
BEYOND BANDAGES: INTERSECTING INSECURITY, MINERALS AND AGRICULTURAL TERRORISM IN NIGERIA'S MIDDLE-BELT

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Nelson Mandela was once reported to have said that, a new society cannot be created by reproducing the repugnant past, however refined or enticingly repackaged”.² This quip agrees with the conclusion of many Nigerians that, something is wrong with Nigeria, and that, something is wrong with anyone who says nothing is wrong with Nigeria. One of the wrongs of the Nigerian state in recent times is the complex issue of insecurity. In Nigeria's Middle Belt region in particular, illicit economies, particularly the exploitation of mineral resources has overshadowed peaceful coexistence with the involvement of armed groups in illegal mining activities, which has exacerbated arms smuggling, increased insecurity, and violent conflict in the region. The exploitation and trade of mineral resources has fueled conflicts, financed terrorism, and exacerbated instability in the middle-Belt region that is bedeviled by weak governance and institutional capacity. This nexus highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of conflicts and promotes sustainable development. By critically examining the intersections between security, governance, and mineral resource management, this study provides insights into the challenges and opportunities for mitigating conflicts and promoting stability in the resource-rich Middle-Belt region. The findings underscore the importance of formalizing artisanal mining, strengthening governance and security institutions, and fostering international cooperation to address the transnational nature of resource exploitation and terrorist financing.

Keywords: Insecurity Benue Genocide Artisanal Mining, Agricultural Terrorism in Tivland, Fulani Militia, Middle-Belt Region, Banditry in Nigeria,

Introduction

One of the formidable Challenges that has confronted the Nigerian nation in recent times has been the preponderance of insecurity. These ranges from the Boko Haram insurgency, to serial kidnapping, militancy and of recent, the Fulani/herdsmen challenge. Evidently, the Nigerian is undergoing a challenging phase in her historical development. It is not an exaggeration to say that insecurity appears to have been the most formidable challenge met by the Buhari administration since assumption of office in May, 2015. The Boko Haram militia that once controlled vast swathes of territory in their quest to establish an Islamic caliphate, have caused the loss of about 20,000 lives and the displacement of over a million others even before the take-over of the Buhari administration. This is in addition to the militia activities in the Niger-Delta, the Movement for the Actualization of Biafra in the South-East/ IPOB and the Fulani Herdsmen menace against the

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². Nelson Mandela (1918) In: Alain Stephen, This Book Will Make you Think: Philosophical Quotes and What they Mean, London, Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 201, p.159

Nigerian Farming Community. While the Nigerian leadership has had measurable success in its fight against Boko Haram, it appears that the menace of the herdsmen-farmer conflicts has defied solution. The brazenness with which suspected Fulani herdsmen slaughter settled communities and raze down villages is a sad reminder of the enormous security challenges still facing the Nigerian nation.

By 2014, the Fulani Herdsmen had killed 1,229 people,³ operating mostly in the Nigerian Middle Belt where each of their attacks claims on the average 11 lives, Benue Nasarawa, Southern Taraba and the Southern part of Kaduna state as well as parts of Adamawa State are particularly hard hit. From 2013 to the first half of 2016, these states have witnesses close to 100 major attacks on communities. Over 5000 lives have been lost in these attacks. In one attack alone early in the year, over 300 people, including children and women were killed in Agatu Local Government Area. The entire Middle Belt and parts of Southern Nigeria have been at the receiving end and chilling killings by herdsmen which many government spokesmen often claimed are aliens. These killings are only a tip of the entire narrative of a sinister threat to the lives of many Nigerians. Thousands have been displaced from their ancestral homes and forced to live in impoverished refugee camps having lost their farmlands and homesteads. Women have been raped and properties and farm produce worth millions of Naira destroyed. Parts of Benue State have been annexed by herdsmen who continue to occupy it at the expense of farmers.

At the core of the conflict is the issue of territorial occupation. Territoriality is a very powerful geographic strategy for groups who seek control over others and their resources through forceful control of other areas and landscapes. It is thus not out of place to argue that, the violent push by herdsmen into Tiv land and other states in Nigeria is a devious attempt to secure usufructuary rights to Tiv and other territories in order to be able to exploit the political opportunities that such rights may confer to herdsmen. Obviously therefore, something is wrong with anyone who says that nothing is wrong with Tiv nation.

The herders-farmers conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt is a complex issue fueled by land use disputes, ethnic tensions, and religious differences. Here's a comprehensive breakdown:

The why of Herdsmen / Farmers Conflicts in Tivland

Human Needs Theory (HNT) was developed in the 1970s and 1980s as generic or holistic theory of human behavior. It is based on the hypothesis that humans have basic needs that have to be met in order to maintain stable societies. As John Burton describes: "We believe that the human participants in conflict situations are compulsively struggling in their respective institutional environments at all social levels to satisfy primordial and universal needs – need such as security,

³. According to the Global Terrorism Index, this Nigerian pastoralists are the 4th deadliest terror group in the world after ISIS, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab.

identity, recognition, and development. They increasingly to gain the control of their environment that is necessary to ensure the satisfaction of these needs. This struggle cannot be curbed; it is primordial⁴

This struggle for primordial needs is theoretically related to the Frustration-Aggression theory which is based on the stimulus-response hypothesis. The frustration of not satisfying these needs leads to aggression and subsequently, conflict. What distinguishes Human Needs theory from the Frustration-Aggressive theory is that the former is concerned only with absolute requirements (needs) while the latter is concerned with wants and desires. The obvious conclusion here that, while the Fulani struggle for the survival of their herds, the Tiv Farmer needs his farm for bountiful harvest in order to satisfy his human needs. Obviously, this leads to the clash and conflict of interest.

Others, looking at the attacks in the middle belt in a holistic view posit that it cannot be coincidental that they have decided to assault the North Central region of the nation, citing reasons, according to these proponents, the attacks are planned to destabilize the region for either religious or political and economic consideration.

The expansionist tendency of the Fulani of the whole world is an additional reason adduced to where through whichever method they impose themselves on other areas through diplomatic, trickily and coercive means.

Among the prominent causes of conflict observed in the relationship between host communities, on one hand and migrant farmers and pastoralists on the other, are the following:

i. Cropped grazing space:

Thus, expansion of agricultural land into grazing areas, leading to competition for resources. This has in turn exacerbated tensions and eventual conflict between Farmers and herders.

ii. Relclaimed and Occupied Cattle Trade Routes:

The defunct Northern Region once demarcated some land strips as passage corridors for trade cattle and/or transhumance purposes. With the current population growth, the demand for land resources has also increased thus diminishing the traditional family owners of their land leading to heightening tensions between farmers and herders. But this usually leads to frustration and tension for the herdsmen who were used to such strips before.

⁴. Burton, 1979:72

iii. Farm Crop Destruction:

Often times, very young and irresponsible Fulani children are sent to graze flocks on the field while their parents are at their settlement bases. Such children, probably out of fatigue or just mischief, would unleash the animals on unharvested agricultural crops of the native population. Such occurrences usually lead to conflicts of huge proportion if not handled very timely.

iv. Cattle Rustling:

Many a time, a whole flock of cattle may be rustled by a criminal gang. When this happens, the herdsmen sometimes attribute the crime to their local hosts; especially if their relationship is strained, as on the Jos Plateau territory in Nigeria in the past 15 years (about 2001-to date). The claims and counter-claims arising from this may lead to a serious break down of the law and order. In reality, however, it often turns out that the criminals are the drug dependent idle youth from within the Fulani community themselves.

v. Influence of Drugs:

Virtually all Fulani Youth are well trained to handle livestock flocks as herdsmen or special drovers of cattle on trade routes to the city markets. However, not many may have herds to tend as the real cattle owners in the cities usually enter into pastoral contracts for their holdings only on per flock basis.

As such, a good number of youth remain under-employed; the patriarchs usually assigning them as assistants or alternate herdsmen to assist the real herders in some of the latter's absence due to sickness, social demands or emergency. In such a state of idleness and or under employment, many a young man gets tempted into the use of hard drugs. This in turn leads them into criminality; including cattle rustling. In the process, even their Fulani community begins to fear and shun them. Many run off into the cities. Some may be employed by the urban Hausa butchers as cow handlers on the slaughter slabs or as cattle drovers of trade cattle. Others end up joining the bands of hardened gangs in town.

Evidence is also beginning to show that they also serve as scouts who guide the so-called "foreign" killer herdsmen to their criminal destinations when they go attack native settlements mostly at night. Occasional identification of such local Fulani boys among the killers by members of the attacked communities normally lead to tension and reprisal attacks on nearby Fulani settlements.

vi. The Criminal Militia Night Marauder

The presence of an AK47 wielding Fulani herdsmen is no comfort to their local hosts. The sight of such a weapon in the hands of any herdsmen conjures the mental agony and the fear of another night attack by killer herdsmen.

vii. Inaccessible Water Sources

Most migrants from the Sahel belt seek out sources of water for dry season irrigation farming. They invariably settle in *fadama* areas, i.e. by any perennial streams or river banks. This constitutes an obstruction to the needs of their Fulani cousins who are co-migrants in search who are in search of grass and water for their animals. The herdsman's inability to graze the water side would usually push him deeper into the hinterland and, thereby, on to the farms of the local natives before harvest is completed. An ensuing quarrel normally produces a three-cornered conflict between the herdsman and the Hausa *lambru* farmer on the other. Such quarrels may produce an intractable social disorder.

viii. Religious and Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Religious and Ethnic Differences also account for most of the conflicts that have taken on dangerous dimensions. The predominantly Christian farming communities in the rich Middle-Belt attract the Muslim herding communities. This has altered the much cherished peaceful co-existence, love and trust that Nigeria's Middle-Belt groups used to enjoy. Today, the once peaceful and accommodating Middle-Belt has needlessly been sacrificed on the alter of religious fanaticism, ethnic bigotry and inter-regional distrust. Stereo-typing or group profiling is getting the nation more and more fractured at the seams. More so when heedless ethnic champions and reckless religious leaders make statements full of divisive invectives or rabble-rouse their audiences through hate inspired preachments.

ix. Poor indigenous education and Social Intolerance

Some migrants, especially those of Northern Muslim origin, are very poor in social integration. When they reach a good handful in population, they would rather set themselves apart than residentially and socially mix with their hosts. One may not be charitable in describing this tendency as having some "apartheid" only because the term become notorious at the height of South Africa's extreme form of racial segregation. But the practice of setting themselves apart also engenders of re-enforces the unwanted practice of social intolerance, ethnic profiling and inciting religious preachments against "others". This can't but elicit displeasure from their surrounding neighbours. Such subliminal feelings inexorably add fuel to any conflict no matter how negligible is the issue starting the quarrel.

x. Judicial Corruption

When quarrels arising from any of the foregoing conflicts reach the court system, another form of frustration (on both sides of the dispute) unfolds. For, apart from being slow, unpredictable and ill-organized, justice usually goes to the highest bidder; such that blatantly clear culprit may end up the pyrrhic winner, thanks to how much he greased the palms of both the prosecuting police and the judges. As a result, quarrels usually get bloody as nobody wishes to settle any disputes in law courts. On account of this deeply compromised and corrupt system, former President

Olusegun Obasanjo accused the judges of turning the courts into "a court of corruption rather than a court of justice".⁵

xi. Weak National Systems, Poor Leadership Recruitment.

It is an under-statement to say that Nigerian leaders and Governments (at all levels) shirk their responsibilities when it comes to handling crimes related to social disorder. Many a time, hundreds of people are killed in both urban and rural areas but nobody is brought to book and face the wrath of the law, even when the initiators are clearly identified. Reports of Judicial panels of inquiry and "white papers" deriving from their conclusions are usually filed and archived without implementing the reports.

This state of impunity only encourages miscreants who may mischievously ignite arson, murder and general social unrest because they know that nobody would bring them to account for their actions before the law. Such is the kind of mentality that conduce to criminals taking to arms against defenseless citizens like the killer herdsmen now do in a military style.

It is also the root of the culture of violence that grew the Boko Haram, the Maitatsine, the MASSOB, the OPC, the MEND, or even the now apparently emerging El-Zakzaky terror group with full military-like youth wing parading under their watch. In a normal polity run on the basis of a constitution, legal codes and a culture of "Rule of Law", it is an expected attribute of leadership that no criminal or group, irrespective of how well-placed they may be in the society, should escape the so-called "long Arms of the Law" no matter for how long the culprits may be on the run or in hiding. In fact even "primitive" societies operate on that attribute. It's only a government run by a brood of Kakistocratic thieving leaders that allows this regime of violence.

Under this national malaise, our failed leadership have prioritize brood power over inclusive governance and a disconnect between the state and its citizens, leading to a lack of trust and cooperation, personal gain and cronyism over the public interest, and a lack of transparency and accountability. Fragile as the Nigerian state is, it has failed to establish the rule of law, foster accountability, or provide essential services. The incompetent leadership also lack the capacity or capability to make informed decisions, often prioritizing personal interests over the public good and the exclusion of certain ethnic nationalities from decision-making processes, leading to

⁵. Obasanjo in his book, *Nigeria: Past and Future, 2025* lamented the steady decline of the integrity of the judiciary, particularly since the Fourth Republic. Obasanjo cited an incident where a governor showed him six duplexes allegedly built by a judge using funds acquired as chairman of election tribunals, illustrating the depth of corruption. He warned that justice has become available only to the highest bidder, leading to despair, anarchy, and violence instead of order and hope. He also accused INEC Chairman Mahmood Yakubu of undermining the electoral process since 2015, making elections a "charade" and prioritizing his will over the people's. He further alleged in the book that late former President Muhammadu Buhari colluded with the judiciary during his election cases, rewarding judges with appointments regardless of age or rank.

ineffective governance and potential conflict. It is also in the character of weak institutions for their leaders to disregard laws, court decisions, and fundamental human rights, creating an unstable and unjust environment.

Insecurity, minerals and agricultural Terrorism:

Nigeria's insecurity challenges are deeply intertwined with issues surrounding minerals and agricultural resources. The crisis in Logo, Guma and Kwande Local governments are traceable to these factors. The exploitation and mismanagement of these resources have contributed significantly to the security challenges, giving rise to what can be described as *agricultural terrorism*. Consequent upon this challenge is food insecurity, economic instability, and heightened communal tensions.

i. Mineral Resources: The struggle for control over mineral resources, particularly in regions like the Niger Delta, has fueled violent conflicts. The exploitation of these resources without adequate benefits for local communities has led to resentment and violence against both the government and multinational corporations. In Logo alone, about five (5) minerals namely, Florite, barlyte, lead, salt and Zink are being exploited in Zanan (Ugondu), Anyiin (Gaambe-Tiev) and Ayilamo (Tombo) with environmental degradation of varying degrees, leading to displacement and poverty among the local communities. This degradation often exacerbates tensions and conflicts over land and resources among the local population.

ii. Agricultural Terrorism: This concerns attacks on Agricultural Resources (infrastructure) by terrorist groups thereby disrupting food production and supply chains. This not only affects food security leading to food shortages and high food prices but also economic instability and increased poverty levels and inequality in the Benue community that is the indisputable food basket of Nigeria. The resultant mass displacement and migration and the destruction of agricultural resources forces communities to flee in search of safety and livelihoods, leading to displacement and migration with its attendant consequences, creating in the process, humanitarian crisis for the most vulnerable; women and children. This can strain resources in receiving areas and potentially spark further conflicts.

iii. Economic Consequences: Insecurity in Nigeria has severe economic consequences, affecting various aspects of the economy and society. Some of the key consequences include, the agricultural sector which is vital to Nigeria's economy. The targeting the agricultural sector, which is a significant contributor to Nigeria has led to significant economic losses, decreased GDP, and increased poverty levels in the affected communities. Farmers are often afraid to cultivate their fields due to the risk of attacks, leading to a decline in food production thus threatening food security. Insecurity deters foreign investors leading to a decline in Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows thereby reducing the capital available for capital economic

development and growth. Similarly, Insecurity has led to loss of revenue and income for individuals, businesses, and the government. In the middle-Belt Nigeria, many businesses have closed down or relocated to more active and secure geographies. The trickle effect being loss of job and investor confidence due to increased risk for foreign investors and reduced economic activity.

iv. Insecurity and Resource Management

There is an established nexus between insecurity and resource management. Poor Governance and Corruption weakens governance structures inclusive of security agencies and management of security funds and undersourced personnel. This has further aggravated insecurity and hindered effective management of both mineral and agricultural resources thus allowing criminal activities to thrive while exacerbating conflicts over resource control leading to loss of revenue and income for individuals, businesses and the government. The by effect of all these is environmental degradation with the resultant climate change that has contributed to resource scarcity, migration, and conflict, further destabilizing the country.

Lack of Inclusive Development and equitable distribution of resource benefits has fueled grievances among local communities. This has promoted historical injustices and made many youths more susceptible to recruitment by terrorist groups. Intentional and systematic destruction in whole or in part in Nigeria's Middle-Belt rooted in resource competition has marginalised and weakened governance structures. Of particular notice is the control of land, mineral resources by elites and invading terrorists. The resultant effect has been destruction of farms, closedown of schools and displacement of communities thus deepening poverty and inequality, crippling development and preventing inclusive development.

Insecurity and State of the Nation: Beyond Bandages

The west Africa–Sahel region has seen a [proliferation](#) of [militant Islamist groups](#) since the 1990s. One of the most vicious groups operating in the region is [Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin](#) (Support Group for Islam and Muslims). The militant group emerged in 2017 in Algeria and Mali, and has [targeted](#) civilian populations. The UN listed the group as an al-Qaeda affiliate in [2018](#). [Al-Qaeda](#) is an Islamist organisation founded by Osama bin Laden in the 1980s. The 2024 global terrorism index listed Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin as [one of the world's most dangerous terrorist organisations](#). Its influence has expanded in most parts of the Sahel. The group emerged to strengthen the jihadist insurgency under al-Qaeda. It combines violence with diplomacy to expand its influence and challenge state authorities.

Its engagement in illicit economies has been key to the group's successful expansion. This revenue is used to carry out devastating attacks. This tactic is common among terrorist groups in the west Africa-Sahel axis, including [Boko Haram](#) militants. They rely on illicit economies

namely, Artisanal mining, Kidnapping, Livestock theft and Money laundering:

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of these criminal groups in Nigeria's mining sector. These includes,

Firstly, Porous borders: Nigeria's long porous borders, stretching over 36,450 kilometers, make it challenging to track who enters the country, how they enter, and what they do within it. This allows irregular migrants and illicit goods to slip through undetected.

Secondly, Transnational organized crime: The exploitation of mineral resources has become a transnational issue, with armed groups and criminal networks operating across borders. This has led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, further fueling insecurity.

Thirdly, Poor migration management: The ineffective management of migration has resulted in the influx of irregular immigrants, some of whom engage in nefarious activities such as smuggling, human trafficking, and illicit drug peddling.

The group needs money for fighting, and to sustain political and social influence in its areas of operation.

Artisanal gold mining has proven to be a major factor in its expansion and resilience. In areas where the group exerts influence with **Illicit mining alone generating over US\$30 billion annually**. According to a report by Swissaid, a development group based in Switzerland, the main destinations for this gold are the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and Switzerland and France. These Jihadist groups gain access to Minerals by controlling mining sites and transport routes to and from mines. They sometimes allow trusted allies, who include local armed groups, bandits and other criminal networks, to mine in exchange for a payout. The extent of mining funds is not exactly known, but it is speculated that the artisanal sites in areas controlled by the group have the capacity to produce **725 kilograms of gold** per year, valued at *US\$34 million*.

In March 2023, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) published an investigative report indicating that illegal mining was at the core of armed banditry and terrorist activities in northern Nigeria, with massive amounts of illegally mined gold smuggled into neighboring countries like Niger and Mali. These illegal activities have caused a series of violence in rural mining communities. It has also been reported by Amnesty International that “from January to July 2023, there were more than 2,000 abductions in relation to mining site disputes in Zamfara State alone. Some militants and bandits also impose levies or 'taxes' on miners and local communities, while other actors seize the mining sites for themselves in order to

use the proceeds to buy arms and finance their operations”.⁶

In the Iddle-Belt region, terrorist activities by militia groups has established a nexus between illegal mining and insecurity. The proceeds from this illegal economic operations have for some time now been connected to the financing of terrorist organizations in the region. These armed groups use such revenues to acquire sophisticated weaponry, recruitment of fighters, and logistical networks through which counterterrorism efforts by the national government has been exceedingly unable to match. The forceful control of mining sites and exploitation of these resources has exerbated conflicts, spreading across the Middle-Belt areas like Southern Kaduna, southern Kebbi, Plateau, Benue, Kogi, Taraba and Niger. Over 5 000 people have been killed in Zamfara State in the past five years.

Kidnapping for Ransom:

This is another source of money and political control. Kidnap victims include cattle owners, businessmen, state officials and foreigners. Kidnapping for ransom has become a significant security challenge in Nigeria, with various groups and individuals involved. Here's a breakdown of the statistics and trends:

- i. Between July 2022 and June 2023, 3,620 people were abducted in 582 incidents, resulting in at least N5 billion in ransom demands. ii) In 2011 - 2020, kidnappers collected around \$18.5 million in ransom payments. iii) In Nigeria, several billions of Naira were paid as ransom by victims of kidnapping in from 2022-2025. Data from security consulting firm SBM Intelligence and the National, Bureau of Statistics (NBS)⁷ provides a grim picture of escalating ransom payments in Nigeria, exacerbated by the devaluation of the Naira. iv) From 2023-2024, a total of N2.23 trillion was paid as ransom. In 2022 alone, a total N653.7 million, or approximately \$1.13 million was paid as ransom. v) In 2025, the total ransom paid from August 2024–August 2025 amounted to N2.56 billion (\$1.66 million).

Livestock theft:

This has also been a critical source of funds. The practice of livestock theft as economic warfare and a means to generate funds has led to livestock being forcibly taken from herders who fail to pay zakat (a religious fee among Muslims) or subscribe to the group's ideology. The stolen livestock are sold in Mali, Mauritania or Senegal. The ability to monetise stolen livestock makes their theft a cornerstone of the Sahelian war economy and a source of cash for weapons and vehicles.

⁶. <https://www.bing.com/search?q=Insecurity+and+artisanal+mining&safeSearch=strict&form=METAWA>

⁷. <https://www.thecable.ng/report-nigerians-paid-n2-57bn-ransom-to-kidnappers-in-one-year-4722-abductions-recorded/> Accessed on Monday September, 2025. There are significant obstacles to gathering a complete picture of ransom payments worldwide though, these figures represents an idea of the effects of insecurity on the national economy as well as the challenge of weak national institutions.

Money Laundering

This is another illicit economy central to the militant group's financing. It lends money to merchants, invests with banks and funds small shops with the aim of getting profits. This helps ensure a constant flow of money and provisions to support the group's terrorist acts. It has attached much importance to this illicit economy, to the extent of assassinating those who interfere with its investments.

Remedial measures:

1. International/National Level

To cut down Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin's financial base – and thereby weaken its capacity for militancy – counterinsurgency efforts need to take the following actions.

- i. Government security actors should collaborate with local self-defence task-force to regulate artisanal mining and thwart kidnappings.
- ii. Financial intelligence units need to identify merchants who receive money from the militant group to block the flow of illicit funds.
- iii. Specialised courts that deal with money laundering and terrorism financing cases should be established and made operational in Burkina Faso and Mali, the epicentres of the group's activities.
- iv. The sahelian countries like Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali should increase security around civilians to minimise civilian casualties from terror operations.

Since finance is the basis of the militant group's strength, regional security co-operation should be strengthened. This would help with systematically tracking illicit flows and stopping them. Dismantling the group's illicit economies and blocking its financial flows are key to countering its activities.

2. Local

- i. **Comprehensive Resource Management:** Developing a comprehensive policy framework for the management of mineral and agricultural resources is crucial. This framework should prioritize sustainable practices, community engagement, and equitable distribution of benefits.
- ii. **Investment in Agriculture:** Investing in agriculture through modern farming techniques, infrastructure development, and support for farmers can enhance food security and reduce vulnerability to terrorism.
- iii. **Security Sector Reform:** Reforming the security sector to ensure accountability, professionalism, and community-oriented policing can enhance trust and effectiveness in addressing insecurity.
- iv. **Community Engagement and Dialogue:** Engaging local communities in dialogue and decision-making processes can help address historical grievances and build intra/inter-

ethnic trust. This approach can reduce tensions and foster cooperation in combating insecurity.

- v. Legalizing and regulating artisanal mining can also help reduce insecurity and promote sustainable practices. Such legal instrument that strengthen security agencies, address corruption, promote investment friendly policies and enhance intelligence gathering can go a long way in advancing a secure environment, economic growth and development.

It is argued though that, the nexus between insecurity and the exploitation of minerals and agricultural resources in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that considers the root causes of insecurity, promotes sustainable resource management, and engages local communities. By prioritizing security, economic development, and social cohesion, Nigeria can mitigate the negative impacts of insecurity and work towards a more stable and prosperous future.

A journey into an enlightened communication suggests for us a culture of intellectual hygiene. This requires a new instrumentality for the acquisition of a knowledge that is grounded on *justified true belief*, devoid of what Francis Bacon calls the *Four Idols of the mind*. These idols of the mind represent fundamental flaws in human understanding that can lead to conflicts and poor decision-making. With the aid of strong mental magnitude and epistemic prowess, humanity is surely on the way of constructing an epistemic purity.

According to Bacon, the Four Idols include:

- i. **Idols of the Tribe** are deceptive beliefs inherent in the mind of man, and therefore belonging to the whole of the human race. They are abstractions in error arising from common tendencies to exaggeration, distortion, and disproportion. These are inherent flaws in human nature that lead to biased perceptions. In the Middle Belt conflict, this manifests as groupthink and tribalism, where individuals prioritize their group's interests over others', fueling tensions between farmers and herders.
- ii. **Idols of the Cave** are those which arise within the mind of the individual. This mind is symbolically a cavern. The thoughts of the individual roam about in this dark cave and are variously modified by temperament, education, habit, environment, and accident. These are individual biases shaped by personal experiences, education, and environment. In the conflict, this could be seen in the way individuals view the other group through the lens of past traumas or preconceived notions, hindering constructive dialogue.
- iii. **Idols of the Marketplace** are errors arising from the false significance bestowed upon words, and in this classification Bacon anticipated the modern science of semantics. These refer to the misuse of language and communication, leading to misunderstandings and conflicts. In the Middle Belt, this could be seen in the inflammatory rhetoric used by some leaders, which exacerbates tensions between groups.

- iv. **Idols of the Theater** are those which are due to sophistry and false learning. These represent dogmatic thinking and adherence to ideologies without empirical evidence. In the conflict, this is evident in the rigid adherence to traditional practices, such as transhumance, without considering alternative solutions like ranching.

These potential deceptions are sources of misinformation and disinformation beclouds humanity and prevents our knowledge of external reality. Avoiding them thus empowers humanity to aim and communicate the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Applying Bacon's Idols to the Conflict

By recognizing and avoiding these the idols, political leaders and stakeholders can work towards encouraging diverse perspectives and inclusive decision-making processes. This framework highlights the need for critical thinking and nuanced understanding in addressing the the problem of Insecurity in Nigeria's Middle Belt. The Nigerian nation needs to address individual biases in order to foster empathy and understanding between farmers and herders through community engagement and dialogue though, not of the deaf. In this regard, there will be improved rationally persuasive and convincing communication through the use of clear, respectful language to reduce misunderstandings and promote constructive discussion.

In Nigeria like the world over, we are all surrounded by idiots (individuals with varied behavioural differences). So we must always consciously strive to understand each other and adapt communication styles to effectively intraact with each personality in us. By recognizing and valueing these differences, individuals can improve relationships, reduce misunderstandings, and achieve better outcomes in personal and group settings of the many personality. Thomas Erikson¹⁰ has identified these differences namely,:

- i. **Red (Dominance):** Ambitious, decisive, dynamic, and competitive, Reds are natural leaders who bring energy and momentum to teams. However, they can appear aggressive or domineering.
- ii. **Yellow (Inducement):** Positive, creative, and sociable, Yellows are social butterflies who infect others with their energy. They can be impulsive and attention-seeking, dominating conversations with their talkativeness.

^{8.} When leaders are formidably best guided by a reasoned sense of moral purpose, they are able to channel their ambitions and summon their talents to enlarge the opportunities and lives of other members of their community. These brand of leaders can only come to be through the creative abilities of the mind. This prong of leadership philosophy has to do with relativities of time, space, context, families, cultures, groups, goals, etc. I have coined this mode as Ayatutuism, an African leadership model that is enabled to combine transactional and transformational leadership foregrounded in African communocentric ontology.

^{9.} For a detailed discourse on leadership, read, Mbigi, L. 2005. *The Spirit of African Leadership*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing.

^{10.} Thomas Erikson, *Surrounded by Idiots* (2019).

- iii. **Green (Stability):** Calm, stable, and loyal, Greens prefer predictable environments and avoid conflict. They can seem stubborn or indifferent, holding back in challenging situations. Blue (Analytic): Detail-oriented
- iv. **Blue (Analytic)** Detail-oriented and analytical, Blues seek perfection and accuracy. They can appear distant or pessimistic, focusing on risks and problems.

As voiced by Socrates, the unexamined life is not worth living, hence, the need to re-examine traditional practices, integrate innovative solutions, such as modern ranching to balance the security and resource needs of both groups (farmers and herders). Besides, modern husbandry benefits farmers and herders in good measure by way of improved livestock management. It enables herders to manage their livestock more effectively, reducing the risk of overgrazing and promoting sustainable land use. Secondly, it reduces conflict and tension between herders and farmers, and finally, it enhances and ensures the availability of livestock products, contributing to food as well as security, local economies. By and large, ranching will help mitigate conflicts between farmers and herders over land use and resources.

Conclusion:

I have argued above that, the current insecurity that rears its ugly head in varied forms namely, Fulani Militia, Kidnapping, Banditry and Agricultural terrorism in Nigeria's Middle Belt is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. Understanding the role of Francis Bacon's Four Idols in perpetuating the conflict, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to address the root causes of insecurity. The paper provided critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for mitigating conflicts and promoting stability in the resource-rich Middle-Belt region.

The findings underscore the importance of formalizing artisanal mining, strengthening governance and security institutions, and fostering international cooperation to address the menace of illegal resource exploitation through terrorist financing. Nigeria needs the imperative of improved border security through technology, deepened cooperative efforts and enhanced human security. The international community need to support good governance that will unleash rapid development, deradicalisation programmes and deliberate countering of jihadist narratives as necessary and sufficient measures to defeat insurgency. This means that the nation's military capability needs to be upgraded through training, acquisition of modern defense equipment and intelligence gathering and sharing. This would require both regional and international partnership to achieve.