

# Governing Ungoverned Spaces

## Policy Recommendations

1. Nigeria should insist on the implementation of all the conditions attached to ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and services.
2. The foreign security force should be tactfully dislodged, to avoid the force going underground or taking out their frustration on the locals.
3. Local communities should be engaged to gather intelligence for conflict-prone regions and ungoverned spaces.
4. Nigerian security operatives need to be better trained and equipped to respond to internal security threats, as well as instituting a [local vigilante group](#) that it will train and monitor.
5. Government should focus on the use of modern technology for reconnaissance especially of these ungoverned spaces.
6. Government presence is needed in every part of the country. [Border Communities Development Agency](#) build a database of such ungoverned spaces for special attention.
7. Special effort should be made to demobilise the local population that may have joined such group, and they should be under surveillance for a while.

Nextier SPD Policy Weekly provides an analysis of topical conflict, security, and development issues and proposes recommendations to address them. It is a publication of Nextier SPD.

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**A**s Nigerian security operatives contend ineffectually with the Boko Haram insurgency and herders-farmers conflicts, a band of dissident foreign guards has [emerged in Tangaza](#) Local Government Area of Sokoto State. This is coming at the time when the North-West has come under siege on account of banditry especially in the rural areas. Similarly, the North-Central remains on the edge following the internecine conflicts between [nomadic pastoralists and sedentary agriculturists](#) which have claimed [over 1,300 lives between January and July 2018](#). Ironically, the epicentres of these conflicts are difficult terrains including mountains, forests and rural settlements with little or no government presence. Efforts by security operatives to police these ungoverned spaces have been resisted by the violent non-state actors as evidenced by the [massacre of over 100 soldiers in Metele](#) on November 18 and the [Zamfara killing of 16 policemen](#) on November 29, 2018. Following these unwholesome developments, Nextier SPD Weekly Vol. 1 Issue 19 examines the security threats posed by [ungoverned spaces](#) and makes recommendations on how they can be addressed.

Despite the label of Islamic terrorism that has been stamped on the new group in Sokoto State, local opinion leaders have provided insight to their true identity and mission. The [foreign security guards](#), who are mainly of Fulani and Arab extraction, initially migrated to Niger Republic from Mali, Sudan and Libya. They were invited to Tangaza council area in September 2018 following the failure of the police to protect the rural communities from bandits, cattle rustlers and kidnappers. The success of the [guards in rescuing the kidnapped village head](#) and rustled cattle made the rural settlements to accommodate the guards, give them their daughters in marriage and pay stipends

to them. Following the warm reception and incentives, membership of the guards has [increased from about a dozen to over 200](#) because of new recruits who were rewarded with motorcycles after training. They have set up camps in the forests adjoining the [villages of Vasanina, Mana, and Marake on the Nigeria-Niger border](#). Having settled into the communities without questioning by state authorities, the armed guards have resorted to levy [taxes](#) on wealthy individuals especially cow owners under the guise of alms collection (Zakat) and fining of herders whose animals encroach on farmlands. Besides, they force the communities to accept their interpretation of Sharia laws and defaulters of the new tax regime and religious laws are subjected to punishment, such as flogging.

World-wide, insurgents, terrorists and other violent non-state actors have often capitalised on ungoverned spaces to establish havens and training camps for their nefarious activities. Indeed, the [Taliban in Afghanistan](#) and the [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia in Northern Ecuador](#) used mountains and forests respectively as their havens. The [Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta](#) set up bases in the creeks in the violent campaign for control of oil resources and for environmental security. Until recently, Boko Haram terrorists relied on the [Sambisa forest](#) and [Gwoza mountains](#) to launch attacks against state and civilian targets. History and evidence point to the fact that these foreign security guards in Sokoto State will transform into an insidious group. There is need to consider a number of actions to forestall their transformation into another radical sect.

1. The Nigeria government, as a matter of urgency, should review its security architecture especially as it pertains to international border patrol. While



observing [ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and services](#), people coming into Nigeria from neighbouring states should show their identification as stipulated in the agreement and comply with all the demands in the protocol. Nigeria should work with its neighbouring countries to provide increased security at the borders. The government should provide the required resources even if it means obtaining support from multi-lateral agencies that are focused on improving security in the region.

2. The foreign security guards should be peacefully dislodged; not by force, but with tact, patience, and painstaking effort. Any repressive force could make them go underground, take out their frustration on local populations, or turn violent against the state.
3. The government should provide the right incentives to partner with local communities to gather intelligence for conflict-prone regions and ungoverned spaces. Nextier principals are working on a similar project for pipeline surveillance in the Niger Delta. The firm is creating a technology solution for collating intelligence and early warning signals that can be analysed and shared with Nigeria's security agencies to forestall any conflicts.
4. Nigerian security operatives, especially, the police need to be better trained and equipped to respond more proactively and speedily to internal security threats. Incidentally, the local leaders of Tangaza communities had resorted to foreign guards' assistance on account of the inability of the police to protect them. Given its resource constraints, Nigeria Police Force can consider instituting a [local vigilante group](#) that it will train and monitor.
5. Nigeria should ensure adequate security and protection of its territorial space through effective mobilisation of its security operatives and the use

of modern technology to monitor its expanse land, sea and aerial borders to stop the annexation of its space as ungoverned territories by miscreants and insurgents. Given limited resources, government should focus on the use of technology for reconnaissance especially of these ungoverned spaces.

6. Government at all levels should target such areas with no government presence for infrastructural development such as construction of mass housing projects, major road projects, agricultural projects and industrial zone. This should reduce urban congestion, as well as the tendency of criminal groups to use such safe havens. Government agencies like the newly established [Border Communities Development Agency](#) should work on building a database of such ungoverned spaces for special government attention.
7. Special effort should be made to demobilise the local population that may have joined the group. The few local people in Tangaza communities, who have been trained, armed and maybe radicalised should to be demobilised and reintegrated into the communities and placed under surveillance for some time.

Nigeria's ungovernable spaces continue to grow by the day as the presence of government continue to recede to state capitals and major cities, thereby leaving most rural areas desolate and with no government control. In the absence of formal authority and in many cases recognised informal authorities, non-state actors, especially those with insurgent ideology, have risen and are holding sway. More importantly, Nigeria should stop waiting for rebel groups to emerge, grow and fester before trying to handle the situation. Finally, there is need to leverage technology to establish a local network for intelligence gathering. This option is more effectual and cost-effective especially in the face of declining government resources.