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ECONOMIC MARGINALISATION AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES OF HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA AND THEIR REFLECTION IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC, FROM 1999 TO 2023

Abstract: Banditry has deep roots in Nigeria's precolonial and colonial history, which became evident in the Fourth Republic. This study used published data to trace the history of banditry in Nigeria and examine its manifestation under various administrations in the Fourth Republic, from 1999 to 2023. The findings showed that economic marginalisation by the privileged few and political struggles among the elites were key factors in the historical origins of banditry in Nigeria's precolonial and colonial periods. These historical factors continued to influence banditry during the Fourth Republic, as seen in patterns under different administrations, such as the Niger Delta militant activities during Obasanjo's era over the marginalisation of oil-producing communities, Boko Haram insurgency during Yar' Adua's tenure due to the poor socioeconomic conditions in the north-east, herder-farmer conflicts under Goodluck's government over resource disputes related to scarce arable land for cattle grazing and farming, and secessionist armed groups during Buhari's administration over political marginalisation of the south-eastern region from the national mainstream.

Keywords: banditry, economic marginalisation, political struggles, Nigeria, history, Fourth Republic

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INTRODUCTION

Classical accounts of insecurity in Nigeria show that banditry pre-dates Nigeria's existence, manifesting in the prevailing socio-economic and political issues in both precolonial and colonial Nigerian societies (Falola, 1986; 1995; Watson, 2000; Akinwumi, 2001). However, the Fourth Republic exemplifies the historical roots of banditry in Nigeria. Nigeria entered a new democratic era with the establishment of the Fourth Republic in 1999, after roughly seven years of military rule. Much hope was placed on the benefits of democracy, but the economic and political conflicts that led to banditry during the precolonial and colonial periods can be seen to persist in the Fourth Republic, thus dampening hopes for a peaceful nation.

Previous research has focused on the factors that contributed to the growth of banditry in Nigeria (Olaniyan, 2017; Ojo, 2020; Bello, Agunyai and Amusan, 2022). The activities of armed groups, mainly in Northern Nigeria, have been the subject of additional research (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014; Shehu, Victor and Binta, 2017; Amadi, Igwe, and Ukachikara, 2019). In the same vein, the forms of banditry across Nigeria's geopolitical zones have been documented by Irabor (2025), while government response to curbing banditry in Nigeria is the focus of Irabor and Awofeso's (2025) study. However, the economic marginalisation and political struggles of historical antecedents of banditry in Nigeria and how it manifested in the Fourth Republic, 1999–2023, have received little attention; thus, this study. Six sections make up this study. The statement of the research problem is introduced in this first section. The thematic review is defined in the second section, and an empirical review of relevant literature serves as the foundation for the third section, while the fourth part focuses on the theory used in the study. The research approach is addressed in the fifth section. Before the seventh and final section, which offers the conclusion, the sixth section presents the study's findings.

THEMATIC REVIEW: INSECURITY AND BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

Unlike security, insecurity entails danger and a lack of protection stemming from fear and nervousness caused by a real or perceived absence of safety. According to Udoh (2015), insecurity is anxiety that results from feeling helpless and unconfident. Nigerian insecurity largely stems from various factors, including unemployment, economic inequality, corruption, weak security systems and permeable borders (Adebayo, 2013; Shalangwa, 2013; Adegoke, 2014). Unemployment and its related effects on poverty have led to an increase in violent crime as a means of livelihood (Ake, 2003; Adebayo, 2013). For Nwagbara (2007) and Mbaya (2013), corruption is a key cause of insecurity, as when government officials engage in embezzlement of public funds, there are fewer resources available for developing industries and facilities to support trade and create employment. Insufficient funding of security agencies has also been linked to weak security systems, resulting in a lack of modern equipment, poor worker welfare, and inadequate manpower to effectively address insecurity (Alemika, 2013; Adegoke, 2014). Furthermore, permeable borders particularly among states in the Lake Chad region, facilitate both legal trade and illicit activities such as arms smuggling, leading to proliferation of weapons, drug trafficking, armed robbery, and other criminal acts, which have been identified as primary drivers of the unrest in the north-east (Shalangwa, 2013; Murtala, 2018; Jumba, 2019).

Banditry refers to the activities of bandits, who are typically members of armed groups engaging in unlawful or criminal behavior (Irabor, 2025). It includes any deeds outlawed and proscribed by the government due to the criminal activities involved, such as armed theft, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and attacks on communities (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019). In Nigeria, banditry encompasses the activities of insurgent groups like Boko Haram and the Islamic States of West Africa Province (ISWAP), armed herdsmen, Niger Delta militants, secessionist militants such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), criminal gangs without clear ideological ties, as well as non-state actors that threaten the cooperative existence of the state (Okoli and Ugwu, 2019; Ojo, 2020). Bandits often operate in rural or remote areas

where law enforcement is limited, targeting travellers and merchants on highways, vulnerable communities and educational institutions such as schools (Habila, 2016; Zenn, 2018; Abubakar, 2019). In recent years, the concept of banditry has garnered significant attention in Nigeria due to its widespread impact on security, socio-economic stability, and human rights.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW: BANDITRY AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA

Empirical studies on banditry and internal security in Nigeria cover various issues such as insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, and herder-farmer conflict. Literature on insurgency mainly focuses on the actions of Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgent groups. In this regard, Awojobi (2014) examined the impacts of Boko Haram's activities in north-eastern Nigeria. According to the study, which was based on a comprehensive review of media reports and existing literature, Boko Haram's atrocities negatively affect the region's social and economic life through reduced commercial activities, loss of lives and property, as well as displacement of people.

Another study was carried out by Ezinwa and Ezedinachi (2019) to examine the effect of highway banditry and robbery in Nigeria. The research relied on primary sources, including oral information and testimonies from key respondents. The study identified 133 highways passing through Nigeria's six geopolitical zones as major hotspots for banditry. In a comparative analysis of the farmers-herders conflict and the Boko Haram insurgency, Chiluwa and Chiluwa (2020) analysed the portrayal and representation of the conflicts in both foreign and Nigerian media. Based on online articles from four international newspapers published between 2016 and 2019 concerning herder-farmer conflicts, the study found that Fulani armed militants caused more fatalities and displacement than the Boko Haram terrorist group in 2017 and 2018.

From another perspective, Oyewole (2016) examined variations in hostage-taking across Nigeria. The study employed secondary data through a desk review of official documents relevant to the research. It revealed that kidnapping is prevalent in Nigeria's northern and south-

ern regions. Findings indicated that most kidnappings in the northern part of the country are perpetrated by insurgent groups, including Boko Haram and Fulani militants. Meanwhile, Niger Delta militant groups are known to carry out kidnappings in the southern region. Conversely, Jumba (2019) conducted a study on the dynamics and dangers of cattle rustling in Nigeria's Lake Chad Basin Area. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) approach was used to gather information from victims of cattle rustling, local vigilante groups, and the police. The results showed that cultural, linguistic and religious ties facilitate the free movement of rebels and the flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Nigeria.

Bello, Agunyai, and Amusan (2022) studied insecurity, armed non-state actors, and government responses to banditry in Nigeria. Their aim was to examine how the unique features of the Nigerian president contributed to rising insecurity. The findings, based on a qualitative approach using desktop reviews, indicated that despite President Muhammadu Buhari's military background, the country did not feel secure under his leadership. Consequently, there was widespread criticism of President Buhari's strategy to eliminate banditry in Nigeria.

Irabor and Awofeso (2025) conducted a study on the Nigerian government's response to solve the problem of banditry in the country. Primary data were used in the study through the conduct of interviews to obtain information from key stakeholders such as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), local security network, otherwise known as Western Nigeria Security Network (WNSN) or *Amotekun*, Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), *Miyetti Allah* Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN), and legislators in the National Assembly. The collected data underwent descriptive content analysis, which involved coding themes from the interview text. Result from the study indicated that the central and sub-regional governments had engaged some approaches to curtail banditry in Nigeria, comprising deploying security services to insecure zones, increasing finance for the military to purchase hardware, training, and other logistics and the introduction of the National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP) as a solution to the conflict between herders and farmers, and the prohibition on free grazing in some states. In order for the government to solve the problem of banditry in Nigeria, the study acknowledged the concentration of the security arrangement, accessibility of ungoverned forestry, and inadequate border security as the key problems deterring the government from suppressing banditry in Nigeria.

The forms of banditry across Nigeria's geopolitical zones were the subject of Irabor's (2025) study. The study was based on secondary data and systematic analysis. The findings of the study showed that banditry is not limited to a particular region and has taken shape throughout Nigeria's geopolitical zones. The study recommended decentralisation of the security structure to solve the multifaceted nature of banditry in Nigeria.

FRAMEWORK FOR THEORY: SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

The social contract theory was proposed by English philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and others to challenge the divine right of kings to rule in European societies by explaining the state of nature before the emergence of modern government. In this study, Hobbes's version of the social contract theory is used to analyse the history of banditry in Nigeria and the government's role in establishing rules to manage social affairs. According to Hobbes (1651/2001), individuals in the state of nature were apolitical and asocial, caught in a perpetual state of conflict and fear. In this condition, there was no room for commerce, only constant fear and the threat of violent death. To escape this insecurity, individuals chose to relinquish their natural rights to the government and form a political community to attain security. Hobbes (1651/2001) observed that a supreme authority was essential to suppress natural freedom and establish rules to govern social interactions.

Hobbes's version of social contract theory described the emergence of banditry in Nigeria's precolonial and colonial societies as a manifestation of the state of nature before independence in 1960, which marked the arrival of modern government. In the precolonial Nigerian state, Falola (1986) and Watson (2000) documented the activities of brigands in the 19th century fighting for control of Ibadan communities. During this period, Ibadan communities were regarded as territories where traditional rulers gained social honour based on the number of armed men they could command for violent raids involving slavery and property theft (Falola, 1986; Watson, 2000). Crummey (1986), and Akinwumi (2001) also recorded the activities of bandits in the 19th century in the Borgu region (part of present-day Niger state), who raided itinerant merchants

and the Fulani of their cattle. Under colonial rule, colonial administrators also suppressed the people through force engaged in the slave trade, and exploited resources, thereby increasing violence in the colonised societies (Wilmot, 2006; Kalama and Doupere, 2020).

However, the gaining of independence in October 1960 represents the social contract into which Nigerian citizens enter to curb the natural freedom that human beings exhibited in the precolonial and colonial state of nature and to establish rules for regulating social interactions. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria states in section 14 (2) (b) that the health and safety of the populace shall be the main goals of the state (Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution, 1999). Thus, the social contract theory holds that civil government is essential to guaranteeing people's safety in accordance with moral and political rules of behaviour. Therefore, under Nigeria's Fourth Republic, each person's moral and political obligations are defined by a democratic compact that is enshrined in the 1999 Constitution.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative, using secondary data collected from textbooks, journal articles, newspapers, archives, government and international organisation publications, and the Internet. These data were analysed through systematic methods. The systematic analysis is suitable for this study because it enables the evaluation of scholarly works on the history of banditry in Nigeria to draw conclusions on the historical background of banditry in Nigeria and to identify current patterns of banditry in the Fourth Republic.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF BANDITRY IN NIGERIA

Indeed, reports of banditry incidents in precolonial Nigerian societies were documented in the 19th century (Falola, 1986; 1995; Akinwumi, 2001). The focus on the 19th century highlights a period marked by

significant events, such as the arrival of colonialism, foreign explorers and missionaries, which generated archives and information concerning insecurity in both precolonial and colonial Nigerian societies (Falola, 1986; 1995; Akinwumi, 2001). Accounts from this era describe banditry as linked to the marginalisation of the majority of the population from economic activities by a small privileged elite in the Borgu region (Hirshfield, 1979; Crummey, 1986; Akinwumi, 2001).

The Borgu region in the current Nigerian state includes communities in north-west Nigeria such as Bussa, Illo, Kaiama, Kenu, and Yashikira. A significant feature of the Borgu region during the 19th century was the activity of merchants engaging in trade of kolanuts and the transformation of society from an agrarianism base to mercantilism (Hirshfield, 1979; Akinwumi, 2001). Economic activities in the Borgu region were so prominent that customs houses were established in each society along the trade routes to regulate trade, ensure security and collect tolls from traders (Akinwumi, 2001). The economic advantages led to social division in the Borgu region, creating a distinction between the few who had access to economic opportunities and the less privileged group who lacked connection to economic resources (Crummey, 1986; Adekunle, 1994; Akinwumi, 2001).

This social change led to increased involvement of the less privileged in crime, making banditry prominent in the Borgu region (Adekunle, 1994; Akinwumi, 2001). The less privileged established themselves as bandits, raiding itinerant merchants and Fulani herders for cattle, kidnapping farmers to enslave them, and engaging in trade with slaves, which were seen as methods for securing wealth and resources monopolised by the few privileged groups (Orr, 1965; Adekunle, 1994). A well-known bandit in the Borgu region was Bakin Jaki, who commanded a gang estimated at 400 men and 60 horsemen (Anene, 1965; Crummey, 1986; Adekunle, 1994). The activities of these robbers adversely affected merchant trade, as there were no longer secure routes to the market in Borgu (Orr, 1965; Akinwumi, 2001). The influence of banditry in the Borgu region was so extensive that by the onset of British rule in Nigeria in 1900, most local societies had become desolate (Adekunle, 1994; Akinwumi, 2001).

Historical accounts also link banditry to the involvement of political elites in civil disorder as part of their efforts to gain political power. A notable example of elite involvement in banditry can be seen in Ibadan during the 19th century, where slave raiding and proper-

ty theft became prominent activities supported by traditional rulers (Awe, 1964; Falola, 1986; Watson, 2000). Evidence from Falola (1986) and Watson (2000) indicates that it was common for elites to use armed gangs, known as *Egbe onisunmomi*, for slave raids and theft as a means to achieve social honour, with public disorder often viewed as a result of warfare. In their pursuit of chieftaincy titles, chiefs competed to exert authority over the people and rivals, distributing war spoils among households, which contributed to patterns of social instability in Yoruba history (Watson, 2000). During this times of insecurity, the Ibadan polity was built on the achievements of elites who profited from war spoils, slave raids and robberies to sustain their material and political influence.

After gaining independence in 1960, various issues stemming from the government, including political corruption, the 1967 Civil War, and military intervention in politics, among others, were linked to the rise of banditry in Nigeria (Amuwo, 1995; Adekanye, 2011; Adebayo, 2013). Political corruption in Nigeria results from economic underdevelopment and a lack of basic infrastructure to support trade and generate jobs for the growing population (Adebayo, 2013; Abamara et al., 2015). Nkpa (1976) and Arinze (2010) also demonstrated that the Civil War left arms and ammunition in the public domain, leading to increased cases of armed robbery. It is also important to note that successive military governments committed human rights violations and were responsible for poor governance, which contributed to the civil population becoming militarised rather than patriotic citizens (Etebom, 2021). A notorious bandit in the 1970s was Ishola Oyenusi, who led a gang of six men specialising in bank and factory robberies, carjacking, and killing victims during operations (Folarin, 2006; Osifodunrin, 2007). Another prominent bandit in the 1980s was Lawrence Anini, who terrorised Benin city and its environs with his gang of 21 members, gaining notoriety through bank robberies and kidnapping (Otwin, 1987; Lawal, 1994).

REFLECTION OF THE HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF
BANDITRY IN NIGERIA
UNDER DIFFERENT ADMINISTRATIONS
IN THE FOURTH REPUBLIC, FROM 1999 TO 2023

Olusegun Obasanjo's Administration (1999–2007)

Olusegun Obasanjo was the first President of Nigeria's Fourth Republic. His government was elected for two terms in office, which lasted until 2007. A major manifestation of banditry during these periods involved armed insurrection in the Niger Delta region over oil spillage, environmental degradation, imbalanced government financial arrangements disavouring the oil-producing communities, and the exclusion of the inhabitants from the vast petroleum resources in the region (Nseabasi, 2010; Adisa, 2020). The Niger Delta region (including Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers, Abia, Imo and Ondo states) encompasses states with abundant petroleum resources amounting to over 80% of Nigeria's crude oil resources, placing Nigeria among the leading oil-producing nations in Africa (Akpan, 2010; Ezemenaka, 2018).

Despite the financial gains from petroleum production in the Niger Delta region, the exploration of crude oil by multinational companies authorised by the federal government caused oil spills and environmental damage. This led to the destruction of fishing and farming activities that are vital for local livelihoods (Akpan, 2010; Ezemenaka, 2018). Feelings of resource exploitation and marginalisation led to the formation of armed groups, including the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Avengers (NDV). These groups engaged in kidnapping expatriates and domestic workers in the oil industry, vandalizing pipelines, and engaging in oil bunkering, which significantly increased insecurity in the region (Ezemenaka, 2018; Teriba, 2018; Irabor 2025). As the crisis worsened, the kidnapping of oil workers and expatriates, previously a form of political protest, became highly profitable and fostered the practice of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria (Akpan, 2010; Ezinwa and Ezedinachi, 2019).

Musa Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan's Administration (2007–2011)

The Musa Ya'adua administration took office on 29 May 2007. After came on board on 29 May 2007. Following President Musa Yar'Adua's death on 5 May 2009, Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, assumed leadership of the Presidency. To tackle the Niger Delta crisis, the government introduced the Amnesty programme in 2009, which aimed to demilitarise the militants (Akinnaka, 2013; Ajibola, 2015). Despite the federal government's amnesty programme, events in 2021 showed that nearly 98 reported cases of piracy occurred in the Niger Delta region, where almost 130 crew members were kidnapped (Adisa, 2020; European Asylum Support Office, 2021).

As the Niger Delta imbroglio subsided, the government faced the insurgency of Boko Haram in the north-east. Various explanations have been proposed as the basis of insurgency in the north-east region. One factor links insurgency to poor governance, leading to relative poverty and underdevelopment in the northern region (Adesoji, Abdullahi and Eva, 2018; Ojo, 2020). Based on these premises, Ojo (2020) believed that the Boko Haram group emerged to address anomalies in governance and establish justice through the introduction of Sharia law, which would serve as a model of good governance. Another explanation for the causes of insurgency in the north-east region includes the support the group received from political elites (Mbaya, 2013; European Asylum Support Office, 2021). Mbaya (2013) observed that the introduction of Sharia law in 2001 across twelve northern states including Zamfara, Borno, Bauchi, and Yobe, intensified the Boko Haram uprising. It was also found that some political elites, including Ali Modu Sheriff, the former governor of Borno state, employed Boko Haram members to attain political power in 2003 (Mbaya, 2013; European Asylum Support Office, 2021).

Boko Haram employed various tactics, including suicide bombings, kidnappings, and raids on communities and market, to advance the insurgency. The group was responsible for the bombing of the United Nations building and police headquarters in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, in 2011 (Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene, 2019; Alimba and Salihu, 2020). It also carried out the kidnappings of 276 secondary schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, and 110 female students in Dapchi, Yobe State (Habila, 2016; Zenn, 2018). During the peak of Boko Haram's assault in 2015, it controlled 11 of the 27 local government areas in Borno State (Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution Abuja, 2017; Zenn, 2018).

Goodluck Jonathan's Administration (2011–2015)

Goodluck Jonathan's government began on 29 May 2011, when the Boko Haram insurgent group had gained more control in the north-east region, with spillover effects into other parts of the northern region. At the height of the Boko Haram insurgency in the north-east, the President declared a state of emergency in some local government areas in Jos, Borno, Yobe and Niger states (Ismail, 2015; Ojo, 2020). Amid the Boko Haram insurgency, the administration also faced conflicts between herders and farmers in the north-central region. According to Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin (2018), northern Nigeria has experienced a decrease in the length of the rainy season, leading to fewer water springs and an increase in desertification of the forest ecosystems. Consequently, there is less grassland available for farming and grazing cattle.

Therefore, the issues of cattle encroaching on farmland and damaging crops, scarcity of land for farming, grazing resources to feed cattle, and cattle urinating in streams and waterways create fierce rivalry and antagonistic relationships between farmers and herders (European Asylum Support Office, 2021; *Nigeria's Herder-Farmer...*, 2020). Although the shorter rainy season may not be directly related to government problems, ineffective government strategies and solutions to resource competition have led to increased violent conflict. Between 2011 and 2015, herder-farmer conflict grew in the North-Central region, accounting for 55.5% of the total assaults in the area ('Herders against farmers...', 2017).

Muhammadu Buhari's Administration (2015–2023)

The Buhari administration began on 29 May 2015, and was re-elected for a second term in office from 2019 to 2023. While the Buhari administration contends with previous insecurity issues, such as the Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram insurgency, and herder-farmer clashes, a more peculiar security concern that characterised the administration relates to the transformation of herder-farmer's conflicts and the IPOB into militant organisations.

The frequent conflicts between farmers and nomadic livestock breeders over pasture for cattle feed and farming land led to the formation of militias by both sides (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; International Crisis Group, 2017). However, armed herdsmen carried out more assaults against farmers and host communities, such as those in Nimbo and Ohaji-

-Egbema, Enugu State; Ibarapa Oyo State; Onocha-Olona, and Ubulu-Uku, Delta State; Umuawa-Ibu, Imo State and Ogbaru and Ihiala, Anambra state, among others (Kwaja and Ademola-Adelehin, 2018; Conflict Armament Research, 2020). Over time, criminal gangs, comprising individuals from various nationalities with no particular ideology emerged from the unresolved herder-farmer conflict and engaged in armed insurrection through criminal enterprises such as kidnapping and cattle rustling, mainly in the northern region (Ojo, 2020; Olayinka, 2020).

Arising from the political and economic exclusion of the people of the south-east region from the mainstream of the country, separatist violence by pro-Biafra groups also contributed to banditry during the Buhari administration (European Asylum Support Office, 2021; Njoku and Ogugbuaja, 2021). According to Njoku and Ogugbuaja (2021), the appointments made by President Muhammadu Buhari in his second term had at least one representative from other geopolitical zones, but no representative from the south-east zone was included among the appointments. Political marginalisation of the Igbo ethnic group from the mainstream of the country seems to reinforce the President's tendency to discriminate against the region, which gave him only 5% of the votes during the 2015 general election (Adibe, 2017; Uchime, 2018; Njoku and Ogugbuaja, 2021).

The IPOB carried out assaults against government institutions and agents, including attacks on police stations in Anambra and Imo states; military personnel in Enugu and Anambra states; correctional centres in Anambra and Imo states; and buildings of the Independent National Electoral Commission in Anambra, Enugu and Imo states (Adangor, 2017; Olisah, 2021). The IPOB also ordered and enforced a 'sit-at-home' curfew across the south-east states in protest against the continued detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of the IPOB, who was arrested by the government (Nwafor, 2021; Olisah, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study showed that economic marginalisation by privileged few and political struggle among elites were central to the historical roots of banditry in Nigeria's precolonial and colonial states, which later manifested in the Fourth Republic. In the Fourth Republic, the rise of Niger Delta

militants during the Obasanjo administration was a consequence of the marginalisation and exclusion of oil-producing communities from the region's vast petroleum resources. The Boko Haram insurgent group, which appeared during Yar' Adua's administration, was a result of unrest among unemployed youths challenging a poorly functioning socioeconomic system. Disputes over land for grazing and farming – due to shortages – further intensified conflicts between herders and farmers leading both groups to form armed factions to defend their interests during the Goodluck administration. In the Buhari administration, political and economic exclusion of the south-east from the national mainstream spurred the formation of a secessionist armed group.

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