

How Violence Could Affect

Nigeria's 2023 Elections



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1.0 Background

Nigeria's general elections will kick off on the 25th of February 2023 against the backdrop of security and economic challenges. In the last couple of months leading to the polls, political declarations, primary elections, peace accords, court cases, and campaign promises have been the order of the day. These activities have intensified political conversations and, in some cases, violence among party officials and supporters. Even ordinary residents are not left out in the wake of campaigns and campaign-related violence. Anecdotal accounts of many Nigerians about the election reflect renewed political consciousness, uncertainties about the credibility of the polls, and their preferred choice of candidates and parties.

Also, in the hustle and bustle of Nigeria's 2023 general elections are newly registered voters, heightened youth political consciousness, and unending political conversations on social media platforms. The Independent Election Commission (INEC), Nigeria's electoral umpire, stated that at least 9.5 million new registrants were recorded during the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise, which temporarily ended in 2022 for this year's election. INEC said it had registered [93,469,008](#) voters for the 2023 general elections. About 39.65 percent of registered voters are youths between the ages of 18 and 34. Beyond this, there is a renewed sense of political consciousness and interest, especially among young Nigerians, given the intense conversations online and offline. This is supported by the introduction of new election technologies such as the Bimodal Voter Accreditation Systems (BVAS), etc., and the processes of electronically transmitting the results. With the new 2022 Electoral Act backing these new election technologies; new beliefs, expectations, and trust in the coming elections being free and fair emanated. These developments may have enhanced new public trust, scrutiny, and accountability of the electoral processes, but they may also lead to avoidable tensions and escalation of violence if there are irregularities during the polls, such as perceptions of INEC's lack of integrity, militarisation of the polls, voters' suppression, and intimidation.

Some key concerns during the polls are activities of political vigilante groups and the existing violent conflicts across the country. The question remains how would they impact the elections? Currently, Nigeria is facing a mix of insurgency, terrorism majorly in the Northeast, banditry in the Northwest and Northcentral, separatist agitations in the Southeast, and gang violence in the

Southwest and parts of the South-south. These violent conflicts may play out in the elections, or their actors may be inclined to electoral violence. Also, the Nigerian state's effort to provide security in the hotbeds for the elections may lead to the militarisation of the polls and subsequent violence. Furthermore, the likelihood of post-election violence is possible, given the campaigns' intensity, and recorded elections linked- violent clashes. The heightened youth political consciousness and disgruntled political blocs who have continued to make inciteful comments are becoming very worrisome.

President Muhammadu Buhari had [assured](#) people of peaceful polls irrespective of the critical security concerns. Also, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Lucky Irabor, has vowed that the Armed Forces of Nigeria will provide a safe and secure environment for the conduct of the 2023 elections.¹ Further, the [re-signing of a peace pact](#) few days to the general elections by the 18 political parties and their Presidential candidates is another step towards achieving a peaceful election. Apart from the issue of security provision, ensuring that state security agencies who will be deployed during the elections show professionalism and non-partisanship is also a critical concern for many election stakeholders.

Based on the above, this report highlights emerging and existing violent conflicts, actors, potential actors, and possibilities of electoral (including post-election) violence in Nigeria's six geo-political zones. The report adopts a regional overview style comprising Nigeria's six geo-political zones. The regional overview approach gives context-specific data and information on existing conflicts, actors, and their likely involvement in the polls. It also itemises the causes and consequences of post-election violence. Finally, tailored recommendations to help navigate the possibilities of electoral violence have been provided in the report.



2.0 Regional Insights

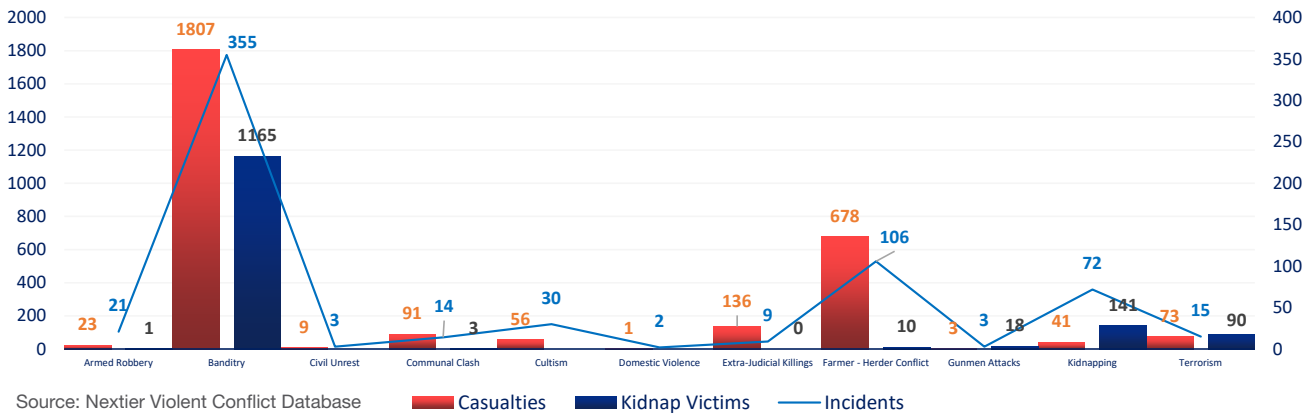
2.1 Northcentral Nigeria

The 2023 general election in the Northcentral region is occurring at a time where certain violent conflicts, such as banditry and farmer-herder conflict, remain prevalent. Thus, certain actions, scenarios, influences, and outcomes can be deduced from trends in the region as it pertains to the forthcoming election.

¹<https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/11/13/well-provide-safe-secure-environment-for-2023-elections-irabor-vows/>

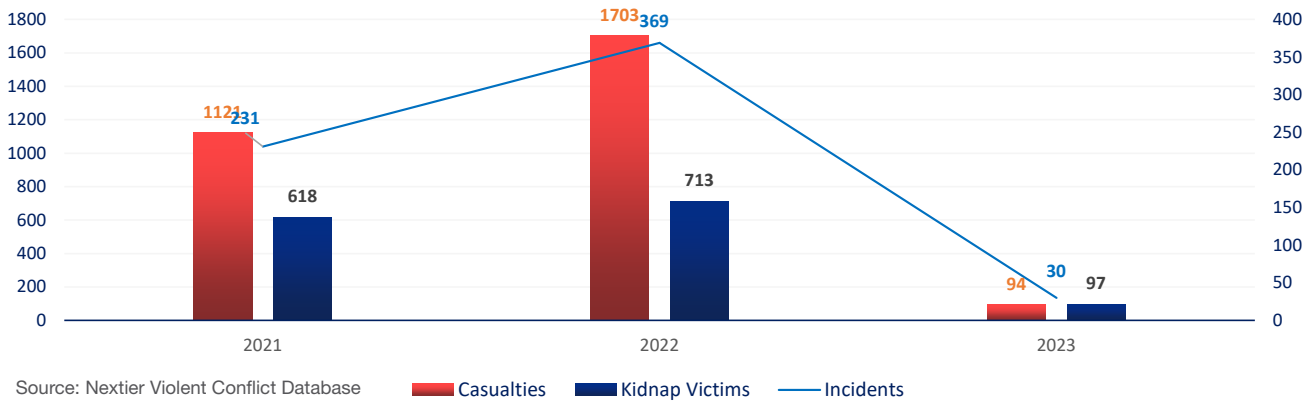
Predominant Crisis Types in Northcentral Nigeria

Predominant Crisis Types in Northcentral Nigeria
Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



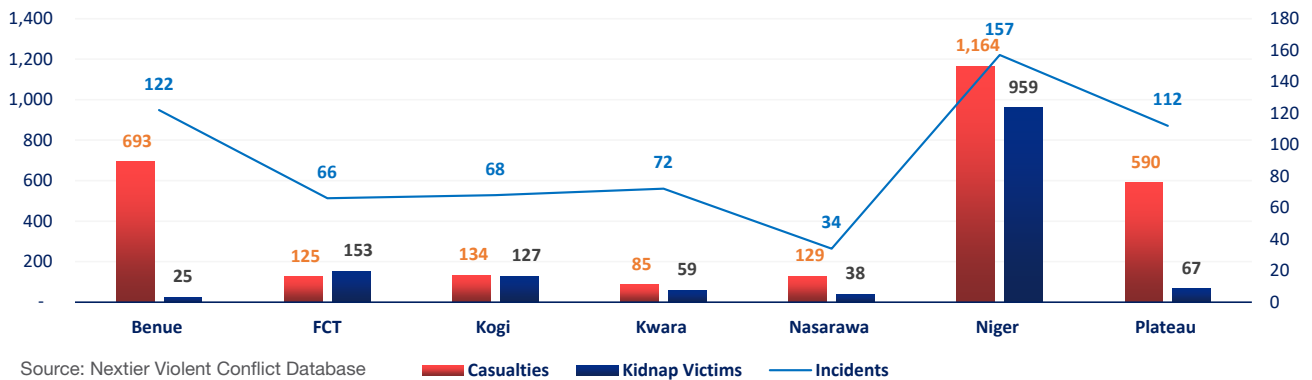
Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Yearly Violent Conflict Trend in Northcentral Nigeria
Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



Northcentral Nigeria: State-by-State Data of Violent Incidents

Nextier Violent Conflict Data: State-by-State
Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



How violence may be deployed during the polls

- Increased activities of existing violent actors during the polls
- Political assassinations
- Voter intimidation
- Attacks on electoral officers and equipment.
- The politicization of existent tensions – farmer-herders, inter-communal conflict.
- Recruitment from refugee camps for electoral intimidation
- The weaponisation of state security agencies for political gains
- Hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from Social media platform can led to offline violence

Possibilities of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

The possibilities of post-election violence vary from state to state, dependent on the political and security atmosphere. Out of the six Northcentral states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja, Kogi and Benue states have ranked among the most violent states during elections. Triggers for electoral violence include:

- Public incitement by political leaders may lead to assault and arson attacks
- Weaponisation of community guards like the Community Volunteer guards
- Perceived INEC bias and incompetency triggering violent youth protests
- Disruption of elections under the guise of suspected herdsmen and bandits

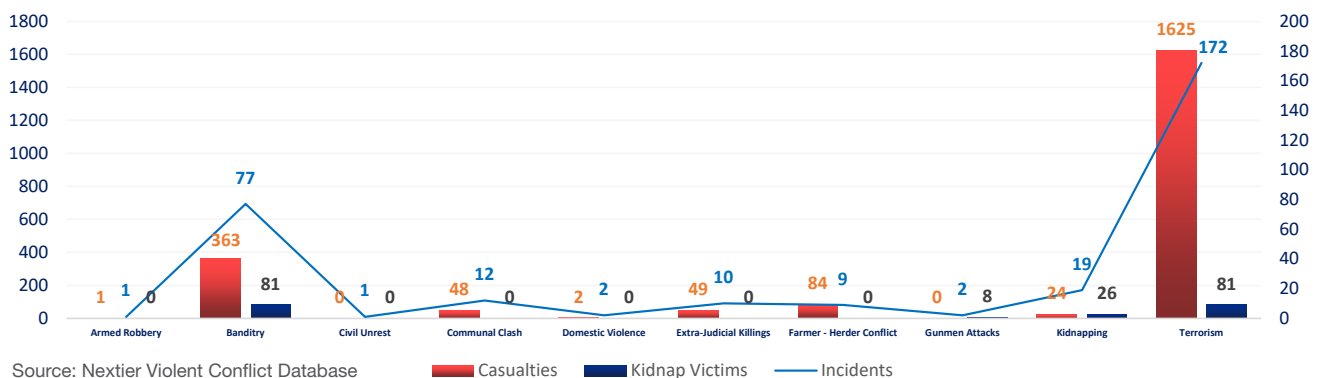
2.2 Northeast Nigeria

Northeast Nigeria has endured thirteen years of battles with insurgents.² As the 2023 general elections draw near, the possible outbreak of violence against voters in the region is a contentious issue. In the past, voting did not occur in terrorist-controlled areas. These locations were inaccessible, and delivering election materials was impossible. Other times, voters were assaulted and killed.³ Current reports indicate that terrorists still control some areas in the region.⁴ This scenario presents an unpredictable and dangerous climate for the voting populace in these areas.

Predominant Crisis Types in Northeast Nigeria

Predominant Crisis Types in Northeast Nigeria

Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023

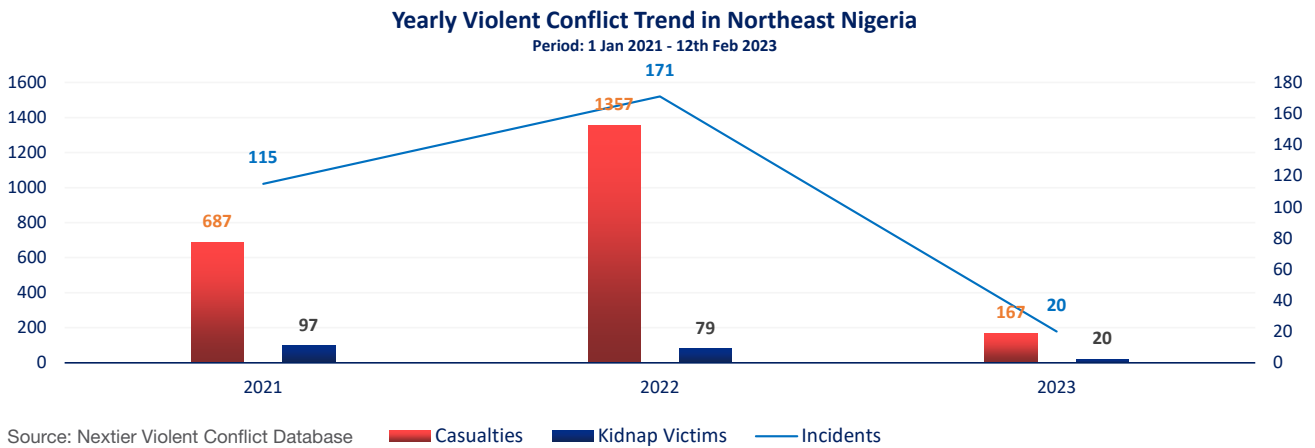


²Jagged edges of insurgency and monumental humanitarian crises in the northeast (2023) THISDAYLIVE. Available at: <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/12/07/jagged-edges-of-insurgency-and-monumental-humanitarian-crises-in-the-north-east/> (Accessed: February 17, 2023).

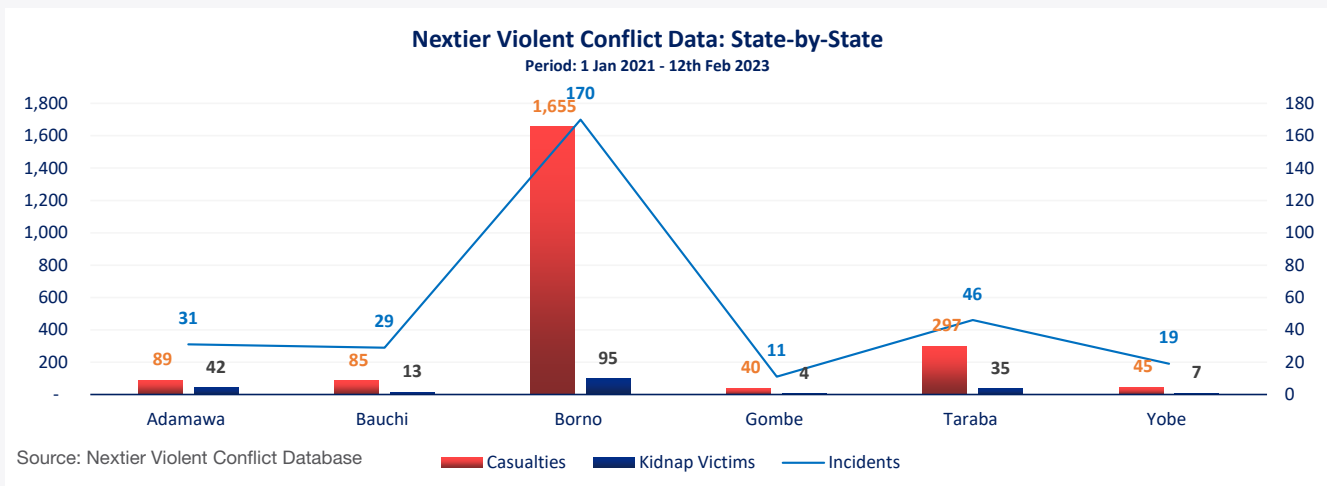
³2023 elections: As insecurity stokes fear, FG AI (2023). The Guardian. Available at: <https://guardian.ng/news/2023-elections-as-insecurity-stokes-fear-fg-allays-concern-over-cancellation/> (Accessed: February 17, 2023).

⁴Marama, N., (2022) Boko Haram still in control of 2 Borno Igas, says Zulum. Available at: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/boko-haram-still-in-control-of-2-borno-igas-says-zulum-2/> (Accessed: February 17, 2023).

Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database



North East: State-by-State Data of Violent Incidents



How violence may be deployed during the polls

- Terrorist attacks
- Assassination
- Kidnapping
- Arson attacks
- Threats
- Hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from social media platform can led to offline violence

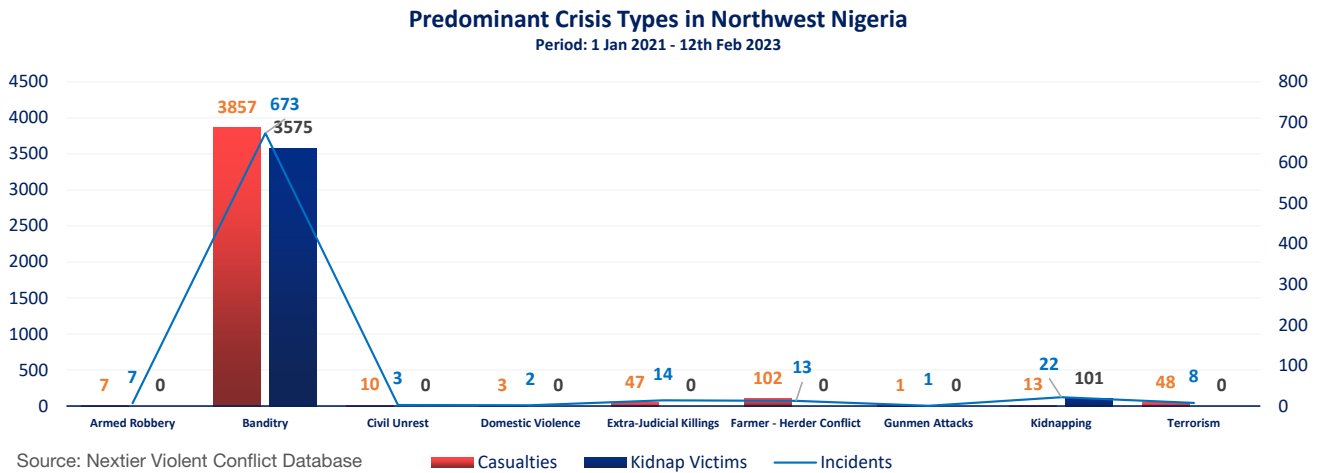
Possibilities of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

- Unfulfilled electoral aspirations
- Security agencies' tyranny, cruelty, repression, and partisanship
- Inciting remarks from politicians, traditional, religious, and community leaders, as well as other influential persons
- Law and order breakdown - assault, arson attacks, looting, and destruction of public and private infrastructure
- Voter apathy, skepticism in the election process, and distrust in the government

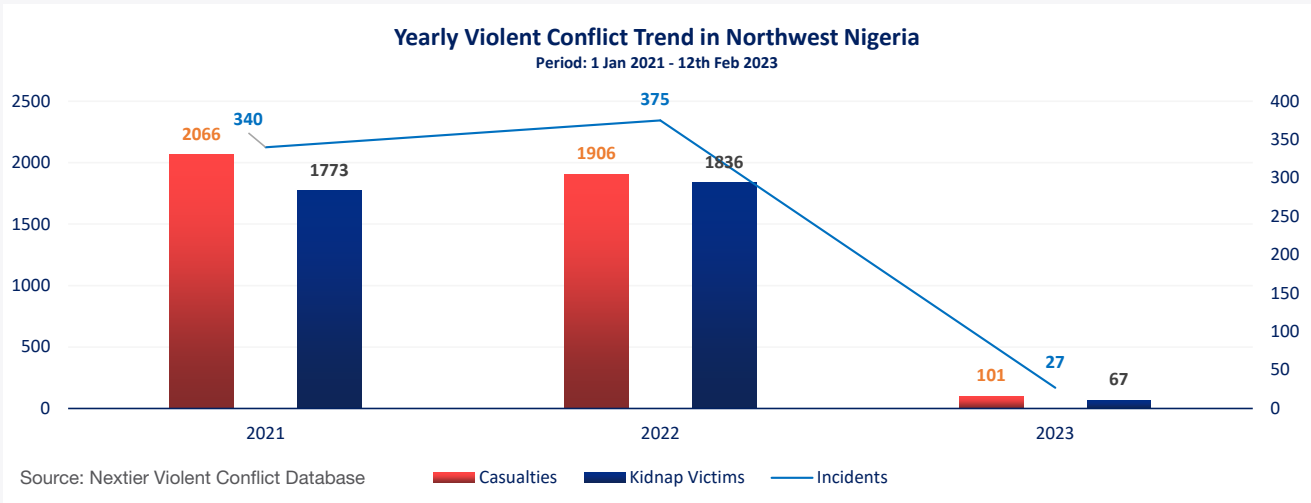
2.3 Northwest Nigeria

The Northwest region of Nigeria is a key political battleground in the country's elections. With over 22 million people registered to vote, this region also has the country's highest number of recorded armed groups and bandits' attacks. These security challenges could impact the electoral process and lead to voter intimidation and low voter turnout.

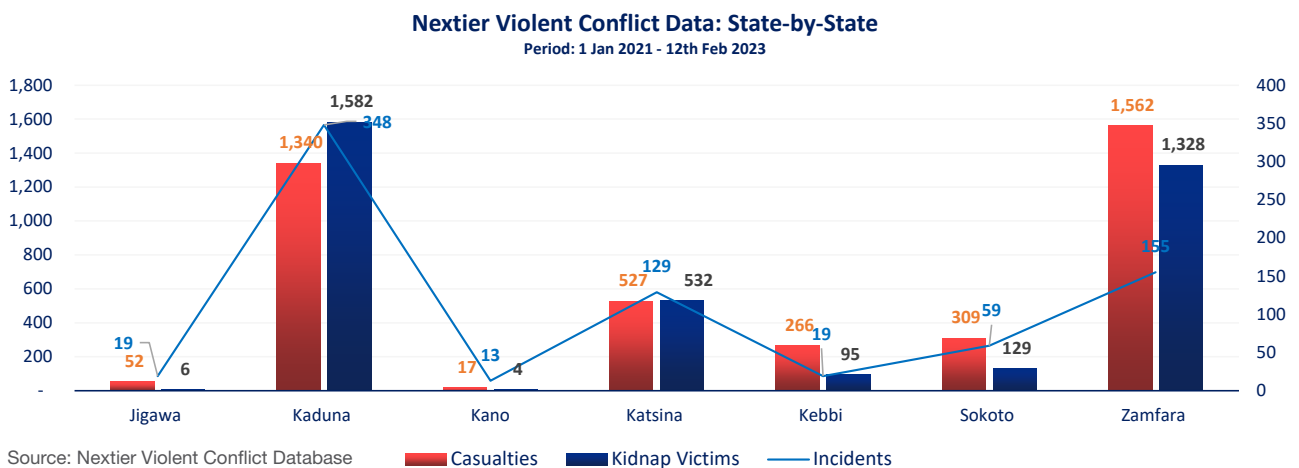
Predominant Crisis Types in Northwest Nigeria



Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database



Northwest: State-by-State Data of Violent Incidents



How violence may be deployed during the polls

- BVAS failure or perceived corruption by election officials could lead to attacks on INEC staff or snatching of ballot boxes
- Clampdowns on opposition parties or assassinations of candidates
- Protests by supporters of the losing candidate degenerate into riots or sectarian killings
- Clashes between supporters of different candidates
- Renewed attacks and or abduction of residents by existing armed groups
- Heightened political tension along ethnoreligious lines led to militarised local communities and self-defence militias
- Increased security operations in the region
- Hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from Social media platform can led to offline violence

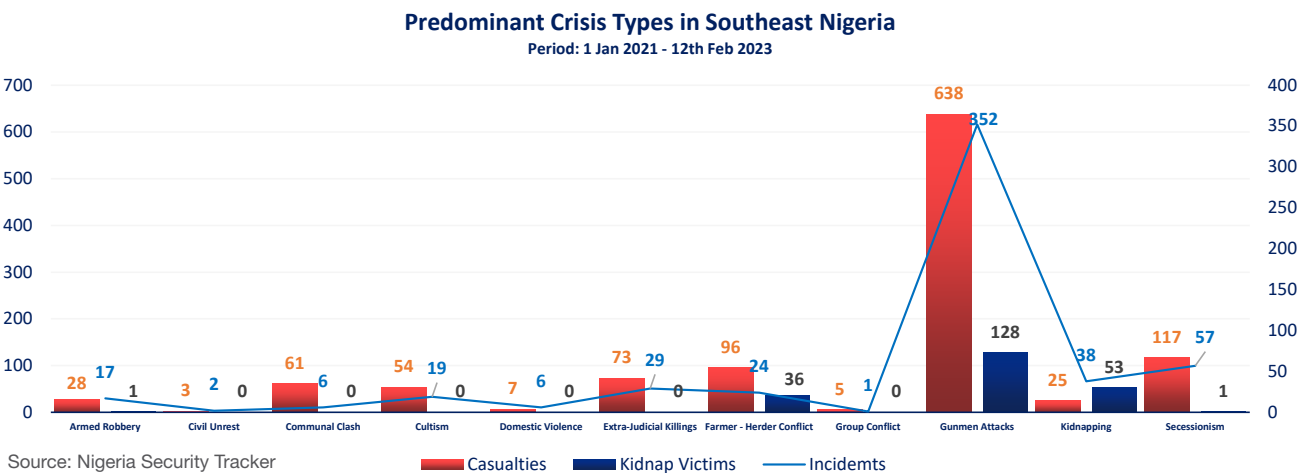
Possibility of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

- Highly contested election with allegations of rigging or voters’ suppression
- Increased attacks and prevalence of arms and armed groups in the region
- Refusal of a political party to accept election results
- Unmanaged inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech via social media
- Polarisation of communities along religious, ethnic and cultural lines by politicians, traditional, religious, and community leaders
- Police Brutality

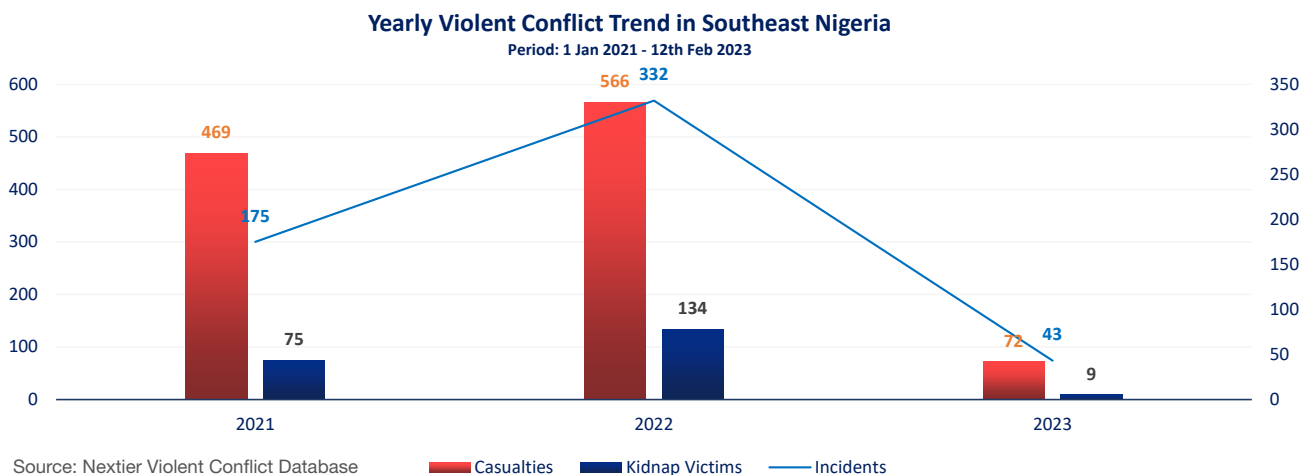
2.4 Southeast Nigeria

Southeast region will partake in the 2023 general elections amidst unending violence perpetrated by suspected members of separatist groups, gunmen, hoodlums, cult gangs and other criminal associations. The region is currently one of Nigeria’s most troubled hotbeds, after decades of relative stability, according to tracked data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database.

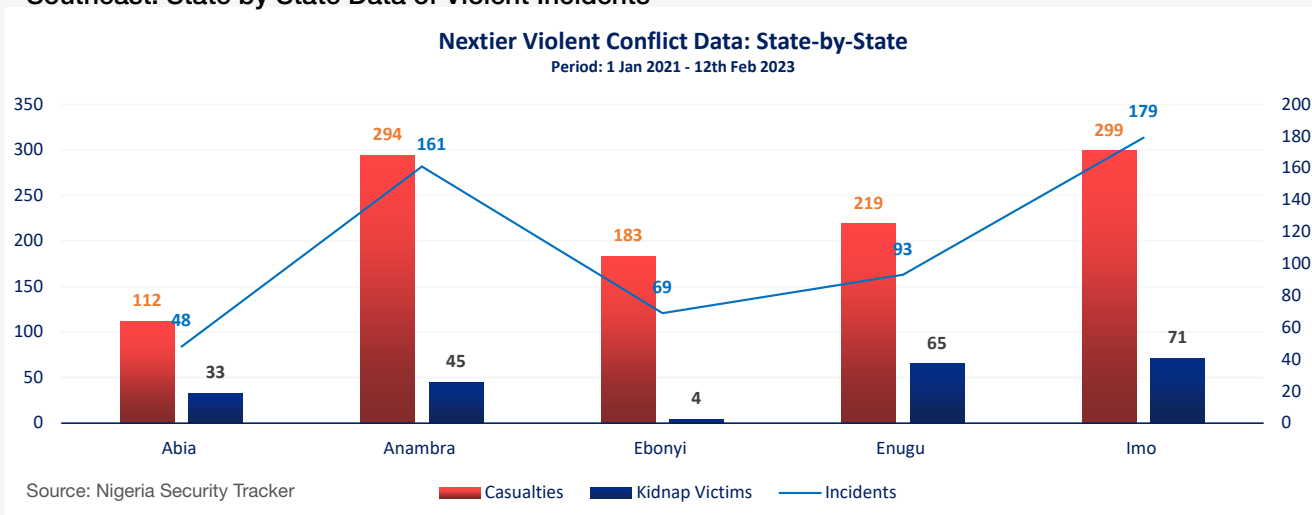
Predominant Crisis Types in Southeast Nigeria



Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database



Southeast: State by State Data of Violent Incidents



How violence may be deployed during the polls

- Announcement and enforcement of sit-at-home orders
- Political assassinations
- Intimidation and attacks on electoral officers and voters
- Arson attacks on INEC facilities and election materials
- The weaponisation of existing group tensions – separatist agitations, farmer-herders, inter-communal violence, etc
- Deployment of non-state armed groups to cause violence
- Militarisation of the polls, including security agencies’ partisanship, voter/electoral officers’ suppression, and assault
- Increased activities of existing violent actors during the polls
- Hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from Social media platform can led to offline violence

Possibilities of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

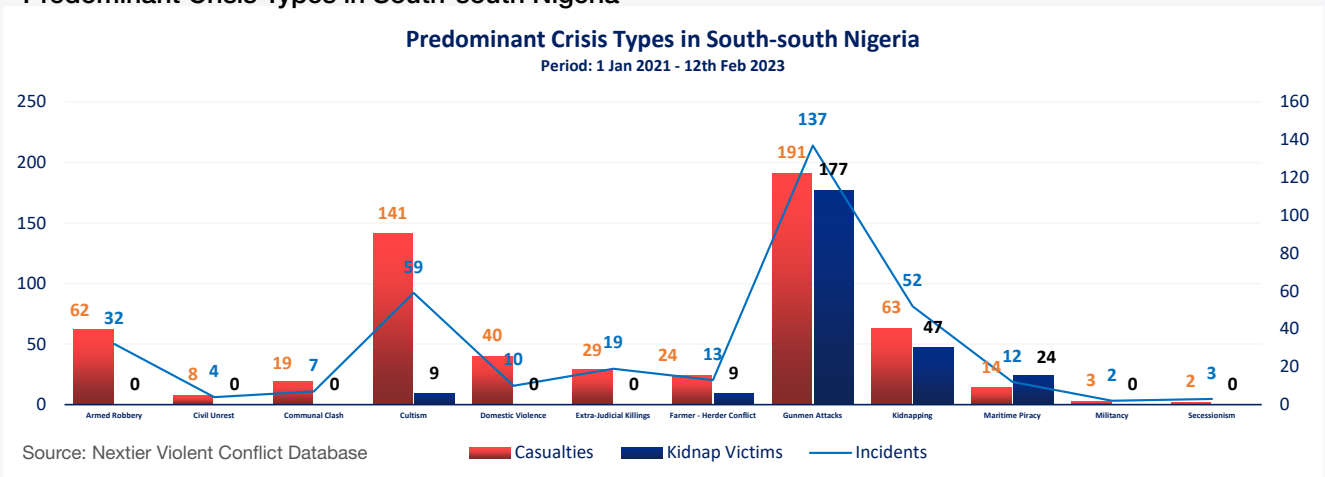
- Heightened secessionist sentiments

- Unmet electoral expectations
- Security agencies' high-handedness, brutality, suppression and partisanship
- Inciteful remarks from the political class, traditional, religious and community leaders, including other influential people
- Breakdown of law and order – assault, arson attacks, looting, destruction of public and private infrastructure
- Voter apathy, distrust in the electoral process, government

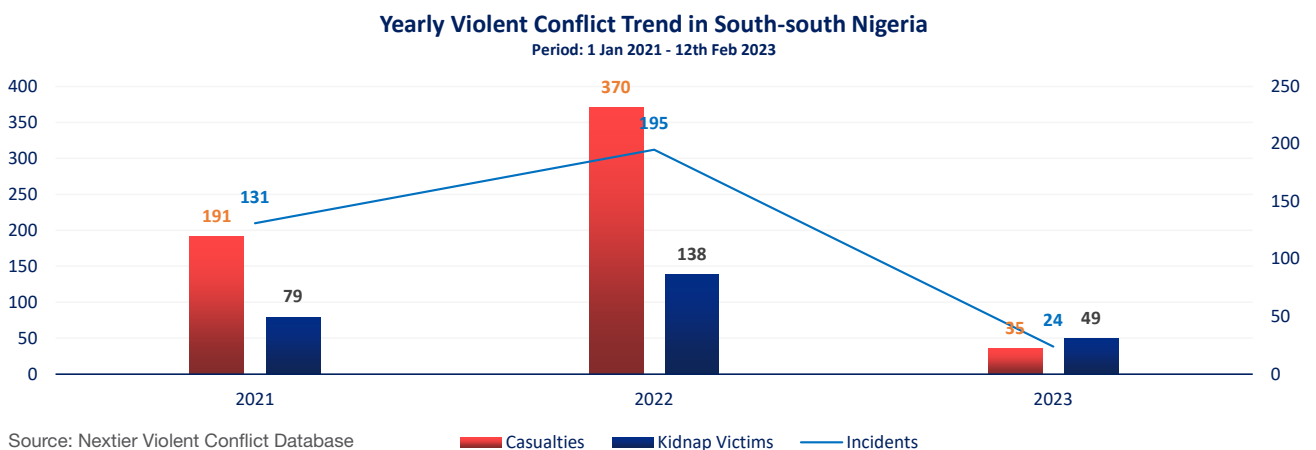
2.5 South-south Nigeria

Despite ongoing chaos in this part of the country such as rise in kidnapping, cult group activities and political thuggery, the South-south region will be voting in the 2023 general elections. However, these existing and emerging conflicts in the region may cause an uproar of violence in the coming elections.

Predominant Crisis Types in South-south Nigeria



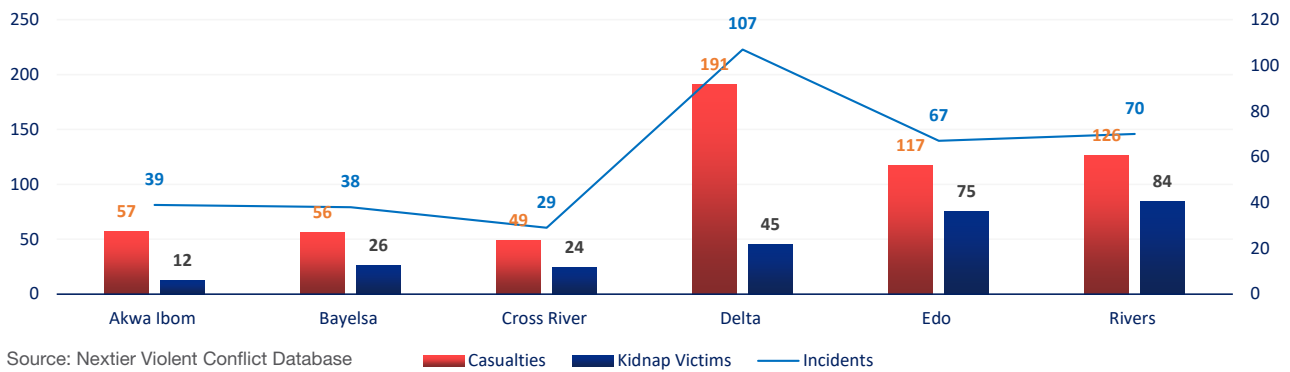
Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database



South-south: State-by-State Data of Violent Incidents

Nextier Violent Conflict Data: State-by-State

Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



How violence may be deployed during the polls

- Harassment from militants, ex-militants, and political thugs and state-backed groups
- Harassment from cult groups
- Civil unrest
- Extrajudicial killing

Possibilities of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

- Rigging
- Vote buying
- Intimidation by the opposing parties
- Voters Suppression
- Inciteful and hate speech
- Bias on the part of the electorate

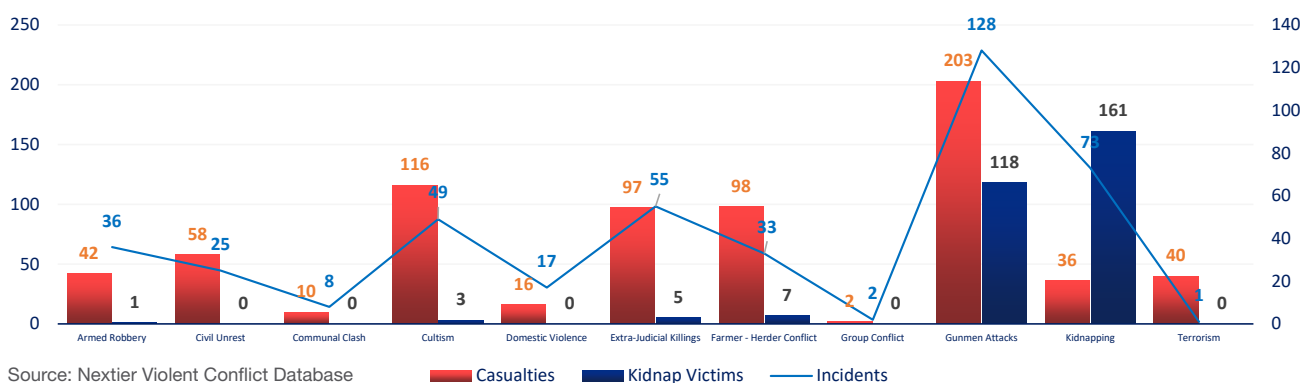
2.6 Southwest Nigeria

Southwest Nigeria has had its fair share of violent conflicts ravaging Nigeria. These existing conflicts may pose a significant threat to the elections in this region.

Predominant Crisis Types in Southwest Nigeria

Predominant Crisis Types in Southwest Nigeria

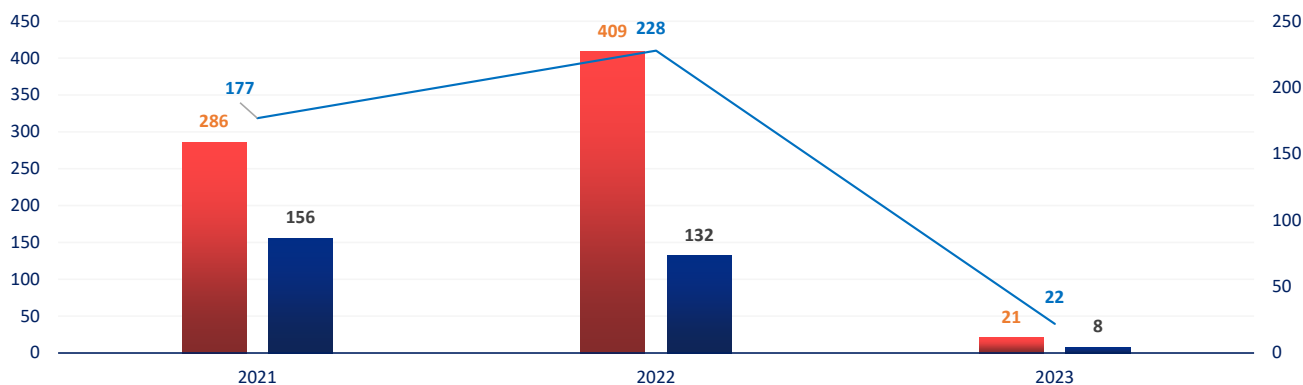
Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



Current Trends from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Yearly Violent Conflict Trend in Southwest Nigeria

Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



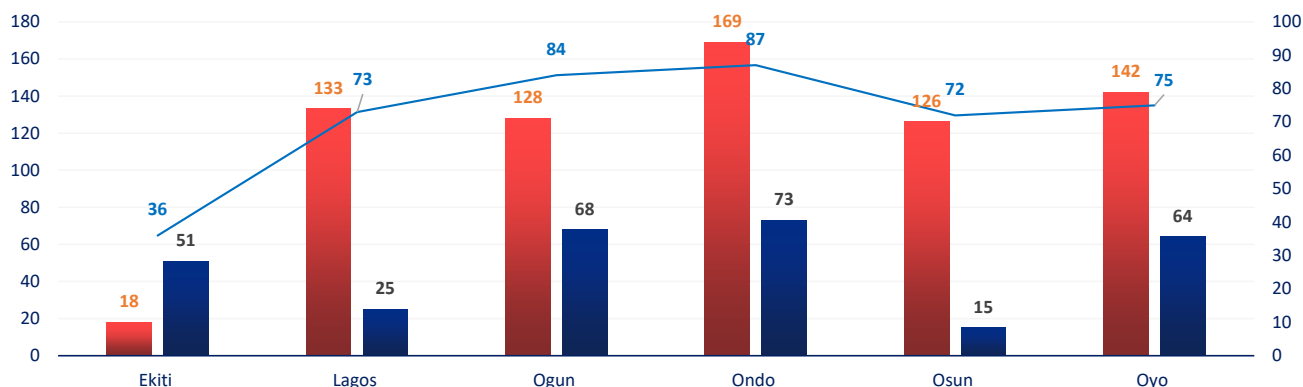
Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Casualties Kidnap Victims Incidents

Southwest: State-by-State Data of Violent Incidents

Nextier Violent Conflict Data: State-by-State

Period: 1 Jan 2021 - 12th Feb 2023



Source: Nextier Violent Conflict Database

Casualties Kidnap Victims Incidents

How violence may be deployed during the polls

- Intimidation and suppression of electorates and INEC officials
- Weaponisation of existing and potential actors like cult gangs, hoodlums, political thugs, and campaign members.
- Unrest between party and candidate supporters
- The tension between identity groups
- Suppression of the voters or INEC officials could delay voting materials and make polling units inaccessible to the electorates.
- Hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from Social media platform can led to offline violence.

Possibilities of post-election violence (causes and consequences)

- Unmet electoral expectations
- Perceptions of INEC's bias and incompetence
- Voter suppression and intimidation
- Perceptions of electoral malpractice
- Deployment of thugs and hoodlums
- Public incitement and inflammatory statements by the political class and other influential people.



3.0 Election-related Violent Incidents

Nigeria has a history of electoral violence in previous election cycles, and this 2023 election cycle is no different. Cases of election-related violence have been recorded across regions in the country. Gunmen killed a Labour Party (LP) senatorial candidate in Enugu state on Wednesday, 22nd February 2023. In January 2023, thugs attacked the All Progressive Congress (APC) campaigners in Rivers state. Also, in January 2023, 10 people were mangled, and scores were injured as members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressive Congress (APC) engaged in a fierce battle in Osun state. In Lagos state, supporters of LP’s presidential candidate were reportedly attacked by hoodlums during a rally in February 2023. Up north, 74 people were hospitalised, and 70 vehicles were damaged as thugs attacked the PDP’s December 2023 presidential campaign in Maiduguri, Borno state. In Zamfara state, PDP and APC accused each other of masterminding political violence, leaving one dead and 18 others injured. There have also been instances where INEC personnel and facilities have been attacked by assailants, especially in Imo, Enugu, Anambra, Osun, Ogun, and Ebonyi states. The likelihood of continued violence during and after the polls cannot be dismissed.

State Actors	Non-State Actors (region(s))	Potential Actors during the Polls
Political office holders	Armed robbers, gunmen kidnappers, assassins, ritualists and other organised crime syndicates	Identity-based groups

State Actors	Non-State Actors (region(s))	Potential Actors during the Polls
Formal security agencies	Bandits	Traditional, religious and community leaders
State-backed Vigilante Groups (Hisbah, Hunters' group, Amotekun, Ebubeagu, Yan Banga, LNSC)	Farmers and herders	Electorates/voters & youth groups
	Cult gangs	Government officials, including political office holders
	Militants (South-south)	Formal security agencies and state-backed vigilante groups
	Terrorists/Insurgents (Northeast, Northcentral, Northwest and Southwest)	Political parties, supporters, campaign organisations, candidates and thugs
	Separatist Groups (Southeast, Southwest and South-south)	Informal sector groups such as transport workers, market associations, etc.
	Hoodlums, organised and unorganised mobs	Community/ethnic militias
	Political thugs	
	Community/ethnic militias	

State Actors: State actors that are inclined to deploy violence.

Non-State Actors: Non-state actors that are inclined to deploy violence.

Potential Actors: State and Non-State actors that are inclined to deploy violence during the polls.



4.0 Potentially Risky Local Government Areas (LGAs)

S/N	Region	States	Potentially Risky Local Government Areas (LGAs)
1.	Northcentral	Benue	Guma, Logo, Makurdi, Ukum, Gwer West
		FCT	Abaji, Bwari, Kwali
		Kogi	Lokoja, Ofu, Okene
		Kwara	Ilorin West, Moro, Ilorin South, Ekiti
		Nasarawa	Keana, Nasarawa Eggon, Akwanga
		Niger	Shiroro, Rafi, Lapai, Munya, Mariga
		Plateau	Bassa, Jos North, Mangu, Bokkos, Jos South
2.	Northeast	Adamawa	Yola North
		Bauchi	Alkaleri, Bauchi, Bogoro
		Borno	Bama, Damboa, Biu, Dikwagubio, Chibok
		Gombe	Billiri
		Taraba	Gassol, Bali, Jalingo
		Yobe	Gujba

S/N	Region	States	Potentially Risky Local Government Areas (LGAs)
3.	Northwest	Jigawa	Guri
		Kaduna	Chikun, Birnin Gwari, Igabi, Giwa, Kajuru
		Kano	Ungogo, Nassarawa
		Katsina	Jibia, Faskari, Kankara, Funtua
		Kebbi	Danko/Wasagu, Augie
		Sokoto	Sabon Birni, Goronyo, Rabah
		Zamfara	Gusau, Maru, Tsafe, Bungudu
4	Southeast	Abia	Umunneochi, Aba South, Aba North, Ohafia
		Anambra	Ihiala, Aguata, Nnewi South, Idemili North
		Ebonyi	Onicha, Izzi, Abakaliki, Ikwo, Ishielu
		Enugu	Isi Uzo, Nkanu East, Igbe Eze North
		Imo	Oguta, Orlu, Mbaitoli, Okigwe, Orsu, Ideato North
5.	South-South	Akwa Ibom	Mkpat-Enin
		Bayelsa	Yenagoa, Ogbia
		Cross River	Calabar Municipal
		Delta	Sapele, Ughelli North, Ethiope West, Warri South
		Edo	Etsako West, Ovia North East
		Rivers	Emohua, Portharcourt, Obio-Akpor, Ahoada East
6.	Southwest	Ekiti	Ikole, Oye
		Lagos	Alimosho, Lagos Island, Kosofe, Surulere, Ojo
		Ogun	Abeokuta North, Obafemi Owode, Sagamu, Ifo
		Ondo	Ose, Akoko North West, Akoko North East
		Osun	Osogbo, Ilesah East, Ilesha
		Oyo	Iseyin, Surulere

5.0 Likely Winners and Losers if there is Violence

The scenario-building model (table below) estimates the likely outcomes if there is electoral violence or the absence of it in the regions. It relies significantly on candidates' states' of origin and perceived strong support bases, as suggested by recent polls by [Nextier](#), Bloomberg, ANAP and Stears. It is a rigorous attempt to understand who gains or losses in the event of violence across the regions and states. These scenarios also indicate motives to deploy violence.

S/N	Scenarios/Impact	Benefactors	Losers
1.	Violence leading to heightened voter apathy as part of voter suppression	Political contenders with a weak support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions	Political contenders with the region as its strong support base and/or origin
2.	Violence leading to the cancellation of votes	Political contenders with a weak support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions	Political contenders with the region as its strong support base and/or origin
3.	No violence + high voter turnout	Political contenders with the region as its strong	Political contenders with a weak

S/N	Scenarios/Impact	Benefactors	Losers
		support base and/or origin	support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions
4.	No violence + no cancellation of votes	Political contenders with the region as its strong support base and/or origin	Political contenders with a weak support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions
5.	Increased militarisation (high-handedness) may lead to low voter turnout, as a high-security presence may indicate the possibility of shootouts or face-offs with armed gangs.	Political contenders with a weak support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions	Political contenders with the region as its strong support base
6.	Increased militarisation may also lead to high voter turnout as voters feel safer due to a security presence.	Political contenders with a strong support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions	Political contenders with a weak support base in the region and favourable bases in other regions



6.0 Recommendations

Some recommendations to stabilise violent hotspots in Nigeria go beyond the election cycle, as it is government's statutory obligation to protect its citizens. Furthermore, some recommendations for violence-free elections overlap across regions due to similar crisis types, actors, motives, regions' realities and responses. However, there are distinct features requiring tailored solutions for sustainable results.

6.1 Northcentral Nigeria

The security situation in the Northcentral region could influence the turnout of the forthcoming general elections. Violent spots and previous trends in electoral violence provide insight into the election scene. Furthermore, current security realities and past cases of electoral violence is a clarion call to initiate adequate measures for ensuring free, fair and credible elections in Northcentral Nigeria. Thus, certain factors like increased security presence in identified violent spots could protect INEC officials and the electorate and consequently improve voter turnout, thus reducing political apathy. Furthermore, the identification and prosecution of political leaders inciting the public could serve as a deterrent to others. Therefore, the following recommendations will help manage security threats and enable a smooth outing:

- INEC should maintain professionalism and neutrality so as not to fuel perceptions of bias and compromise
- Security agencies should not allow themselves to be used as agents of voter suppression and other forms of electoral violence
- Religious, traditional and community leaders should admonish their audience on peaceful polls and best practices
- Political candidates and parties should also ensure best practices and resist from making inciteful comments that can heat up the polity leading to violence.

- Security agencies should work with Social Media platforms to pull down posts capable of inciting violence.

6.2 Northeast Nigeria

The Northeast securitisation is a complicated knot. However, beyond the elections, the Nigerian state must continue its stabilisation efforts in the region. Specifically, election security should ensure the following:

- The government must increase counter-terrorism efforts in the region to weaken and immobilise terrorists from carrying out attacks before, during, and after the elections.
- To ensure the safety of voters, officials, and electoral materials, security agencies must deploy additional officers to flashpoints and encourage inter-security agency collaboration. This effort will improve voter confidence and turnout.
- The government must massively mobilise and partner stakeholders in the region to advocate for peaceful elections. The government and stakeholders should enlighten the voting populace on the consequences of electoral violence as stipulated in the electoral act.
- Security agencies should work with Social Media platforms to pull down posts capable of inciting violence.

6.3 Northwest Nigeria

Since December 2022, there has been a reduction in banditry attacks in the Northwest region. However, the region's existing security challenges could potentially provide fertile ground for violent escalation, but the likelihood and severity of violence will depend on the level of tension, measures to address insecurity, transparency, and fairness of the electoral process. Therefore, the following recommendations apply:

- The government should work with security agencies to ensure adequate security measures are in place before, during, and after the elections. This includes intensifying securitisation efforts in the region. There is a need for professional conduct by security personnel and strict neutrality in the electoral process.
- INEC should ensure that the electoral process is impartial and that election rules and regulations are enforced without bias or discrimination.
- Politicians and their party agents should engage in peaceful campaigning by avoiding aggressive or inflammatory language and focusing on issues and policies rather than personal attacks.
- Politicians and traditional/religious leaders should promote tolerance and respect for diversity by speaking out against hate speech, discrimination, and violence. They should also encourage inclusivity and dialogue between different groups to help build trust and understanding.
- Politicians should concede defeat gracefully and accept the election's outcome. They should also encourage their supporters to do the same and avoid any actions that could lead to unrest or violence.
- Security agencies should work with Social Media platforms to pull down posts capable of inciting violence.

6.4 Southeast Nigeria

Given the 2023 general elections and existing security challenges, the Southeast zone is

complicated. There is a worrisome mix of renewed and fierce separatist agitations, insecurity, criminality and rising political consciousness among the youth. Therefore, the possibility of tensions leading to electoral violence, militarisation or over-securitisation of the polls is high. There is a need for INEC, security agencies, political blocs and the region's residents to apply caution in the discharge of statutory duties and expression of civic rights. Perceptions and instances of abuse and compromise may be the tipping point of electoral violence.

The recommendations are as follows:

- Adequate security provisions in the region
- Professionalism of security agencies deployed for election security
- Deploying counternarratives of “sit-at-home” orders and rumours
- Integrity of INEC officials to minimise perceptions of compromise
- Online and offline sensitisation campaigns on best practices during the polls
- Security agencies should work with Social Media platforms to pull down posts capable of inciting violence especially from group threatening voters in the region not to participate in the election
- Proper investigation on who is funding and fuelling some of the attacks on political opponents.

6.5 South-south Nigeria

Electoral violence is recurrent in every election in the South-south region, especially in Edo, Bayelsa and Rivers states. Although there are possibilities of a violent election, measures are being put in place to ensure the safety of voters in the election. Given the region's history of electoral and gang-related violence, the following recommendations apply:

- Adequate security provisions in the identified hotspots and other areas
- Prosecution of political elites deploying gangs for electoral violence
- Prioritisation of voters' and electoral officers' safety during the polls
- Close monitoring of activities of cult-gang groups often used by politicians

6.6 Southwest Nigeria

Some Southwest states, especially Lagos, have a history of electoral violence. The state also has the highest voting population in the upcoming polls. Hence, elections are likely to be fiercely contested. Therefore, INEC should ensure that all processes are carried out transparently, and security agencies should ensure maximum security of the electorate against the existing non-state actors and potential actors. Given that Lagos state is a choice destination for many Nigerians outside of the southwest zone, it accommodates several tribes, which leaves the state with a chance of identity-related violence during the polls. To prevent any occurrence of violence, the following recommendations should be adopted:

- Adequate and impartial securitisation processes and protocols
- INEC should maintain neutrality, professionalism and integrity during the voting processes in order not to fan perceptions of compromise or group hate
- Previous election hotspots and where violence has been recorded during recent campaigns should be effectively securitised and monitored.
- Deployment of enough security agencies to areas prone to attack by political thugs as witnessed in the 2019 Presidential elections. These are areas occupied mainly by Nigerians from other geo-political regions.



Conclusion

The world will watch while Africa's most populous nation goes to the polls, which many argue is a make or mar moment. This is given the socio-economic and security issues millions of Nigerians have to battle with daily and the predictions of sliding towards "state failure". Hence, like most democracies, and mainly, elections, it is a time for the voting public to choose leaders that will champion their course, protect them and set the enabling environment for actualising individual and collective objectives. A free, fair, credible and violence-free election driven by technology is paramount as Nigerians exercise their franchise. Therefore, there is a collective need for the government and citizens to ensure safety during and beyond the election cycle. The highlighted conflict types, actors and hotspots could pose significant threats to peaceful polls. However, all stakeholders' proactive and tactical efforts will help prevent election violence.

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