

# Policyweekly

## Security Challenges Before Nigeria's Incoming Administration



(Photo credit: [Africanexaminer.com](https://www.africanexaminer.com))

### Policy Recommendations

- 1 The Nigerian state should sustain the ongoing fight against non-state armed groups across the country.
- 2 The capacity of security agencies in charge of border security should be strengthened through training, interagency collaboration and the provision of cutting-edge border security equipment.
- 3 Nigeria should sustain support for and deepen collaboration with regional security frameworks and institutions.
- 4 The incoming administration should support peace talks in warring countries across the region.
- 5 The incoming administration should support the conflict early warning system.

### Introduction

On the 29th of May, 2023, a new administration will be inaugurated to captain the affairs of Nigeria for the next four years. The incoming administration will be confronted by the growing internal and regional security challenges threatening the stability of the Nigerian state. Internally, the new administration will be challenged by banditry in the North West, insurgency by [Boko Haram](#) and the [Islamic State West Africa Province \(ISWAP\)](#) in the North East and parts of North Central, farmer-herder menace in the North Central and parts of South West, the menace of unknown gunmen and separatist agitation in the South East, crude oil theft and connected militancy in the South-South. At the regional level, terrorist activities, civil wars, and political instabilities across the Sahel threaten security with negative implications for internal security in Nigeria. The growing activities of jihadist insurgents in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso have the tendency to establish stronger cross-border links with insurgents and bandits operating in Nigeria to worsen the security situation in the country. The political instabilities connected to recent coups and

counter-coups in Chad, Mali, and Burkina Faso and the ongoing [war in Sudan](#) may unleash large cache of weapons, ammunition, and armed fighters, which may be easily exploited by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) to further heinous activities in Nigeria and across the region.

Ahead of the May 29th, 2023 inauguration, this edition of Nextier SPD Policy Weekly reflects on the security challenges staring at the incoming administration in Nigeria, particularly on the possibilities of the growing regional security crises across the Sahel region coalescing with and exacerbating Nigeria's internal security challenges.

### Internal Security Challenges Before the Incoming Administration

Banditry is a key internal security challenge to confront the incoming administration. The 2022 Annual Review of Nigeria's Violent Conflict Situation Report by Nextier showed that in 2022, the North West alone experienced 349 incidents of banditry, in which 1,831 lives were lost. There were also 174 kidnap incidents in which 1,835 victims were kidnapped by bandits in the North West alone. Although the Nigerian military has been able to push back the insurgents in the North East and [the military has reported that there is no more any local government under the control of the insurgents](#), Boko Haram and ISWAP have continued to cause occasional harm in targeted communities across the North East. The 2022 Nextier's Violent Conflict Situation Report showed that the North East experienced 96 terrorism incidents with 1,001 casualties in 2022. Just recently, [in April 2023, at least 11 civilians were killed by Boko Haram when the sect successfully attacked Buni Gari in Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State](#). In the South East, criminal elements operating under the label of 'unknown gunmen' have taken advantage of the separatist agitation led by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to cause mayhem in the region. [On May 17th, 2023, unknown gunmen in Anambra State shot and killed at least four staff members from the US Embassy in Nigeria who were on humanitarian mission in the state](#). Across the North Central and parts of the North West, violent confrontations between farmers and herders have remained a source of insecurity in the regions. A report by Nextier showed that between 2015 and 2020, farmer-herder violence resulted in 1,800 fatalities in the Middle Belt region. The 2022 Nextier's Violent Conflict Situation Report revealed that in 2022 alone, there were 28 violent incidents linked to farmer-herder clashes, which resulted in 231 deaths in the North Central.

Apparently, despite efforts and successes by previous and outgoing administrations in tackling insecurity, Nigeria remains afflicted by various internal security challenges which drain human and material resources that should have been deployed to other development ventures. What is more, the increasing regional security challenges, fragilities and instabilities across the Sahel region have the tendencies to interact with and exacerbate these existing internal security crises, thereby making them more complex and intractable.

### Regional Security Challenges and Possibilities of Worsening Internal Security Challenges

In their seminal study, Buzan and Waever (2003) enunciated the theory of Regional Security Complex

(RSC) to explain how the security of a group of countries, usually sharing geographical proximity, are interlinked such that security threats in one country easily travel to other countries within the region. Again, the security problems of the countries cannot be reasonably resolved in isolation from one another. The Sahel exemplifies an RSC in which the securities of countries within the region are so interlinked that the security crisis in one country is easily transferred to the others. The Sahel region has been a cesspool of violent conflict. The [2023 Global Terrorism Index \(GTI\)](#) described the Sahel as the hotbed of terrorism. The [Lake Chad Basin and the Liptako-Gourma sub-regions in the Sahel have become epicentres of violence](#), with the activities of terror organisations causing havoc in the sub-regions. More so, the growing political instabilities in countries like Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as the exit of French and European forces from the countries, have continued to embolden terror organisations and other NSAGs operating in the Liptako-Gourma to [increase and expand their activities across the Sahel](#). For instance, the first two quarters of 2022 witnessed an increase in violence in the [Liptako-Gourma area, which spilt into coastal West Africa](#). Thus, the growing violence in the Liptako-Gourma area has the potential to scale up Nigeria's internal security crisis, particularly banditry and terrorism, if and when Nigerian-based armed groups are able to align with terror groups operating in the Liptako-Gourma area.

Furthermore, the ongoing violence in Sudan poses a security challenge to the incoming administration in Nigeria. Just like the experience with the [collapse of the Libyan state in 2011](#), the [violence in Sudan](#) has the potential to exacerbate the banditry and terrorism in Nigeria by unleashing large amounts of weapons and an army of fighters which the NSAGs in Nigeria could leverage to bolster their activities. The terror groups could exploit [Nigeria's porous borders](#) to move weapons and fighters in and out of the country. An Associate Professor of security studies at Federal University Lafia, Nigeria, warned that the war in Sudan could have a possible contagious effect in which warlords, mercenaries, and militias are encouraged to intervene in the national politics of Africa's embattled states including Nigeria (Personal Communication). The [war in Sudan could further destabilise the already fragile Sahel region by spilling into already violence-plagued countries such as Chad](#) which is Nigeria's close neighbour. Where this happens, the internal security in Nigeria will be threatened because terror groups such as ISWAP operating in the Lake Chad Basin would take advantage of the crisis in Chad to escalate violence. This view is shared by an expert in security studies who opined that the Sudan war could "destabilise the Chadian frontier of the volatile Sahel-Sahara strip by engendering aggravated incidences of arms proliferation and militia activism, which may complicate the existing crime-terror conundrums in the area extending to Northern Nigeria" (Personal Communication). Moreover, Sudan is already awash with arms, and a [large amount of these arms are in the hands of civilians](#). It is estimated that the [combined arms holdings among civilians and security forces in Sudan are currently at over three million](#). This proliferation of arms in Sudan is dangerous for the entire Sahel region as these arms could easily get into the hands of terror groups operating in various parts of the region, including Nigeria. The Sudan war could also trigger a refugee crisis which, according to a security expert, "may trigger the mass return of Sudanese of Nigerian roots whose population is estimated to be over five million. This is in addition

to other Sudanese, Nigerian and other countries' nationals, who may be displaced by the crisis" (Personal Communication).

### What Should the Incoming Administration Do?

For the incoming political administration to address the internal and regional security challenges threatening Nigeria's stability, the following recommendations are put forward.

1. **Sustain the fight against non-state armed groups in Nigeria:** the Nigerian state should sustain the ongoing fight against the various NSAGs across the country. The intelligence-gathering component of the fight should also be scaled up in order to enhance the effectiveness of military operations in the field. There is also a need to deepen soft approaches like social interventions across the operational areas of the NSAGs in order to reduce tacit supports the NSAGs may be getting from the communities. Dialogue should also be explored with low-risk groups such as farmers, herders, unarmed separatist agitators and militants.
2. **Deepen border security:** capacity of security agencies in charge of border security should be strengthened through training, interagency collaboration and the provision of cutting-edge border security equipment. To do this, the Nigerian government should collaborate with experienced indigenous firms and international development in the field of border security.
3. **Support regional security frameworks:** Nigeria should sustain support for and deepen collaboration with regional security frameworks and institutions such as the [Multinational Joint Task Force](#), [G5 Sahel](#), etc., in order to ensure terror groups are decimated across the region. Given Nigeria's current economic challenges, support and collaboration with such institutions should not be limited to funding but should emphasise intelligence sharing, joint operation and cooperation in other areas of counter-insurgency.
4. **Support peace talks in warring countries across the region:** the incoming administration should consider supporting ongoing peace talks and, where possible, initiate new ones with the warring factions across the Sahel region.
5. **Support the conflict early warning system:** the incoming administration should provide more support for the conflict early warning system for continuous evaluation of the trends in regional conflict with a view to understanding how such regional conflict may impact Nigeria's security. This can be done in collaboration with reputable research institutes and firms in the area of

peace, security and development. Therefore, the National Centre for the Coordination of Early Warning and response mechanism, now known as Office for Strategic Preparedness and Resilience (OSPRE), which was set up by President Buhari in 2022, should be given more financial and institutional support to deepen their roles and activities in line with the threats posed by conflicts like the Sudanese one.

### Conclusion

The incoming administration in Nigeria will be confronted by internal and regional security challenges. The regional security challenges have the potential to accentuate the internal security challenges due to the possibilities of NSAGs operating in Nigeria acquiring weapons from conflict zones, building alliances with NSAGs operating in conflicting zones, recruiting fighters from conflict zones etc. Thus, Nigeria's internal conflict should not be treated sui generis by the incoming administration. There is a need to approach them within the context of the growing regional security challenges by adopting measures aimed at addressing not just internal insecurity but also mitigating regional violence.

### References

- Buzan, B. & Waeber, O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nextier (2023). *2022 Annual Review of Nigeria's Violent Conflict Situation Insights from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database*. Abuja: Nextier.

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# Weekly Update



**Power Dialogue**



25th May 2023  
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM



Thought Pyramid, 18 Libreville Crescent, Wuse II, Abuja

## Vision 30:30:30

Accessing Finance for the Next Phase

82nd Edition

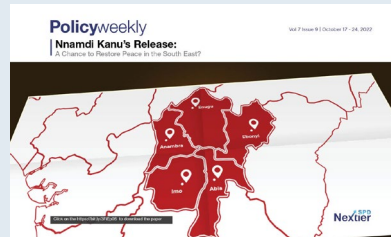


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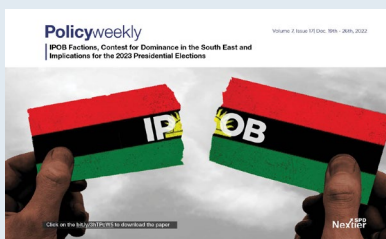
In recent years, the Global Terrorism Index has categorised Nigeria as one of the most terrorised countries in the world. Indeed, terrorist activities are pervasive across many regions of the country...



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