

# Policyweekly

## Post-election Revival of Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria



### Policy Recommendations

- 1** The Federal Government should prioritize enhanced policing to manage national security challenges.
- 2** Government should engage with civic groups to break down barriers to direct dialogue.
- 3** Adopting strategic communication engagement approaches can lead to lasting peace.
- 4** Special provisions need to be made to protect vulnerable communities from resource conflicts.

### Introduction

As Nigeria's general election approached in 2023, there was a substantial reduction in insecurity in the country. However, in the month of March 2023, after the presidential and governorship elections, there was a resumption of insecurity such as the farmer-herder conflict (Benue, Oyo), gun men attack (Imo, Lagos, Adamawa, Delta, Nasarawa, Kogi) banditry and Kidnapping (Zamfara, Kaduna), cultism (Ekiti, Enugu). What could have paused the violence for a while and allowed the elections to take place and resume after that? Perhaps, some of the factors could be a more conscious deployment of security forces and the hope of inclusion by aggrieved groups through elections. This temporary compromise may be explained as an opportunity for the failing Nigerian state to withdraw from the edge or a negotiated ceasefire to enable the dominant elite's political wing to formalise their state capture through elections before the resumption of anarchy. In this edition of Nextier Policy Weekly, we reflect on the post-election resurgence of violence vis a vis the

relative peace before and during the 2023 general election.

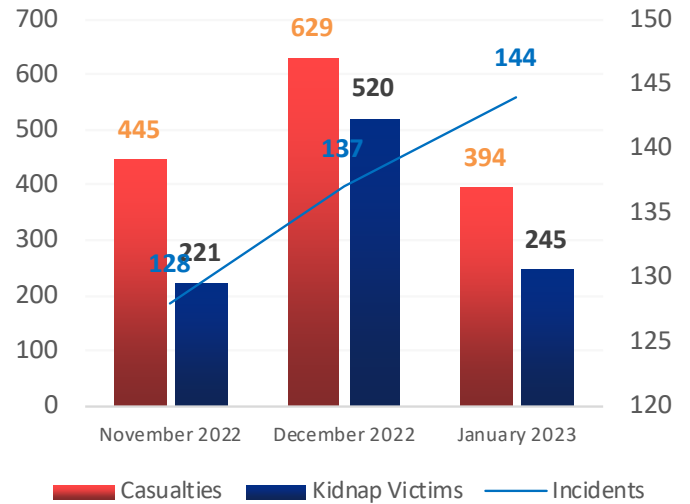
**The Situation Before the Election**

As the country drew near to the general election, there were apprehensions about whether the ballot would genuinely take place because of the state of insecurity in the country. For instance, a terror group attacked Nigeria’s foremost military training institution, the [Nigerian Defence Academy](#) and successfully killed two officers and abducted one in 2021. Inspired with bravado from this earlier success, the terrorists set off for another armed attack on the same institution in February 2022, but were [annihilated in their second attempt](#). In a separate incident on March 2022, bandits ambushed a train travelling from Kaduna to Abuja, killed about eight passengers and kidnapped 168 others (Nextier, 2023). Also, in June 2022, 50 Phone dealers in Zamfara State were kidnapped on their way to the State capital (Nextier, 2023). In September 2022, there was a heavy armed attack on [Kuje correctional facility](#) in Abuja by ISWAP terrorists (a breakaway faction of Boko Haram to free their detained members). The attack led to the escape of 800 inmates from the correctional facility. In fact, as the election approached, one of the terrorist groups in Kaduna State, the Ansaru, took over some communities and banned political activities in the Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. This ban took place during the voter registration exercise.

Nextier Annual Review of Nigeria’s Violent Conflicts recorded 78 incidents of farmer-herder violence across Nigeria in 2022, with 436 casualties. Apart from death resulting in this violence, the destruction of properties and attacks on communities led to the forced exit of several communities to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in most of Benue State. This development was expected to have implications for participation in the 2023 elections as most people who registered in their areas of regular habitation would be unable to access such areas or vote due to conflicts.

Secessionist activities, mainly in the South East and slightly in the South-South of Nigeria, recorded 44 incidents and 70 casualties in 2022 (Nextier, 2023). The leading secessionist group in the South East, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), had since 2021 imposed a compulsory sit-at-home on Mondays in the entire South East following the arrest of their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Not only that this sit-at-home protest has led to an estimated economic loss of four trillion Naira, but also there have been very potent threats of applying the same kind of protest to undermine elections in the South East of Nigeria. Before the governorship election in Anambra state both in [2017](#) and [2021](#), IPOB had threatened to impose their unique style of protest to undermine the election. Indeed, the leader of a faction of the Indigenous People of Biafra, Mr. [Simon Ekpa](#) who is based in Finland, had declared a total sit-at-home in the South East as well as the exclusion of the South East from the 2023 general election. However, after a diplomatic engagement between the Federal Government in which the Ambassador for Finland was invited by Nigeria’s Foreign Minister, it appeared on the news that Mr. Ekpa was invited by the Finnish Police. Ultimately, the election was peaceful in the South East of Nigeria.

**Trend of Violent Conflict Before Elections (November 2022 - January 2023)**

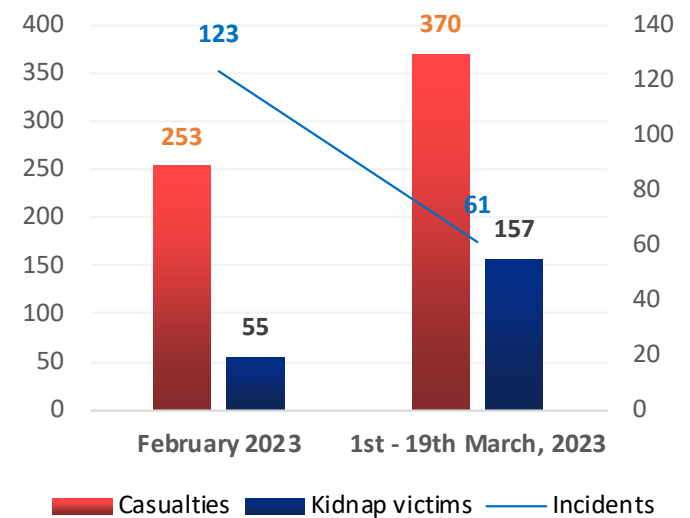


**Figure 1:** Trend of Violent Conflict Before Nigeria’s 2023 General Elections (November 2022 - January 2023).

**Prevalent Conflict Types:** *Armed Robbery, Banditry, Civil Unrest, Communal Clash, Cultism, Domestic Violence, Extra-Judicial Killings, Farmer - Herder Conflict, Gunmen Attacks, Kidnapping, Secessionism, Terrorism, and Thuggery.*

**Source:** Nextier Violent Conflict Database

**Trend of Violent Conflict During Elections (February - March [1st - 19th] 2023)**



**Figure 2:** Trend of Violent Conflict During Nigeria’s 2023 General Elections (February - March [1st - 19th] 2023).

**Prevalent Conflict Types:** *Armed Robbery, Banditry, Civil Unrest, Communal Clash, Cultism, Domestic Violence, Extra-Judicial Killings, Farmer - Herder Conflict, Gunmen Attacks, Kidnapping, Secessionism, Terrorism, and Thuggery.*

**Source:** Nextier Violent Conflict Database

**Post-election Violence and Analysis.**

The above crucial threats to the election, in addition to gunmen attacks, cultism, kidnapping and other sundry security challenges, were essential sources of fear that made Nigerians [doubt](#) whether the election could hold. Despite all the threats, the election period was characterised by a substantial suspension of security-threatening activities. The relative peace of those few weeks has come to an abrupt end with the revival of hostilities in several

states of the country. Renewed farmer-herder clashes have been reported in Benue state. Herders have in two different attacks, one in three communities of [Guma](#) Local Government Area and another in [Otukpo](#) Local Government Area, respectively killed 13 and 50 persons. Similarly, herdsmen numbering over twenty invaded Community Grammar School Alaropo Nla in Oriire Local Government Area, [Oyo State](#) with their cattle and injured students and teachers of the school with sword and machete.

In [Zamfara state](#), arrests had been carried out for incidences of cattle rustling, violence and banditry. Elsewhere in the North -West of Nigeria the Kagoro Chiefdom of Kaura Local Government Area in [Kaduna State](#) was subjected to violent terror attacks attributed to Fulani militia. The attack resulted in the death of 38 persons. Earlier in April 2023, a similar attack in Dabna, Hong Local Government in [Adamawa state](#), resulted in 3 fatalities. In [Kogi State](#), unknown gunmen attacked Aloko, a community in Oganenigu Ward of Dekina Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State, killing several persons and setting houses on fire.

Also, gun violence has gained renewed traction in the post-25th February 2023 elections. In [Imo State](#), five policemen and two couples who operated the restaurant where the officers went to eat were shot by gunmen about five weeks after the 2023 general elections. In [Lagos state](#), gunmen attacked a police team, killing one and recovering two rifles from them. A different nature of the same gun violence had been witnessed in [Nasarawa](#) State, where a former Deputy Governor was kidnapped.

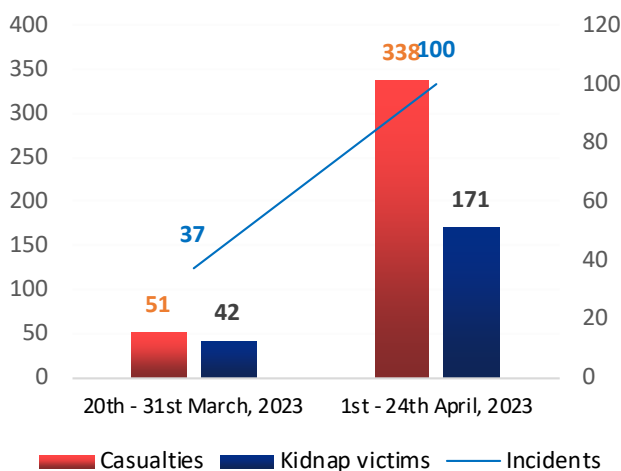
The question that this post-election revival of insecurity in Nigeria raises is whether there is a solution pathway which is not traveled but patronised during elections based on expedient requirements of politics. The first thing to be noted is that election period involves security planning, procurement, and deployment of the various arms of law enforcement agencies that are usually not directly involved in regular policing job. For instance, [404,106](#) security personnel were deployed for the election. This figure is combination of 310,973 police officers while the balance was sourced from complementary security agencies in the country. While more is needed for general security needs of the country, it surpasses the regular security deployments and would have added to stemming the activities of groups that menace security in the country. In this regard, the acute under-policing of the Nigerian security space stands out. It is, therefore, tempting to think that the short-term result connects with the kind of priority that security is given during elections.

The second proposition is that there could be some behind the scene conversation with various actors that hamper national security. There is no official information from the government in this regard. However, influential groups within the state could take on such responsibility. As the Anambra State election was approaching in November 2021, with a planned sit-at-home by the IPOB, [Ohanaeze](#), the apex Igbo sociocultural organisation, had to plead with the group to allow peaceful election in the state. The same plea was made with IPOB for the 2023 general election. However, when the faction of IPOB led by Mr Ekpa became recalcitrant, the Council of Traditional Rulers in the South East issued a statement that people must ignore them and participate in the vote.

While these actions combined with the state level diplomacy with Finland to guarantee peace for the election, it is not sure that the government made any post-election plan to sustain peace in terms of whatever it had done to achieve it in the imminence of and during the election. More than likely, this gap is what the recrudescence of gunmen attacks, [kidnapping](#), banditry, and ethnically targeted attacks on vulnerable groups leverages.

**Trend of Violent Conflict After Elections**

(March [20th - 31st] - April [1st - 24th] 2023)



**Figure 3:** Trend of Violent Conflict After Nigeria's 2023 General Elections (March [20th - 31st] - April [1st - 24th] 2023).

**Prevalent Conflict Types:** *Armed Robbery, Banditry, Civil Unrest, Communal Clash, Cultism, Domestic Violence, Extra-Judicial Killings, Farmer - Herder Conflict, Gunmen Attacks, Kidnapping, Secessionism, Terrorism, and Thuggery.*

**Source:** Nextier Violent Conflict Database

**Recommendations**

Based on the above reflections, one recommends that:

1. The Federal Government should make it a priority to enhance the penetrative power of the state through adequate policing both in number of personnel, quality of training and deployment, update of operational logistics and responsiveness to security challenges. If a little improvement in enhanced deployment during elections could make temporary changes, then improved and sustained improvement on deployment would be one pathway to managing national security challenges.
2. Civic groups like sociocultural organisations

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and traditional rulers are important community gate-keepers that the government could align with to engage with groups that operate within their cultural jurisdiction. Perhaps, the direct dialogue the state is evading with some of the groups could be brokered by these gate-keepers if properly engaged.

3. If momentary engagement during the elections could yield momentary peace, it is therefore a clue that strategic communication engagement can go further than any kinetic approach.
4. The communities like the Southern Kaduna area, Benue State and other zones in which resource conflicts is driven by ethnic dynamics should be specially designated as endangered. Therefore, special provisions in terms of properly trained security personnel in adequate numbers and security facilities need to be provided to protect them.

### Conclusion

The recently concluded general election in Nigeria took place in an atmosphere of greater tranquility than popular anxiety anticipated before the election. The various aspects of insecurity and the groups behind them tended to stop momentarily. After the election, insecurity has resumed. This policy brief therefore explores what happened during the election

to mitigate the security challenged. The measures taken during the election included, enhancement of security deployment, the intervening role of civic organisations and community gate-keepers as well as government's diplomatic engagement with external sources of support to insecurity. By giving sustained thrust to these measures, insecurity could be reasonably mitigated in the country.

### Reference

Nextier. (2023). 2022 Annual review of Nigeria's violent conflict profile. [https://thenextier.com/2022-annual-review-of-nigerias-violent-conflict-situation/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=2022-annual-review-of-nigerias-violent-conflict-situation](https://thenextier.com/2022-annual-review-of-nigerias-violent-conflict-situation/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=2022-annual-review-of-nigerias-violent-conflict-situation)

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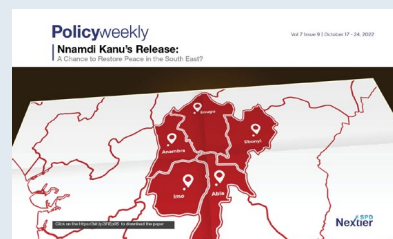
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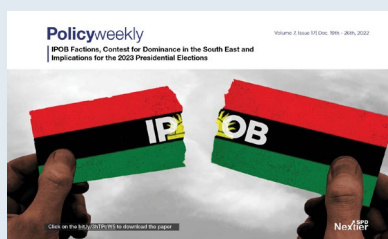
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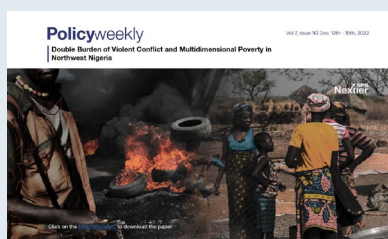
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