

## **Social Conflicts and Insecurity in Nigeria: Where Lies the Future?**

**Itumo, Anthony**

*Department of Political Science  
Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki  
E-Mail: tonyitumo15@gmail.com*

**Udeuhele, Godwin Ikechukwu**

*Department of Political Science  
Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki*

**Aro, Gibert Chukwu**

*Department of Political Science  
Ebonyi State University, P.M.B 053, Abakaliki*

### **Abstract**

Since the creation of Nigerian state via the British fiat, the unholy political marriage has continued to wobble from one challenge to another. In less than six years of its political independence, the country suffered a political convulsion which unfortunately led to the abortion of the First Republic in 1966 and subsequent thirty months civil war. The emergence of the military in governance before and after the civil war came with the varying degrees of hopes and aspirations that the turmoil and insecurity which hitherto afflicted the country would be fundamentally addressed via a sound political structure that could bring about good governance. These hopes were diametrically dashed as the country continued to witness various forms of social upheavals attesting to high level of institutional violence under different military regimes. After many years of intermittent military dictatorships, Nigerians sought relief in a democratic transition which midwived a civil rule on the 29th of May, 1999. Since the civil rule came on board insecurity and instability have continued to reign supreme across the country. This study is set out to unearth the causes of social conflicts in Nigeria, how its strains promote the upsurge of insecurity across the country and to recommend the possible remedies. The materials for the study were drawn from secondary sources while content analytical technique was used for data analysis. The theoretical framework that anchored the study is the fragile state theory.

**Keywords:** Social conflicts, insecurity, Nigeria, instability and fragile state

### **1. Introduction**

Nigeria state since independence in 1960 has remained a hot bed of constant commotions and perilous social upheavals that threaten the peace, security and corporate existence of the state. It is evident that since the country escaped from the clutches of British imperialism and attained its statehood, the country has been bedevilled by various forms of social conflicts which manifest in perennial ethno-religious riots, indigene/settler conflicts, inter/intra tribal wars, communal clashes, political conflicts,

militancy, insurgency, hate speeches, and recently the issuance of quit notice to one another by ethnic nationalities. These challenges are not unconnected with the country's historical experiences and the nature of the Nigerian state. It is gratifying to note that Nigerian state is a mosaic of antagonistic ethnic formations that have nothing in common except their colour. It is also pertinent to note that the process that saw Nigeria's metamorphosis into statehood did not in the real sense follow the normal trajectories that characterise ascendance of a country to a nation state, ie; from nations-state to nation-state. Rather the process went through sublimation whereby the component units that make up the country were coerced automatically into one administrative umbrella without due consideration for their respective ethnic and social cultural consanguinities.

As a matter of fact the present conflicts and insecurity witnessed across Nigerian state today are not unexpected as they are intrinsically linked and rooted in British colonialism. So Nigeria as a creation of British colonialism was rested on a faulty foundation of mistrust and distrust among the various ethnic nationalities that make up the country. Invariable the social conflicts that engulf the various parts of the country today were ordinary expected. Certainly, the struggle for political control, cultural and ethno-religion differences, contestations over resource distribution, land allocation, citizenship questions and indigene/settler contestations have often degenerated into violence conflicts in different parts of the country. As such, ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry have unfortunately become the pervasive characteristics of the politics in the Nigerian state. This has left the feelings of dual loyalty in the psych of every average Nigerian (Oroju, 2014) with everyone identifying first with has ethnic group. Obviously, loyalty to Nigerian state is seen as secondary by many Nigerian citizens while loyalty to one's ethnic group is seen as primary. These pervasive characteristics of the Nigerian state have precariously disposed it to frequent socio-political imbroglio and the attendant insecurity. This aptly explains why many years after Nigeria independence, ethno-religious and political crises continued to erupt in many parts of the country.

It would be recalled that the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) was a product of the culmination of a long entrenched history of suspicions and mistrusts that characterised the relationships between the Hausa-Fulani dominated north and the Igbo dominated eastern Nigeria over struggle for control of power at the centre. In defining the character of Nigeria politics before the Civil war, (Itumo and Nwobashi, 2017) assert that the political parties were organised along ethnic lines as the major ethnic groups in the county floated their own political parties. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) was for the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group, the Action Group (AG) was for the Yoruba ethnic group, while the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) was for Igbo ethnic group. In a bid to rule the country and dominate other ethnic groups, the leaders of the major political parties preached the politics of hate-divide and rule. More than any other factor, the inter-party struggles for political power politicised ethnicity and spread ethnic thinking to the most remote areas of the country. It became obvious that the inter-ethnic rivalry increased tremendously among the major ethnic groups and exacerbate hostilities among them (Nnoli, 1978).

In the post-civil war Nigeria, the situation was not even better, as ethnic tensions, agitation and cries for marginalisation continued to characterise the polity. Evidences abound that many violent ethnic and religious conflicts have continued wrestled the country to her knees in the recent time. Militancy in the Niger Delta, agitation for the Sovereign State of Biafra in the southeast, minority cries for marginalisation across the country, religious riots in the north, herdsmen/farmers conflicts, hate speeches and ultimately the activities of the dreaded Boko Harem insurgency have predisposed the country to a parlous state of insecurity and instability. This study is set out to examine the social and institutional strains responsible for the upsurge of insecurity in Nigeria and to recommend the possible remedies. To accomplish this task the study raised the following questions: What are the causes of the social conflicts in Nigeria? What are the challenges posed these social conflicts to peace and security of the Nigerian state? What are the possible remedies to the incessant social conflicts in Nigeria?

## **2. Causes of Social Conflict**

### **Governance Thesis**

This stream of literature links the occurrence of violent conflicts in human society to issues, and challenges relating to governance. The first strand of this literature explores the instability generated by democratic transitions, suggesting that the steadfast promotion by the international community of democratic rule—a necessity for adherents to democratic peace theory—may be inappropriate in some cases. Some of these studies highlight the power of democracy in pacifying relations between states (Maoz and Rosset, 1993:73). Mansfield and Snyder, 1995:14 and 2001:18) found that democratising states are more susceptible to internal violent conflict than autocratic regimes. The studies assert that erecting democratic institutions upon a shaky foundation may exacerbate ethnic tensions especially when certain ethnic groups are shut out of the political process. Thus, in states with precariously balanced ethnic cleavages, democratisation burdens a polity with considerable instability. The central argument here is that when democratic institutions are nascent or non-existent, the legitimate avenues for settling political and social dispute are oftentimes absent leading to frequent social conflicts.

Other studies centred on how diversionary use of force could generate social conflicts and mar democratic consolidation within a polity. On this account, Dassel and Reinhardt, (1999) posit that civil wars are initiated when the military responds forcefully to insurrection that arises from “contested political institutions.” The scholars argued that “In countries with consolidated political institutions, groups do not agree on which rules are authoritative. The military cannot resolve its disputes with other groups by following political rules because the losers will reject the outcome as illegitimate and seek redress through extra-institutional means.” Therefore, consolidated democracies are better able to respond to group demands through democratic political institutions that produce outcomes perceived as legitimate. Their results confirm their hypothesis that the existence of contested political institutions increases a state’s vulnerability to internal conflict and propensity to initiate aggression abroad. Political turmoil produced by contestation of political institutions incites military aggression, leading directly to internal strife. These findings have significant implications for civil war literature that examines how various political institutions affect a state’s vulnerability to civil conflicts. If the political institutions are not consolidated and popular discontent with political system exists, the contestation of political institutions leads to civil conflicts. Thus, highly democratic systems should be able to circumvent this development.

Similar studies explored the role of democratic political institutions in conflict management and how internal quiescence in democratic politics could generate palatable political outcomes in plural societies (Lijphardt, 1977 and Lijphardt, 1999). The central argument is that if certain ethnic groups are marginalized from the political process—either through the lack of essential political representation or unfair policy outcomes—their incentive to initiate violent rebellion increases (Reynal-Querol, 2002a and 2002b). Lijphardt (1999) has presciently warned that the bellicosity and adversarial nature of Westminster or majoritarian democratic system has the potential to inflame ethnic tensions and substantially increase the likelihood of social conflicts. He asserted in majoritarian systems, the stakes in periodic democratic elections are much higher because of intrinsic uneven proportionality of these systems. Consequently, because the thresholds to secure representations are so high in these systems, groups without sufficient popular support are excluded from the political process and oftentimes left without political representation (Lijphardt, 1977 and 1999). This leads to dictatorship of the majority as minority groups are systematically aged out of the political process. Reynal-Querol, (20002a) and (2002b) has aptly remarked that exclusion from the political process reduces the opportunity cost associated with rebellion.

He further argued that proportional representation (PR), systems are more inclusive and more permissive, thus removing the barriers to representation inherent in majoritarian system (Lijphardt, 1999). Lijphardt, (1999:33), suggests that deeply divided societies who adopt majoritarian system are susceptible to “...majority dictatorship and civil strife rather than democracy”. According to Lijphardt, (1999:33), plural societies “... need a democratic regime that emphasises consensus instead of

opposition, that includes rather than excludes, tries to minimize the size of the ruling majority instead of being satisfied with bare majority: consensus democracy”. Ethnically, linguistically, and religiously heterogeneous societies, then, must adopt a political system whose rules are designed to expand group representation rather than restrict it to avoid civil strife.

The second strand of this set of literature links the occurrence of violent social conflicts to military intervention in governance. Scholars of this orientation posit that military involvement in state governance increases the vulnerability to violent social conflict in the society. Supporting this viewpoint, (Agbaje and Ohonvbere, 2000) argue that the prolonged years of military rule contributed to the incessant violent conflicts witnessed in Nigeria today. According these scholars, the prolonged military rule in Nigeria led to the militarisation of the Nigeria society by successive military regimes and has resulted in the emergence of such armed groups such as the Bakasi Boys in the South-East, O’Odua Peoples’ Congress in South-West (OPC) and Arewa Peoples’ Congress (APC) in the North and the Egbesu Boys of Africa in the Niger Delta. These scholars contend that military dictatorship leads to increase in the circulation of weapons and citizens’ access to small arms and thereby entrenches and enthrones a culture of violence in the psyche of the citizens. This enhances the chances of citizens’ resort to aggressive behaviour even over matters that could ordinarily be resolved diplomatically.

The scholars further asserted that between 1993-1998, General Sani Abacha (a military ruler) heightened ethnic and regional tension in a bid to perpetuate himself in office, pitching state forces against opposition groups, and in the process igniting disputes that led to the formation of several self security groups (Agbaje, 2002). Ibrahim (2009), corroborated the above view point asserting that after independence in 1960, Nigeria underwent thirty years of military rule (1960-1979 and 1983-1999), during which the political and social values were deeply eroded and grossly undermined. Ibrahim further remarked that military regimes in Nigeria typically introduced culture of forceful seizure of political power, indefinite detention of politicians and activists, harassment and summary execution of opponents. These were accompanied with deliberate and strategic weakening by ruling powers of the political and socio-economic well being of Nigeria as a tool for domination and control as well as the use of “fear” and “divide and rule” tactics to keep Nigerian citizens from organising. Asobie (1999) remarked that the ruling military protected criminals as long as they served the government interest of retaining the power and created subservient cults of violence among businessmen, politicians, university administrators, traditional rulers, academics and young people (students, area boys, and militia groups) in further attempt to sustain their hegemony

Other scholars link the violent social conflicts in Nigeria to colonialism or neo-colonialism (Egwu, 2001; Oyovbaire, 1983:76 and Nnoli, 1978) defects in the structure of Nigeria federalism (Muhammad, 2007:10); problems and challenges posed by power sharing arrangement (Rustad, 2008); while (Ibeanu, n.d; Suberu, 2001 and Alaigwe, 2007) attribute it to the creation of more states.

### **Ethnic Identity Thesis**

This stream of literature links the likelihood of violent social conflict to diversities arising from ethnic differences among groups in the society (Collier, 2001b:17 and Renal-Quarol, 2002b). These scholars share the view that societies in which there is manifestation of artificially created psychological boundaries based on ethnicity are vulnerable to violent internal conflict than the homogenous ones. Emphasizing the potentiality of ethnic identity to generate conflict situations in society Collier, (2001b) argued that ethnic diversity induces the likelihood of violent conflicts in societies. According to this study, the existence of a dominant ethnic group doubles the risk of conflict. Renal-Quarol, (2002b), challenges Collier’s findings, her result indicates that multi-ethnicity is directly related to the outbreak of internal conflict.

Arguing in favour of this proposition, Osaghe and Suberu, (2005) asserted that disintegration, secession, civil strife, civil war, minority agitation and violent conflicts, all of which would normally be considered aberrant to normal state formation, are quite common threats or actual occurrence in

divided states like Nigeria. This claim is supported by the fact that both in competitive and non-competitive settings, Nigerians are more likely to define themselves in terms of their ethnic affinities than any other identity. Indeed, according to the authoritative survey carried out by Lewis and Bratton in 2000, on “Attitudes to Democracy and Markets in Nigeria”, ethnicity “is demonstrably the most conspicuous group identity in Nigeria” (Lewis and Bratton, 2000: 27). Thus, the survey found that almost one-half (48.2%) of Nigerians chose to label themselves with an ethnic (including linguistic and local-regional) identity, compared to almost one-third (28.4%) who opted for class identities, and 21.0 percent who chose a regional identity (Lewis and Bratton, 2000). In essence, close to two-thirds of the population see themselves as members of primordial ethnic, regional, and religious groups. In other word, “Nigerians tend to cluster more readily around the cultural solidarities of kin than the class solidarities of the workplaces” (Lewis and Bratton, 2000:25). What is more, “religious and ethnic identities are more fully formed, more holistic and more strongly felt than class identities” as evidenced in the fact that whereas those who identify with religious and ethnic communities are almost universally proud of their group identities... those who see themselves as members of a social class are somewhat more equivocal about their pride” (Lewis and Bratton, 2000: 26). All of this is not surprising, considering that ethnic formations are perhaps the most historically enduring behavioural units in the country, and were further reinforced by the colonial and post-colonial regimes.

### **Religious Identity Religion Thesis**

Ranking next to ethnicity is religious identity. In fact, in parts of the North commonly referred to as the ‘core’ or ‘Hausa-Fulani North – which is roughly coterminous with those states that adopted Sharia law in the Fourth Republic – religious identity is more critical than ethnic identity and in fact serves to activate ethnicity. Thus, among Nigeria’s “two largest ethnic groupings, the (southern) Yoruba were considerably more prone to define themselves ethnically... than were the (northern) Hausa-Fulani... who rather opted for a religious (Muslim) identity” (Lewis and Bratton, 2000:25). Religious identities in Nigeria are usually classified into three – Christian, Muslim and Traditional. Of the three, traditional religions is the least politically active; numbering several hundreds of ethnic groups and subgroups, villages, clans, kin groups; and, involving the worship of different gods and goddesses. However, in parts of the Kogi, Kwara, and Nassarawa States, masquerade activities associated with traditional religion have been a major source of conflicts. In effect, Christian and Muslim identities have been the mainstay of religious differentiation and conflict, with Nigeria Muslims much more likely to evince or articulate a religious identity than Christians (Lewis and Bratton, 2000). We have already referred to how this differentiation underlies the North-South cleavage (in terms of the North being predominantly Muslim and the South predominantly Christian), and sharpens ethnic cleavages in the North.

### **Economic Thesis**

This stream of literature attributes the occurrence of violent conflicts in the society to economic factor. Collier, (2001a) and Collier and Hoeffler, (1998) have done the most significant and persuasive research on the effect of economic causes on civil strife. Their vast research on the subject explores the effect of economic growth rates and economic inequality on the outbreak of civil violent conflict, how the existence of natural resources fuels internal conflict and the nexus between per capita income and civil war. In all, economic thesis contend that the propensity to indulge in violence is higher among low income and less educated people (Freeman, 1996).

Regarding extreme economic inequality as an antecedent to civil war, Collier and Hoeffler (2002) and Sen (19973) assert that state’s propensity for intra-state war is related to the degree of inequality in society. Envious of elite prosperity, citizens may attempt to overthrow the ruling government to achieve a more balanced distribution of wealth. Likewise, inter-group disputes-particularly where primordial tensions exist- may be exacerbated by inequitable concentrations of financial resources. This does suggest, however, that government expenditures to ease economic

inequalities may stifle the rumbling of rebellion. Collier and Hoeffler's analysis of economic inequality however overlooks the role of state action in ameliorating the widespread discontent caused by extreme inequalities. Concentrating only on income inequality distorts the "... deprivations that relate to other variables, such as unemployment, ill health, lack of education, and social exclusion" (Sen, 1999:108). Some scholars have also found empirical support for low levels of GDP per capita as a determinant of violent conflict, although, because of its high level of correlation with other socio-economic indicators, it is "the most difficult variable to interpret" (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002: 16).

Similarly Blomberg and Hess (2002) found that harsh economic conditions generated by economic recession are significant predictors of the manifestation of internal conflicts. Their discussion on the causes of this relationship in the intra-state context is largely devoid of compelling theoretical reasons for this linkage. Citing the diversionary use of force literature for explaining external aggression in times of economic recession, this may have little applicability in developing world where miserable economic conditions vitiate their capacity for force project. Similarly, if these states are non-democratic-as most are in the developing world-the diversionary use of force to deflect domestic criticism of microeconomic performance is illogical. That is if periodic elections are absent, why would autocrats be concerned about political accountability? A more convincing explanation for this relationship may lie in shrinkage of government resources available to public goods.

The second strand of the economic literature seeks to quantifiably test the effects that unmanageable debt service payments have on the incidence of intra-state conflict. Again, classical liberal theory provides a guidepost. Kant excoriates the contraction of debt in the conduct of external affair, finding objectionable the utilization of credit system to execute and sustain wars (1795 and 1970). By sapping the financial resources of state, unbearable debt obligations inevitably impinge upon the well-being of its citizens. Thus, Kant argues that, "the prohibition of this debt system must be laid down as preliminary article of perpetual peace, all the more necessarily because the final inevitable bankruptcy of state in question must involve the loss of many who are innocent, and this would be public injury to the state" (1995 and 1970).

Much of the literature on debt obligation is organised around debt sustainability concerns and the perpetuation of social and economic misfortune common in countries encumbered with exorbitant level of debt (Cheru, 2002; Poku, 2002). Cheru (2002), for instance, frames problem of excessive debt loads carried by developing countries around the inevitable evisceration of government social programmes, and the spread of disease pandemics such as AIDS. According to Cheru, the structural of adjustment policies levied by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on recipient countries "have worsened social Welfare in the areas of health, education and poverty reduction" (2002:302). Similarly, citing Peter Piot, director of UNAIDS, Poku writes, "... (the) structural adjustment raises particular problems for governments because most of the factors which fuel the AIDS pandemic are also those factors that seem to come into play in structural adjustment programmes" (2002:538).

Sen (1999:143) has argued vigorously in favour of a role for government to create social opportunities through far-reaching public policy initiatives. Particularly in developing countries, Sen asserts, "... the need for public policy initiatives in creating social opportunities is crucially important". Without opportunities to improve individual welfare, there exist substantial incentives to engage in or support armed rebellion to achieve a greater degree of social justice (Collier and Hoeffler, 1999:213).

Addison and Murshed (2003) posit that debt forgiveness for the poorest countries is an important step in reducing the outbreak of internal conflicts. According to the authors, disillusionment and disaffection spread throughout the population of a state whose debt servicing obligations preclude it from providing basic services to its citizens. Similarly, because potential rebel groups harbour "grievances" against the central government that may be exacerbated by reductions or cessations of public spending, debt relief may permit the government to "... offer-through broad-based public spending to redress grievances and thereby achieve complete peace, or at least lower the level of fighting" (Addison and Murshed, 2003:5). Thus, the opportunity costs for initiating an insurgency are

inversely related to public expenditures; that is, if the grievances of rebels can be assuaged through increased fiscal transfers, they are less likely to resort to armed conflict.

Unmanageable debt obligations, however, adversely affect a government's capacity to accomplish this goal. Contextual information supporting this supposition is ample. Re-distributive policies are notoriously contentious in Nigeria for instance, where ethnic cleavages, which are institutionalised through the formation of ethnically determined federal states, are aggravated by the process of fiscal allocation (Suberu, 2001).

Garland (2004), argues that there could be an interaction effect between ethnic heterogeneity and debt-service obligations. If governments are bombarded with number of groups clamouring for increased autonomy or larger slice of resource pie, however GDP per capita and excessive debt obligation may reduce the government's ability to evenly allocate public expenditures to the satisfaction of the different groups. For instance, the enormous debt burdens afflicting the African continent, compounded by the crosscutting ethnic divisions formalised through arbitrary drawn borders may inflame tensions. Thus, ethnic heterogeneity may only be operative for explaining the outbreak of civil war in states incapable of equitably ensuring social welfare.

### **Geographical/Territorial Thesis**

This stream of literature perceives conflict as a geo-political matter resulting from incessant natural struggle for expansion and control over geographical territory by political units (see, Prescott, 1965; Tagil, et' al; 1977; Holdich, 1916 and Boggs, 1940). The first proposition of these scholars is that at the root of every conflict lies the issue of territorial boundary which defines the extent of control that inheres in each community. According to Prescott (1965:31), in the general term boundary conflict consists of four different types of disputes between political units having some measures of autonomy, for it must be recognised that disputes occur over the whole range of international, extra-national, federal and intra-national.

Early writers on this theory explained boundary disputes in terms of the military power of states, in the context of international relations. For them, it was a geo-political matter. Following this viewpoints, writers like Ratzel and Haushofer, regarded as the founders of geo-politics, argue that the state is akin to a living organism, its boundaries representing its skin. Like all living organisms, it is in the nature of states to grow and expand (Tagil, et' al; 19977). As such boundaries are not rigid. They only express the strength of states. Therefore, they are in a constant state of flux. Therefore as the strength of a state increases, so does its need for "good" boundaries. The argument here is that a dynamic state is naturally entitled to organic boundaries, that is, boundaries corresponding to its geo-political structure. As such it has the right to claim territory if it has the capacity to exploit it and if the pressing state lacks such capacity.

This geo-political conception of boundary question, especially the general idea of the power of states, has remained the dominant explanation for boundary conflicts among liberal political scientists. It can be found variously expressed in Holdick (1916:211), Spykman and Rollins, (1939), and the works of many power theorists in international relations. The implication of these ideas is that boundary conflicts are natural. They are the part of the very nature of states, which is expansionist, conditioned only by their relative strength in relation to one another. Thus Spykman and Rollins refer to states as "power struggle organisations" which have an inherent tendency to expand. On a general basis, these observers argue that boundary conflicts mirror power struggles among states. These struggles could be political, economic, or military. According to Prescott, sudden changes in the power of states in the international environment results in the proliferation of territorial claims. This is because states rarely choose to negotiate from a position of Weakness (1965:114). That is why the international environment is replete with such claims at the conclusion of major wars or serious systematic changes.

### Theoretical Framework

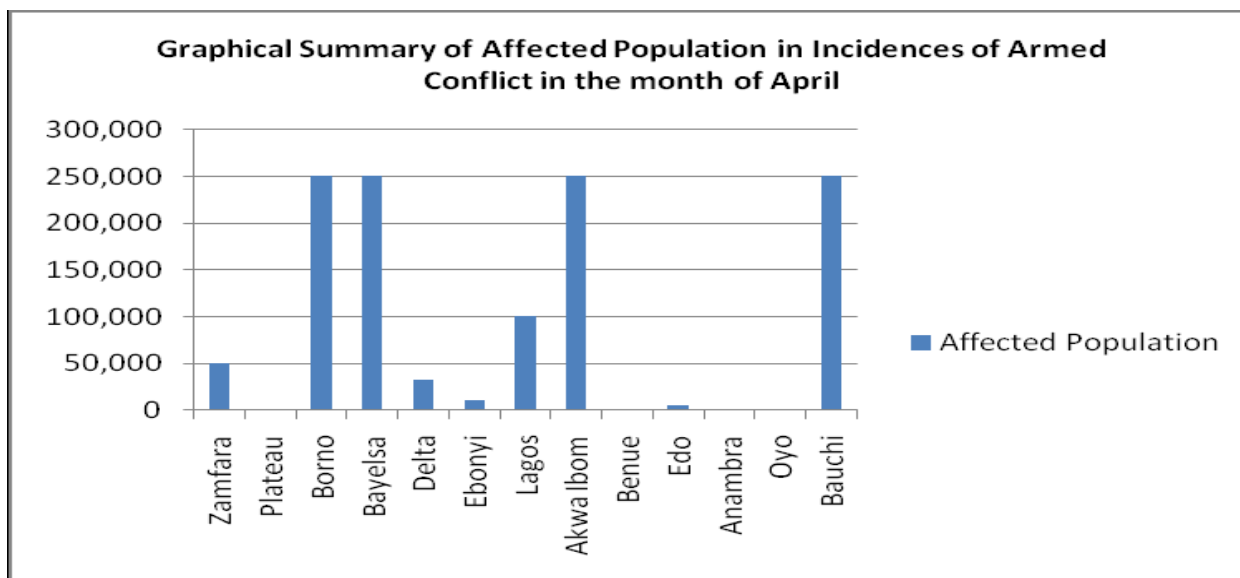
The theoretical framework that anchors this study is the fragile state theory. This theory is associated with Scholars such as; Naude et al (2011) Mwangi (2010) and Starr (2009). The central assumption of the fragile state theory is that prolonged instability/crisis in any state structure or institution of the society that arises from ethnic differences, consistent manipulation of state resources by power wielders, undemocratic regime or social policy failure, if unabated, can predispose the state to a volatile situation that creates avenue for further manipulation of those weakness by internal and external forces. In other words, understanding state fragility means understanding when weakness exist unabated in a state institution or essential structures of the society.

The theory further asserts that when a state fails to demonstrate structural capacity to adapt and manage perceived socio-political crisis in any vital state organ/area, or fails to reasonably demonstrate legitimacy, monopoly of use of power and institutionalize law and order for the harmonious existence of its units, it becomes vulnerable to escalators of major conflict who would take advantage of the situation for political and economic gains. This scenario does not only disrupt socio-political order but gives opportunity to conflict entrepreneurs to establish their beehive in such state or region given the seemingly absence of law and order and state’s inability to control its areas, citizens and resources. This theory is aptly for study because it not exposed the internal and external conditions that gave impetus to the rise of social conflicts in Nigeria, but the underlying factors that sustained and facilitated the spread of insecurity across the Nigeria state which is the major trust of this study.

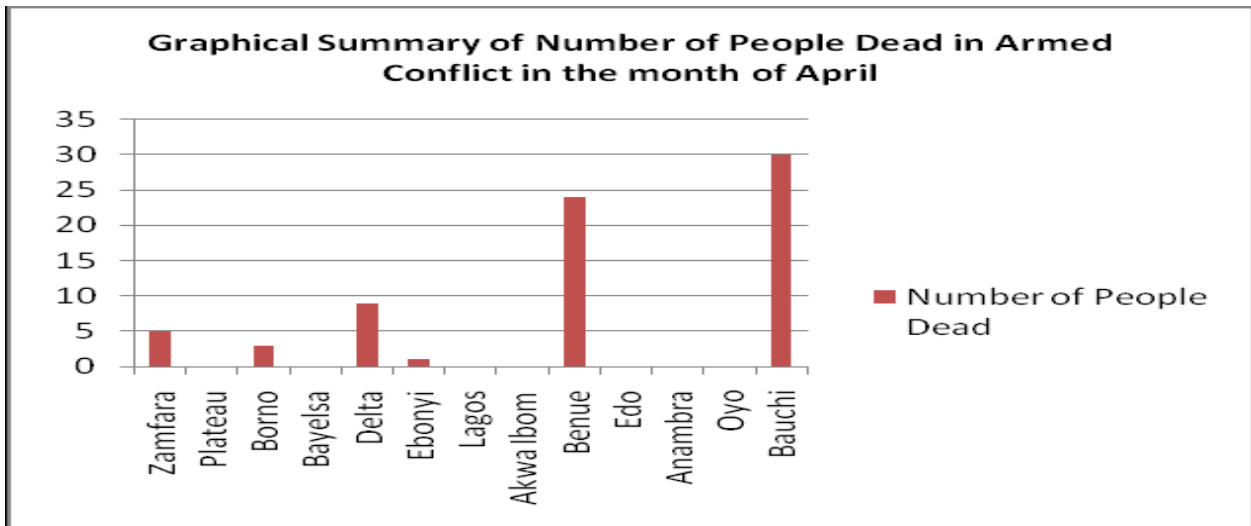
### 3. Methodology

The study adopted qualitative method in carrying out its investigation. The data employed for the study were gathered from secondary sources. As such, data used for this study were collected from public libraries as well as private libraries of a number of colleagues and associates within and outside the country. Besides, the study also made use of internet materials wherein relevant articles were carefully gathered. The study utilized content analytical techniques for the analysis of data. As such the information employed for analysis in the study were carefully extracted from logical chains of evidence presented in journal papers, conference papers, periodic papers, edited books, documentary materials among others. The presentation and interpretations of data were carried out with the use of bar charts and simple percentage respectively.

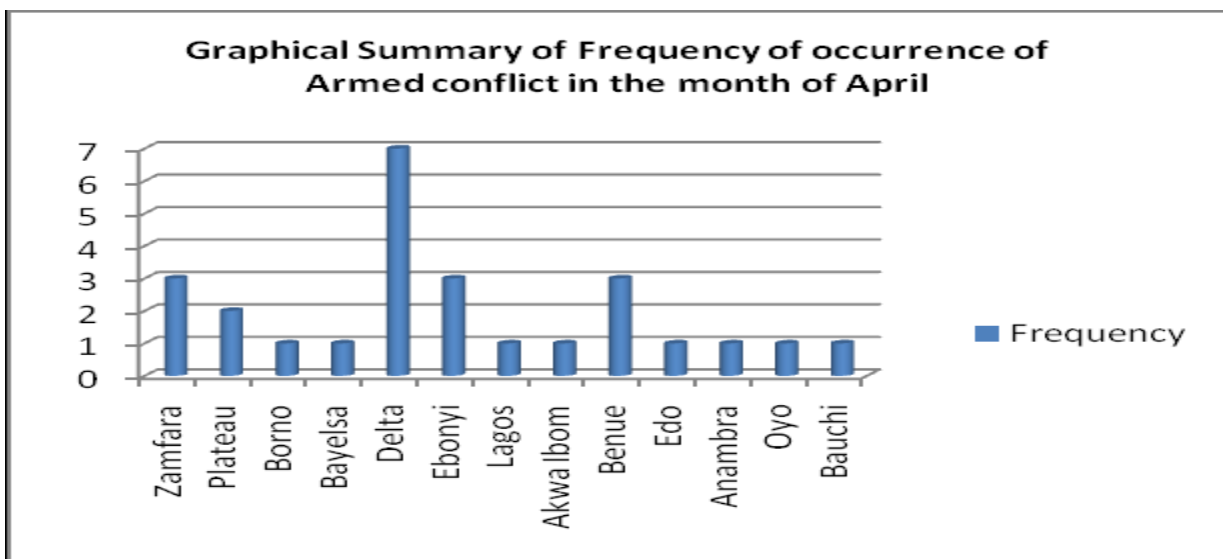
Graphic Summary of Manifestations Social conflicts and Insecurity in Nigeria



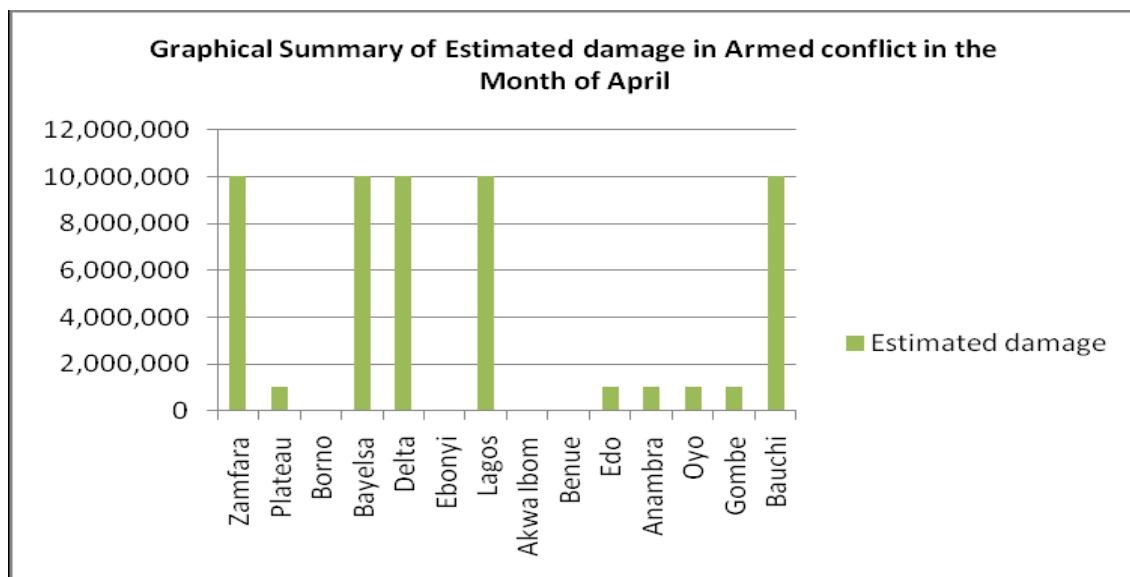




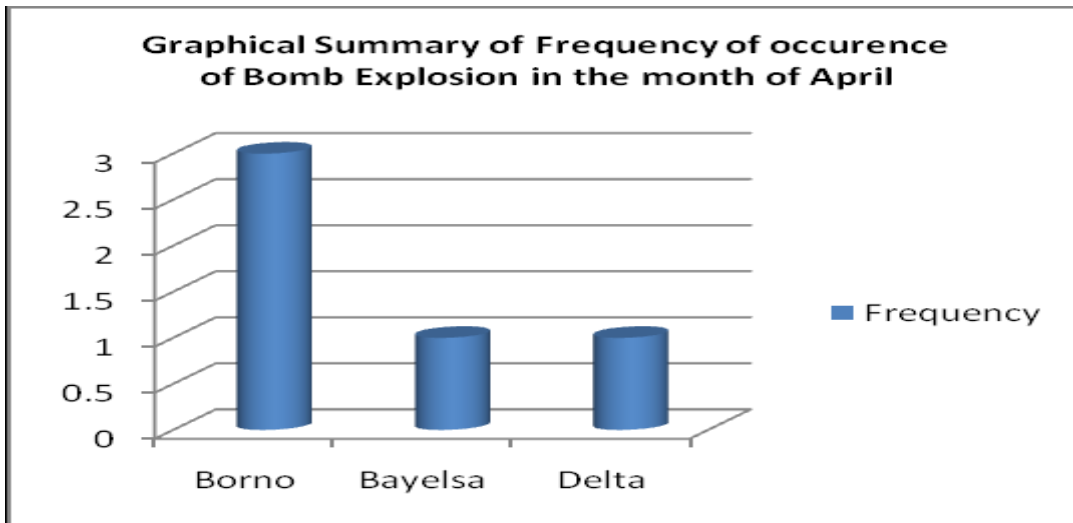
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.



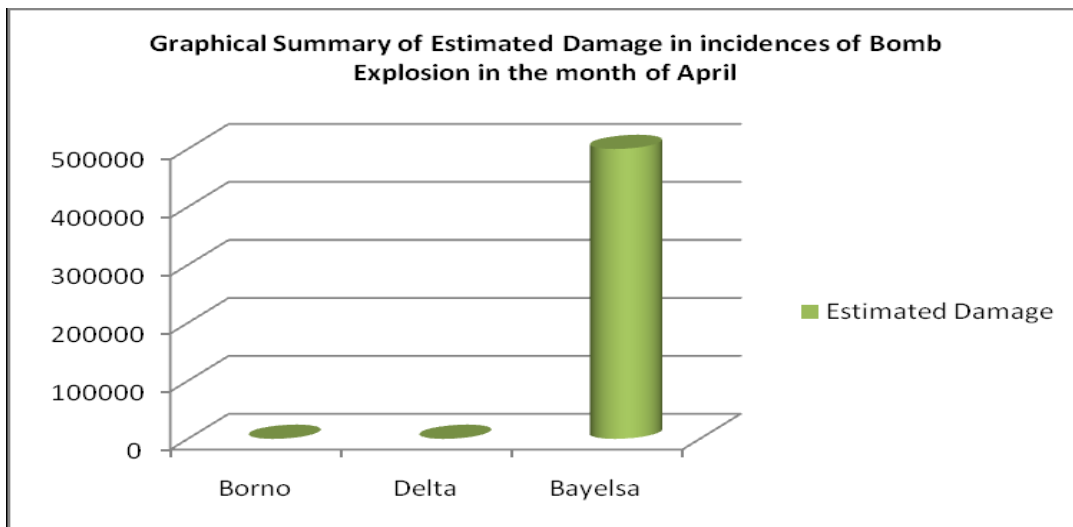
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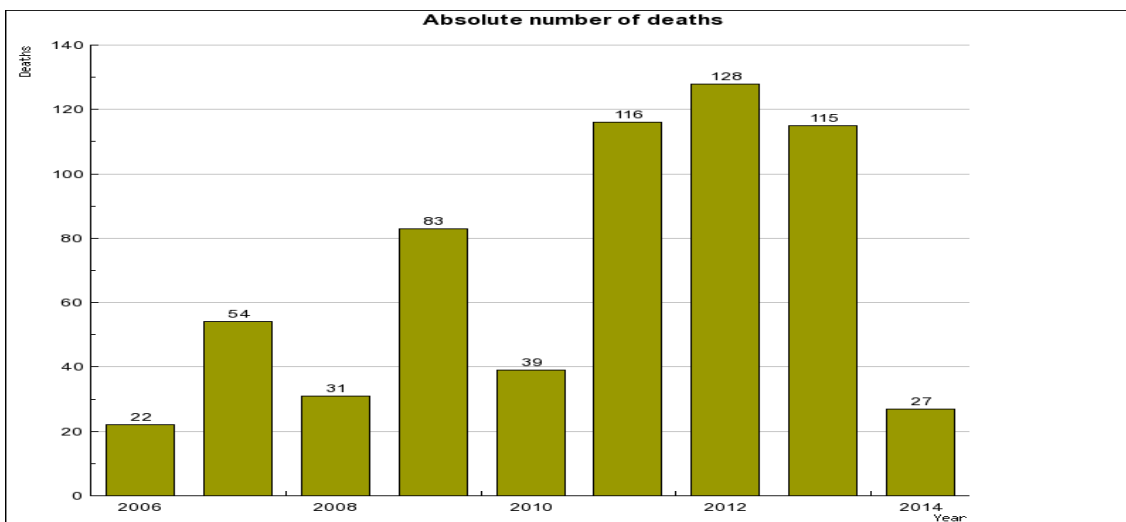


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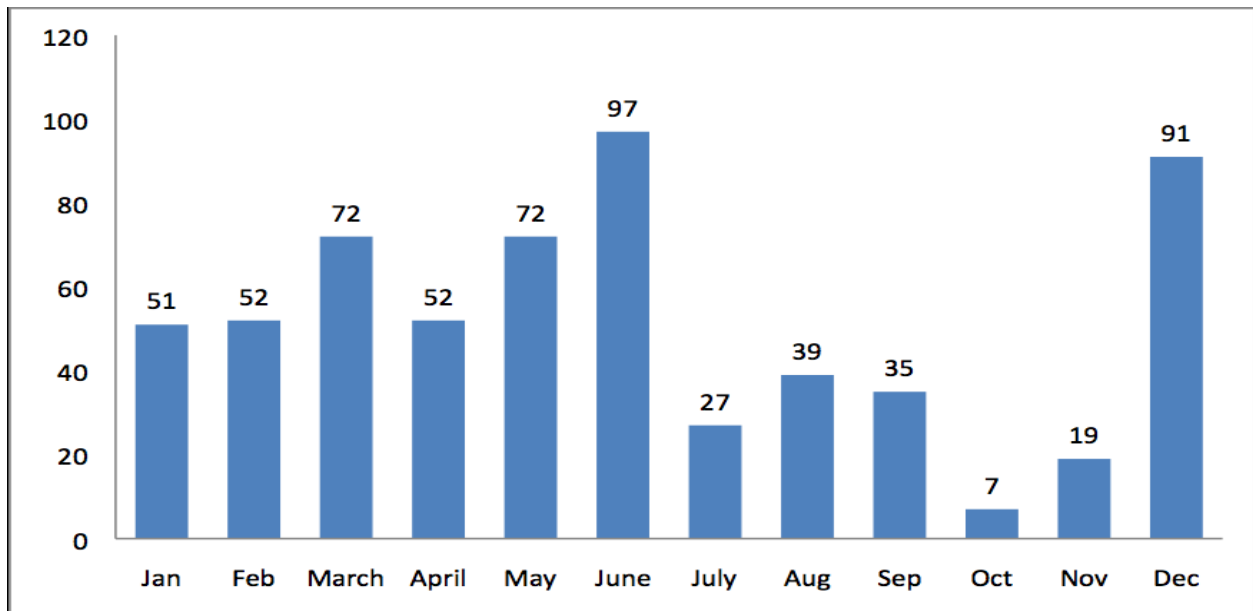
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.

**Figure 2:** Violent deaths in Nigeria caused by cattle grazing, per year (June 2006–May 2014)



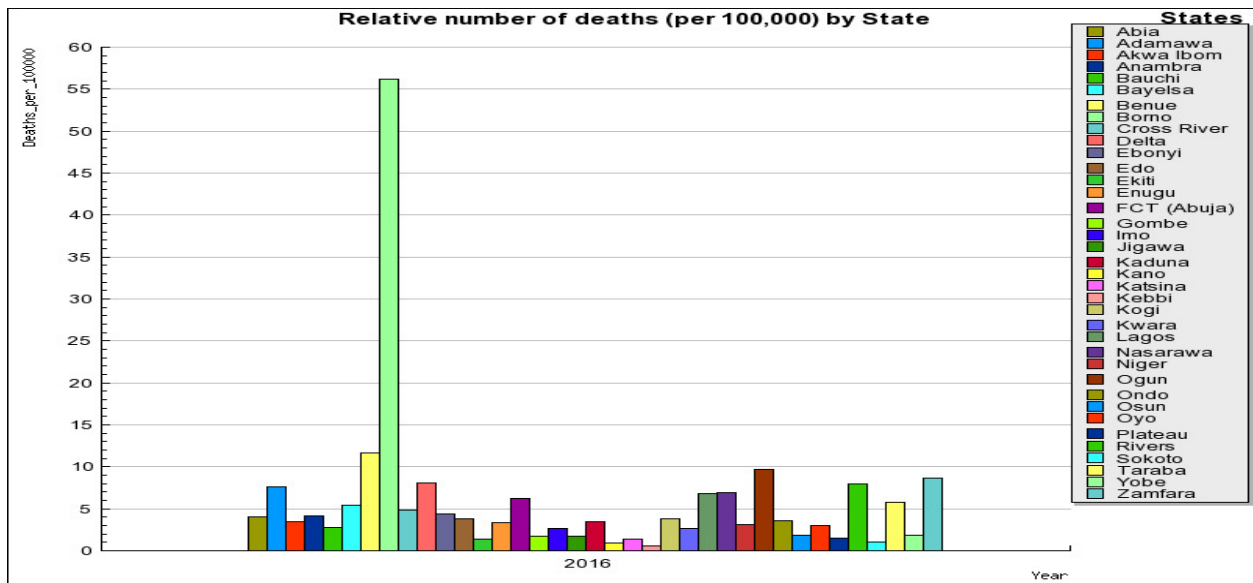
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.

**Figure 6** Violent deaths in Nigeria caused by cattle grazing, cumulative figures per month (June 2006–May 2014)



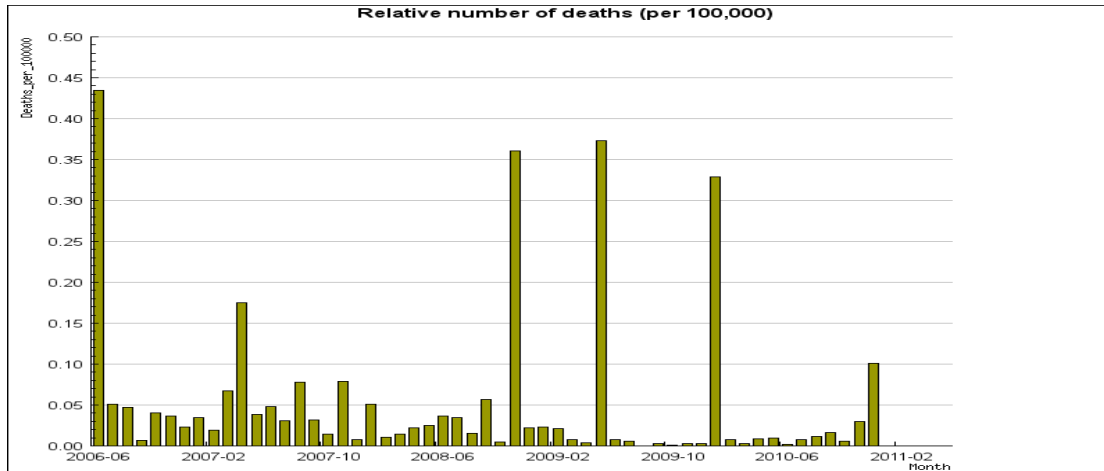
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.

**Figure 2:** Fatality figures of people that died in violent conflicts related cases in Nigeria per state in 2016



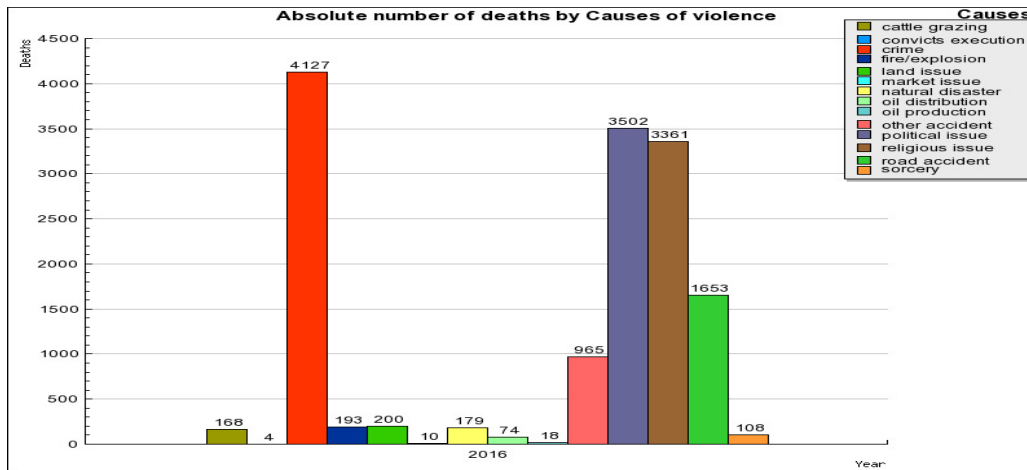
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.

**Figure 6:** Political violence according to the relative number of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (2006-2011)



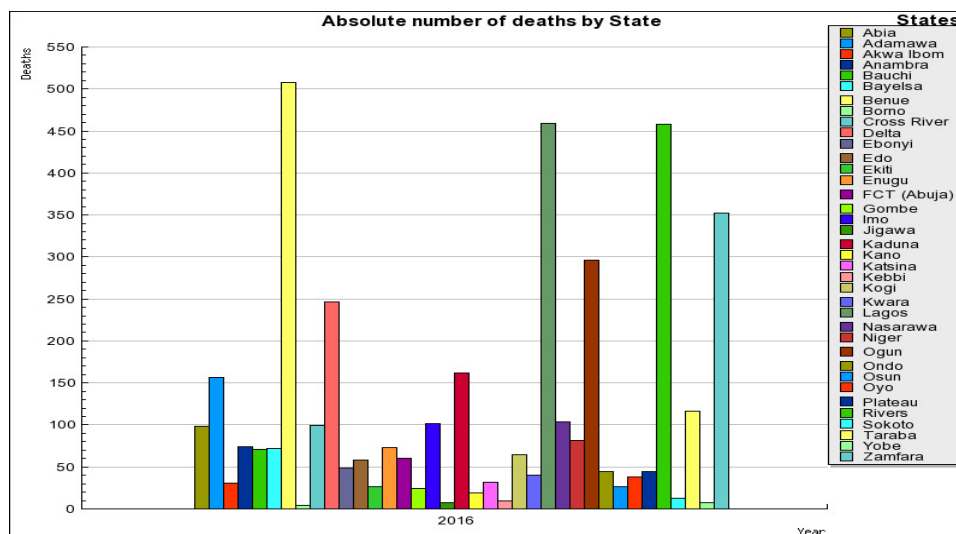
Source: Nigeria Watch 2016.

**Figure 4:** Number of fatalities related to different causes of violence in 2016



Source: Nigeria Watch 2016

**Figure 5:** Crime fatalities per state in 2016



Source: Nigeria Watch 2016

## **Social Conflicts and Security in Nigerian State**

The data above reveal that Nigerian state is engulfed by perilous social conflicts that have exposed the country to all sorts of security challenges since the recent times. Most of these social conflicts are rooted in the historic experiences and nature of the Nigerian state. It will be recalled that shortly after independence in 1960, Nigeria was immersed in political conflicts ranging from the census controversy of 1962, the western election violence, and subsequent military coups. The inability of the elite to manage the conflict culminated into thirty months civil war, 1967-1970. It is gratifying to note that the civil war was caused by complex webs of political, economic and ethnic factors, some of which are inherited from the colonial period (Ikejiani, 2009). The aftermath of civil war introduced a culture of violence behaviour in the psych of Nigerians leading to new security challenges which hitherto were alien to Nigeria state. It is an open secret that immediately after the civil all sorts social vices increased such as armed robbery, inter/intra ethnic violence clashes, religious violence and political hooliganism became the order of the day rather than exceptions.

It is pertinent to note that as the Civil War ended in 1970, the intermittent military and civilian rules within the period were unable to address the conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria as religious riots mostly in the northern part continued to plague the polity. This does not come with consternation because Nigeria jumped the evolutionary trend of transition from nations-state to maturity. Although this study does not solely accuse or blame all the problems of Nigeria on colonialism or diverse ethnic background as other states with similar historical backgrounds are doing better economically and politically today but the fact remains that Nigeria has not do well when compared with other countries that got their independence the same period.

The local, national and international forces have contributed or even combined in some circumstances, to fuel nearly every conflict in Nigeria. It will be recalled that sometime in the past religious riots that took place consumed many lives in the northern Nigeria on the ground that Prophet Mohammed was cartooned in Denmark. Often, individual causes intertwine and, when combined they exacerbate and further intensify conflict as either ethnic, religious, political, economic or even natural resources related. It is instructive to note that these factors combine in greater magnitude to reinforce social and insecurity in the contemporary Nigeria.

At the dawn of democracy in 1999, it was greeted with fanfare that the finally hope and political stability have arrived in the country. It was never imagined that Nigeria was going to witness much centripetal and centrifugal forces than ever in the annals of its history. First was the emergence of militancy in the Niger Delta. Even though it somehow began in the 1990s following the killing of Ken Wiwa, an environmentalist, the trend assumed more worrisome dimensions after inauguration of the civil rule in 1999. The ugly posture emerged on the horizon with other social movements and militant groups that began to challenge the Nigerian state, and the policies, attitudes, and the activities of the Transnational Oil Companies (TNC). This led to the assemblage and formation of different militia groups such as The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), Niger Delta Vigilante Group (NDVG) to mention but a few. The combined forces of militancy and attacks on oil installations and facilities had succeeded in stagnating oil production which brought the country to her knees until the policy of amnesty was applied in 2009 by Nigeria government.

Currently, the emergence of the red scorpion and the Avengers in the Niger Delta is on the rampage posing serious national security challenges. While the Avengers are on the prowl, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra in the southeast rose up and reawakened the struggle for independence state of Biafra in the southeast, thereby heightened the insecurity in the region. The developments have led to loss of lives and property worth millions of naira in the regions and all efforts made by government to address the matter are yet yield the desired results.

Furthermore, the worsening state of insecurity in the northeast has claimed a lot of lives, stagnated development and destroyed the economy of the area. In the wake of 2009, the dreaded Boko Haram insurgency emerged on the Nigeria political scene, with view to instituting a religious Islamic

state. It should be noted that Boko Haram is not the first Islamic fundamentalist sect in Nigeria to adopt violence as a weapon of operation. In the 1970s and early 1980s, one Mohammed Marwa, that was widely acknowledged as dangerous to peace and stability of the nation formed the sect that was known as Maitatsine. He instigated riots in the northern part of country which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. This explains why some pundits view Boko Haram as an extension of the Maitatsine riots (Johnson 2011). Whether viewed as the extension of the former Maitatsine or not, the activities of the Boko Haram sect have wrecked untold havoc on the Nigerian state.

Since 2009 when the leader allegedly died in the hands of the security agents and forces, more violent attacks have been witnessed on regular basis in churches, mosques, security establishments and media organisations with huge human casualty that present the government as helpless, vulnerable and incapable of handling the insurgency. No doubt many lives and property have been lost as a result of the Boko Haram attacks in northern Nigeria. Despite the claim by the Nigerian government presently led by Muhammad Buhari that the Boko Haram insurgents has been degraded and decimated by its counter insurgency operations, the recent cases of renewed attacks orchestrated by the sect across the states of the northeast point to the fact that such claim is far from the truth. Obviously, the Nigerian state has not been able to bring the attacks of the Boko Haram insurgents to its end, despite the huge human and material resources committed to winning the war.

While the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents continue to threaten the security of the Nigerian state, the herdsmen/farmers clashes have thrown up another challenge to the security forces. Many cities and communities have been razed down by fire and deadly weapons courtesy of the herdsmen. This has been witnessed in Nasarawa, Benue, Plateau Ekiti, Delta, Ekiti, Ogun, Imo, Enugu states among others. It is in the opinion of this study that Nigeria is presently predicated on parlous foundation and driven precipitously to the brink of abyss as a result of insecurity. The prediction of the US that Nigeria would break last year 2015 cannot be dispensed forthwith in the present state of insecurity and nation building challenges. Despite the need to critically address the national questions that brought the nation to these sorry states of affairs, our ruling elites have decided to burial their heads in passivity and indifference while the country drifts to oblivion. This development has portrayed the country as vulnerable to insecurity and safe heavens for all sorts of crimes. This goes to corroborate the view of Batware (2012) that African states, including Nigeria are known to have become conflict prone since the end of the cold war.

The nature of conflicts and other socio-political challenges have made scholars of diverse intellectual persuasions to described African states as failed states, while others locate African states on the foci of fragile states. However, a painstaking examination will certainly locate and situate states in Africa as to be either fragile or failed. Multidimensional social conflicts in any state stand as the major indexes of measuring its strength and viability. Wars, conflict, crises, poverty, and political instability mark the hallmarks of fragile or failed states, reliance on black market, outbreak of various epidemics, electoral instability, and refugee flow (Ifesinachi, 2011). The above situations have continued to reproduce and reinforce itself in Nigerian state confirming the thesis that African states are fragile. State fragility is determined by country specific weakness in authority, legitimacy and capacity (David, 2008). Where is Nigeria in the context of state fragility? The response is in the affirmative given the data presented in figures above. These situations are likely to prevail and persist in Nigerian state because of bad leadership, weak institutions, lack of internal cohesion and capacity to manage its resources. This assertion further reaffirms the validity and aptness of the central thesis of the fragile state theory that prolonged instability/crisis in any state structure or institution of the society that arises from ethnic differences, consistent manipulation of state resources by power wielders, undemocratic regime or social policy failure, if unabated, can predispose the state to a volatile situation that creates avenue for further manipulation of those weakness by internal and external forces.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Nigeria today is currently contending with myriads of security challenges, which include the Boko Haram insurgency, militancy in the Niger Delta, resuscitated secessionist movement in the southeast, menace of herdsmen/farmers conflicts across the country, armed robbery, kidnapping, hate speeches among others. In the presence of all these ugly trends, it is difficult to determine the direction that the country is taking. In this vein Nigerians cannot be sure of what will happen tomorrow because of the insecurity prevailing in the country. It is in the opinion of this study that institutional weakness, structural imbalances in our federalism, marginalization, victimisation, political ineptitude and their attendant social ills, have combined to fuel conflict situations and insecurity in Nigeria.

The violent conflicts and secessionists threats in Nigeria are ultimately the fallout of frustration faced by some sections of the country. The financial profligacy occasioned by inept leadership has inflicted mass poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. Worse still, institutional decay and corruption especially among the top officials of government have rendered the government incapable of tackle the security challenges. This is made manifest in the Dasuki armed deal saga, where money meant for the purchase of arms to fight Boko Haram insurgency was embezzled by top brass politicians in the country. Obviously, there is insecurity across the federation, and this calls for a drastic action on the side of government to tackle and resolve the matter. In this regard the study recommends for total overhauling of the security and strengthening of the democratic institutions to checkmate or curb the state of insecurity in the country. It also recommends for power sharing, devolution of powers and restructuring of Nigerian federalism to pave way for true federalism that would accommodate the yearnings, aspirations and interests of the federating units.

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