

Executive Summary

Understanding and Tackling Insecurity in Nigeria

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Nigeria is currently battling with generalised insecurity. With hardly any of its six geo-political zones spared from one form of insecurity or the other, Africa's most populous country and erstwhile bulwark of stability in the West African subregion is now practically under the gun on all fronts. The dispersed and growing insecurity in Nigeria, despite the best efforts of the gallant members of the country's security forces and increased budgetary provisions, will clearly play very high in the minds of politicians and voters as Nigeria approaches the landmark 2023 elections. Also at issue are a host of election-related concerns: whether elections will hold in some of the flashpoints; whether there will be adequate security in place to ensure the conduct of free, fair and credible polls; and how the outcome of the elections could impact post-election stability in the country.

For the current and future administrations in Nigeria, tackling growing insecurity is a critical and urgent task. It is of utmost existential significance to the citizens and the state itself. Without adequate security, the citizens cannot optimise their potentials. And with expanding insecurity, both the capacity and the legitimacy of the state get eroded. Securing life and property remains the primary responsibility of the state and the state enjoying the monopoly of violence remains the only safeguard against descent to anarchy. So, more than at any of the previous six general elections in the Fourth Republic, the state of security will be a major issue precisely because almost all parts of the country have been drawn into the frontlines. The theatre of insecurity was previously restricted to the North East, where some appreciable progress has been made against Boko Haram and its splinter groups.

The cumulative effect of the generalized insecurity is that the fear among Nigerians is palpable as nowhere seems immune to the scourge of insecurity. This is especially so in rural areas which bear a heavier brunt, given the somewhat regular rate those areas are besieged. The debilitating security challenges are already also taking a toll on economic activities, particularly with regard to commerce and agriculture. The adverse effect is also felt in the education sector in many parts of the country. This is in addition to the humanitarian crisis occasioned by mass displacements in states burdened by security challenges.

The unending sit-at-home order enforced by members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the armed wing of the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), is negatively affecting trade in an area noted for its vibrant commercial activities. Further crackdown on such lawful business activities will drastically reduce individual and government revenue, thus fueling poverty and its attendant consequences, especially in the worst affected states of Anambra and Imo. The continued debasement of state legitimacy will embolden criminals and ultimately lead to the creation of a state within a state.



In the North-West and North-Central, the sacking of hundreds of farming communities will further exacerbate the looming spectre of hunger and starvation in a country with the second largest burden of malnourished children in the world. The rapid spread of ISWAP cells, if untamed, could give the Islamic State an opportunity to turn Nigeria into the new Syria. The North Central, South West, and South South are equally burdened by growing insecurity in different forms.

The electioneering and transition period provide a most auspicious moment to contend with both the security situation and the ways out. Expectedly, there would be clashes of prescriptions on how to tackle this growing menace to all Nigerians. The starting point for this paper is the need for a clear understanding of the nature and drivers of the security challenges currently facing Nigeria and, consequently, the imperative of grounding solutions in such a nuanced understanding.

To arrive at such an understanding, the paper examines the major forms of insecurity in the six geo-political zones of the country, sketching their histories and dimensions, and mapping how they imperil life and property, magnify fault-lines, and hinder economic growth and national development. The key security challenges identified are: terrorism, banditry, herders-farmers/communal clashes, insurgency, militancy, ethnic agitations/separatism, and religious fundamentalism. The list is not exhaustive but these are the main ones. While some of these forms of insecurity are new, some have a long history, with some actually predating colonialism (for example, banditry in the current North West geo-political zone of the country). The lines separating these categories are sometimes blurred, as the actors operate across lines, mutating from one category to the other, adopting similar modes of operation, and sometimes joining forces.

As part of the process of gaining a deeper understanding of the growing security problem in Nigeria, the researchers explored the drivers and triggers of insecurity in the country. The researchers relied on secondary data and they employed descriptive and analytical lenses. They identified eleven factors which provide the environment for insecurity to start and fester. The identified drivers of insecurity are:

 Ineffective and inadequate security architecture;	 Agitations for resource control;
 Ineffective and insufficient criminal justice system;	 Easy access to illicit drugs;
 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons;	 Presence of porous borders;
 Prevalence of poverty and unemployment;	 Multiplication of socio-political and economic grievances;
 Impact of climate change;	 Poor land use policies; and
	 Failure to address structural/constitutional deficiencies.

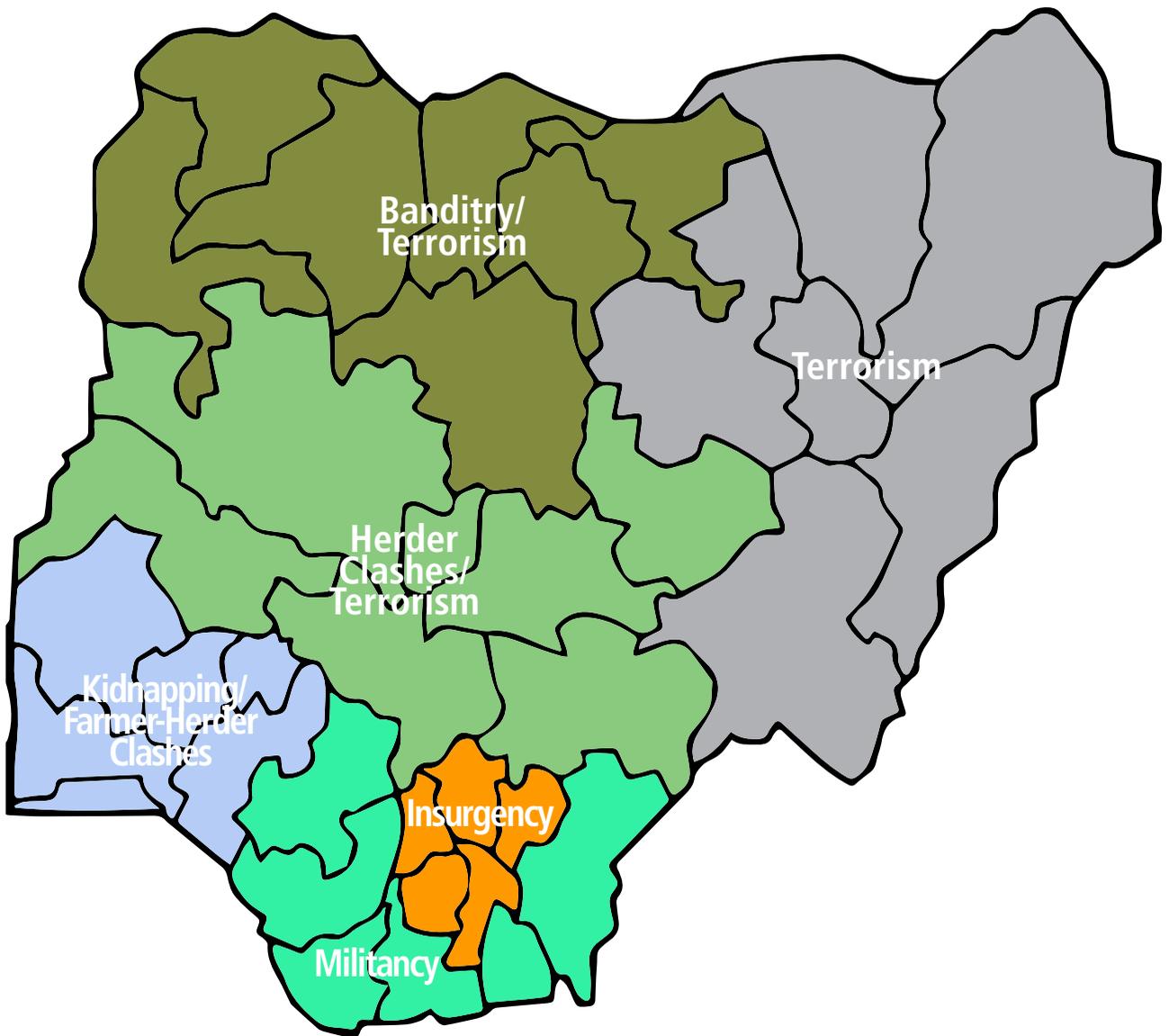
Hardly does a conflict or a source of insecurity have just one trigger. Here too, there could be considerable overlap or interaction among many triggers.

In addition to identifying the factors that drive or trigger conflicts and insecurity, the paper also classified the different ways in which insecurity manifests in Nigeria. Some

Troops Clear Terrorists Haven in
Lake Chad Fringes, Commence
Op Karya Gwuiwa

Photo credit: The Nigerian Army

Map of Generalised and Dispersed Insecurity



North East: Terrorism



South East: Insurgency



North West: Banditry/Terrorism



South South: Militancy



North Central: Farmer-Herder Clashes/Terrorism



South West: Kidnapping/
Farmer-Herder Clashes

of the manifestations are: 1) Kidnapping/mass abduction; 2) Serial/ritual killings; 3) Pipeline vandalism/oil theft; 4) Destruction of farmlands; 5) Increased use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs); 6) Proliferation of irregular security outfits.

The utility of this approach is simple: insecurity in Nigeria is multi-dimensional. As such, for any attempt at addressing the growing menace to be effective and sustainable, it needs to be holistic, deftly combining 'hard', military solutions with 'soft' approaches aimed at tackling the socio-economic underpinnings of conflict and crime. The recommendations for addressing insecurity in Nigeria include the following: Reforming the defence and security sector; Prioritising dialogue and soft-approach to conflict resolution; Increasing the deployment of strategic communications; Reviewing and updating the Land Use Act and other extant laws and policies; Strengthening judicial and legislative responses; Strengthening border security; Reviewing the operation of the National Boundary Commission; Constructively engaging unemployed and unskilled youths through education and vocational training; Regulating irregular security outfits across the country; and controlling the traffic in and access to small arms and light weapons.

Underpinning these recommendations are certain conclusions. The conclusions are that addressing the myriad of security challenges facing Nigeria will require:



1. Greater attention to the drivers of insecurity by all tiers of government as well as greater coordination and collaboration among different tiers of government on efforts aimed at tackling the drivers of insecurity;



2. Greater coordination and synergy among the armed forces, the security MDAs, and the intelligence community to address apparent lapses in coordination and collaboration;



3. Deft combination of enhanced boots-on-the-ground options with improved conflict-resolution and hearts-and-minds approach, as insecurity in Nigeria cannot be surmounted by military options alone;



4. Improvement in accountability and consequence management within the security sector; and



5. Alignment of the security sector with the prevailing security challenges in the country in terms training, orientation, resourcing, and inclusion.

The report consists of four major sections. First, there is an analysis of the current security challenges in Nigeria. This section gives an overview of the state of insecurity in Nigeria by identifying the threat factors and their impact on the security sector. Second, the report examines the issues that drive insecurity and emphasizes, quite clearly, that understanding these drivers is a necessary precondition for an improved policy approach. Third, the report identifies and explains the manifestation of insecurity. Finally, the report provides a list of recommendations split along these timescales: short, medium, and long terms. It also outlines the various MDAs that should be saddled with the responsibility and implementation schedule.

Allowing the prevailing security challenges to fester will hasten Nigeria's slide to the league of failed states similar to the circumstances in Iraq and Syria. The preponderance of groups with territorial ambitions means increased threat to the territorial integrity of the country. The proposed multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approaches to addressing insecurity in Nigeria in this paper are targeted at blocking structural gaps that drive insecurity. The paper concludes on a hopeful note: if the necessary measures are employed in time and place, insecurity will be well addressed, if not totally eradicated.

Recommendations and Implementation Timelines



Short Term:
3 - 6 months



Medium Term:
6 - 12 months



Long Term:
12 months and above

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Prioritise Dialogue and Soft-Approach to Conflict Resolution	The Federal Government should produce a National Dialogue and Peace Initiative as well as a framework for centralised handling of problems such as banditry, communal clashes, and farmer/herder conflicts.	Medium Term 	Presidency, ONSA, State Governments, Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution (IPCR)	A more centralised dialogue process
Enhance the role of Traditional Justice Mechanisms	Enact laws at the state levels that would guide and give legal effect to conflict resolution through the traditional institutions. To check abuses, there should be a central regulatory body in the mould of Judicial Service Commission.	Medium Term 	National Assembly, State governments; Civil society, legislature	Speedy dispensation of justice; nipping crises in the bud; a more robust monitoring and reporting mechanism for conflicts.
National trauma healing and victim reparation	Move the National Trauma Centre to the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management and expand its scope to cover all victims of conflicts through a comprehensive management synergy with states and agencies responsible.	Short term 	Presidency, National Assembly, National Hospital, Abuja; Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management; Development partners	Psychological therapy for victims of violence; rehabilitation and ensuring victims are cured from tendencies of vengeance or relapse into criminal past.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Improve Use of Strategic Communications	Revival of the Forum of Spokespersons of Security Agencies and anchor it in the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) for proactive engagement with citizens and coordination among sister organisations.	Short term 	Presidency, ONSA; Public Relations Unit of Security and Intelligence Agencies; Federal Ministry of Information	Turning the tide of the narratives around the security agencies, especially countering terrorists' propaganda.
Review of Land Use Act and other extant laws and policies	Engage the National Assembly and the Nigerian Governors Forum for a thorough review of the Land Use Act to address issues of judicious sharing and usage of land	Medium term 	Presidency, National Assembly through relevant ministries and agencies; State governors; other stakeholders	Resolve communal clashes over farming rights and herder/ farmer conflicts.
Strengthen Judicial and Legislative Response	Hold an inter-agency review of existing legal frameworks for a comprehensive identification of legal and judicial gaps that need to be firmed up.	Medium term 	National Assembly, the Judiciary, Federal Ministry of Justice, ONSA, development partners, CSOs	Firmer and universal legal provisions that will provide effective frameworks for tackling insecurity.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Strengthen Border Security	<p>Set up a panel to review the level of implementation of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) National Border Management Strategy: 2019 – 2023</p> <p>Create strategic objectives focusing on strategy within the broad objectives of: Enhancing National Security, Contributing to National Economic Development, Reinforcing Social Harmony, Fulfilling International Agreements and Partnerships, and Ensuring Migrants' Human Rights and the Protection of Vulnerable Migrants.</p> <p>Create a border guard force focused on providing border security.</p> <p>Reorganise ongoing joint border drill for more proactive patrols and surveillance.</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	<p>ONSA; Nigeria Immigration Service; Ministry of Interior; Nigeria Customs Service; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Federal Ministry of Justice; National Assembly</p>	<p>Reduced inflow of small and light weapons, illegal migration, and smuggling.</p>
Strengthen the capacity of the National Boundary Commission	<p>Review operations of the National Boundary Commission</p> <p>Strengthen its capacity and capability to:</p> <p>Identify landowners</p> <p>Devise mechanisms to resolve land disputes</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	<p>NBC; National Assembly; Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation</p>	<p>Resolution of inter-communal conflicts.</p>

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Constructive engagement of unemployed and unskilled youths through education and vocational training	<p>Establish state-funded vocational training centres for skills acquisition in the areas of technology, agriculture, mining, entertainment, and sports.</p> <p>State governments should take greater ownership and responsibility for this endeavour</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	NDE; SMEDAN; State governments; development partners	Disengagement of youths from criminal activities or from being recruited into sinister organisations.
Strategic Defence and Security Sector Reform	Key stakeholders must agree on security sector reform objectives and desired end goals	<p>Short term</p> 	National Assembly, ONSA; security and intelligence agencies	Comprehensive and functional security sector architecture.
Security Sector Review	<p>Review all Nigerian military, paramilitary, security forces and relevant ministries.</p> <p>Produce a comprehensive Strategic National Defence and Security Sector Review (SDSSR) report which includes a comprehensive audit of security personnel, equipment, and facilities.</p> <p>Review the various agency's missions, organisation, training, doctrine vis a vis the current national threat dynamic.</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	National Assembly, Presidency, ONSA, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Police Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, Development Partners	A citizen centred security architecture that is effective and efficient.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Security Sector Streamline	Streamline duplicate agencies, merge, or dissolve those that are currently irrelevant or redundant as recommended by the Oronsaye Report.	Medium term 	National Assembly, Presidency, Development	Reduce redundancies and duplication of functions and promote efficiency as well as allow enhanced coordination and cooperation.
Security Sector Reorganisation	Create regional task forces with regional organisational hierarchy to tackle regional and state level threats/emergency response	Long term 	Presidency, ONSA, Ministries of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Police Affairs, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Ministry Science and Technology	A citizen centred security architecture that is effective and efficient.
Increase Security Sector Manpower	Set up a national recruitment campaign to recruit skilled personnel into the services. Increase the use of technology as a force multiplier. Review current policies to allow for shorter enlistment periods (4-5 years) with an option of higher salary in return for forgetting pensions	Short term 	Presidency, ONSA, Ministries of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Police Affairs and Police Service Commission, Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Ministry Science and Technology, Ministry of Budget and Planning	Adequate boots on ground enough to overwhelm the enemies and convergence of human and technological capabilities for a more effective and efficient.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Increase the Role of Women in National Defence and Security	<p>Review policies to allow for increased roles of women in security leadership.</p> <p>Set up female only-security and defence teams focused on community relationship building.</p> <p>Replicate and enhance existing structures in the Nigerian Armed Forces, police and some of intelligence and paramilitary organisations and across the remaining security and intelligence MDAs that are yet to embrace a gender positive philosophy.</p> <p>Establish units focused on education of gender roles while mainstreaming a women's positive lens in the security sector.</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	<p>ONSA; Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Women Affairs, National Assembly</p>	<p>Close gender gaps in security policies and utilise women finding solutions to security threats.</p>
Enhance Security Sector Monitoring and Evaluation	<p>Increase the use of data and metrics to determine progress.</p> <p>The National Planning Commission should engage civil society and Nigeria's development partners to assist in developing the capacity of the civilian component of security sector MDAs.</p>	<p>Medium term</p> 	<p>ONSA; Ministry of Defence; Ministry of Budget and Planning, Development Partners, National Assembly</p>	<p>Better coordination and accountability.</p>

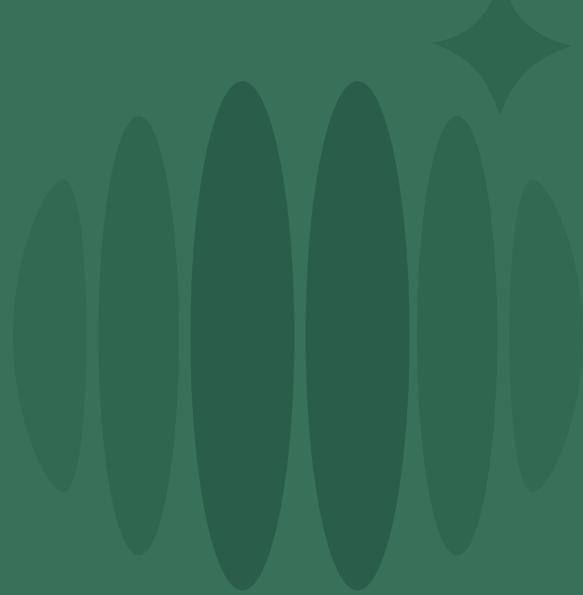
Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Review of Official Secrets Act 1962:	The National Assembly should review the Freedom of Information Act and the Official Secrets Act to ensure they are consistent with the current aspirations of Nigeria's national security objectives and our democratic aspirations.	Medium term 	National Assembly, Presidency, Ministry of Justice and Nigerian Bar Association, Ministry of Information and National Human Rights Commission	Tighten confidentiality of official secrets.
Accountability and Punitive Measures for Non-Performance:	Using the accountability spectrum, create standards and performance measurement platforms as well as various degrees of consequences that penalise excesses of violent state actors and their accomplices. Synergy with the judiciary is necessary for these measures to contain punishment for every form of criminality and be utilised. Appoint a Standards and Compliance Function or an Ombudsman in various aspects of the security and intelligence sector.	Short Term 	Presidency, ONSA, Defence Headquarters; Ministry of Police Affairs, Ministry of Interior, National Assembly, Ministry of Budget, and Planning	Accountability for action and inaction which will then engender effectiveness and efficiency.
Strengthening Intelligence Management	Management structure should be decentralised to better address threats on a regional level Having a functional intelligence fusion centre centrally and across the geopolitical zones	Medium Term 	Presidency, ONSA (The Intelligence Community); Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Police Affairs,	Proactive management of crises.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Regulation of Irregular Security Outfits Across the Country	<p>Conduct a comprehensive audit of all existing federal, state, and local governments' security outfits such as task forces and vigilantes to understand the number, size, strength, capacity, and capabilities of existing groups.</p> <p>Implement existing provisions in the mandates of the Police, The NSCDC and other security MDAs to ensure the incorporation of these security outfits in the national security architecture.</p>	<p>Short Term</p> 	<p>Presidency, ONSA; Ministry for Police of Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Budget, and Planning,</p>	<p>Cut off proliferation of irregular security outfits and utilise the existing ones in a more organised way.</p>
Control of Arms and Light Weapons	<p>Establish, strengthen, and review policies that dictate the regulation, tracking, and management of weapons along the lifecycle from: production, sales/distribution and stockpiling of local arms manufacturers.</p> <p>Arising from the above, integrate these into the Defence Industry Corporation.</p>	<p>Short Term</p> 	<p>National Assembly, Presidency, ONSA, National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW), Defence Industry Corporation (DICON)</p>	<p>Reduce armed conflict and violence.</p>

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Stricter Government Security Personnel's Weapons Handling and Management	<p>Conduct an audit to determine the integrity of existing armouries and the need for new ones.</p> <p>Ensure weapons are deposited in secured and safe armouries and weapons stores for accountability.</p> <p>Introduce weapons management system which incorporates technology and allows for accountability</p>	<p>Short term</p> 	<p>Presidency, ONSA; National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW); Office of the Auditor General of the Federation</p>	<p>Reduce armed conflict and violence</p>
Arms Mop Up	<p>In addition to kinetic operations such as armed raids, other non-kinetic options should be adopted such as a money/grant for arms approach.</p> <p>Weapons can be turned in, in exchange for educational grants or business capital.</p>	<p>Short term</p> 	<p>ONSA, Ministry of Police Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Budget and Planning, National Assembly</p>	<p>Reduction in illegal arms in the hands of non-state actors</p>

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Enhance Current Government Anti-SALW Efforts	<p>Create a framework for the coordination, implementation and monitoring of all efforts and federal and state government levels geared towards the control of small arms and light weapons in Nigeria.</p> <p>The House of Representatives should work with the Senate to accelerate the passage of the National Commission for the Coordination and Control of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) Bill. The bill passed by the Senate is a consolidation of three bills including the Nigerian National Commission against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (Establishment) Bill, 2020(SB. 283), the Nigerian National Commission against the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (Establishment) Bill, 2020 (SB. 513). and the National Centre for the Coordination and Control of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (Establishment) Bill, 2021 (SB. 794).</p> <p>The two chambers should harmonise the bills and present to the Executive for assent within the lifespan of the 9th Assembly.</p>	<p>Short term</p> 	ONSA, Ministry of Interior, National Centre for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (NCCSALW), National Assembly.	Tightening access of non-state actors and private individuals to arms and light weapons.

Action	Implementation Strategy	Timeline	Responsible Party (Civil Servants, Technocrats and Political Appointees)	Expected Outcome
Engagement of Private Military Contractors, Veterans and Private Security Industry:	<p>Conduct and audit of all retired and dismissed security and intelligence personnel to develop a database showing their current activities.</p> <p>The government to invite private security contractors to support public security sector efforts including in the ongoing counter insurgency and counter terrorism and as well as anti banditry operations in country. This support can be in field operations as well as other security multiplier roles.</p> <p>In addition, the roles of military and intelligence veterans as well as the private security industry should be incorporated into the national security architecture.</p> <p>National strategic think tanks should be tasked with the generation of rigorous policy recommendations, supporting the creation of strategy and policy implementation guidelines and reviewing strategy and policy implementation.</p>	<p>Short Term</p> 	<p>Presidency, ONSA, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Police Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Justice, National Assembly</p>	<p>Block gaps in the current security architecture and strengthen security functions.</p>



About Agora Policy

Agora Policy is a Nigerian think tank and non-profit committed to finding practical solutions to urgent national challenges. We conduct policy research, facilitate frank and purposeful dialogues, and build capacity for governance, policy and advocacy.

About the IIAPP Project

The Informed, Inclusive and Accountable Public Policies (IIAPP) project is designed to achieve three things: one, to maximise the opportunity provided by the electioneering and transition periods and beyond to sustain attention on and further mainstream transparency, accountability, gender equity and social inclusion into policy and governance discourse in Nigeria; two, to generate original and credible evidence before, during and after the 2023 elections to focus the attention of the country on key policy areas and, ultimately, the adoption of sensible, inclusive and effective policies on key national challenges; and three, to deepen the capacity of state and non-state actors to undertake evidence-driven policy analysis, design, implementation and advocacy. The IIAPP is supported by the MacArthur Foundation.



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