

Violent Communal Conflicts as a Form of Terrorism in Taraba State, Nigeria

¹Prof. Benedicta Daudu, Phd., ²Daniel Philemon Saredau, Phd., ³Walmak Gupar Esq., ²Isaac Kajere Esq

¹Department of International Law & Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, University of Abuja

²Department of Public Law, Taraba State University, Nigeria

³Department of Private Law, Taraba State University, Nigeria

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8080245>

Received: 30 July 2024; Accepted: 10 August 2024; Published: 16 September 2024

ABSTRACT

This study is a socio-legal investigation of the violent communal conflicts in Taraba State, North East Nigeria. Applying a legal research method through doctrinal analysis of literature, anchored on the concept of acts of terrorism under the Terrorism (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2022, and framed on the human security theory, the study collected data from a sample of 12,663 respondents selected from the seventeen Local Government Areas in the State. The main instrument used to collect the data was structured questionnaire and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistical tools. Data was also sourced through field surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that violent conflicts are often complex and deeply rooted in historical, social, economic, and political factors. The study finds that this situation results from differences between ethnic or religious groups within the society, fueled by grievances, perceived injustices, competition over resources, and political manipulations. The study further finds that the conflicts usually escalate to widespread loss of lives, destruction of properties, disruption of economic activities, displacement of communities, and long-term societal disaggregation. The study establishes that efforts towards mitigating the conflicts have yielded little results due to several challenges including lack of implementation of the reports of various committees of inquiry into the conflicts, lack of adherence to peace agreements by warring parties, and political interests of elites. Consequently, the study recommends that the government should be proactive and responsive towards security intelligence reports on perceived outbreaks of violent conflicts, should show greater commitment to guaranteeing the security of the people by implementing recommendations from commissions of inquiry, while civil society organizations and traditional institutions working with the government, should continually employ dialogue mechanisms to foster understanding between the belligerents. The paper concludes with the position that addressing these issues is crucial for effective conflict prevention, peacebuilding efforts, and promoting reconciliation in the State.

Keywords: Violence, conflicts, terrorism, security, Taraba.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Nigeria has been battling humongous challenges to national cohesion and security. These challenges- such as ethno-religious crises, kidnappings, banditry, separatist agitations, insurgency, and terrorism- are vigorously shaking the very fabric of the nation. Nigeria, as a country with an aggregation of several nationalities and ethnicities, is a hallmark in the relationship of diverse ethnic groups. The amalgamation process of the various nationalities in 1914 by the colonialists, which later led to independence in 1960, opened up vistas of negative inter-relationships that sometimes resulted in insecurity as various ethnic groups competed for economic and political supremacy.¹ These struggles have been shaped and sustained by the structure of the post-colonial State, resulting in scholars and analysts having a pessimistic view of the amalgamation which they describe as a

¹ Idike, A & Eme, O. (2015) Ethno-Religious Identities in Nigeria: Implications for Governance in Nigeria, *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 10

‘mistake’.² The amalgamation was primarily done to meet the administrative needs and convenience of the colonialists rather than the local nationalities. Hence, the colonialists amalgamated the administration of the northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria, but not the people within the protectorates.

The confrontational nature of the identity questions relates to the origin of modern statehood which brought together various ethnic nationalities and necessitated their permanent socio-economic and political fusion at the turn of the 20th century. Beyond the impasse of colonial rule, Nigeria has increasingly become more internally fragmented than it was on Independence Day, 1st October 1960. In the quest for power and resource control, political elites whip up ethnic and religious identities, igniting conflicts. The inability of the different divides in Nigeria to co-exist peacefully due to these differences has put the country into an array of conflicts and insecurity.³

The situation has become worrisome since the commencement of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic in 1999, as the country witnessed the occurrence of more than fifty violent inter and intra communal conflicts. The notable ones include Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State, Tiv-Jukun in Taraba State, Ogoni-Andoni in Rivers State, Chamba-Kuteb in Taraba State, Itsekiri/Ijaw/Urhobo in Delta State, Ife-Modakeke in Osun State, Aguleri-Umuleri in Anambra State, Yoruba-Hausa in Sagamu, Ogun State, Ijaw-Ilaje in Ondo State, the intermittent clashes in Kano, Kano State, Bassa-Igberira in Nasarawa State, Eleme-Okrika in Rivers State, Hausa/Fulani-Sawaya in Bauchi State.⁴ From this listing, it is observed that these conflicts have occurred in the different parts of the country.

Taraba State, created in 1991 from the defunct Gongola State, inhabits over thirty ethnic groups, which is the highest in the country.⁵ The State is ethnically heterogenous. However, this heterogeneity has not been well managed, and since creation, the State has become a flashpoint of insecurity and violent communal conflicts, especially between the Tiv and Jukun ethnic groups.⁶ The Tiv-Jukun conflict, centered around the axis of Wukari and Takum Local Government Areas, has been intermittent, but extremely violent. Here, as data from our focus group discussions and key informant interview indicates, communal conflicts persist, and has created a toxic atmosphere of palpable tension and eerie apprehension among the citizens.

Our filed surveys and focus group discussions indicate that the communal conflicts in Taraba State is both violent and seemingly intractable. The conflict is cyclical, and as parties generate historical and psychological reasons to justify revenge, and to claim sympathies for their respective causes, the conflict persists. Parties also trade blame, with each side claiming victimhood. Accordingly, reprisals and counter-attacks are features of the conflict, thereby constraining attempts at sustainable resolution. Such has been the cycle of persistent, prevalent, and violent communal conflicts in Taraba State.

Situated in the conception of an “act of terrorism” as defined in section 2(3) of the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022,⁷ this research approaches the violent communal conflicts in Taraba State as acts of terrorism. This is more so that the violent communal conflicts are willful, based on ethno-religious ideologies, and have the effect of intimidating the population and destabilizing the fundamental political, constitutional, economic, or social structure of the state. The impact of the violent communal conflicts includes deaths, injuries, diseases, loss of livelihoods, displacement of persons, reduction of communities into ghost towns, disintegration of families and communities, impassability of roads, abandonment of farms and markets, segregation of communities and markets, as well as emotional and psychological trauma. These are cognizable as acts of terrorism under the Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act, 2022.

² Adeyemi, O (2018) Amalgamation and the Crisis of Governance: The Nigerian Experience. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 2-3

³ Odunlami, B. & Oyeranmi, O. (2020) Ethnic-Politics, Class Identity, and the Crisis of Nation-Building in Nigeria, 1914-1970. *KIU Journal of Humanities*, 29

⁴ Adenuga, G., Olajubu, A., Oyewole, S., & Omotola, J. S. (2023). Ethno-religious Conflicts and the Challenges of National Security in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. *South African Review of Sociology*, 53(2), 130–149

⁵ Taraba State Government <https://www.tarabastate.gov.ng/index.php/explore-taraba>

⁶ Yahaya, B., Mohammed, S., & Emmanuel, F. (2021). State Intervention in Communal Conflict: A Study of Tiv-Jukun Crisis in Takum and Wukari Local Government Areas of Taraba State. *Lapai Journal of Administration*, 3(4)

⁷ Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, <https://sabilaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TERRORISM-PREVENTION-publication-1.pdf>

Our field survey indicates that the areas where violent communal conflicts take place are ascertainable by their exclusive ethnic and segregated character. Hence, in place of integrated communities, segregated communities are established, the frontiers of which become battle grounds to assert ownership of land, and to undertake revenge along identity-based lines of ethnicity and religion. Furthermore, the increase in the quantum of violence, the recourse to revenge and perceived historical injustice by the contending groups, the accusation by both parties of participation of state actors in favor of the “other”, and the recourse to generating sympathies by appealing to victimhood, all threaten to make the conflict an intractable one, with grave implications for national security, integration and cohesion.

Applying a mix of legal and social science research methods, this research investigated the causes and nature of violent communal conflicts in Taraba State. Through doctrinal jurisprudential content analysis of legal and social science literature, field surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, the research interrogates the concerns, claims, and constraints of parties involved in the conflict. The research was designed to understand the issues, and assess the political, religious, and security structures in the affected areas towards identifying gaps and weaknesses. The research was also designed to determine the nature and extent of violations of human rights, as well as the ways and means of preventing recurrence. Ultimately, the research proffers solutions for improved security, peaceful coexistence, and reintegrated and harmonious communities within the context of constitutional guarantees to citizens.

Statement of the Problem

Since independence on 1st October 1960, Nigeria has been plagued with numerous security challenges including ethnic conflicts.⁸ Ethnic consciousness has motivated the ethnic groups to develop and pursue certain political and economic goals unique to their group, thereby stimulating inter-ethnic tensions, and forestalling Nigerian nationalism.⁹ The inter-ethnic tensions often turn violent resulting in destruction of lives and properties, and building a culture of distrust and animosity among the citizens who identify on ethnic lines.

The violent communal conflicts in Taraba State are symptomatic of deep-rooted grievances and discontents based on ethno-religious identities. The conflicts are centered on discontents relating to the constitutional issue of citizenship rights, land rights, and fear of domination in the political, economic, and social spheres. In other words, they are a contest is over land and its resources, political relevance, and access to social and economic opportunities. The contest then manifests as ethno-religious crisis, and take up violent dimensions. The conflicts not only terrorize citizens, but also destabilize the social, political, and economic fabrics of the communities.

The violent communal conflicts have become cyclical, systematized, and organized, such that the extant legal, security, and socio-political structures seem inadequate to contain its intensity and dynamism. This indicates a need to re-assess the fundamentals of these structures, and to identify the gaps and needed counteracts. Accordingly, this research examined the nature of the conflicts, and identified the salient claims and concerns of affected parties. The aim was to deepen appreciation of the conflicts, towards proffering enduring solutions that will foster peace, reconciliation, reintegration, and harmonious coexistence.

Theoretical Framework

Terrorism is the illegal use of force to instill fear, and establish social, political, or economic change. Article 1 (3) of the African Union Convention on the Prevention and Combating of

Terrorism, defines terrorism as:

“Any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to any person or group of persons or cause or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources or environment or cultural heritage, and is calculated to

⁸ Joshua, S., Gberevbie, D., & Onor, K. (2021). Building Security through Insecurity: The Nigerian Military and Counter-Violence Campaigns in the Fourth Republic. *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(1), 177

⁹ Abasili, K., Ezeneme, E., & Nwokike, C., Analyzing the Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria: An In-depth Examination, *Global Scientific Journals* 11(10), 239

(a) intimidate, put in fear, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint or to act according to certain principles; or (b) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public, or to create a public emergency.

Similarly, section 2 (3) of the Terrorism Prevention Act, 2011 defines “an act of terrorism” as

“An act willfully performed with the intention of furthering an ideology, whether political, religious, racial, or ethnic, and which—

(a) may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organization;

(b) unduly compels a government or an international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act;

(c) seriously intimidates a population;

(d) seriously destabilizes or destroys the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization;

(e) influences a government or an international organization by intimidation or coercion;

(f) violates the provisions of any international treaty or resolution to which Nigeria is a party, subject to the provisions of section 12 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; and

(g) involves, causes, or results in—

(i) attack on a person’s life, in the form of grievous bodily harm or death,

(ii) kidnapping of a person,

(iii) destruction of Government or public facility, a transport system, an infrastructural facility, including national critical information infrastructure, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, a public place or private property, which may likely endanger human life or result in major economic loss,

(iv) the seizure of an aircraft, ship, or other means of public transport or conveying goods, or the diversion or use of such means of transportation or conveyance for the purposes of subparagraph (iii) of this paragraph,

(v) the manufacture, possession, acquisition, transportation, transfer, supply or use of weapons, including explosives or biological, chemical, radiological or nuclear weapons (BCRN weapons), as well as research into and development of BCRN weapons without lawful authority, and the receipt, possession, use, transfer, alteration, disposal or dispersal of nuclear or other radioactive material or devices,

(vi) the release of dangerous substance, causing of fire, explosions or floods, the effect of which is to endanger human life,

(vii) interference with or disruption of the supply of water, power, or any other fundamental natural resource, the effect of which is to endanger human life,

(viii) the release into the environment or any part thereof, or distribution or exposure of the public or any part to dangerous, hazardous, nuclear, or other radioactive or harmful substance, any toxic chemical, microbial or other biological agent or toxin, the effect of which is to endanger human life or to provoke substantial damage to property or to the environment,

(ix) endangering or engaging in acts likely to endanger the safety of an aircraft, ship, train or any other means of transportation,

- (x) the bombing and other acts of violence at airports and other public places,
- (xi) the disruption of any computer system or the provision of services directly related to the supply of water, power, communications, infrastructure, banking or financial services, utilities, transportation, other essential infrastructure or any other fundamental natural resources, the effect of which is to endanger human life,
- (xii) the disruption of the provision of essential emergency services, including police, civil defence, medical and acts prejudicial to national security or public safety,
- (xiii) the propagation and dissemination of information or information materials in any form or mode calculated to cause panic, evoke violence or intimidate a government, person or group of persons, or
- (xiv) an act directed against a nuclear facility, or an act interfering with the operation of a nuclear facility, where the offender intentionally causes, or where he knows that the act is likely to cause, death or serious injury to a person or substantial damage to property or to the environment by exposure to radiation or release of radioactive substance, unless the act is undertaken in conformity with the provisions of existing laws.

The above definition is meant to be comprehensive enough to encompass terrorism in its varied dynamics and nuances. Accordingly, we find that the causes, modus, and consequences of violent communal conflicts in Taraba State fit into the description of acts of terrorism set out above. Accordingly, while terrorism is an issue of global concern, and not merely restricted to Nigeria, this research's scope is not the international context. For this research, terrorism is approached from a national perspective, and terrorist acts are restricted to those occurring within national borders. Within this context, the idea is that terrorism is a threat to national security and integration because it affects human security and hampers socio-economic and political development. This implicates the theory of human security.

Human security is inextricably linked with national security.¹⁰ Human security emphasizes the way violent communal conflicts, and diverse forms of terrorist and criminal activities within the national borders, threaten the safety of citizens, communities, and the institutions of state. Thus, for Nigeria to ensure sustainable national security, it needs to embrace “the organizing concept of human security which is a people-centered approach focused on individual human beings and their rights and needs.”¹¹ The human security approach, because it looks inward to the people, and enjoins the state to create socioeconomic, political, and environmental structures that promote the survival, livelihood, and dignity of its people, has the capacity to help states “reduce the likelihood of conflicts, overcome the obstacles to sustainable development, and promote a life of dignity all.”¹² When security threats to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of the human person are addressed, the interface between security, development, and human rights is expanded.

Terrorism, in general, and violent communal conflicts, in particular, arose in Nigeria because the marauding individuals and conflicting groups took advantage of government's action and inactions in dealing with the fundamental human security need of Nigerians.¹³ Our focus group discussions indicate parties asserting competing claims, claiming victimhood, and accusing the “other” of state support. The effect of neglect of human security is that in Taraba State, violent communal conflicts have become persistent, organized, and systematized. The understanding that violent communal conflicts are mainly a result of deprivations, indicates that they are fostered by the inadequate human security policy and implementation mechanisms in the country. Hence, the need to ensure human security.

The researchers find the human security theory as apt because the theory is at the intersection of security, human rights, and human development, cohering with the provisions of section 14(2)(b) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution

¹⁰ See, D S Reveron & KA Mahoney-Norris *Human and National Security: Understanding Transitional Challenges* (2019); D Anderson-Rogers & KF Crawford *Human Security: Theory and Practice* (2018).

¹¹ Reveron & Mahoney-Norris (n 45) 10.

¹² Report of the Secretary-General, Follow-up to the General Assembly Resolution 666/290 on human security A/68/685 (2013) <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/reports-resolutions/>.

¹³ Vande, P.T. (2023). Banditry and Human Security in: The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_215-1

that “[T]he security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government.” Other connected provisions of the 1999 Constitution are section 15(2) that “[N]ational integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic, or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited”, and 15(4) that “The State shall foster a feeling of belonging and of involvement among the various peoples of the Federation, to the end that loyalty to the nation shall override sectional loyalties.” By tackling the issue of violent communal conflicts through human security framework, government is concomitantly fulfilling its primary objective of assuring the security and welfare of the people, ensuring the fundamental objective of national integration, and promoting the human rights of citizens.

Features and Effects of Violent Communal Conflicts in Nigeria

Long before Nigeria became a country in 1914, conflict and wars were a significant part of the history of the areas and kingdoms that would later be put together to form Nigeria.¹⁴ The early history of conflict has been linked to contention over access to resources (including land, cattle, slaves and oil), and conquests that sought to spread Islam, especially the 19th century Usman dan Fodio Jihad.¹⁵

Post colonialism, one type of violent conflict that has intensified over time in Nigeria is ethno-religious conflict.¹⁶ Incidents of ethno-religious conflicts became prevalent Nigeria, especially northern Nigerian, around the 1980’s and 1990s.¹⁷ Communal and indigene/settler conflicts have also increased and intensified since the 1980’s.¹⁸ Indeed, there have been numerous and often intense bouts of communal violence, particularly in Plateau State and the North East of the country.¹⁹

Since the commencement of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic in 1999, several people have been killed as a result of violent conflicts between herdsmen and farmers due to the expansion of the agricultural population at a time of deteriorating environmental conditions.²⁰ The frequent attacks on farmers have weakened communal growth and development.²¹ Cattle herding represents a significant component of the Nigerian economy, as the beef from cattle constitutes the commonest and cheapest source of the animal protein consumed by Nigerians.²² The traditional and unique Fulani encampment (ruga) consisting of temporary structures made of stalks, closely knit family members, and livestock is the natural habitat of the orthodox Fulani settlement, who are the constitute the bulk of cattle herders.²³ However, the State has been unable to regulate the mutual coexistence of its citizens engaged in farming and in herding to harmoniously share the scarce and finite resources, parties usually resort to struggle among themselves, leading to violent conflicts.²⁴

The crisis between herders and farmers would increase or decrease in intensity and frequency depending on economic, environmental, social, and economic factors. For example, an increase in the herd sizes, due to improved conditions of the cattle, will compel pastoralists to seek for more pastures beyond their limited range. Climate change has also constituted a threat by putting pressure on the land, thereby provoking conflicts. Since the 1980s, there has been a marked expansion of cultivation of the swamplands areas around the riverine and

¹⁴ Ajayi, J. Ade , Falola, . Toyin O. , Kirk-Greene, . Anthony Hamilton Millard and Udo, . Reuben Kenrick (2024, August 13). Nigeria. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria>

¹⁵ Best S.G and Carole R. ‘Violent Conflict and its After-math in Jos and Kano, Nigeria: What is the Role of Religion?’ (2011) Working Paper 69. Religions and Development Research Programme.

¹⁶ John C.O and Ruth U.O., ‘Violent Conflict Exposure in Nigeria and Economic Welfare’ <https://docs.iza.org/dp12570.pdf> accessed on 4/02/2024

¹⁷ Njoku, B. & Kolapo, J. The Rise of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria: Critical Analysis and Proposal for New Resolution Strategies. (2022) Covenant University Journal of Politics & International Affairs, Vol 10(1), 3767

¹⁸ Nwagwu, E. Indigenes and Settlers Conflict in Nigeria: A Negation to National Integration and Nation Building. (2016) Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, Vol 7(4), 218.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Accord. Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria. Conflict Trends 2018/3. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria/>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ameh, O., Makairi, A., & Bajaan M. Cattle Rearing and its Contribution to the Nigerian Economy: An Econometric Analysis. (2017) Journal of Social Science and Humanity, 7.

²³ Adogi, M. (2013) *Fulani-farmers conflicts in Nasarawa State: The Ecology, Population and Politics*, Abuja, Murry Greens Consult.

²⁴ Ibid

valley-bottom which were earlier left alone for cattle to pasture.²⁵ This leaves farmers and pastoralists engaged in fierce competition for access to land, often resulting in increased conflicts and violence. Moreover, migration activities of herdsman, who frequently pass through the farmlands destroy crops. Between 2009 and 2020, over 300 people were killed, and thousands displaced people were displaced from their homes and communities as a result of the herders and farmers conflicts.²⁶

Ethno-religious conflicts and herders-farmers conflicts are usually fought by militias and armed civilians, in a manner akin to guerilla wars, and without clear front lines.²⁷ The conflicts often result in the breakdown of law and order, general banditry, and chaos. In some cases, not only are the functions of government suspended, but governmental assets are destroyed or looted.²⁸ Fighting in most conflicts is usually intermittent, with a wide range in intensity. It usually occurs not on well-defined battlefields but in and around communities, and is often characterized by personalized acts of violence, such as atrocities committed by former neighbours, and in some cases, the fighting spills over to neighbouring communities.²⁹ In many cases, it is civilians that have become both the main combatants, and the primary victims. While it is not possible to estimate civilian casualties in violent conflict with precision, the trend is often upward.³⁰

Conflict damages societies in clear and striking ways, killing combatants and civilians, and destroying critical infrastructure.³¹ Its effects are also felt indirectly, as economic production stalls, food, education, and health systems break down, income generation stagnates or disappears, and displacement forces people into crowded and unsanitary conditions.³²

Violent conflict in Nigeria has resulted in a large number of internally displaced persons. Unlike some nations of the world, where natural disasters have led to peoples' displacement, Nigerians are mostly being displaced by violent conflict. According to International Organization for Migration (2023), as of June 2023, over 2.3 million Nigerians have been displaced in north-eastern Nigeria alone, not to mention other parts of the country.³³

To assess conflict's direct and indirect impact on society and development, this research focuses on three areas: demographics, economic development, and human capabilities. This assessment, however, is far from exhaustive.³⁴ Conflict has effects beyond these areas, such as eroding social capital, social infrastructure, and community cohesion and causing damage to the environment.³⁵ On the area of demography, the aftermath of violent conflict usually brings about high mortality, displacement and migration of victims, while with respect to economic development conflict can severely disrupt economic activities through the destruction of productive assets, diversion of resources, death and injury to the population, infrastructural damage and damage to health and education; on human capabilities conflict breeds poverty³⁶

A Primer on Taraba State Historical background and demographic characteristics of Taraba State

The history of the formation of Taraba State could be drawn from the creation of the then North-Eastern State

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ Abba, G.S. & Usman, T., Farmer-pastoralist conflicts in West Africa: Exploring the Causes and Consequences" in *Journal of Information, Society and Justice*. (2018) Vol. 1, No. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Armed Conflicts and their Consequence- the United Nations. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/docs/2001/15%20Armed%20Conflict.pdf> accessed on 4/02/2024

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Ibid*

³¹ Taylor H., David K.B., Mickey F. & Jonathan D.M 'Assessing the Impact of Conflict on Development in North-East Nigeria' (2020) Published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). p. 22

³² *ibid*

³³ North-East Nigeria: Mobility Tracking Round 45: IDP and Returnee ATLAS- June 2023 <<https://reliefweb.int/report/Nigeria/north-east-nigeria-mobility-tracking-round-45-idp-and-returnee-atlas>> Published 19th September, 2023. Accessed 22nd January, 2024

³⁴ Colletta, Nat J., and Michelle L. Cullen. "The Nexus between Violent Conflict, Social Capital and Social Cohesion: Case Studies from Cambodia and Rwanda." *Social Capital Initiative Working Paper*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000.<<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/document-detail>> accessed 3/02/2024

³⁵ Westing, Arthur H. "The Impact of War on the Environment." In *War and Public Health*, edited by Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008. <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship.com/du.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195311181.001.0001/acprof-9780195311181-chapter-5> accessed on 3/02/2024

³⁶ Note 34

on 27 May 1967, with its capital in Maiduguri.³⁷ On 3 February 1976, the North-Eastern State was divided into Borno, Bauchi, and Gongola States. This situation continued till the government divided Gongola State into Adamawa and Taraba States in 1991.³⁸ Accordingly, Taraba State was created on 27 August 1991 out of the defunct Gongola State. Taraba State is bounded in the west by Nasarawa State, northwest by Benue State, north by Bauchi and Gombe States, northeast by Adamawa State, and east and south by Cameroon.³⁹ The state lies largely within the middle of Nigeria, and consists of an undulating landscape dotted with a few mountainous features which includes the scenic and prominent Mambila Plateau.⁴⁰

By the 2006 census figures, the population of Taraba State is two million three hundred thousand, seven hundred and thirty-six people (2, 300, 736).⁴¹ However, the projection of the population as at 2022 is over three million people.⁴² Taraba State comprises of sixteen (16) Local Government Areas and two Special Development Areas.⁴³ Politically, the State is divided into three (3) Senatorial Zones of north, central and southern, with six federal constituencies of ArdoKola-Lau-KarimLamido, Jalingo-Yorro-Zing, Bali-Gassol, Sardauna-Gashaka-Kurmi, Takum-Ussa-Donga, and Wukari-Ibi.⁴⁴

Taraba State is the most ethnically diverse State in Nigeria, with over 80 ethnic groups each with its historical and cultural heritage. Some of these tribes include Mumuye, Ichen, Wurkun, Mambilla, Kuteb, Chamba, Jukun, Yandang, Kunini, Fulani, Jenjo, Lo, Ngoro, Kambu, Kaka, Bandawa, Munga, Tiv, Zo, Bambuka, Jibu, Shomo, and Jole respectively.⁴⁵ Named after River Taraba, one of the main rivers that run through it, Taraba State covers a land area of about 60,000 kilometers square, making it the third largest in the country, after Niger and Borno states.⁴⁶ Over 75% of the land is arable, and the State has multiple climatic conditions suitable for various crops, all season large water bodies, tourism, solid minerals, and vibrant human resources.⁴⁷ However, the potentials of the land resources of the State is yet to be developed into a viable economic enterprise or the human capital significantly empowered to sustain the State.⁴⁸

The major occupation of the people of Taraba State is agriculture. Cash crops produced in the State include coffee, tea, groundnuts, and cotton, while food crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava, and yam, are produced in commercial quantity.⁴⁹ In addition, cattle, sheep, and goats are reared in large numbers, especially on the Mambilla Plateau, and along the Benue and Taraba valleys. Similarly, the people undertake other livestock production activities like poultry production, rabbit breeding, and pig farming on a fairly large scale.⁵⁰ Indeed, Taraba State is among the leading states in the production of livestock, with its dairy farms at Jalingo, Gembu and Nguorje. Communities living on the banks of River Benue, River Taraba, River Donga and Ibi engage in fishing all year round. Other occupational activities such as pottery, cloth-weaving, dyeing, mat-making, carving, embroidery and blacksmithing are also carried out in various parts of the State.⁵¹

Causes of Violent Communal Conflicts in Taraba State

The answers from respondents to whom questionnaires were administered, and the output from our field surveys,

³⁷ Atando D.A., Isa M. & Magaji P., "The Political Development of Taraba State 1999-2019" <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350802245> pg. 22 Accessed on 15th January, 2024

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Oyinloye O.B.A., "The Nigerian Army and Rural Banditry: Issues and Challenges" *Journal Adv Educ Philos*, Nov, 2020; 4(11) 503

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Taraba State Government (2022). Executive Diary 2022.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Isa M. and Oruonye, E.D 'Development Question and Abundant Natural Potentials of Taraba State: The Need for Paradigm Shift' (2021) *E.D/IJHSS*, 8(1) 43

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Egbunu, G. (ed) (2018). *Darius On A Rescue Mission. A Compendium of Achievements.*

Consultants: Parliaments Communications Network Ltd. pg.15

⁴⁶ Taraba State Government (2014). *A Brief History of Taraba State within the Nigeria Centenary (1914-2014).*

⁴⁷ Rescue Taraba 2015 Project <https://tarabastate.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Taraba-State-Rescure-Agenda.pdf> accessed on 4/04/2024

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Taraba State <https://cirddoc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Taraba-State.pdf> accessed on 4/02/2024

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

interviews, and focus group discussions, indicate that the causes of violent communal clashes in Taraba State are largely common, and interlinked. In this section, we shall outline these factors that predispose the State to violent conflicts, as follows:

- i. **Armed Banditry** – the cause of conflict under this heading is both natural and manmade.⁵² The man-made cause is action of the major parties in precipitating these conflicts. Government does not act proactively enough to manage the symptoms of the crisis before it escalates to loss of lives and properties. Moreover, preferential treatments when disputes arise between pastoralists and farmers, as well as population increase are man-made causes of armed banditry. An example was the Fulani and Kuteb crisis sometimes in 2022, the State House of Assembly had to intervene in calling on the Chief Executive Officer of the State to take decisive measures.⁵³ On the other hand, the natural cause is mostly drought which is brought about by a lack of proper management of water resources, poor land management, and policy.⁵⁴
- ii. **Farmer-Herders Conflict** – the unauthorized entry of the herders into farmlands in ethnic regions other than their own, and excessive destruction of these farmlands, coupled with the lack of proper and acceptable mediation mechanisms, breed disagreement. These disagreements when they are not settled, often escalate to violent conflicts, easily aggravating the existing fragile relations among the country's diverse ethnoreligious groups, consequently undermining unity, stability, and development.⁵⁵ The Fulani, Tiv and Jukun crisis is an example.⁵⁶
- iii. **Poverty and Inequality** – inequalities in income have become increasingly pronounced amongst Nigerians. While the poor are becoming poorer, the political elites are becoming richer.⁵⁷ In the face of naked display of self-enrichment by the political elites, the responses of the marginalized, the unemployed, and the deprived working poor to their apparently unchanging plight, have turned out into violent conflict.⁵⁸ This factor indicate the human security angle, as the failure of government to provide for the basic needs of citizens leave them predisposed to engage in violence as employment and for bounty, among others.
- iv. **Bad Governance** - If there was only one social pathology that could be accused of triggering the proliferation of and rise of conflicts in Taraba State, it would be the rising profile of leadership deficit and bad governance both nationally and with respect to the state.⁵⁹ The widespread high profile corruption cases, institutional failures, unconstitutional arrests, police brutality, and public funds misappropriation on the part of successive governments leave the people in limbo.⁶⁰ The resentments of the people against the failure of leadership easily spur them to pick up arms and engage in violent conflict. Secondly, the government's failure to arrest the strange situation cum the violent activities and conflicts before they boomerang, signal leadership and governance deficits.⁶¹ When government is not attuned to its primary purpose of ensuring the security and welfare of the people, as mandated by section 14(2) of the 1999 Constitution, it leaves the citizens free to engage in violent competition towards improving their relative security and welfare situation.

⁵² Oyinloye O.B.A., "The Nigerian Army and Rural Banditry: Issues and Challenges" *Journal Adv Educ Philos*, Nov, 2020; 4(11) 503 - 505

⁵³ Justine T. "Fulani-Kuteb Crisis: Taraba Lawmaker Demands Government's Investigation" <https://www.punchng.com.cdn.ampproject.org> accessed on 3/02/2024

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Adeleke A. and Julius O.A., "Violent Conflict and National Development in Nigeria" *Hatfield Graduate Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 5. Issue. 1 (2021) Pp. 8

⁵⁶ Musa L., "Why we Fled Taraba – Fulani Herders 11th February, 2023, <https://www.dailytrust.com> accessed 4/02/2024

⁵⁷ Pillay, D. *Relative Deprivation, Social Instability and Cultures of Entitlement*. In S. Hassim, T. Kupe and E. Worby (Eds.). *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and there Invention of Difference in South Africa* (93-104). Johannesburg: (2008) Wits Press. Policy, 110 (Spring): 82-96

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Olawale O.A & Damola A. "Conflicts in Nigeria" <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340628835-Conflicts-in-Nigeria> accessed 3/02/2024

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Ibid

- v. Ethnic Diversities and Differences – Some ethnic groups see themselves as a superior breed or race higher and above other groups to the point of considering some groups as “outcasts” on alleged grounds of their refusal to worship their deity.⁶² The Jole and Shomo communal conflict in Taraba State comes to mind.⁶³
- vi. Activities of Religious Extremists – The activities of religious extremists also bring about violent conflict in Taraba. Apart from the fact that Taraba is a multi-ethnic State, it is also a multi-religious and often encounters religious violence. Although Islam and Christianity remain major religions, the resentment between the two religions has become one of the major issues confronting the State.⁶⁴ The Jalingo crisis of 1992, Hausa-Jukun Crisis in Wukari of 2014, and post-election violence in Jalingo in 2015, all bare credence to the impact of religious extremism on peaceful co-existence in the State.
- vii. Economic Resources (Land and Territory Issues in Conflict): Land scarcity, territorial disputes, and competition for the use of land resources precipitate conflict. For example, the Jole-Shomo conflict in Lau LGA is a result of competition over fishing ponds especially Mrmi fishing pond, as well as swamplands for rice farming. The communal violence between the Fulani and the Yandang and other tribes around Lau LGA as a result of competition for land resources for cattle herding as against crop cultivation. Our research into the Tiv-Jukun communal conflicts in Takum and Gassol local government areas indicate population pressure, competition over land, boundary disputes, and alienation as drivers of the conflict.
- viii. Chieftaincy issues, citizenship and indigeneship dichotomy, and political patronage: the debate as to which ethnic group is indigenous to an area while which one is merely a settler or “squatter” pits the ethnic groups in opposing camps. The settlers are said not to have a right to both economic and political control of the area. They also do not have right to traditional leadership, and often the question of entitlement to the chieftaincy of the area predisposes them to violent conflict. One example is the Karimjo-Wurkum crisis in Karim Lamido local government area where the Karimjo maintain that Karim town is not the land of the Wurkum, and therefore the palace of the chief of Wurkum should not be situate in Karim town. Similarly, is the Jukun-Kuteb crisis in Takum local government as to who should be the Ukwé of Takum among the Kuteb people and their neighbours, the Kpanzon and Chamba. To resolve this, the Taraba State government has enacted a law to create for three third class chieftaincy for each of the Kuteb, Kpanzon, and Chamba tribes, and one first class chieftaincy to rotate among the Kuteb, Kpanzon, and Chamba tribes.
- ix. Weak and Ineffective Intervention by the Government, Civil Society, and Traditional Institutions: The majority of the respondents to our questionnaire are of the view that the government, civil society, and traditional institutions have not played their roles creditable well. In focus group discussions, we learnt that government is not proactive enough in enforcing resolutions, and in nipping early warning signs of violence. We also learnt that the number of civil society organizations working to address violent communal clashes in Taraba state is low, and their impact is below average. Moreover, most respondents feel that the traditional institutions should be more open and receptive to reconciling their peoples rather than take sides to foster the violence. As it is, the traditional institution festers the violence by serving as the rallying ground for reprisals and organized violence. Most of our respondents believe that given a more robust and proactive intervention by the government, civil society, and traditional institutions, the cycle of violent communal conflicts in Taraba State can be sustainably abated and the peoples reintegrated.
- x. Inadequate Security Coverage: Our fields surveys and focus group discussions indicate an inadequate security coverage of the areas predisposed to violent communal clashes. There are very few numbers of security personnel manning these areas, and they do not even have the type of weapons, vehicles, and other logistics to provide adequate security in those areas. The ethnic militias and local bandits often have more

⁶² Taraba State Government Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Crisis Between Shomo and Jole Communities of Lau Local Government Area of Taraba State. findings and Recommendations, August, 2020

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Adeleke A. and Julius O.A., “Violent Conflict and National Development in Nigeria” Hatfield Graduate Journal of Public Affairs, Vol. 5. Issue. 1 (2021) Pp. 8

sophisticated weapons and transportation, and they easily overrun the security forces.

CONCLUSION

This research has brought to the fore the fact that conflicts and insecurity are a reality of human existence in Taraba State. The impact which these violent communal conflicts have on human lives and the stability of the State are deleterious. For survivors of the violent conflicts, their lives remain precarious as the ominous threat of recurrence of violence pervades the air, while their living conditions remain pitiable due to gross destabilization of their regular social and economic base. This is the terrorism aspect of the violent communal conflicts. In the mix, the human rights of citizens, including right to life, right to dignity of human person, right to property, right to private and family life, right to freedom of movement, are breached or distorted. The research found that efforts by government at resolving the problem has been few, and largely ineffective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the research findings, the following are recommendations, which if implemented, would help in resolving the issue of violent communal conflicts in Taraba State:

1. The government should set up a Peace and Reconciliation Committee that would interface with warring parties to come up with workable measures for living in peace. The committee would enable the parties to come to terms with each side's claims and concerns. The committee would work in the mold of a truth and reconciliation commission.
2. The government should ensure the provision of social services and basic amenities to communities involved in conflict. Lack of, and inadequate, access to social services and basic amenities precipitate the conflict, and provision would mitigate it. Indeed, the welfare of the people is paramount to ensure their human security.
3. The government should facilitate community policing, but must ensure that vigilantes do not turn into ethnic militias and security agencies involved in crisis containment should be fair and firm to all parties, and should refrain from taking sides.
4. The government should implement the recommendations of the various Judicial Commissions of inquiries set up. There is a report on the Tiv-Jukun crisis, and another one on the Shomo-Jole crisis. Government should summon the necessary courage and political will to implement the recommendations contained in the reports. Lack of implementation would make parties resort to self-help as well as distrust the government's sincerity in tackling the issues. Indeed, there is need to punish or sanction those found culpable to serve as deterrence.
5. The Civil society have been largely absent in conflict prevention and mitigation related to violent communal conflicts in Taraba State. There is a huge gap waiting to be filled. Civil society organizations are invited to intervene in the violent communal conflicts in Taraba State to facilitate peace efforts, and communal co-existence through advocacy and sensitization campaigns among various groups in the State.
6. Governmental policies in the communities should be more inclusive. Discriminatory and skewed government policies and intervention which is unbalanced among the parties precipitate violent conflicts.
7. Government and security forces must establish and operate efficient and effective early warning and early detection systems. Nipping a crisis in the bud is much better than trying to contain a full-blown crisis.
8. The traditional institution must be alive to its role and responsibilities in ensuring that subjects coexist peacefully. Government should facilitate traditional institutions in so doing, while traditional rulers known to fan the embers of hate and discord should be visited with appropriate sanctions.

9. The government should deploy more security personnel to man various strategic places of interest in communities and ensure that the peace is kept. Also, security agencies should be well funded and equipped with the necessary weapons, vehicles, and other logistics.

REFERENCES

1. Abasili, K., Ezeneme, E., & Nwokike, C., Analyzing the Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria: An In-depth Examination, *Global Scientific Journals* 11(10), 239
2. Abba, G.S. & Usman, T., Farmer-pastoralist conflicts in West Africa: Exploring the Causes and Consequences” in *Journal of Information, Society and Justice*. (2018) Vol. 1, No. 2.
3. Accord. Understanding the Herder-Farmer Conflict in Nigeria. *Conflict Trends* 2018/3. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/understanding-the-herder-farmer-conflict-in-nigeria/>
4. Adeleke A. and Julius O.A., “Violent Conflict and National Development in Nigeria” *Hatfield Graduate Journal of Public Affairs*, Vol. 5. Issue. 1 (2021) Pp. 8
5. Adenuga, G., Olajubu, A., Oyewole, S., & Omotola, J. S. (2023). Ethno-religious Conflicts and the Challenges of National Security in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. *South African Review of Sociology*, 53(2), 130–149
6. Adeyemi, O (2018) Amalgamation and the Crisis of Governance: The Nigerian Experience. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 2-3
7. Adogi, M. (2013) *Fulani-farmers conflicts in Nasarawa State: The Ecology, Population and Politics*, Abuja, Murry Greens Consult.
8. Ajayi, J. Ade, Falola., Toyin O., Kirk-Greene., Anthony Hamilton Millard and Udo., Reuben Kenrick (2024, August 13). Nigeria. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Nigeria>
9. Ameh, O., Makairi, A., & Bajaon M. Cattle Rearing and its Contribution to the Nigerian Economy: An Econometric Analysis. (2017) *Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 7
10. Armed Conflicts and their Consequence- the United Nations. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/rwss/docs/2001/15%20Armed%20Conflict.pdf>
11. Atando D.A., Isa M. & Magaji P., “The Political Development of Taraba State 1999-2019” <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350802245> pg. 22
12. Best S.G and Carole R. ‘Violent Conflict and its After-math in Jos and Kano, Nigeria: What is the Role of Religion?’ (2011) Working Paper 69. Religions and Development Research Programme.
13. Case Studies from Cambodia and Rwanda.” *Social Capital Initiative Working Paper*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000. <<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/document-detail>>
14. Colletta, Nat J., and Michelle L. Cullen. “The Nexus between Violent Conflict, Social Capital and Social Cohesion: Consultants: Parliaments Communications Network Ltd. pg.15
15. DS Reveron & KA Mahoney-Norris *Human and National Security: Understanding Transitional Challenges* (2019);
16. D Anderson-Rogers & KF Crawford *Human Security: Theory and Practice* (2018).
17. Egbunu, G. (ed) (2018). *Darius On a Rescue Mission. A Compendium of Achievements*.
18. Idike, A & Eme, O. (2015) *Ethno-Religious Identities in Nigeria: Implications for Governance in Nigeria*, *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 10
19. Isa M. and Oruonye, E.D ‘Development Question and Abundant Natural Potentials of Taraba State: The Need for Paradigm Shift’ (2021) *E.D/IJHSS*, 8(1) 43
20. John C.O and Ruth U.O., ‘Violent Conflict Exposure in Nigeria and Economic Welfare’
21. Joshua, S., Gberevbie, D., & Onor, K. (2021). Building Security through Insecurity: The Nigerian Military and Counter-Violence Campaigns in the Fourth Republic. *Armed Forces & Society*, 47(1), 177
22. Justine T. “Fulani-Kuteb Crisis: Taraba Lawmaker Demands Government’s Investigation” <https://www.punchng-com.cdn.ampproject.org>
23. Musa L., ‘Why we Fled Taraba – Fulani Herders 11th February, 2023, <https://www.dailytrust.com>
24. Njoku, B. & Kolapo, J. The Rise of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Northern Nigeria: Critical Analysis and Proposal for New Resolution Strategies. (2022) *Covenant University Journal of Politics & International Affairs*, Vol 10(1), 3767
25. North-East Nigeria: Mobility Tracking Round 45: IDP and Returnee ATLAS- June 2023

- <<https://reliefweb.int/report/Nigeria/north-east-nigeria-mobility-tracking-round-45-idp-and-returnee-atlas>>
26. Nwagwu, E. Indigenes and Settlers Conflict in Nigeria: A Negation to National Integration and Nation Building. (2016) *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol 7(4), 218.
 27. Odunlami, B. & Oyeranmi, O. (2020) *Ethnic-Politics, Class Identity, and the Crisis of Nation-Building in Nigeria, 1914-1970*. *KIU Journal of Humanities*, 29
 28. Olawale O.A & Damola A. “Conflicts in Nigeria”
 29. Oyinloye O.B.A., “The Nigerian Army and Rural Banditry: Issues and Challenges” *Journal Adv Educ Philos*, Nov, 2020; 4(11) 503
 30. Oyinloye O.B.A., “The Nigerian Army and Rural Banditry: Issues and Challenges” *Journal Adv Educ Philos*, Nov, 2020; 4(11) 503 – 505
 31. Pillay, D. Relative Deprivation, Social Instability and Cultures of Entitlement. In S. Hassim, T. Kupe and E. Worby (Eds.). *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and there Invention of Difference in South Africa* (93-104). Johannesburg: (2008) Wits Press. *Policy*, 110 (Spring): 82-96
 32. Taraba State Government Report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the Crisis Between Shomo and Jole Communities of Lau Local Government Area of Taraba State. findings and Recommendations, August, 2020
 33. Taylor H., David K.B., Mickey F. & Jonathan D.M ‘Assessing the Impact of Conflict on Development in North-East Nigeria’ (2020) Published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). p. 22
 34. Terrorism (Prevention and Prohibition) Act 2022, <https://sabilaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TERRORISM-PREVENTION-publication-1.pdf>
 35. Vande, P.T. (2023). *Banditry and Human Security in: The Palgrave Handbook of Global Social Problems*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68127-2_215-1
 36. Westing, Arthur H. “The Impact of War on the Environment.” In *War and Public Health*, edited by Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008. <https://oxford-universitypressscholarship-com.du.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195311181.001.0001/acprof-9780195311181-chapter-5>
 37. Yahaya, B., Mohammed, S., & Emmanuel, F. (2021). *State Intervention in Communal Conflict: A Study of Tiv-Jukun Crisis in Takum and Wukari Local Government Areas of Taraba State*. *Lapai Journal of Administration*, 3(4)