

# **The Nigerian Police Force and Security Challenges in Delta State of Nigeria, since 1999: A Paradox**

Elijah Williams AREFA<sup>1</sup> & Ikaonaworio EFEREBO PhD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup>Department of History and International Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

<sup>1</sup>[arefaelijah110@gmail.com](mailto:arefaelijah110@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>[efereboii@fuotuoike.edu.ng](mailto:efereboii@fuotuoike.edu.ng)

**IJMER**

Volume. 8, Issue. 1

March, 2025

© IJMER. All rights reserved.

## **Abstract**

Delta State has been plagued by severe, protracted and escalating security concerns since 1999. Security threats range from armed robbery, oil bunkering, kidnapping, and herders-farmers conflict to pipeline vandalism. These crises are manifestation of government's failure to enhance equitable and enduring development in the state. The Nigerian Police Force, saddled with the constitutional function of protection of lives and property have remained in the eye of the storm bringing to question the veracity of its architecture in the state. Adopting the broken windows theoretical framework and depending on primary and secondary sources of data, the paper explores the historical factors necessitating the increase in crime in the oil-rich Niger Delta state. The paper argues that for effective and efficient security performance, the Nigeria Police must collaborate with well-meaning Deltans.

**Keywords:** Nigeria Police Force, Security Challenges, Insecurity, Delta State, Crimes.

## **1. Introduction**

The spate of insecurity in Delta State is very alarming. Arising from this scenario police is encountering several security challenges that borders on kidnapping, oil theft and pipeline vandalism, armed robbery, attacks targeted at police officers, and The Nigeria Police as an institution amongst other heinous crimes. The rate of cybercrime and other related criminal activities has become increasingly a daily routine, signifying a worsen state of insecurity, expectedly, the Police had suffered tremendously in security debacles. First, as subject of attack and second as object of public ridicule, as the primary security organ of the state. It is therefore imperative that the Nigeria Police must stand to the security occasion in order to save itself on both fronts. While the state government is engaging the security apparatus within the state to stem the tide, insecurity had remained unabated.

Several perspectives had been offered as explanation. One of such explanations is the rise of primordial sentiments and the eruption of ethnic militias as a major factor to the security challenges. The security shock in Delta State has been alluded to primordial contributory factors that exploits ethnic sentiments orchestrated by political gladiators. This cataclysmic effect is what many refer to as "use and dump" syndrome. It is a cyclical relation between politicians and illegally armed loyalists, who are used for electioneering purposes and left unattended to, thereafter. These armed youth metamorphose to criminal elements parading these arms for their private criminal enterprise.

Another perspective is tied to the failings of the Nigeria Police as the chief security mechanism of the state. Their shortcomings ranging from poor collaboration with sister security agencies, low personnel morale, bureaucratic and personnel corruption, public distrust to police deficit have been held as factors negatively and inadvertently contributing to the insecurity in the state. Arguably, the Police cannot be excused. However, the dynamics of Delta state's security challenges transcend beyond the Nigeria Police as the Police cannot be adjudged to be a non-performing agency vis-à-vis their present conditions.

A third perspective is a holistic state-centric explanation to the challenges in the security sector. The contention is that criminal gangs have taking advantage of state failures as an avenue to perpetuate unspeakable criminal ventures. The nexus of these three standpoints is bad leadership as most of the budget provisions on security are not well utilized. Of course, the 1999 Constitution of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria (as Amended) specifically states that “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose and concerns of government.” But regrettably, the government has failed in its constitutional duty to ensure the safety and security of lives and properties in Delta State and Nigeria at large.

Lives, properties and business activities have been threatened by criminal elements in the state. Arising from the high rate of incidences of crimes, successive governments of the state has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism and other related crimes in line with the Federal Government of Nigeria’s Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011. These efforts by governments at all levels, notwithstanding, the menace are increasingly becoming unbearable.

## **2. Security: A Conceptual Review**

Security is a multifaceted and broad concept. It entails the assurance of safety in all respect. Security entails all strategic measures orchestrated for the protection and safeguard of lives and properties against violent actions. For the purpose of this work, security is the state of being free from actual or perceived danger to the lives of persons and their properties in a giving society. The Nigeria Police Force has the constitutional responsibility of ensuring that security is at its lowest ebb or level in the country vis-à-vis Delta State. Internal security is primarily shouldered on The Nigeria Police. The question of interest is how The Police has fared in their bid to implementing this sacred duty? Basically, the police are to fulfill government’s primary obligation of providing for the security of her population.

This function is inadvertently attached to the overall fabrics of society and its proper functioning. Insecurity is therefore antithetical to society’s wellbeing. It depicts lack of safety, risk, peril, uncertainty, absence of confidence, state of doubt among others. Escalation of social disorder and instability<sup>4</sup> in the country challenges the role of police in combating crimes and criminality. The contention is that these common terms highlight a situation characterized by exposure to danger or loss of lives and property. The scourge of small arms and light weapons proliferation challenges the security architecture of many states. The security of a state does not lie solely on military preparedness but equally on its ability to develop relatively stable patterns of economic growth and political development. Any society aimed at self-sufficiency in physical security amidst severe food shortages, rapid population growth, and low per capita income, high rate of illiteracy, fragile infrastructure and technological developments, insufficient and ineffective public services combined with persistent unemployment creates a misleading sense of security.

However, physical security is seen as the core and dynamic condition that entails the state’s relative ability to ensure peace and security via security agencies. The concept of security goes beyond the military determination and that government should be very much accountable with the security of individual lives and properties that the state failure has become the root causes of insecurity for not meeting up to her constitutional responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> There is no gainsaying the fact that security is a foundational concept in human existence without which, a state’s political and socio-economic development are impossible. This is the centrality of the social contract between the governments and governed, it’s the foundation upon which everything revolves around to build an enduring society.

This viewpoint corroborates Gani Yoroms when he noted that the structures put forth for societal order would be incomplete without the security content.<sup>7</sup> This is because, states struggle to maintain and strengthen its values to ensure that people live in a free and protected environment consistent with her shared core values while safeguarding their national interest, identity and sovereignty. Delta state is currently facing hyper criminality on many fronts, the security of any state lies in the hands of government and its agencies, as well as the citizens. It is understood that all measures undertaken to protect its citizens in all ramifications must be citizen-friendly.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study adopted the Broken Windows Theory which emerged most visibly in the 20th century. Phillippe Zambrado, a psychologist was the proponent of this framework in 1969. However, the framework was expanded in 1982 by James Wilson and George Kelling, postulating that neglecting to address any problem in a social ecology, no matter how insignificant, will negatively affect people’s attitudes and behavior towards that environment, leading to bigger problems. The duo

advocates that addressing problems quickly will lead to a better environment and better behavior. According to them, ignoring the small problems today is inimical to society's security as this gives way to much more serious crime in the future.

The framework focuses on aggressively pursuing misdemeanors in an effort to reduce the number of major crimes. This theory aptly explores the role of the Nigeria Police Force in combating security challenges and fostering peaceful coexistence within Delta State. The application of the theory to Delta State is even more necessary as the Nigerian Police focuses more on crimes hotbed, and tends to only maintain surveillance for low-level crime zones. The Broken Windows Theory and its submission is aimed at maintaining social order and behavior bringing crimes to its lowest ebb, and discourage high level criminality. By so doing, policing duties serve as deterrence to crimes. Thus, when misdemeanors like petty theft, vandalism, trespassing, traffic violation and extortion are assertively addressed; major crimes are less likely to occur within such geographical space. Thus, social control and fear become two of the main components of broken windows policing.

The Broken Windows Theory notes that even small problems can have significant consequences. Impliedly, the Nigerian Police Force and Delta State government need to be proactive in addressing problems as soon as they arise for a peaceful and orderly atmosphere. The relevance of this perspective is that however small a challenge appears, it has the capacity to gravitate into violent conflict, thereby leading to insecurity and obviously disrupting state's security architecture, especially in the light of increasing rate of criminality in Delta State. It entails that government must not only be proactive but must be nonselective in the prosecution of perpetrators of (violent) crimes in the state.

### 3.1. Typologies of Security Challenge in Delta State

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) has been attested to be a serious humanitarian challenge with implications for development, human rights and global peace. Besides being used to kill and displace hundreds of thousands in conflict zones, SALWs are often been the triggers of conflicts; as they are in the hands of civilians and terrorist groups. The result has always been devastatingly horrible gun violence and homicides, empowerment of criminal organizations and gangs, escalation of conflict terrorism, disruption of public order and safety, undermining of law enforcement agents, and threat to national and global security. Proliferation of SALWs has been a function of violence culture, fear, and instability, undermining trust in institutions and threatening human life and dignity.

For instance in Nigeria today, SALWs is indexed by the intermittent seizure of these weapons by security and border control agencies that has contributed to insurgency, organized crime, human trafficking, drug issues, armed robbery, and kidnapping, which impedes both security and sustainable development in the country. The social disorder associated with SALWs proliferation in many states of the Nigerian federation, is really a worrisome game to play with that had devastating effects on the society. Despite the alarming consequences, there are visible efforts of government to curb this hydra-headed menace in concrete terms on the part of governments, civil societies, and communities, making it the "new normal" as government could not provide the needed security for its citizens. Everyone is under the guise of self-help security syndrome, is a pathetic life experience in the 21 first century Nigerian state, particularly in Delta State.



Figure 1: Militancy in Delta State

Arguably, violence and fear pose a great threat to effective social live governance as well as sustainable development. Worst still, the heightened outcome of violence in rural communities' makes life threatening in many ways. The experience in Delta State and other parts of Nigeria indicate that during occasions of violence in most communities, the response by state's government via the police and other security agencies are often unsatisfactory, in some cases, is unresponsive. Undoubtedly therefore, violence activities flourish more in rural areas especially in Ijo communities where there is absence of security agencies; this is inevitably the case in Delta State. Social problems like armed banditry, theft, illegal oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and militancy, persist and often worsen due to minimal government intervention.

Undeniably violent attack or behavior often does not start with weapons, but it escalates significantly when arms are accessible, especially in unstable environments marked by poverty, mistrust, injustice and lack of effective government structures. Some communities in the hinterland do not have functional police post till date hampering further the security quagmire in the state. This lacuna no doubt has been exploited by criminal elements. The high rate of criminality is such that virtually all citizens are afraid of their lives. Documented cases of armed robbery and kidnapping at the police stations is worrisome, despite security measures put in place by successive governments.

Yet it is on record that armed robbery and kidnapping incidents were celebrated in the oil rich Niger Delta region when it was used as a tool to address the wanton neglect of their communities by the Nigerian state. Kidnapping is now used as a tool for settling inter-personal and political scores.

Crime Statistics in Delta State, 2020.

Detail of Cases of Area Robbery, Kidnapping, Burglary & Stealing, Murder, Rape, Defilement, Dud Cheque, Cyber-Crime & Threat to Life, Serious Assault and Attempted Murder Report and Charge to Court.

S/N	Offences	No of Cases Charged to Court	No of Cases Awaiting Trial	No. of Cases Tried	No. of Cases Convicted	No. of Cases Discharged
1.	Armed Robbery & Kidnapping	220	52	180	90	28
2.	Burglary & Stealing	401	30	150	200	15
3.	Murder	1,420	1001	157	89	7
4.	Rape	768	120	87	120	178
5.	Defilement	255	200	122	101	80
6.	Dud Cheque	408	300	150	5	320
7.	Cyber Crime & Threat to Life	2,346	15	25	15	776
8.	Attempted Murder	357	202	134	67	982
9.	Serious Assault	1,275	77	NIL	7	1,107

		7,450	1,997	1,006	694	3,493
--	--	-------	-------	-------	-----	-------

Source: Delta State Police Command, Asaba

### 3.2. Dearth of Modern Policing Facilities

In the same vein, lack of modern policing equipment and gazettes is one of the appalling challenges bedeviling the security architecture. It entails a situation where crime fighting equipment – weapons and ammunitions available to the police and other law enforcement agencies are outdated or unreliable. This inadequacy frustrates policing task and it is inherently incompatible with the duties and public expectations of the Nigerian Police Force. Sadly, the police work in this disadvantageous situation in combat, law enforcement and self-defense to achieve its objectives. It is appropriate that modern weapons like the AK47 rifle be provided and should be used to replace all other weapons that are capable of giving the police a security threat. What is more worrisome is the fact that while the police grapples with weapons synonymous with the First World War weaponry, the criminal elements engages them with modern weapons to prosecute their cause. Hence, the war against criminality always tilts against government security agencies.

Thus, as a matter of concern, the Nigerian Government should not only concentrate on her supply of guns and ammunition as the case maybe, but should also ensure the availability of wearable devices, such as body cameras to record video footage of interactions while on criminal investigations. Other gadgets such as smart glasses for the provision of real-time data of security threats and allow security personnel to quickly respond to potential threat issues, the biometric authentication for fingerprints, facial recognition, voice recording or recognition to authenticate the identity of suspects linked to a criminal offence.

The Radio Frequency Identification<sup>20</sup> (RFID) technology should be adopted to aid policing because of its essential value in wireless communication, enabling tracking, storage, interpretation and transmission of data without physical contact. It can be used to scan a badge or a card and grant entry into a building of criminal hideout to curb excesses. The detector and other personnel at their various workplaces should be provided with this modern security equipment with other devices to enable police performs their duties effectively. This would not only boost the morale of personnel of the Nigeria Police but would in no small measure enhance public confidence in the chief law enforcement agency.

### 3.3. Cultism and Gang Violence

Cultism and gang violence involves violent behavior that is perpetrated by an organized group of people, often with a shared identity, ideology, whose aims and objectives are against societal norms and are done secretly. Secret cult activities are always carried out at odd hours of the day. They are characterized by secretive and mysterious practices such as killings and initiation ceremonies, indoctrination and mind control, exploitation and manipulation of members, use of symbols and coded language with hierarchical structure and leadership. The act of cultism and gang violence is now perceived in all aspect of lives. It is a serious criminal action in our society and as such is counted as one among the serious security challenges in Delta State and other parts of the country. Cultist activities are most common in tertiary institutions and had taken root in public and private secondary schools. A good number of students from Delta State University, Abraka lost their lives as a result of cult related activities. Other Delta cities such as Asaba, Ughelli, Sapele, and Warri also experience supremacy wars amongst various gangs. Aside supremacy wars, gang violence such as rape, armed robbery, burglary, kidnapping and even murder had become common trademarks of cultist groups. Different types of cult groups operate in varying forms. Several reasons had been adduced for the establishment of cult groups. Some explanations include the desire to protect members from perceived and real threats, undue academic victimization, and desire for brotherhood.<sup>23</sup> Cultism and gang related activities are not peculiar to Nigeria as it is a global security threat and common amongst youth. The American Cult experience also brought about some changes after the abolition of slavery and the American Civil War from the axis of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in December 1765 in Pulaski, Tennessee as a terrorist group formed by six American veterans (soldiers) that fought in the war of the Confederate Army, <sup>24</sup> has spread cultism and gang violence across oceans, leading to the loss of many lives and the destruction of properties, for example.

### 3.4. Police Public Partnership and Security

Police partnership with organize private sector like commercial banks and telecommunication operators in the fight against insecurity requires review to allow for a more robust and engaging collaboration. These engagements between law enforcement agencies, financial institutions, and telecommunications companies would prevent and investigate crimes, particularly those offences that are related to financial crimes. This partnership aim to share intelligence, resources and expertise to combat criminal activities such as fraud and cybercrime, money laundering and terrorism, kidnapping and ransom negotiations, armed robbery and violent crimes, drug trafficking and other organized crimes.

The security challenge prevalent in Delta State is Cybercrime. It is undertaken individually or collectively with a criminal intent to damage the victim's reputation or inflict psychological harm, either directly or indirectly, through modern telecommunications networks like the internet. The discreteness offered by the internet had been utilized by criminals to carryout online crimes such as Advance Fee Fraud, commonly referred to as 419 in Nigerian parlance. Advances recorded in information and communication technology had brought the world closer like never before and had inadvertently increased the speed and the effects of crime on the world's people. There is no gainsaying the fact that for effective and efficient security management, the Nigeria Police must be at speed with technological innovations.



Figure 2: A Fulani Herdsman

One other source of security challenge is the marauding Fulani herdsmen syndrome. Fulani herdsmen in a bid to graze their cattle engage in violence and criminal activities such as rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, murder, and destruction of farms, lives and properties. This had forced farmers in Delta State to abandon their farmlands owing to the fear of herdsmen, who are mostly armed ostensibly to protect their livestock. The security threat posed by the farmers-herders conflict shakes the fabrics of society as it has far-reaching socio-economic, political, religious and legal implications. Thus, this had deepened distrust, suspicion and mutual antagonism among residents in Delta State.

Arising from the above, the Nigerian government in 2019, introduced a ten-year National Livestock Transformation Plan aimed at reducing cattle movement, enhancing livestock production, and addressing the ongoing herder-farmer conflict. While the plan has been supported by some state governments, it faces challenges on many front, and budgetary constraints worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Sadly, farmers no longer farm with ease of mind due to their constant clash with marauding Fulani, herders 28 which in turn reduces productivity and increases the cost of agricultural produce in the state.

### 4. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion situates the role of NPF and security challenges with a view to analyzing the structural, institutional and historical context of policing. This provides avenues to explore the current security challenges, and the response of the Nigerian Police Force to these challenges erodes people's trust and confidence in the police in curbing these crimes. It should be noted that without Police collaborative efforts with citizens, policing these security threats becomes a

herculean task. Preventive policing, swift and effective response by the Nigerian Police towards threat to lives and property in Delta State will reassure Deltans of the body's commitment to ensuring their safety. The underpinning fact is that, if serious measures are not stationed to curb the increasing spate of criminality by identifying both potential threat areas and hot zones perpetrating these heinous crimes within the state, signals greater danger to lives and property.

### References

- I. C. Achumba, O. S. Ighomereho & M. O. M. (2013). Akpan-Robaro, "Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development," *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 4 (2), 79-99.
- G. L. Adeola & F. Oluyemi, (2012). *The Political and Security Implications of Cross Border*. Lagos: Freeman Press.
- D. Beland, (2005). *The Political Construction of Collective Insecurity: From Moral Panic to Blame Avoidance and Organized Irresponsibility*. Center for European Studies, Working Paper Series 126.
- Edeko, S. E. Edeko, (2011). "Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa: A Case Study of the Niger Delta in Nigeria". *Sacha Journal of Environmental Studies*, 1(2), 55-80.
- O. I. Eme & A. Onyishi, (2011). "Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria: A Thematic Exposition". *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business*, 3 (8).
- S. L. Ezeoba, (2011). "Causes and Effects of Insecurity in Nigeria," *The National Scholar*, 8 (2), 28-38.
- Gani Yoroms, (Lagos: NIIA, 2012). "Civil Military Relations in a Democratic Nigeria," in *Nigeria and the World: A. Bolaji Akinyemi Revisited*, ed. Bola A. Akinterinwa, 138.
- Phillippe Zimbrado, *Introduction of Broken Windows in NYC & LA*, (1969). Retrieved June 2, 2024, from <https://www.britannica.com>; See also James Q. Wilson & George Kelling, "Broken Windows Theory 1982". Retrieved July 17, 2014, from <https://study.com>
- Ruth Charlotte, (2024). "Broken Windows Theory of Criminology". Retrieved September 2, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org>.
- Emery Amelia & Jones Joseph, (2024). "Broken Windows Theory in Policing, Definition, Effect and Examples". Retrieved August 5, from <https://study.com>.
- Valasik Matthew, "What is Broken Window Theory?" Retrieved August 8, 2024, from <https://www.academia.edu>.
- C. J. Nwanegbo & J. Odigbo, (2013). "International Journal of Humanities and Social Science". Review, 3(4), 285-291; see also, C. I. Nwabgoso, "Security Challenges and Economy of the Nigerian State (2007 – 2011)". *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, Vol. 2 (6), 2012, 244-258.
- G. O. Ogunleye, O. S. Adewale, B. K. Alese & A. O. Ogunde, (2011). *A Computer-Based Security Framework for Crime Prevention in Nigeria*, A Paper presented at the 10th international conference of the Nigeria computer society held from July 25th -29th; see also, S. I. Oladeji & B. A. Folorunso, (2007). "The Imperative of National Security and Stability for Development Process in Contemporary Nigeria". *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 2007, 66-79.
- O. E. Olabanji & U. Ese, (2014). "Insecurity and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria". *Journal of Sustainable Development Studies* 5, (1), 40-63; See also N. Abiodun, "Tackle Insecurity in South West, NUJ tells Govt." *The Punch Newspaper*, 12th December, 2022.
- A. Danladi, (2010). "Citizenship Indigenship Contestations in Nigeria and National Security: Implications for Social Studies Education in Nigeria". *Journal of Social Studies* 13 (1&2), 41; see also, N. Joseph, *Way out of Insecurity in Nigeria*. Abuja: Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria, 2019, 34.

Oral Interview with Isaac Nelson at Sapele 3-3-2024

Oral Interview with Ebi Kasikoro at Bomadi 16-3-2024

Oral Interview with Stanley Obieyowvi at Abraka 23-3-2024

Oral Interview with Onoriode Efe at Ughelli 15-6-2024.

Oral Interview with Emori Ike at Warri 23-3-2024.

Oral Interview with Sariki Isaiah at Asaba 1-4-2024.

I. Eferebo, "Inter-Agency Relations and Management of Security in Postcolonial Nigeria". WAUU Journal of International Affairs and Comparative Studies 2 (2), 2022, 12.

V. Olakiitan, OkeAko Fulani Herdsmen Invasion: Still Reeling from the Shock", ThisDayLive, June 5, 2020.

H. Abdu, "When Perpetrators become Aggressors: Conflict and Security Sector Governance in Nigeria, in Mustapha, A. R. (Ed), Conflict and Security Governance in West Africa. Abuja: Atlas Global Alliance. Retrieved June 4, 2024, from <http://www.cleen.org/pdf>.

S. E. Arase & I. P. O. Iwuofor, (Eds.), Policing Nigeria in the 21st Century. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd, 2006.

C. A. Okoli & M. A. Idom, (2018). "The Internet and National Security in Nigeria: A Threat-Import Discourse". Journal of Politics and International Affairs, Nigeria, 6 (1), 24-25.

A. Abraham, (2014). "Who Governs the Internet? Implications for Freedom and National Security, World Wide Web (YOJANA), 41-44.

A C. Okoye, "New Trends and Tension in Farmers-Herders Conflict in Nigeria", in B. Okaba et al (Eds.), General Studies Book of Reading, Federal University Otuoke, IFS, 496.