

## **Insurgents To The Rescue: How Non-State Actors Fill The Gap In Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Since the birth of the Fourth Republic, Nigeria has witnessed quantum leaps in the activities of insurgent organizations across her landscape. The failure of the political class to run an all-inclusive administration and to meet the basic needs of the citizens has created a huge vacuum to be filled by violent non state actors. These groups operate as alternative government in most of their domains where they provide amenities, security and some modicum of social justice. This work, driven by interdisciplinary methodology seeks to interrogate the root causes, features and manifestation of insurgent takeover of state responsibilities in some parts of Nigeria. The paper which reveals that inept leadership, wanton corruption, abuse of the social justice system and inequality were largely responsible for the spiralling outbreak of violent conflicts in Nigeria recommends that government should take the welfare of her citizens seriously so as to put a halt to her diminishing influence and reassert control over her land and people.

**Keywords:** Insurgency, Political class, Corruption, Social welfare, Non-state actors.



If one carefully analyses the formation and the composition of the Boko Haram sect- its followership and leadership-the picture that emerges is quite scary; all the ingredients of a social anomie are present in substantial quantity. Many years of neglect, when we allowed children, under the Almajiri system, to wander afar from homes without elementary parental care or guidance, have finally caught up with us as a nation (Isiaku, 2012:31).

### **Introduction**

Nigeria is at the moment inundated with the activities of violent non state actors desirous of altering the existing political landscape. The Nigerian predicament is akin to the situation in several developing countries where inability of states to cater for the needs of their citizens has opened avenues for violent non state actors to access the support of the masses. It is apparent that since the end of the Cold War, most of the theatre of proxy wars reclined, thus given rise to the emergence of new theatres of violent conflicts occasioned by the failure of some states to handle simmering agitations for resource control, religious freedoms, political participations, critical infrastructures and social amenities. For instance, at the formative stage of Boko Haram insurgent group, between 2002 and 2009 many indigent families and jobless youths from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon enlisted in a Koranic training center established by the founder of the sect, Mohammed Yusuf. This enclave was used for ideological propagation and indoctrination. The adherents were tutored to view the state and the political elites that presides over it as the major architect of the socio-political emasculation of the masses.

The sect also introduced welfare programmes tailored towards alleviating the condition of the impoverished members of the society. Boko Haram populism and rhetoric quite resonated with the down trodden who came to view the sect as their bulwark against the mindless exploitation of the rich and political elites (Hansen & Musa, 2013). It is on record that Mohammed Yusuf in his attempt to match up rhetoric with performance bought cars, buses and motorcycles for his followers especially those without sources of livelihood. It was these palliative ventures which became a means of financial empowerment for members of the sects and which also yielded daily returns to the group's purse that pulled the armies of unemployed youths to Mohammed Yusuf (Bello, 2013)

Since the birth of Nigeria's Fourth Republic, apart from Boko Haram, several other insurgent organizations have also emerged, some of which are splintered groups and offshoots of Boko Haram such as Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru) and the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). While most of these groups operate along the borders and hinterland of northern Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) have their operational bases in the Eastern part of the country and the south-south region. The majority of these

insurgent organizations have toed the path of Boko Haram in exploiting the inability of the government to meet up with her social contract to the citizens. It is pertinent to state that in approximately two decades of full-blown insurgent activities in the country, not much has been done in terms of effective counter insurgency (COIN) measures to win the peoples heart and their mind, hence insurgent groups continue to present themselves as alternative regimes.

The paper's cardinal goal is to interrogate how insurgents in Nigeria, over the years took advantage of the lethargic disposition of government in fulfilling her social contract to the citizens to render "messianic" or benevolence functions in some parts of the country. The study is also imperative given the profound observation by Allswell Osini Musan that the dynamics of the turbulence in Nigeria has given vent to policy choices and critical actions which will determine whether Nigeria can survive as a state or fail and splinter into fledgling micro-mini states (Allswell, 2014). Thus this study copiously offers useful recommendations to nip in the bud the factors that make rooms for the proliferation of insurgencies in some parts of the country.

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **Conflict:**

The word conflict is derived from the Latin word *confictus*, which translates to mean collision or clash. Conflict as a concept is not easy to decipher, because it happens in diverse and variegated settings. However, it means to be in opposition and disagreement which is inevitable in human relations. Larfela (1988) aligned with this position by defining conflict as "Part of the competition process that is basic to the survival and successful evolution of the species, homo-sapiens, and to his search for new and better ways to cope with limited resources and stress from environmental change". According to this definition, it is obvious that conflict is an inevitable outcome of human interaction. The essence of conflict seems to be disagreement, contradiction, or incompatibility. Thus, conflict refers to any situation in which there are incompatible goals, cognitions, or emotions within or between individuals or groups that lead to opposition or antagonistic interaction.

Conventionally, conflict is perceived to emanate from opposing interests over access to or allocation of scarce resources, often as a result of divergence goals and aspiration (Mack & Snyder, 1957; Pondy, 1967; Schmidt and Kochan, 1972). It is pertinent to note that most of the conflicts in the developing world tend to align with this view. According to Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (HIIK, 2005) conflict represents a clash of interests on national values between at least two parties that are determined to pursue their interests and win their cases. These views presuppose that conflict is an antagonistic competition amongst divergent entities and testify to the fact that most weak and collapsed states suffered as a result of the burden of conflict (Heinz-Jürgen, Milososki & Schwarz, 2006)

In politics, conflict is more overtly defined as existing when two or more groups are engrossed in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the rivals are to counteract, injure or eliminate the competitors (Jeong, 2000). Conflict stems from contestation between distinct or similar political groups which often ends in political violence. The ensuing political violence when contextualized in the Weberian sense, according to Anifowose, (1982), is an acceptable weapon to ventilate anger.

It is pertinent to argue here that not all conflict ends in violence or hostility. Conflict may simply mean a different perception' or view to an issue or situation (Barash & Webel, 2002). It could also mean a different interpretation of a motive, or a different world-view such as religions, customs, cosmologies or values. Differences in perceptions, orientations and world views may never result in violent confrontations. However, conflict may as well mean hostility or violent confrontation (Jeong, 2000). Conflict takes this dimension when goals and perception are incompatible, thereby building a crescendo that makes open physical confrontations inevitable.

However, conflict does not always mean war. While it is obvious that all wars are a state of conflict, not all conflict situations are wars. The difference lies in the fact that war is a state of reciprocally declared hostility between two or more groups prosecuted by conventional soldiers, with the knowledge and observation of a third (neutral) party who sees to it that acts are within the rules of engagement (Waltz, 2007). Any situation outside of this context cannot be the same thing as war, hence, while the conflict in Mali is a state of war, the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo is not war but conflict. The M23 in DRC as a rebel group does not have legal status to declare war. It is only a non-conventional military group that illegally seeks to overthrow a legitimate regime. It is against this background that the series of violence and armed conflicts going on in Nigeria between the state security apparatus and insurgent organizations such as Boko Haram, ISWAP and IPOB are viewed as acts of insurgency and terrorism. Conflict is thus related to but technically different from war. While conflict is a general description of a state of chaos, including that of war situations war in specific term is a legally declared course of action by constitutionally recognized groups.

From the above perspectives on conflict, it is clear that conflict is part of human nature and could be at inter-states or intra-state levels. It is important to note that there are two sides to conflict; the positive and negative sides. For instance, the positive view of conflict persists in former colonial territories where wars served as the instrument of transition from colonial rule to independence. However, after independence, this principle has not proved beneficial to most African countries; rather it has compounded their problems. Thus, for most African states, conflict is a double-edged sword; a means to independence, but at post- independence, conflict escalated into civil wars, insurgencies and terrorism, with all of these having devastating effects on many African countries.

**Insurgency:**

Insurgency is an organized, long-drawn-out political and military struggle carried out by an organized armed movement to fatally “weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control (The U.S. Department of the Army, 2007). According to O’Neill (1990), insurgency is a conflict between non-ruling groups and ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group deliberately uses political resources, e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics (O’Neil, 1990). In essence, insurgency is an organized violent rebellion or assault that is aimed at overthrowing a ruling government or regime. The cardinal aim of insurgent organization is to take control of the local population which undoubtedly is one of the most important determinant factors for victory between an established state authority and a non-state actor that employs an irregular modus operandi. The primary objective in this type of nonconventional warfare is essentially the acquisition of political control and legitimacy.

It is important to note that through the instrument of ideological and social manipulation of the people via the mass media, the insurgent organization ultimately seeks to transfer political power from the government to itself (Neumann and Smith, 2008). Insurgent activities, therefore, may include violence, but are likely to involve a wider platform of ideological and social activism as well. It is in this guise that certain insurgent groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP carried out welfare programmes in their operational bases and also set up mechanism to enforce an Islamic code of justice in the settlement of interpersonal conflicts, International Crisis Group (2019). They pursued these courses ostensibly to blackmail the government in order to win the hearts of the masses. It is obvious, that without popular backing of the masses, insurgency cannot achieve the broad scope that revolution or civil war can achieve, but it can continue to operate for long periods of time, especially if it receives assistance from foreign powers to complement a relative shortage of internal resources.

While it is a fact that no insurgency can achieve momentous progress without popular internal support, the significant role of external aid and funding is also very crucial. Without foreign support, insurgencies cannot endure for too long. It is on this note that O’Neill (1990), observed that “unless governments are utterly incompetent, devoid of political will, and lacking resources, insurgent organisations normally must obtain outside assistance if they are to succeed.” The scenario painted by O’Neil (1990) tacitly explains the intractable armed conflict in North Eastern Nigeria since 2009. The relentless onslaught of Boko Haram and ISWAP against the Nigerian state in their campaign to establish Islamic Caliphate in their various spheres of influence has been sustained through the support of other international terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS who supplied those funds, armaments, logistic support and training on how to prosecute asymmetric warfare, European Parliament (2021).

**Theoretical framework:**

Gurr (1970), explains the theory of relative deprivation as the difference between what people think they deserve, and that which they essentially think can get. Simply put, the theory contends that the prospect for collective violence differs strongly with the magnitude and scope of relative deprivation among members of a collectivity. The cardinal assumption here is that humans have rudimentary needs which they strive to accomplish, and the repudiation or frustration of these needs by other groups or collection of individuals could upset them immediately or later, thus, leading to crisis (Rosati *et al* 1990). In other words, if there is a substantial divergence between what they think they deserve and what they think they will eventually have, there is a tendency for agitation. According to Gurr (1970), just as frustration gives rise to violent behaviour on the part of an individual, so, too, does relative deprivation produce collective aggression by social groups. This collective violence can manifest in diverse degrees including collaborating with deviants and criminal elements to compromise state security or undermine efforts geared toward counterterrorism.

Galtung (1964) believed that those individuals who find themselves in a state of disequilibrium along various economic and socio-political status dimensions are most likely to be provoked and manifesting aggressive behaviours. It should also be noted that there are a number of other factors and variables that can inspire the use of violence as well. For example, the culture, the nature of economic relationships in the society, and the political environment. Burton (1979) established a relationship between frustration which pushes humans into acts of hostility and the need on the part of such individuals to gratify their basic essential needs. To him, people cannot be understood to condone practices and regimes that thwart their identity and other aspirations that are associated to their desires and because of this, they are constrained to react against the factors, groups and institutions that they see as being responsible for hampering such needs. On the other hand, individuals will embrace any group or institution no matter how sinister, which tends to improve their lot and satisfy their basic needs of shelter, food, protection, social justice, etc.

There is no hiding the fact that frustration produces aggressive behaviour on the part of an individual, so does relative deprivation predict collective violence by social groups. Terlunmun *et al* (2020), contend that a nation with legacies of economic quagmire, high unemployment rate and uneven economic development is a good ground on which terrorist seed can grow and flourish. Acute poverty and economic displacement of livelihoods have severely limited the options of vast majority of young Nigerians in the northern region. Persistent poverty, especially in the midst of plenty and affluence of the upper class, will invariably lead to feelings of frustration among the poor. It will generate hatred, distrust, envy and anger. These psychological situations lead to a loss and erosion of faith in the system, deprivation, alienation and hopelessness. At this point, hostility, antagonism, sabotage and indiscriminate aggression fester. To this end, individual and group grievances, arising from poverty, unemployment, illiteracy,

discrimination, and economic marginalization, can be used as mobilizing tools by clandestine groups to find support and recruits for terrorism and violence.

According to Ayodeji (2018), the theory of relative deprivation has been criticized on the grounds of its too much emphasis on economic deprivation; other factors such as religion, ethnicity, political deprivation, inequality, like that of Northern Ireland, social distance, among others also play a significant part in explaining terrorism and those that sympathize with terrorists. Nevertheless, this theory helps to explain the reason behind the spiraling terrorism and insurgency in the Northeast part of Nigeria. Forest (2012) maintained that Boko Haram insurgency is mainly a consequence of pervasive socio-economic and religious insecurity whose upshot reverberates among certain communities in the North.

Olojo (2013) argues that high level of poverty makes it simpler for extremist groups like Boko Haram to assemble disgruntled mobs in pursuit of their own political gains. In Northern Nigeria, over 70 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, it is not difficult for any demagogue or religious bigot to rally the poor and impoverished as paraphernalia for their own personal aggrandizement. There is the added dimension of massive unemployment, especially within the burgeoning stratum of college graduates. When citizens are pressed to the lowest levels of anxiety, desperation and hopelessness, they can fall easy prey to insurgent groups like Boko Haram who offer them a sense of belonging.

### **The State and social contract in a developing world**

The whole idea of social contract stems from the need for citizens to surrender some or all of their individual or collective rights to the government with the expectation that the government will in turn protect and guarantee their respective freedoms and liberties. The underlying point of the social contract is the relationship between the people and the government; in a nutshell, the social contract theory argues that citizens willingly give up their rights to the State and in exchange it is expected that the government will protect their lives and properties and provide the necessary pre-requisites for the attainment of the good life. To Onwurah (2021), the bottom line of the social contract is this: when citizens are law abiding, the onus falls on the government to provide security of life and property, adherence to fundamental human rights and entronement of the rule of law.

Appadoria (1975), has recognised Hobbes, Lock and Rousseau as the most famous exponents of the social contract theory. He argued that they were influenced by the absence of a government and a body of laws in man's state of nature, men agreed to enter into two accords; pactum unionis and pactum subjectionis. The first was a contract entered by men to live together harmoniously and to respect each other, in order to guarantee the security of their lives and property. The second pact was based on the necessity for the people to congregate and surrender all or part of their freedoms and rights to the (Leviathan), a supreme body, in return for protection of lives, property and some measure of civil liberties. Ambi (2021), maintains that although Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau theoritised differently on the

social contract theory, they were in agreement that the central focus of the theory involves people surrendering their respective freedoms and rights in exchange for protection of lives, property and liberties by a Sovereign, to whom all these collective freedoms and rights were surrendered.

Loewe, Zinti & Houdret (2021), have contended that “social contract” describes a set of state-society relations; to them, social contract defines formal and informal contracts between societal groups and their sovereign (government or other actors in power) on rights, duties and obligations toward each other. They further maintain that social contracts are partly informal institutions, which are intended to make state-society interactions and intercourses more predictable and thereby politics more stable. Their effectiveness depends on their substance (deliverables exchanged between government and society), scope (the actors involved and the geographic range of influence) and temporal dimension (beginning, evolution, and duration). In their opinion, the Arab uprisings in 2010–11 were as a result of the breakdown of the social contract, an expression of discontent with a situation in which governments provided neither political participation nor social benefits, like employments and economic opportunities.

From the foregoing, the notion of social contract evokes the feeling of role-complementarities whereby the citizens surrender their loyalty, pay allegiance, perform tax obligation, and render military and intelligence or information service to the State. On its part, the government is expected to protect the lives and property of the citizens including creating the enabling and unfettered ambiance for the citizens to realize their goals and aspirations. For instance, by the combined effect of the section 14(2) (a, b) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (as amended), it expressly implied that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. This explicitly means that the government has the basic obligation of securing the lives of Nigerians and promoting their welfare. Section 33 on its part maintains the inviolability of a citizen’s right to life and only allows the denial of this right in stringent circumstances. Sections 34-46 reels out sundry fundamental rights, freedoms and liberties available to citizens.

Nweke & Nkwede (2019) aver that social contract theory entails a collective resolve among a people to live together under a given authority with the ultimate aim of addressing basic necessities of life such as security and welfare. A clear question comes to mind: how are these fundamental security and welfare needs, rights and freedoms which form the bedrock and content of the social contract provided, observed or implemented in Nigeria? A careful examination of the situation in Nigeria is one that is not only appalling but also disturbing as what is happening is at variance with an ideal state of social contract between the government and her citizens in all fronts. Onanuga ((2014: 1), captures the Nigerian situation thus:

we are all victims of Nigeria’s crisis of governance, and we all experience its symptoms: failed schools, failed hospitals, failed roads, failed security, failed power supply, Boko Haram, ..., Niger Delta militancy, kidnapping, the vanishing opportunities for youths,



the widening gulf between the rich and the poor and worse of all, the receding faith in Nigeria by Nigerians....

In addition, Abegunde and Akinyemi (2014), painted a miserable picture of the Nigerian state and the fate of the citizens to include:

...infrastructural decay to insecurity, economic instability, mounting ethnic tension, pervasive and institution-suppressing corruption, threatening security upheavals and violence, environmental threats and disasters, political violence and resource struggles to militancy, armed violence and kidnapping. The effect of this on public welfare is pervasive.

In the overall analysis, a nation that is not able to provide the basic needs of her citizens and guarantee equal access to a wide range of fundamental civil, political and socio-economic resources cannot be said to have observed or obeyed its side of the social contract with the people. Going by the incessant loss of lives, caused by terrorist groups, insurgents, criminal gangs, freedom agitators and even the law enforcement agents, it appears Nigeria is rapidly sliding towards the Hobbesian state of nature. The above pitiable situation depicts the absence of effective and efficient law enforcement. Under the circumstance, citizens' confidence in the government is eroded. Consequently, the citizens perceive the failure of government to perform its constitutional role of securing their lives, property and ancestral homes as dereliction of constitutional duty and a breach of the contractual obligation to protect lives as implied in the government and citizens' social contract relationship. When this happens, the citizens can no longer trust their government. They will likely engage in acts of sabotage and espionage. They will undermine government efforts and predispose the state's security agents to vicarious dangers. From the Nigerian experience, rural dwellers and residents of the areas under the attacks of terrorist groups seem to trust the insurgents more than they rely or depend on government. They rather leak out information to the bandits than the state security services. The reason is not far-fetched. In some rural communities, the insurgents provide some social amenities like water, electricity, foodstuffs, drugs and medicines, security against invasion from other rampaging marauders, and some modicum of judicial function. These are the services the citizens elicit from their government at various levels which the government does not provide.

**Insurgents to the rescue: how non-state actors fill the gap in Nigeria:**

In the twenty first century Nigeria some insurgent forces are in control of pockets of territories and have literally supplanted state authority by ruling with a calibrated mix of coercion and co-option, International Crisis Group (2016). The obvious challenge of weak state; limited writ in neglected territories; and the failure of security forces, intelligence services and other institutions to respond with the requisite dexterity to the upsurge in the activities of Boko Haram and splintered

groups such as ISWAP in North Eastern Nigeria and the ubiquitous cells of bandits in North Western part of the country has led to widespread seizure of villages, grazing and farm lands. It is pertinent to stress that insurgency tends to thrive in these areas due largely to underdevelopment, distrust of the state in rural areas, traditional elites' declining authority, proliferation of weapons, heavy-handed and ineffective security forces.

Most of the areas prone to insurgent activities are along the porous borders of Nigeria in the North. These areas are replete with incidences of cross border raids and cattle rustling by marauders. Some vast territories in proximities to the fringes of northern Nigeria, especially in the Middle Belt have not fared any better as a result of poor security presence. The inhabitant of these ungoverned space who are vulnerable to occasional attacks, often feel betrayed by the national security apparatus and have gone ahead to offer their territories as sanctuaries to insurgent organizations as a bargain for protection against the ever-rampaging, ubiquitous criminal gangs and marauders. According to Reuters' news agency, locals in some part of North Eastern Nigeria feel protected from Boko Haram by the ISWAP militia rather than by state security (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018).

It is fast becoming a norm in some communities in Niger State around Shiroro and in Zamfara State to pay protection fees to insurgent groups and bandits. Eight wards within the precinct of Shiroro Dam, one of the major hydroelectric powers generating plant in Nigeria, are in the effective grasp of the Boko Haram, who, apart from hoisting their flags in the areas has put in place mechanism for law and order by rendering both police and military duties. The inhabitants of the areas are compelled to pay their taxes to the groups and in return guaranteed the protection of their lives, properties and farms. The situation is the same in North Western Nigeria. According to the member representing Sabon Birni North Constituency in Sokoto State, Aminu Al Mustapha Gobir, the inhabitants of his constituency have not been subjected to raids like other communities because of their resolve to pay protection fees to the marauders. Put succinctly in his words "the people prefer to pay and live in peace in their communities than to rely on security agencies or go on exile" (Daily Trust Newspapers, October 27, 2021).

In North western Nigeria several militia groups have balkanised most of the rural communities into their various spheres of influence largely due to lack of police and military presence. For instance, vast of the rural enclaves in Niger and Kaduna States are Gilde's territories; under him are smaller camps with loyalty and allegiance to individual leaders. Huge chunk of territories in Katsina are controlled by Auwalun Daudawa and Dangotte Bazamfare, under them are several other mini gang leaders. The Eastern part of Sokoto state on the other hand are under the jurisdiction of Bello Turji, while there are numerous gang leaders in Zamfara rural communities. (Murtala, 2021). The situation in Zamfara State is so precarious and beyond the control of the security agencies that one of the bandit warlords, Gilde who presides over an expansive network of marauders is believed to have vowed to flush out all other militia groups out of the state. Thus, Gilde has been perceived as a benevolent warlord with the antidotes to solving the problem of insecurities in

the state (Daily Trust Newspapers, October 27, 2021).

Some time, the military tactics often deployed by the Nigerian Armed Forces are counter-productive. The use of scorched-earth approach and indiscriminate aerial bombardments has led to increase poverty, hunger and death in the theatre of conflicts, thus pushing the inhabitants of the affected communities into the hands of the insurgents who latched on such blunders to provide succour in forms of foods and building materials. Furthermore, while ISWAP, the ISIS affiliate, is reassuring rural residents to do business, farm and rear animals on the territories under its control, Nigerian security services are busy shutting markets, apparently to deny supplies to the insurgents. It is unfortunate that while the Nigerian state usually falls back on the stick approach in its engagement with the critical mass of the rural folks, the ISWAP group often uses the carrot approach to win the heart of the people. On the 30 April, 2018, Reuters reported that the Barnawi faction, who is known by the ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, administers swathes of territory across the northeastern Nigerian states of Borno and Yobe and adjoining regions of Niger. The report uncovered the jihadist' system of taxation, their administration of sharia law, and the way they use gifts such as digging wells, giving out seeds and fertilizer and providing safe pasture for herders as incentives for people to live under them and collaborate with them. The group also uses Islamic scholars to recruit people and encourage internally displaced people to return to their communities in a bid to bolster the population they control and their revenue (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018)

In all of these areas the people looked up to militia leaders for sense of direction in terms of provision, security and adjudication in land matters, contractual disputes and domestic issues. At the heart of the issues that trigger violent militia activities in North western part of Nigeria are social grumblings arising from the alleged deep-rooted injustice against nomadic communities. For instance, the Kungiyar Gayu armed group, declared through their founding fathers in Zamfara towards the end of 2011 that their goal apart from fostering the unity of the pastoralists was the struggle for social justice. Their allegation was that pastoral and nomadic communities in the state were exposed to all forms of extortion, exploitation and deprivation from diverse agencies. They lamented that they were denied justice mostly in the lower courts. Members of the gang were viewed as liberators of the Fulani from highhandedness of security agents, traditional rulers and politicians. The association was formed at a point when herders in Zamfara State were migrating to other states due to large scale encroachment and confiscation of the grazing areas (Murtala, 2021). The police and Khadis in most parts of Northern Nigeria were deemed corrupt and viewed as auctioneers of justice. It is important to note that the police and the judicial system in their compromised form and state in Northern Nigeria no longer enjoy the confidence of the masses-equipped with this knowledge, insurgent groups in their various spheres of influence resorts to providing some modicum of justice based on Qur'anic jurisprudence and equity. A 50-second video clip released by ISWAP during the returned of the Dapchi girls attested to their popularity with the masses. It showed

residents, mainly youths, hailing the militia and chanting prayers for them (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2018).

Some of the most contentious issues in rural communities in Northern Nigeria borders on land usurpation and alienation. The issue of land grabbing in the region for a relatively long period of time has been orchestrated by the military and political elites who in their quest to establish mechanised farms used their position of influence to confiscate wide expanse of arable land from rural folks. This forceful occupation of the people's land, a situation which created a mass of landless peasant could not be remedy or atoned by the judicial system which has been plagued by corruption. Some of the insurgent organizations operating in Northern Nigeria have positioned themselves as liberators of the people's land and dispenser of same for the common goods of the community. This line of action is usually taken by insurgent organizations to win the heart of the people and to project the government and those holding the levers of power as harbingers of exploitation and perpetrators of evil.

While it is true that bulks of the activities of the insurgent groups operating in Northern Nigeria are concentrated in the rural areas, it is equally true that they have taken advantage of the endemic poverty among the urban masses to register their presence and push through their ideology within the ranks of the urban poor in cities and township. At the onset of Boko Haram at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in order to gain mass followership in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, the sect embarked on economic empowerment of urban masses in their various cells. They provided soft loans for the farmers to buy fertilizers and other farm inputs. Funds were also made available to petty traders and hawkers, while majority of the street urchins and students of koranic schools known as almajiri were provided with motorcycles and tricycles to enable them render transport services and make returns on daily basis (Bello, 2013). The almajiri who were subjected to rapacious exploitation and abuse by their koranic teachers who sent them out to beg on behalf of their schools on daily basis embraced the Boko Haram sect in their numbers, thus offering themselves as foot soldiers and informants. It is pertinent to state that the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) has adopted the same approach to recruit members in the major towns and cities of South Eastern Nigeria such as Onitsha, Aba, Owerri, Nnewi, Enugu and Abakiliki. According to Okolie (2021), some of the IPOB members arrested by the Nigerian security agencies have testified that they were lured to join the group on the grounds of promises of better life.

#### **Conclusion and recommendations:**

The paper examines the nature, activities and spate of insurgents in Nigeria. It revealed how government abandoned her statutory responsibility to the people and thereby created room for the insurgents to woe the vulnerable citizens to their ranks. The study believed that the government's failure to provide the basic social responsibilities to the people and protect their lives and properties left the citizens with no option than to embrace the provisions and protections of the insurgents which they see as a form of rescue.

The research is anchored on the deprivation and social contract theories which provided clear understanding of the relationship between the deprived citizens and the insurgents as well as the government and the citizens. The theory of relative deprivation believed that because the citizens are deprived from the provision of basic amenities and protection of lives and properties, they were made to accept helps from other alternatives as rescuers. The paper further posited that the government reneged on her responsibilities as provided by the social contract theory.

The study contends that although radical religion and territorial expansionism are integral factors, economic deprivation occasioned by long years of state neglect, corruption, joblessness, lack of access to western education, poverty, frustration and extreme anxiety are causes of insurgency. It further argued that the failure of government to perform its constitutional role of securing the lives of the citizens and their properties is a dereliction of constitutional duty and a breach of the contractual obligation. It is the opinion of the paper that the consequence of the government failure led the citizens to develop trust on the insurgents to provide the basic amenities that the government failed to provide.

Arising from the findings of this work, the following are recommended:

1. The government should wake up to her responsibilities by way of honouring her part of social contract agreement. This means providing the basic social amenities to the citizens.
2. Proper and continuous political education should be done. Political education should be properly included in the various education curricula in our schools.
3. Free and fair elections should always be conducted to disallow unfit persons to have access to the corridor of power.
4. Insurgents should be genuinely identified and tried through alternative resolution mechanism and be punished according to the provisions of the law of the land.
5. Citizens who collude with the insurgents should be brought to book according to the law.
6. Traditional rulers should be involved in persuading the insurgents to repent and allow the government to perform her statutory roles to the citizens.
7. Nigerian government should seek help and embrace collaboration with neighbouring nations and other friendly allies that are capable of providing help to solve the problems of insurgents.
8. Education's budgetary allocation should be raised and implemented vigorously to enable government pursue compulsory education at the primary and secondary level.
9. Government should mop up arms from individuals who procured ammunition without license.
10. Cross border checks should be observed to discourage infiltrations of small and lights arms from neighbouring nations.

11. Proper data base should be maintained to enable government identify the citizens residing in a place at any time.
12. Employment should be created to discourage idleness among the citizens.
13. Citizens especially the youths should be encouraged to acquire skills which will enable them to be self-reliant.

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