



Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

THE TRIPLE HELIX: GOVERNANCE, NONSTATE VIOLENCE, AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:

A Journey Moving the Center Beyond the Leviathan State

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE

Series No. 03/26



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DEDICATION

To My Beloved Mother who passed away December 7th, 2018. I love you eternally

To the millions of Nigerians whose lives have been disrupted, displaced, and destroyed by the crisis documented in this lecture — your suffering demands documentation, your resilience inspires hope, and your futures demand transformation.

To the people of Dan Sadau Emirate, who endured the near-total collapse of an entire civilization within the span of a decade, embodying the spirit of extraordinary resilience that will ultimately enable recovery.

To the communities of Taraba State who bore decades of ethnic conflict and whose experiences first shaped my understanding of Nigeria's governance crisis in 1994.

To the Koma people of Adamawa State, whose abandonment by the postcolonial state reveals the true character of governance failure in its most extreme form.

To the late Professors, Ayo Rauf Dunmoye, Late Mallam Saidu Adamu, Late Ado Amidu Andeley, Late Professor John Ayam, Late Mr. Paul Muftwang, Late Toure Kazah, Late Professor Abubakar Momoh, Late Alhaji Sani Kabir, Sarkin Ebute Metta (Chairman Council of huasa Chiefs in Lagos State and Arewa Community in Lagos State), Late Professor Yusuf Isiaku Dankofa (law), Late Professor Usman Abubakar, all of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and Most of all, Late Proferssor Alex Gboyega of University of Ibadan, whose intellectual mentorship also established the standards of rigorous empirical scholarship that have guided this entire research journey. Late Abdullahi Kizzy, Late Bala Mamman (Sabo Ibadan), Late Bala Sule (Sabo Ibadan).

PROTOCOL

The Vice-Chancellor, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria,

Members of the University Governing Council and Senate,

The Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic, Administration, Research,
Innovation and Advancement),

The Registrar, Bursar and Other Principal Officers of the University,

Provosts of Colleges,

Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes,

Heads of Academic and Administrative Departments,

Your Royal Highnesses, the Emirs and Traditional Rulers here
present,

Distinguished Representatives of Government and Development
Partners,

Fellow Professors and Academic Colleagues,

Distinguished Guests,

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal,

Dear Students,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

**THE TRIPLE HELIX:
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DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA:**

A Journey Moving the Center Beyond the Leviathan State

ABSTRACT

This inaugural lecture presents the culmination of thirty years of empirical research across Northern Nigeria, advancing a novel theoretical framework — the Triple Helix — that theorizes how governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse operate as mutually reinforcing, coconstitutive crises rather than as independent phenomena amenable to single dimension solutions. Drawing on 487 structured interviews, 93 focus group discussions, analysis of more than 2,200 documented violent conflict events, and longitudinal case studies conducted between 1994 and 2025 across eight Northern Nigerian states, the lecture demonstrates that Nigeria's security and development crisis represents a systemic rather than sectoral challenge. The research establishes that armed banditry, Boko Haram insurgency, farmer herder conflicts, and ethnic militias — though distinct in origin and tactics — share a common structural foundation in governance failure, particularly at the local government tier where the correlation between institutional autonomy and service delivery registers at $r=0.922$. The lecture documents the catastrophic human consequences of this systemic failure, including the displacement of over 2.8 million persons, the operation of more than 30,000 armed bandits across Northwestern Nigeria, and Nigeria's ranking at 163rd of 166 countries on the Sustainable Development Goal Index. It advances a comprehensive policy framework requiring simultaneous intervention across all three helix strands and proposes the concept of competitive governance as an alternative analytical lens to the inadequate Leviathan state model that has dominated both theory and policy in postcolonial African contexts.

Keywords: *Triple Helix, governance failure, nonstate violence, development collapse, competitive governance, Northwestern Nigeria, armed banditry, Boko Haram, local government, Sustainable Development Goals.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACLED — Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
APC — Arewa People's Congress
CJTF — Civilian Joint Task Force
ECOWAS — Economic Community of West African States
FCT — Federal Capital Territory
FCDO — Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (United Kingdom)
FGD — Focus Group Discussion
HDI — Human Development Index
IDP — Internally Displaced Person
ISWAP — Islamic State West Africa Province
JAS — Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)
LGA — Local Government Area
LGFA — Local Government Financial Autonomy
NPC — National Population Commission
OPC — Oodua People's Congress
PECA — Protection from Engagement in Conflict Areas
SDG — Sustainable Development Goal
SFCA — Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations
SIEC — State Independent Electoral Commission
SSA — Sub-Saharan Africa
UNDP — United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF — United Nations Children's Fund
WFP — World Food Programme

SECTION 1:

PROLOGUE — A SCHOLAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH CONFLICT AND GOVERNANCE

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, permit me to begin this inaugural lecture with an account of the intellectual journey that has shaped my understanding of Nigeria's governance and security challenges. This journey spans thirty years of research, teaching, and sustained engagement with communities, policymakers, and fellow scholars, traversing the length and breadth of Northern Nigeria from the highlands of Taraba to the savannahs of Zamfara, from the insurgency-ravaged Northeast to the banditry-afflicted Northwest. It represents not merely a personal milestone but the culmination of sustained scholarly inquiry into one of the most vexing challenges confronting contemporary Nigeria: the intricate, mutually reinforcing relationship between governance failures, nonstate violence, and developmental collapse.

My scholarly journey commenced in 1994 when, as a young researcher at Ahmadu Bello University, I first encountered the complexities of ethnic conflict in Taraba State. The Jukun-Chamba and Kuteb conflicts that engulfed Takum and the surrounding areas of Southern Taraba presented a puzzle that standard political science explanations could not adequately address. Why would communities that had coexisted for generations suddenly erupt in devastating violence? Why did the Nigerian state, with its elaborate federal structure and constitutional provisions for managing diversity, prove incapable of preventing or resolving these conflicts? These questions shaped my doctoral research and established the intellectual foundations upon which the theoretical architecture presented in this lecture is built.

The 1997–1998 conflict in Taraba State devastated communities I had come to know intimately through extended fieldwork. The Justice Aliyu Peace Committee estimated material losses at 6.613 billion Naira, representing the destruction of homes, businesses, and livelihoods accumulated over generations. But beyond the material devastation, I witnessed the psychological trauma inflicted upon

survivors, the displacement of entire communities, and the erosion of social trust that would require decades to rebuild. These experiences convinced me that understanding ethnic conflict required moving beyond simplistic explanations emphasizing primordial ethnic hatreds, toward examination of the structural conditions, elite manipulations, and governance failures that transform ethnic differences into violent antagonisms.

My doctoral dissertation, "The State and Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: A Study of Taraba State, 1996–2006," submitted to Ahmadu Bello University and subsequently published by Lambert Academic Publishing, examined these dynamics systematically. Through extensive fieldwork involving 700 community questionnaires deployed in three stages and yielding 396 valid returns, and 400 official questionnaires yielding 230 valid returns, I documented how intraclass struggles within the ruling class mobilized ethnic identities for political competition. The conflict was not primarily about ancient ethnic animosities but about contemporary struggles for political power, access to state resources, and control over traditional institutions. Political elites on both sides of Taraba's ethnic divide manipulated communal sentiments to advance personal agendas, transforming what might have remained manageable local disputes into devastating regional violence that claimed thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of persons.

The Taraba research established an analytical framework I would apply across multiple conflict contexts in subsequent decades. Political conflicts and power struggles connect directly to intraclass fighting and factional contests within Nigeria's ruling class. These struggles routinely entail the mobilization of ordinary people's ethnic and communal identities through deliberate manipulation, where communities are rarely ever aware of the real essence of the power contest being prosecuted on their behalf and at their expense. This insight, validated across different regions and conflict types over thirty years of subsequent research, became central to my understanding of violence in Nigeria and ultimately informed the Triple Helix framework presented in this lecture.

From Taraba, my research expanded to examine the phenomenon of ethnic militias that proliferated across Nigeria during the transition to democracy in 1999 and the early Fourth Republic. The emergence of the Oodua People's Congress in the Southwest, the Bakassi Boys in the Southeast, the Egbesu Boys in the South-South, and the Arewa People's Congress in the North represented a significant transformation in Nigeria's political landscape that demanded scholarly attention. These movements, while articulating distinct regional and ethnic grievances, shared fundamental characteristics: they emerged in direct response to perceived state failure and security collapse, drew membership predominantly from unemployed youth, operated outside legal boundaries, and mounted direct challenges to the state's monopoly on legitimate violence.

My research on ethnic militias, conducted through the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies with support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, documented the demographic profile, motivations, and structural conditions driving militia formation across four geopolitical zones. The findings were striking in their consistency. Militia membership comprised predominantly youth between sixteen and thirty-five years of age, with ninety six percent younger than thirty-four and ninety percent drawn from low-income backgrounds. Unemployment emerged as the primary driver of participation, with forty five percent of respondents identifying it as the main factor behind their involvement. Ethnic marginalization ranked second at thirty six percent, followed by manipulation by politicians at twenty one percent. These findings carried profound implications: what appeared on the surface as ethnic or regional mobilization was, in substance, a crisis of youth unemployment, state failure, and elite manipulation of grievance.

The research also documented what I termed a youth subculture of violence that had taken root in Nigerian society by the early 2000s. Young men excluded from formal political participation and formal economic opportunity discovered that violence offered pathways to income, status, and patron client relationships with political elites. The political space had become so monetized and so thoroughly controlled by godfathers that legitimate entry proved impossible for youth without financial backing or political sponsorship. The only

accessible entrance into the system ran through conflict — and predominantly through violent conflict. This dynamic, documented in the militia research, established a critical analytical foundation I would deploy years later when examining why banditry proved so recruitable in Northwestern Nigeria's economically devastated communities.

Published as the chapter "The Youths, Ethnic Militias and Democracy in Nigeria" in Adetula's edited volume on Nigeria's political development (Isa, 2010), this research argued that the ethnic militia phenomenon represented a fundamental crisis of the Nigerian state manifesting as political domination, marginalization, and economic deprivation. The virtual deterioration and collapse of institutions for interethnic equity and national cohesion had strengthened the resolve of political elites to promote geo-ethnic organizations as instruments of political competition. The failure of security agencies had created the social acceptability of ethnic militia groups as alternative community protection mechanisms. Most critically, the increasing availability of small arms — estimates suggested approximately three million weapons circulating in Nigeria by the mid 2000s, with nearly eighty percent acquired illegally — not only promoted a culture of violence generally but emboldened disaffected groups and separatist movements into mounting direct challenges to legitimate authorities.

Simultaneously with the militia research, my scholarly attention turned toward the phenomenon of militant Islamic movements emerging in Northern Nigeria. The Shariah debates that consumed northern states between 1999 and 2002, the historical trajectory from the Maitatsine sect of the 1980s through the contemporary Sufi-Salafist spectrum, and the emerging neo-Salafist formations that would coalesce into Boko Haram all demanded analytical engagement. My published research on these movements documented how a combination of increased inequality, injustice, poverty, failed social services, security collapse, and the legitimacy crisis of the weak authoritarian Nigerian state — compounded by failed structural adjustment programmes — had created fertile ground for radical Islamic mobilization among northern Nigerian youth. The research identified charismatic religious leadership, transnational Islamist networks, and the exploitation of governance failures as the three

pillars upon which these movements rested. These findings would prove analytically crucial when, after 2009, Boko Haram transformed from a religious sect into a territorial insurgency that would displace millions and kill hundreds of thousands.

From 2010 onward, my research expanded geographically and thematically to embrace the Northwestern Nigeria crisis as it evolved from localized criminal activity into a systemic governance and development catastrophe. My first systematic encounters with what would become the banditry crisis occurred during fieldwork in Zamfara and Katsina states, where I observed in rural communities the same structural conditions I had documented in Taraba: governance failure at every tier of government, elite predation of public resources, traditional authority under siege, youth unemployment creating dangerous availability for recruitment, and state security forces whose abuses generated communities more hostile to them than to the armed groups terrorizing villages. The patterns were both familiar and escalating into something qualitatively more severe.

The longitudinal case study of Dan Sadau Emirate, which I began tracking in 2011, became the most vivid empirical demonstration of the Triple Helix framework's explanatory power. A community of 45,000 people, governed by a respected Emirate with centuries of institutional continuity, had been reduced by 2019 to 3,200 residents — a ninety three percent population collapse within eight years. The systematic documentation of this catastrophe across multiple field visits, as security conditions permitted and later as armed escort became mandatory, provided the most concentrated single-site illustration of how governance failure, armed violence, and development collapse interlock and accelerate each other's destructive effects. No theory could explain Dan Sadau's fate that did not simultaneously account for all three crisis dimensions working in concert.

The thirty years that separate my first fieldwork in Taraba's conflict torn communities in 1994 from the completion of this inaugural lecture in 2025 represent not merely the passage of time but a sustained intellectual engagement with one of the most consequential

governance crises in postcolonial African history. The research that this lecture synthesizes encompasses 487 structured interviews conducted across eight Northern Nigerian states, 93 focus group discussions with community members ranging from internally displaced persons to traditional rulers and government officials, and the systematic analysis of more than 2,200 documented violent conflict events spanning four decades. Every finding presented in the sections that follow traces directly to field evidence gathered at personal risk, often in dangerous conditions, always in service of the conviction that rigorous scholarship can and must inform better governance and more effective policy.

The intellectual journey has produced a theoretical framework — the Triple Helix — that this lecture advances as a contribution to understanding Nigeria's crisis and pointing toward its resolution. The framework theorizes the mutually reinforcing dynamics among governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse, demonstrating through extensive empirical evidence that these three dimensions constitute an interlocked system resistant to the partial, single dimension interventions that have consistently and expensively failed. The framework draws on three decades of empirical research, on engagement with theoretical traditions from neoMarxist state theory to competitive governance analysis, and on the lesson — learned painfully through observation of failed interventions across Northern Nigeria — that complexity demands integrated rather than fragmented responses.

What follows in this lecture is structured to make that argument systematically and comprehensively. Section Two develops the theoretical and conceptual foundations, establishing the nature of the Nigerian state and the Triple Helix framework. Section Three presents the methodological architecture through which thirty years of evidence was gathered and analyzed. Section Four deploys the empirical evidence across six case studies and three analytical helix dimensions. Section Five documents the devastating consequences for Nigeria's Sustainable Development Goal commitments. Section Six translates the analysis into comprehensive policy prescriptions. Section Seven reflects personally on the scholarly journey and its intellectual legacy. Section Eight offers a final synthesis and

conclusion, positioning Nigeria at the crossroads between continued decline and the possibility — still real, still within reach — of transformation.

But before all of that, Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, permit me to acknowledge the human faces behind the statistics. Ado Amidu Andeley of Lankaviri-Jalingo, my friend and intellectual companion from those early Taraba days, whose untimely death during the violence of the late 1990s transformed abstract academic inquiry into urgent personal commitment. The displaced widow in a Zamfara IDP camp who could not explain why her husband was killed but could describe with heartbreaking precision what she had lost. The Emir of Dan Sadau, presiding over an emirate that had shrunk to a shadow of its former self, whose dignity in the face of near-total institutional collapse exemplified the resilience this lecture seeks to honor alongside the suffering it documents. The children in roadside IDP camps along the Abuja-Kaduna highway, born into displacement, knowing no other existence. It is for them, ultimately, that the scholarly work documented in this lecture was undertaken, and it is in their service that the policy prescriptions it advances must be implemented.

SECTION 2:

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: UNDERSTANDING THE NIGERIAN STATE AND THE TRIPLE HELIX FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction: Moving Beyond the Leviathan State

Thomas Hobbes, writing in the aftermath of the English Civil War, conceptualized the state as Leviathan — a sovereign authority commanding absolute obedience in exchange for security and order. This foundational conception has shaped Western political thought for centuries, informing assumptions about state formation, political obligation, and the nature of legitimate authority. The Westphalian state system institutionalized this vision in 1648, establishing territorial sovereignty and non-interference as organizing principles of international order. Post-colonial African states, including Nigeria, inherited this conceptual architecture despite possessing fundamentally different historical trajectories, social foundations, and state formation processes. The violence of colonial conquest dissolved preexisting traditional states, substituted externally imposed administrative structures, and left successor states bereft of the organic societal foundations from which the Hobbesian Leviathan was supposed to emerge.

The limitations of applying this Leviathan framework to contemporary Nigeria become starkly apparent when one examines empirical realities across the country's conflict affected regions. In the territories studied over nearly thirty years — Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Kano, Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States — the Nigerian state frequently exists as aspiration rather than actuality. State authority extends unevenly across territory, contested by traditional institutions, religious authorities, ethnic organizations, armed groups, and nonstate actors who exercise governance functions in spaces the formal state cannot or will not reach. Understanding Nigeria's security and development crisis therefore requires, as a prior analytical step, moving beyond the Leviathan ideal toward an empirically grounded theory of the postcolonial state's actual character and functional logic.

2.2 The Nature and Character of the Nigerian State: NeoMarxist Foundations

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, understanding Nigeria's governance and security crisis requires first establishing a rigorous theoretical account of the Nigerian state itself. The state constitutes the central analytical category for this lecture's entire analytical architecture. The theoretical framework of analysis deployed throughout this research is the neoMarxist theory of the postcolonial state — an offshoot of the classical Marxist political economy approach developed by radical scholars of Third World origin, including Hamza Alavi, Colin Leys, John Saul, Claude Ake, Samir Amin, and Gunnar Myrdal (Alavi, 1979; Arowosegbe, 2001). The central contention of these theorists is that an understanding of the nature, history, composition, and character of the Nigerian state is indispensable for capturing the dynamics of political and socio-economic developments and processes within that state. The state constitutes the central locus of politics and therefore the major determinant of the directions of most societal processes.

Classical state theory, from Hobbes through Weber to contemporary scholars, emphasizes the state's core functions: monopolizing legitimate violence within a defined territory, establishing order, and providing public goods. The Hobbesian social contract conceptualizes the state as arising from rational individuals who surrender freedoms to a sovereign authority in exchange for security and order. The Weberian tradition defines the state through its institutional features — a centralized administrative apparatus claiming legitimate monopoly over violence within a bounded territory. These European-derived frameworks prove fundamentally inadequate for understanding the African state generally and the Nigerian state specifically, because they assume organic state formation processes that colonialism systematically prevented.

The neoMarxist analysis situates the Nigerian state's origins squarely within the history of colonial imperialism. In understanding the nature of the postcolonial Nigerian state, one is informed primarily by the structuralist concept of the state as derived from the metropolitan centre — a product of colonial imperialism (Alavi, 1979). Nigeria at independence inherited a state apparatus that was overdeveloped in

the colonial period. Critically, an ascendant indigenous bourgeoisie did not establish the postcolonial state; rather, a foreign imperialist bourgeoisie created it and continued to extend influence on it after independence through links with the bureaucratic, military, and political elites (Alavi, 1979). The colonial state was equipped with powerful bureaucratic-military apparatus enabling it through routine operations to subordinate native social classes — and the postcolonial state inherited precisely that overdeveloped apparatus along with its institutionalized practices of managing and controlling the indigenous social classes.

Peter Ekeh's analysis establishes the genealogical clarity required here. The African state as a power was implemented through force via European imperialism arising from the needs of European industrial capitalism. Colonialism dissolved traditional states in Africa through violence and conquest, depriving African states — particularly Nigeria — of the benefit of inherited governance traditions. The contemporary African state inherited the essential characteristics of the colonial state: institutions consisting mainly of instruments of violence and coercion — the military and police, the judiciary, and the bureaucracy — to which parliamentary assemblies were added only as apparatus with advisory capacity (Ekeh, 1985). The modern African state, as Ekeh concludes, was launched on violence and subversion, and the state and society have since independence continued to grow apart rather than converge, generating a persistent legitimation problem that defines the Nigerian political condition to the present day.

Reverend Matthew Hassan Kukah's observation reinforces this analytical point with important normative weight: when the state fails to serve as a platform for individuals to attain their potentials, human beings tend to find alternative means of creating a sense of belonging. Disengagement sets in as men and women adopt new survival techniques — belonging to armed gangs, cults, extreme religious or cultural groups, or adopting false nationalist agendas cast in tribal and religious moulds — and then unleash forms of terror on the state, its citizens, and its agencies (Kukah, cited in Isa, 2001). This dynamic, theorized abstractly in the early 2000s, describes with frightening

precision the lived reality of Northwestern Nigeria by the 2010s and 2020s.

Claude Ake provided the most penetrating characterization of the Nigerian state's fundamental character: a predatory state based on Hobbesian politics that ruined the prospects of development by spreading alienation, resentments, inefficiency, and corruption (Ake, 1985, cited in Isa, 2001). The Nigerian state, in Ake's analysis, is also characterized by the partial penetration of capitalism within the social formation; the centrality of the economy in the accumulation process; the limited development of commodity production and exchange; the existence of a small but conscious class of capitalists; and an incoherent, fragmented economy that generates a persistent pattern of divisive cultural pluralism (Ake, 1985). These structural characteristics place a high premium on political power, making the struggle for power Hobbesian in its intensity and destructiveness. The state becomes an intense arena for power struggle because politics is an absorbing pursuit prosecuted at the detriment of everything else — including economic development, security provision, and legitimate governance.

The state in Nigeria, as Ekekwe's analysis establishes, is a postcolonial and peripheral capitalist formation that differs fundamentally from the state in advanced capitalist formations. In peripheral capitalist formations such as Nigeria, the underdevelopment of productive forces makes the state, its institutions, and its apparatus a crucial factor and a direct instrument for the accumulation of surplus in the interest of the dominant class or its elements (Ekekwe, 1986). This accumulation function — not welfare provision, not security delivery, not development facilitation — constitutes the Nigerian state's primary operational logic. Those who capture political power develop a siege mentality and perceive governance in terms of maximizing personal accumulation while maintaining the political conditions enabling that accumulation. Traditions of authoritarianism and brutality have made mobilization for any developmental agenda not merely difficult but functionally antithetical to the state's operational purpose.

Richard Joseph's concept of prebendal politics captures a further crucial dimension of the Nigerian state's character. In prebendal systems, public offices become sources of private wealth accumulation rather than platforms for public service. Political competition centers on access to state resources rather than competing policy visions. Winners enjoy virtually unfettered access to state resources while losers face exclusion not merely from power but from the entire patronage network distributing jobs, contracts, and development amenities (Joseph, 1987). This zero sum political competition intensifies ethnic and regional mobilization as communities perceive their collective welfare as entirely dependent on having their representatives in positions of power. It generates the "cake-sharing syndrome" that A.B.C. Nwosu identifies as the structural root of Nigeria's perennial distributional crises — over revenue allocation, federal character, creation of states and local government areas, and national population counts (Nwosu, 2000, cited in Isa, 2001). Identity and ethnic conflicts, in this theoretical framework, are secondary contradictions subject to manipulation by dominant class elements depending on the degree of resource scarcity and the forms of competition that ensue (Barongo, 1980, cited in Isa, 2001).

The Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou (1999) analysis of the criminalisation of the African state extends these insights in directions particularly relevant to the contemporary Nigerian crisis. These scholars document fraud and smuggling on a major scale, the plundering of natural resources, the privatisation of state institutions, the development of an economy of plunder, and the growth of private armies as features of public life in Africa — suggesting that the state itself has become a vehicle for organised criminal activity. The accumulation of capital on a large scale created real dominant classes who benefited from colonial collaboration, nationalist mobilisation, nationalisation, and economic liberalisation, and who position themselves to benefit from the eventual criminalisation of the state (Bayart et al., 1999). In the Nigerian context, this criminalisation thesis explains why armed groups proliferate in environments where they theoretically should not — where states with formal security forces, elected governments, and constitutional structures have

nevertheless lost both the capacity and the will to secure their populations.

This neoMarxist analysis of the Nigerian state provides the theoretical foundation for the three-strand helix framework advanced in this lecture. Governance failure is not accidental, circumstantial, or correctable through technocratic adjustment. It is structural — rooted in the colonial origins, extractive logic, and prebendal political economy of a postcolonial peripheral capitalist state whose institutional apparatus was designed for extraction and control rather than welfare provision or development facilitation. Understanding this structural character explains why governance interventions consistently fail when they address symptoms rather than the underlying extractive political economy. It explains why local government remains captured and dysfunctional not despite Nigeria's democratic constitution but partly because of how that constitution structures incentives for predation. It explains why security forces frequently generate as much insecurity as they resolve. And it explains why development programmes perennially fail to reach their intended beneficiaries in Nigeria's conflict affected communities.

2.3 The Triple Helix Framework: Theorizing Mutually Reinforcing Crises

The Triple Helix framework developed through this research theorizes the mutually reinforcing dynamics among three interconnected crisis dimensions: governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse. Unlike linear causality models that privilege one factor as primary cause and treat others as derivative effects, the Triple Helix conceptualizes these three dimensions as coconstitutive and mutually amplifying, creating self-perpetuating cycles that prove extraordinarily difficult to break through single dimension interventions.

The first strand of the helix, governance failure, manifests across multiple institutional levels and functional dimensions. At the federal tier, security operations launch with great fanfare but withdraw without establishing sustainable governance structures, creating security vacuums that nonstate actors immediately fill. At the state tier, governors have consistently treated local government statutory

allocations as personal patronage resources, diverting an estimated N750 billion between 1999 and 2004 alone according to documentation from the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE, 2003; Isa, 2015). At the local government tier, elected councils gave way to caretaker committees appointed by governors — with sixty five percent of Northwestern local governments under unelected leadership at various points during the Fourth Republic — and these appointed officials served gubernatorial interests rather than community needs. At the traditional authority tier, institutions that maintained social order for centuries have lost their material base, their legitimacy, and their capacity to mediate conflicts. These failures are not recent developments but represent the culmination of long-term processes rooted in Nigeria's colonial legacy, postcolonial political economy, and the structural dynamics of peripheral capitalist state formation analyzed in section 2.2.

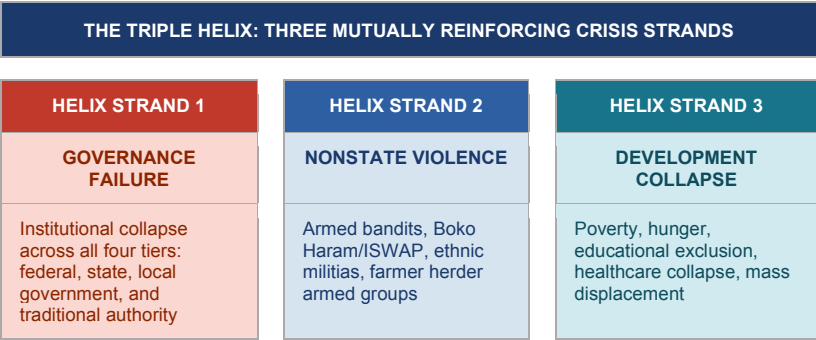
The second strand, nonstate violence, encompasses the proliferation of armed groups operating outside state authority and frequently challenging it directly. These include Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province in the Northeast, armed bandit groups in the Northwest, farmer herder militias across the Middle Belt, the Indigenous People of Biafra and its armed wing in the Southeast, and various militant groups in the Niger Delta. While these groups differ substantially in origins, motivations, organizational structures, and tactics, they share fundamental structural characteristics: they emerge from governance failures, challenge state authority through violence, control territories where state presence is absent or contested, establish alternative governance systems, and systematically destroy the development infrastructure that might otherwise provide their members with legitimate economic alternatives to violence.

The third strand, development collapse, refers to the systematic destruction of human capabilities and productive capacity that both drives and is driven by the other two helix dimensions. This collapse encompasses educational system destruction as schools are burned, teachers flee, and children cannot access basic education; healthcare system disintegration as facilities are damaged, medical personnel leave, and populations cannot access any healthcare; agricultural system collapse as farmers cannot reach their fields, markets cease

functioning, and food insecurity spreads rapidly; economic disintegration as businesses close, infrastructure deteriorates, and multidimensional poverty deepens; and demographic catastrophe as populations flee conflict zones, creating mass displacement that strains already inadequate resources in receiving communities while leaving conflict zones depopulated and ungovernable.

Figure 1 — The Triple Helix Framework

This diagram depicts the three mutually reinforcing crisis strands and their six causal interaction pathways. Each strand is simultaneously cause and consequence of the other two, creating a self-perpetuating cycle that resists all partial interventions.



The helix metaphor captures the intertwined, mutually reinforcing nature of these three strands, each wrapping around and intensifying the others in a spiraling pattern that accelerates over time. Governance failure creates conditions for violent mobilization: ungoverned spaces where armed groups can organize and operate freely, security vacuums that nonstate actors fill with alternative protection arrangements, and state absence that drives populations to seek security and justice through whatever channels remain accessible. The proliferation of armed violence then systematically destroys development infrastructure and processes — displacing populations, destroying schools and healthcare facilities, disrupting agricultural production, eliminating economic opportunities, and generating the mass grievances that further delegitimize the state. Development collapse, in turn, generates conditions that further undermine

governance: widespread poverty that erodes state revenue and fiscal capacity; mass grievances that delegitimize state authority and reduce communities' willingness to cooperate with security operations; and the desperate material conditions that make youth recruitment into armed groups rational from the recruit's perspective, because participation in violence offers better income and status than available legitimate alternatives. Each strand feeds into and intensifies the others, explaining why the crisis has proven so resistant to three decades of partial interventions.

SIX DOCUMENTED CAUSAL INTERACTION PATHWAYS				
#	From	→	To	Mechanism
1	Governance failure	→	Non-state violence	Creates territorial vacuums
2	Non-state violence	→	Governance failure	Destroys legitimacy
3	Governance failure	→	Development collapse	Service deprivation
4	Development collapse	→	Governance failure	Erodes state revenue
5	Non-state violence	→	Development collapse	Destroys infrastructure
6	Development collapse	→	Non-state violence	Fuels recruitment

Figure 1: The Triple Helix Framework — Governance Failure, Nonstate Violence, and Development Collapse as Mutually Reinforcing Crises

Source: Isa (2025). The Triple Helix: Governance, Nonstate Violence, and Development in Nigeria. Inaugural Lecture, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

The framework's theoretical power derives precisely from its refusal to privilege any single causal strand. The analytical temptation in studying Nigerian insecurity is to identify one root cause — poverty, or ethnic tension, or governance failure, or religious radicalism — and prescribe interventions targeting that single factor. My thirty years of field research demonstrate conclusively that this analytical reductionism misrepresents the actual dynamics and generates the pattern of failed, expensive, and ultimately counterproductive interventions that Section 4 documents exhaustively.

2.4 Competitive Governance: Multiple Authorities in Contested Spaces

A critical theoretical contribution emerging from this research concerns what I term competitive governance — the coexistence of multiple authorities simultaneously claiming legitimacy and exercising power within the same territories. Classical state theory assumes a single sovereign authority within a bounded territory. This assumption serves useful theoretical purposes but describes almost nowhere in contemporary Africa, and describes Nigeria least of all. The Nigerian state does not hold a monopoly on physical force. In large portions of the country, nonstate actors exercise greater control over territory, populations, and the means of violence than the state apparatus itself.

Recent scholarship has begun recognizing this complexity. The concept of hybrid political orders, developed by Boege, Brown, Clements, and Nolan (2008) among others, emerged as an attempt to move beyond the binary of state success and state failure. This literature argued that what matters is not whether the state functions according to Western templates, but whether populations have access to security, justice, and service delivery — regardless of whether provision comes from state institutions or alternative actors. This represented a significant epistemological shift from asking why the state has failed toward asking who governs when the state fails.

Yet even this important reframing remains analytically incomplete in ways that my research addresses directly. Hybrid political orders scholarship tends toward description rather than explanation, documenting that multiple actors govern while offering limited insight into why particular configurations emerge, how they evolve dynamically, and when hybrid arrangements generate stability versus escalating violence. More critically, the hybrid orders framework sometimes implies that alternative governance arrangements represent acceptable or even desirable substitutes for state governance. My research demonstrates something quite different: the political arrangements that emerge when state capacity collapses are frequently brutally hierarchical, economically extractive, and politically repressive. Bandits who provide nominal community protection

extract taxation at rates communities cannot sustain, conscript young men into their ranks, restrict women's freedom of movement, and execute any community members suspected of cooperating with state security forces. This is not governance as a public good; it is governance as organized predation with minimally protective features designed to maintain the compliance of subject populations.

The concept of competitive governance advances beyond hybrid orders analysis in four important respects. First, authority in competitive governance arrangements is fundamentally zero sum rather than complementary. When armed bandits govern a territory, they do not complement or supplement state authority — they replace it. When vigilante groups provide community security, they do so precisely because state police cannot or will not provide it. Authority over a given population is finite; one actor claiming it effectively denies it to others. This creates inherently competitive dynamics that frequently produce violence between rival authority-claimants. Second, competitive governance arrangements are dynamic rather than static. Governance configurations shift constantly as actors gain or lose capacity, legitimacy, or resources — sometimes over weeks rather than years. Yesterday's trusted mediator becomes today's predator when his economic position deteriorates and protection of his income stream requires extortion rather than service. These rapid shifts in the Northwestern Nigeria conflict zone were documented through my longitudinal fieldwork and proved analytically invisible to cross-sectional studies examining only a single moment in time.

Figure 2 — The Competitive Governance Spectrum

This structural diagram maps all major governance actors in Nigeria's conflict affected spaces across a spectrum from state monopoly to ungoverned territory, documenting their governance functions and competitive relationships.

STATE MONOPOLY	CONTESTED AUTHORITY	COMPETITIVE GOVERNANCE	UNGOVERNED SPACE
Federal military (Army, Navy, Air Force)	Nigerian Police Force (centralised, underfunded)	Local government (hollow — politically captured)	State presence: absent in forest zones

Traditional rulers (customary legitimacy)	CJTF / Civilian JTF (community protection)	Armed bandits (tax, permit, govern)	Boko Haram / ISWAP (territorial caliphate)
FUNCTIONS	FUNCTIONS	FUNCTIONS	FUNCTIONS
Security, taxation, service delivery	Mediation, dispute resolution, legitimacy	Extortion, protection, land access permits	Courts, schools, taxation, punishment

← Increasing state legitimacy | Increasing nonstate governance capacity →

Figure 2: Competitive Governance — The Spectrum of Authority in Nigeria's Conflict Affected Spaces

Source: Isa (2025). Competitive governance concept developed from thirty years of field research, 1994–2025.

Third, populations navigate between competing authorities pragmatically, based on immediate calculations of need and risk rather than principled loyalty. A farmer may pay informal taxes to bandits in exchange for protection enabling agricultural work, while simultaneously seeking state protection when that option becomes accessible. A community may welcome vigilante protection one year and fear and resent those same vigilantes the next, as their protection calculus transforms into extraction. Loyalty is contingent rather than absolute, fluid rather than fixed — a reality that governance interventions ignoring this fluidity routinely fail to account for. Fourth, and most significantly, competitive governance generates violence. Competition for governance authority, especially when combined with competition for economic resources — land, livestock, kidnapping ransoms, control of commercial routes — produces conflict between armed groups, between armed groups and state forces, and between armed groups and the communities they nominally protect. Understanding this competitive dynamic is essential for designing security interventions that reduce rather than inadvertently intensify violence.

The ungoverned spaces that have consolidated across Northwestern Nigeria — the Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu forest complexes of Zamfara State; the rural hinterlands of Katsina, Sokoto, and Kebbi States — represent the physical manifestation of competitive governance failure. Government has watched and

allowed these ungoverned spaces to consolidate over years and decades of governance neglect (Isa, 2022). States tend to concentrate resources in high-return urban areas, an approach that creates pockets of long-standing disenfranchisement in rural peripheries that become fertile breeding grounds for radicalization, recruitment by armed groups, and the spread of alternative governance arrangements backed by coercive capacity rather than democratic legitimacy (Isa, 2022). The forest complexes that bandits use as bases are not merely physical spaces; they are governance vacuums — zones where the Nigerian state has effectively abdicated its constitutional responsibilities to its citizens for so long that the citizenry has been forced into accommodation with whoever offers any form of security, however predatory.

2.5: Literature Engagements — Positioning The Triple Helix In Scholarly Discourse

2.5.1 Introduction: The Necessity of Theoretical Differentiation

The Triple Helix framework advanced in this lecture does not emerge from a theoretical vacuum. It engages, extends, challenges, and in several critical respects supersedes existing bodies of scholarship on African state failure, political order, armed conflict causation, neopatrimonial governance, and development reversal. Positioning the framework within this landscape is necessary not merely as an academic convention of locating one's contribution relative to predecessors, but because the failures of existing frameworks to explain the Nigerian crisis are themselves part of the empirical evidence that demands a new analytical architecture. Each of the frameworks engaged below has generated genuine intellectual insight. The arguments advanced here do not dismiss those insights; they demonstrate where each framework reaches the limit of its explanatory reach and where the Triple Helix framework begins. The engagements proceed in order from the most foundational challenges — the failed state literature and political order theory — through conflict causation frameworks, African state formation theory, and neopatrimonial governance analysis to the most recent constitutional instability literature directly grounded in the Nigerian context.

2.5.2 Engaging the Failed State Literature: Beyond Collapse Terminology

In engaging the failed state literature, the Triple Helix framework rejects the terminology of state collapse that Euro-American scholars and their African counterparts have deployed to describe the postcolonial African state's condition. The labelling of Nigeria as a "quasi-state," "fragile state," "failed state," or "collapsed state" — terms deployed by Zartman (1995), Wunsch and Olowu (1995), and their intellectual descendants — proceeds from a normative standard derived from the experience of Western European state consolidation that was never applicable to the postcolonial African context. As this research's doctoral foundation established, examining the African state from within the framework of its own historical formation reveals not collapse but a particular, structurally explicable form of predatory functionality (Isa, 2002, 2011). The Nigerian state does not fail to function; it functions precisely as the neoMarxist analysis of Ake (1985), Ekekwe (1986), and Alavi (1979) predicts it would — as an instrument for primitive accumulation by the governing class rather than as a platform for the provision of public goods and security.

The practical analytical consequence of failed state terminology is policy misdirection of the most costly kind. If the Nigerian state has "collapsed," the appropriate response is state reconstruction — new institutions, capacity building, external technical assistance. Thirty years of field evidence documents that such reconstruction efforts, pursued through multiple World Bank programmes, European Union governance initiatives, and USAID-funded local government reform programmes, have failed systematically because they addressed symptoms rather than the structural character of the state (Isa, 2022). The Triple Helix framework replaces the failed state binary with a more analytically precise account: the Nigerian state does not fail everywhere uniformly but rather retreats selectively, abandoning ungoverned spaces — the Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu forest complexes of Zamfara State; the rural hinterlands of Katsina, Sokoto, and Kebbi States — while retaining its predatory presence in the political and economic centres where extraction remains viable (Isa, 2022). This selective retreat is not state failure; it is state strategy — and it demands a fundamentally different policy response than reconstruction-oriented frameworks provide.

2.5.3 Engaging Huntington's Political Order Theory: Institutionalisation Without Class Analysis

Samuel Huntington's foundational argument in *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968) holds that political instability in developing countries derives primarily from the gap between political mobilisation and political institutionalisation — when societies mobilise faster than institutions develop to manage that mobilisation, violence and disorder follow. Huntington's framework has influenced decades of governance reform thinking, including the decentralisation programmes that have shaped Nigerian local government policy in the Fourth Republic. Its emphasis on the primacy of order before democracy, and its insistence that institutional strength matters more than institutional form, retains analytical purchase in certain contexts.

The Triple Helix framework accepts Huntington's core insight that institutional weakness and governance incapacity create conditions for violence but advances beyond it in three analytically decisive ways. First, Huntington's framework treats institutional weakness as a technical deficiency correctable through institutional design and capacity investment. The three decades of field evidence documented in this research demonstrate that Nigerian governance institutions are not weakly designed but deliberately structured to serve the interests of the prebendal governing class rather than the public (Isa, 2002; Joseph, 1987). The weakness of local government institutions is not accidental; it is the intended product of state governors' systematic withholding of statutory allocations — a practice documented from 1999 onward in which the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees estimated that, of approximately N750 billion allocated to local government councils between 1999 and 2004 alone, less than one-third actually reached them (NULGE, 2003; Isa, 2015). Reforming these institutions without addressing the class interests that structure their dysfunction produces the pattern of reform failure that the research programme documents consistently across three decades.

Second, Huntington's framework treats political mobilisation as a mass phenomenon that overruns institutions. The Nigerian evidence inverts this relationship in a manner Huntington's framework cannot accommodate: in Nigeria, the governing class itself mobilises

ethnicity, religion, and regional identity as instruments for managing intraclass competition for access to state resources, while simultaneously constructing institutions weak enough to remain capturable and extractable (Isa, 2002, 2011; Nwosu, 2000). The youth militia proliferation documented across the early Fourth Republic — the Oodua People's Congress, the Arewa People's Congress, the Bakassi Boys — were not expressions of mass mobilisation overrunning fragile institutions; they were instruments of elite competition deployed from above while institutional capacity was deliberately hollowed from within (Isa, 2010). Huntington's framework has no analytical category for the elite instrumentalisation of mass violence.

Third, and most critically, Huntington's political order theory has no mechanism for explaining the interaction between governance weakness, organised armed violence, and development collapse as a self reinforcing dynamic system. His framework addresses politics and order; it neither theorises development collapse as an independent causal force nor models the feedback loops through which development reversal accelerates governance failure and generates new recruitment pipelines for nonstate armed groups. The Triple Helix's central theoretical innovation — the mutual reinforcement dynamic that makes the crisis systemic rather than episodic — lies entirely beyond Huntington's analytical horizon.

2.5.4 Engaging Herbst's African State Formation Theory: Geography Without Political Economy

Jeffrey Herbst's *States and Power in Africa* (2000) advances an influential argument that African states' governance deficits derive fundamentally from the geography of population distribution across vast territories — a geography that makes the projection of state power from capital cities to rural hinterlands prohibitively costly in comparison to the densely settled European territories within which state consolidation proceeded. Herbst argues that African rulers have historically preferred to broadcast power within a limited radius from capitals rather than expend the fiscal and military resources required for comprehensive territorial control. The ungoverned spaces of Northwestern Nigeria, in Herbst's framework, represent the natural

endpoint of this historical pattern — territory that the Nigerian state never genuinely penetrated and therefore cannot credibly claim to govern.

The Triple Helix framework acknowledges the genuine empirical insight in Herbst's geographic analysis. The Rugu, Kamara, and Kunduma forest complexes of Zamfara State are indeed remote, border-adjacent territories whose terrain complicates state penetration. The Alantika Mountain highlands of the Koma people in Adamawa State represent an extreme case of geographic marginality that reinforces the state abandonment documented in Section 4.8 of this lecture. Geographic factors constitute a real variable in the research programme's five-layer analytical architecture, specifically within the spatial dynamics of Layer Two.

However, Herbst's geographic determinism obscures more than it illuminates in the Nigerian case for two reasons that thirty years of field evidence demonstrates with precision. First, the governance vacuum in Northwestern Nigeria's forest complexes did not precede the banditry crisis; it accelerated dramatically during and after the banditry crisis itself. The Dan Sadau Emirate had functioning administrative structures, traditional authority governance, and local government service delivery until the banditry escalation of 2011–2016 systematically destroyed them (Isa, 2011–2019). Geography did not change between 2010 and 2019; governance collapsed because armed actors deliberately dismantled it in pursuit of territorial control. The causal arrow runs from governance failure enabling violence, not from geographic distance enabling governance failure. Herbst's framework cannot explain a governance vacuum created by political economy choices and violence rather than territorial distance.

Second, Herbst's framework implies that the solution to African governance deficits lies in reconsidering territorial boundaries — consolidating states into more governable units or accepting that vast interior territories will remain beyond effective state reach. This implication, even if unintended, provides intellectual cover for the political abandonment of peripheral populations that the Triple Helix framework identifies as the structural precondition for the crisis. The Koma people's abandonment, the farming communities' subjugation

to bandit governance, and the displacement of 2.8 million Nigerians are not geographic inevitabilities but political choices made within a class-structured state system that finds peripheral populations economically marginal and therefore governable. Geography conditions the cost of governance; it does not determine its absence. The Triple Helix framework replaces geographic determinism with political economy analysis that assigns causal responsibility where the field evidence locates it — in deliberate governance choices made by actors with interests in selective state presence.

2.5.5 Engaging Bratton and van de Walle's Neopatrimonial Framework: Description Without Dynamics

Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle's analysis of neopatrimonialism as the defining feature of African political regimes (*Democratic Experiments in Africa*, 1997) provides the most directly applicable existing framework to the governance failure dimension of the Triple Helix. Bratton and van de Walle argue that African regimes combine formal bureaucratic structures — constitutions, ministries, elections — with informal patrimonial networks through which rulers distribute resources to personal clients in exchange for political support. This neopatrimonial logic consistently undermines formal institutions, subordinates public policy to private patronage, and generates the governance deficits that produce political instability.

The Triple Helix framework accepts neopatrimonialism as a necessary and important dimension of the Nigerian governance failure analysis. Richard Joseph's concept of prebendalism — the treatment of public offices as sources of private wealth extraction — captures a central mechanism through which the Nigerian governing class hollows out institutional capacity at every tier (Joseph, 1987). The research programme's documentation of state governors systematically withholding local government allocations, security force personnel extorting the communities they nominally protect, and traditional rulers whose authority has been captured by factional political elites all constitute empirically documented manifestations of neopatrimonial logic at work (Isa, 2002, 2010, 2022).

However, the Triple Helix framework advances beyond neopatrimonialism in three analytically important respects that the

field evidence demands. First, Bratton and van de Walle's framework focuses primarily on the political regime level — the relationship between rulers and political elites, and between elites and the formal institutional architecture of the state. The Triple Helix operates across four institutional tiers — federal, state, local government, and traditional authority — documenting how neopatrimonial dynamics cascade downward through the state system to destroy institutional capacity at each successive level. The research programme's documentation of vacant agricultural extension positions, non-functioning primary healthcare facilities, and abandoned judicial infrastructure across Northwestern Nigeria's local governments demonstrates that neopatrimonialism's consequences extend far below the elite political level that Bratton and van de Walle's framework most directly addresses (Isa, 2022).

Second, neopatrimonialism is a framework for understanding governance dysfunction; it does not theorise the interaction between governance dysfunction and organised armed violence as a mutually reinforcing dynamic. Bratton and van de Walle's framework predicts political instability and poor governance outcomes from neopatrimonialism, but it does not model how the nonstate armed groups that emerge in neopatrimonial governance vacuums develop their own governance functions, create alternative legitimacy structures, and thereby permanently degrade the state's capacity to recover governance authority even if political will for reform were present. The governance vacancy → armed group formation → alternative governance → state legitimacy collapse → governance vacuum reinforcement cycle that the Triple Helix documents across eight case studies lies beyond neopatrimonialism's explanatory architecture.

Third, and most significantly, neopatrimonialism has no analytical category for development collapse as an independent causal force in the crisis system. Bratton and van de Walle treat development failure as a consequence of neopatrimonial governance — predatory extraction produces poverty. The Triple Helix framework demonstrates, through the Dan Sadau longitudinal case study and the cross case SDG analysis, that development collapse generates independent causal effects on both governance failure and violence

that operate through feedback loops rather than one-directional consequences. Communities stripped of economic resources, educational infrastructure, and healthcare capacity become recruiting pools for armed groups, incapable of generating the social capital and institutional trust that governance reconstruction requires, and unable to sustain the livelihoods that provide populations with a stake in stability. Development collapse is not merely a symptom of governance failure; it is an independent driver of violence and further governance deterioration (Isa, 2022). This analytical distinction, grounded in thirty years of community level evidence, constitutes the Triple Helix framework's most important extension beyond neopatrimonialism.

2.5.6 Engaging Collier and Hoeffler's Greed-Grievance Framework: Choice Without Structure

Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler's influential econometric analysis (*Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, 2004) argues that the explanatory weight in armed conflict onset rests with greed — the rational economic incentives for armed group formation when lootable resources are available — rather than with grievance, which they find statistically insignificant as a predictor. This framework generated widespread academic and policy influence, shaping World Bank approaches to conflict prevention that emphasised reducing the economic feasibility of war rather than addressing underlying political grievances.

The Triple Helix framework rejects the greed-grievance binary as an analytical straightjacket that the field evidence consistently transcends. The research programme's documentation of armed group formation across eight case studies demonstrates that the distinction between greed and grievance dissolves when examined at the level of individual and collective motivation rather than at the level of aggregate statistical association. The ethnic militia research documented that membership was driven neither by pure economic incentive nor by abstract ethnic grievance but by the rational calculation of young men excluded from formal political participation and formal economic opportunity, for whom militia membership offered income, status, and a form of political agency unavailable

through legitimate channels (Isa, 2010). The Zamfara banditry research documented that the initial armed groups emerged from farmer herder disputes over grazing land and water access — grievance-rooted — but evolved into organised criminal enterprises extracting ransom and taxation revenues — greed-structured — while retaining the ethnic and territorial identity claims that legitimised community tolerance of their presence (Isa, 2022). The analytical category that captures this complexity is neither greed nor grievance alone but the governance vacuum that allows both economic opportunity structures and political grievance mobilisation to operate without institutional mediation or constraint (Isa, 2022; Ibadan Summit paper, 2021).

Furthermore, Collier and Hoeffler's framework produces a static, cross-sectional analysis that cannot account for the evolutionary dynamics the longitudinal research programme documents. Armed groups in Northwestern Nigeria began as opportunistic criminal formations and evolved into quasi-state governance actors exercising territorial control, collecting informal taxes, adjudicating disputes, and providing protection services — a transformation that represents a qualitative change in the conflict's character that statistical models calibrated on war onset cannot track. The Triple Helix framework's five-phase temporal analysis, spanning early warning through contemporary catastrophe, captures this evolutionary dynamic in ways that cross-sectional econometrics structurally cannot.

2.5.7 Engaging the Constitutional Instability Literature: Matfess and the Fourth Republic

Hilary Matfess's analysis of the constitutional roots of insecurity in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (*Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2016) represents the most directly Nigeria-specific theoretical engagement available in the recent literature and the one whose insights the Triple Helix framework most directly builds upon and extends. Matfess argues that Nigeria's 1999 Constitution institutionalises instability through three interlocking mechanisms: the centralisation of security forces under federal command while localising governance responsibility at the state level, creating a governance-security mismatch; indigeneity rules that generate

permanent exclusion of non-indigenous populations in states and local governments, creating structural grievance and recurring communal violence; and land tenure arrangements that prevent negotiated post-conflict settlements, perpetuating cycles of dispossession and violence.

The Triple Helix framework incorporates the Matfess constitutional analysis as one important dimension of the governance failure strand but advances beyond it in two critical respects. First, constitutional architecture explains the structural conditions within which political actors operate but does not explain why different actors in similar constitutional environments produce dramatically different governance outcomes. The research programme's comparative analysis demonstrates that the governance collapse most catastrophically manifested in Zamfara State was not inevitable from the constitutional framework but was accelerated by specific gubernatorial decisions — the 2013 decision by Zamfara's governor to arm Fulani vigilantes against Hausa communities documented in the banditry phase analysis — that operated through but were not determined by constitutional structures (Isa, 2022). The Triple Helix framework requires both structural analysis of constitutional incentive environments and political economy analysis of class-interested choices made within those environments.

Second, Matfess's constitutional analysis remains within the governance dimension and does not theorise the interaction between constitutional dysfunction, organised violence, and development collapse as a mutually reinforcing system. The constitutional roots of security failure explain why the Nigerian state is poorly positioned to respond to armed groups; they do not explain the development collapse dimension of the crisis or the feedback dynamics through which development reversal generates new constituencies for violence and undermines governance recovery. The Triple Helix framework's theoretical contribution is precisely to integrate the constitutional, political economy, and development dimensions into a unified analytical architecture, grounded in thirty years of longitudinal field evidence, that no single dimension framework can replicate.

2.5.8 The Triple Helix Framework's Distinctive Contribution: A Summary

The systematic engagements above establish with analytical precision where the Triple Helix framework stands in relation to its theoretical predecessors. It accepts from the failed state literature that the postcolonial African state represents a qualitatively different analytical object from the Weberian state; it rejects that literature's collapse terminology and replaces it with a structural analysis of selective predatory functionality. It accepts from Huntington that institutional incapacity creates conditions for violence but rejects institutional weakness as a technical deficiency and replaces it with class-interested political choices that deliberately structure institutional dysfunction. It accepts from Herbst that geography conditions the costs of state penetration but rejects geographic determinism and replaces it with political economy analysis of why peripheral populations are abandoned by structurally extractive states. It accepts from Bratton and van de Walle that neopatrimonialism is a necessary analytical lens for Nigerian governance but extends beyond its regime-level focus to document institutional cascade failures across four tiers and advances the independent causal role of development collapse that neopatrimonialism as a framework does not theorise. It accepts from Collier and Hoeffler that economic opportunity structures matter for armed group formation but rejects the greed-grievance binary and replaces it with governance vacuum analysis that explains the evolution of armed groups from opportunistic criminal formations into quasi-state governance actors. It accepts from Matfess that constitutional architecture institutionalises instability but extends beyond constitutional analysis to the integrated three-dimensional crisis system that constitutional frameworks alone cannot explain.

The Triple Helix framework's distinctive intellectual contribution emerges precisely at the intersection of these six engagements: it provides the analytical architecture for understanding how governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse operate as mutually reinforcing dimensions of a single integrated crisis system, why partial interventions addressing any single dimension systematically fail, and why only integrated approaches

addressing all three dimensions simultaneously can interrupt the self-perpetuating cycle that thirty years of empirical evidence documents across eight case studies and three decades of Nigerian political history. No existing framework delivers this integrated explanatory power, and that gap in the theoretical literature is what this inaugural lecture addresses.

SECTION 3:

METHODOLOGY — RESEARCHING CONFLICT IN DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENTS

3.1 Research Design and Philosophical Foundations

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this lecture draws on thirty years of field research conducted across Northern Nigeria, employing a progressive multi-method research design that evolved in sophistication, geographic scope, and analytical depth as the research programme expanded from its Taraba origins in 1994 through the Northwestern Nigeria crisis documentation completed in 2025. The design reflects both deliberate methodological commitments and the practical necessities of researching violence, governance failure, and development collapse in environments where danger, suspicion, and human suffering constrain what can be learned and how it can be learned.

The philosophical foundation of this research is empirical and pragmatic. Theory must emerge from and remain accountable to empirical evidence rather than imposing predetermined frameworks on complex phenomena. This commitment to empiricism has required sustained physical engagement with the communities, displacement camps, traditional institutions, and conflict zones that constitute the research's subject matter, across thirty years of fieldwork that began in Taraba's conflict-ridden communities and eventually required armed military escort to access Northwestern localities that bandits had rendered inaccessible to civilian researchers. The discipline of grounding every analytical claim in documented evidence — traceable to named field sites, dateable to specific periods, verifiable through the research instruments employed — has governed this programme from its inception and remains its defining methodological commitment.

The research adopts a longitudinal design spanning 1994 to 2025, enabling analysis of how conflicts emerge, evolve, and transform over time in ways that cross-sectional studies conducted at a single moment cannot capture. This temporal depth proves analytically essential for understanding phenomena that develop gradually before exploding

into visible crisis. The Taraba ethnic conflicts examined in the foundational doctoral research had roots extending back to colonial administration and to pre-colonial land tenure arrangements. The banditry crisis in Northwestern Nigeria was developing for years — in the form of escalating cattle rustling, deteriorating local governance, and expanding ungoverned forest spaces — before achieving national visibility around 2016. Longitudinal research reveals these developmental patterns, showing how today's crises grow from yesterday's unresolved tensions and governance failures. Each wave of field research has therefore been designed not merely as an independent investigation but as a temporally positioned observation point within an extended analytical arc.

3.2 Research Phases and Geographic Scope: From Taraba to the Northwest, 1994–2025

The research programme unfolded across four identifiable phases, each building on and refining the methodological foundations of the preceding phase while responding to the analytical demands posed by newly encountered empirical phenomena.

The foundational phase, spanning 1994 to 2006, established the core methodological architecture of the entire programme through the doctoral research on ethnic conflicts in Taraba State. Field research during this phase operated across Ussa and Takum local government areas — the primary conflict theatres — and extended to Wukari town, Jalingo the Taraba State capital, Yola the capital of the former Gongola State of which Taraba was once a part, and Abuja the federal capital. The purpose of this geographic spread was to generate data and information from the full range of principal actors: community leaders, chiefs and emirs, members of traditional councils, past and present military and civilian governors and their aides, members of judicial panels and peace committees established to address the violence, political and military leaders, youth leaders, academics, federal and state bureaucrats, aid workers, civil society organizations, and serving journalists. The inclusion of both subnational actors in the conflict zones and federal-level actors in Abuja reflected a deliberate multi-scalar analytical design in which local conflict dynamics were

understood in relation to state and national political economy rather than as isolated community phenomena.

The expansion phase, spanning 2007 to 2014, extended the research programme to examine the ethnic militia phenomenon across four geopolitical zones, the emergence of militant Islamic movements in Northern Nigeria, and the early development of Boko Haram as it transformed from a theological movement into an armed insurgency. This phase employed a more explicitly comparative design, moving beyond intensive single-site analysis toward systematic comparison across multiple conflict contexts. The research on ethnic militias, conducted with Heinrich Böll Foundation support through the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies, required developing survey instruments capable of capturing demographic data on militia membership, motivations, and organizational structures across diverse geographic contexts. The Shariah debate research and the militant Islamic movement analysis relied more heavily on archival and documentary methods, complemented by interviews with religious scholars, government officials, security personnel, and civil society actors who had direct engagement with these phenomena.

The intensification phase, spanning 2015 to 2019, focused on the Northwestern Nigeria crisis as armed banditry escalated from localized criminality toward systematic territorial control. This phase required the most demanding security management of the entire research programme, as fieldwork conditions deteriorated progressively as the research proceeded. Initial field visits to communities in Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto states occurred under modest security precautions. By 2017 and 2018, the same routes required military escort and advance security assessment. By 2019, several communities that had been accessible for field research in 2016 had been abandoned by their populations or were under effective bandit control, making research visits physically impossible. The Dan Sadau longitudinal case study — initiated in 2011 and tracked through multiple field visits until access became impossible — illustrates this progression from accessible to inaccessible fieldwork in concentrated form.

Figure 3 — The Thirty-Year Longitudinal Research Programme, 1994–2025

Section 3.2 (Research Design). This timeline maps the four research phases across three decades, showing geographic scope expansion, methodological evolution, and cumulative empirical scale.

THIRTY-YEAR LONGITUDINAL FIELD RESEARCH PROGRAMME (1994–2025)			
PHASE 1 1994–2006	PHASE 2 2007–2012	PHASE 3 2011–2019	PHASE 4 2020–2025
Taraba State Ethnic conflict management	Ethnic militias 8 northern states	Northwest crisis Zamfara / Dan Sadau	Synthesis Triple Helix framework
PhD dissertation: The State and Management of Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria (Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011)	Heinrich Boll Foundation / CDCMS research: youth, ethnic militias and democracy	Field studies: Dan Sadau population collapse 45,000 to 3,200 (2011–2019)	UK FCDO, World Bank, UNDP commissioned assessments — 8 states
487	93	2,200+	r = 0.922
Structured interviews across all phases	Focus group discussions, 8 states	Conflict events analysed across Nigeria	LG autonomy vs. service delivery (Isa, 2018)

Figure 3: The Thirty-Year Longitudinal Research Programme, 1994–2025 — Four Phases, Eight States, 487 Interviews

Source: Isa (1994–2025). Longitudinal multisite field research across Northwestern, Northeastern, North-Central, and Taraba State conflict zones.

The synthesis phase, spanning 2020 to 2025, integrated the accumulated evidence from all preceding phases into the Triple Helix analytical framework presented in this lecture, while adding documentation of the contemporary crisis — the post-COVID collapse of humanitarian response, the 2021–2022 escalation of bandit attacks, the Supreme Court's 2024 local government financial autonomy ruling, and its implementation beginning in January 2025. This phase also involved a systematic review of international development literature, conflict databases including ACLED event data, and policy documents from Nigerian government agencies, international organizations, and bilateral development partners.

3.3 Mixed Methods Integration: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

The research throughout all four phases deploys an integrated mixed methods design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in a mutually reinforcing rather than sequentially separate manner. Quantitative methods provide systematic measurement of patterns, relationships, and trends across large samples and multiple contexts. Qualitative methods provide depth, contextual meaning, and process understanding that quantitative measures cannot capture. The integration of both within the same research design produces analytical results superior to either approach deployed independently.

The doctoral research on Taraba State employed the most extensively documented survey methodology of the entire programme, establishing quantitative standards that subsequent research phases adapted and applied. The survey design was structured as a multitiered, multistaged approach using two distinct questionnaire instruments administered simultaneously — the community questionnaire targeting ordinary citizens, youth leaders, community leaders, women leaders, traditional religious leaders, teachers, political leaders, market women leaders, and leaders of community-based associations; and the official questionnaire targeting political office holders, serving and retired local government chairmen and councillors, members of the National Assembly and State House of Assembly, career civil servants, and school principals and headmasters (Isa, 2001).

The survey administration proceeded through three deployment stages to ensure adequate coverage, reliability, and validity of the research instruments and the representativeness of responses obtained. In the first stage, 300 community questionnaires and 200 official questionnaires were distributed across locations, communities, and wards of the local government areas. In the second stage, an additional 200 community questionnaires and 100 official questionnaires targeted areas of dense population and underrepresented rural communities. In the third and final stage, another 200 community questionnaires and 100 official questionnaires extended coverage to areas wider than those addressed in the preceding stages. The three-

stage deployment addressed a methodological challenge specific to conflict research environments: communities segregated along ethnic lines, populations displaced by violence, and the fluid, uncertain conditions that made it impossible to guarantee adequate coverage from a single-stage distribution. In summation, 700 community questionnaires were distributed across three stages, from which 396 valid returns were processed and analyzed after sieving out 91 invalidated copies affected by missing pages, torn forms, or inadequate completion (Isa, 2001). Of 400 official questionnaires distributed, 230 valid returns were processed and analyzed after 43 copies were invalidated for lack of clarity, missing pages, or physical damage (Isa, 2001).

The sampling plan adopted probability-based methodology — specifically, cluster sampling and multistage area sampling — in recognition of the conflict environment's constraints (Araoye, 2004). The population was first divided into clusters of homogeneous units: families, villages, and wards of the local governments. Within each cluster, stratified sampling distinguished between urban and rural locations, while purposive sampling ensured that specific categories of key informants were systematically included regardless of their probability of random selection. This hybrid design preserved the statistical properties required for generalization while ensuring that analytically critical voices — traditional rulers, security force personnel, elite political actors — were not accidentally excluded by purely random selection.

Data analysis employed the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, using SPSS Version 13 for Windows to generate frequency tables, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and correlation coefficients (SPSS, 2006). Cross-tabulation analyses examined relationships between two categorical variables — for example, the relationship between respondent community category (community leader versus community member) and their ranked assessment of conflict causes — using chi-square tests of association to determine whether observed distributional differences exceeded what chance variation within the sample would predict. All significance assessments in the doctoral research operated at the $p < 0.05$ threshold, with the analysis treating findings reaching that threshold as warranting analytical attention

while maintaining the interpretive caution appropriate to purposive samples drawn from conflict affected environments rather than probability samples from stable populations.

The software enabled systematic quantitative analysis of the 396 community questionnaire returns and 230 official questionnaire returns, producing the frequency distributions, chi-square tests, and cross-tabulations that provided the statistical foundations for the doctoral dissertation's findings. The correlation coefficient of $r=0.922$ between local government autonomy and service delivery effectiveness — documented in the subsequent 2018 World Bank decentralization research (Isa, 2018) — exemplifies the kind of precise quantitative relationship that systematic survey methodology, rigorous sampling, and statistical analysis makes achievable. This coefficient, among the strongest documented in the Nigerian governance literature, provided robust empirical evidence that governance improvements directly enhance service delivery, validating the theoretical relationships predicted by decentralization theory in a specific Nigerian context.

Table 3.1: Summary of Quantitative Indicators Across the Thirty-Year Research Programme

Indicator	Documented Value	Source/Phase
Community questionnaires administered (Phase 1)	700 distributed across three stages; 396 valid returns after follow-up mobilisation	Doctoral research, 2006
Official questionnaires administered (Phase 1)	400 distributed across three stages; 230 valid returns	Doctoral research, 2006
Official questionnaire response distribution by LGA	Ussa 40.0% (n=92); Takum 50.9% (n=117); Jalingo 9.1% (n=21)	Doctoral research, 2006
Major cause of conflict: political exclusion and domination (community respondents)	64.4% ranked first	Doctoral research, Taraba, 2006
Major cause of conflict: ethnic marginalisation (community respondents)	61.4% ranked second	Doctoral research, Taraba, 2006
Youth component of conflict affected community respondents	72.4% aged 18–39 years	Doctoral research, 2006
Militia member age profile: under 34 years	96% of sampled militia members	Militia research, 2010

Indicator	Documented Value	Source/Phase
Militia member income profile: low-income backgrounds	90% of sampled militia members	Militia research, 2010
Dan Sadau Emirate population: 2011 (baseline)	45,000 residents	Longitudinal field research, 2011
Dan Sadau Emirate population: 2019 (endpoint)	3,200 residents	Longitudinal field research, 2019
Population decline magnitude	93% over eight years	Computed from field measurements
Deaths in Zamfara State: 2011–2019	2,619 documented fatalities	Ibadan Summit paper, 2022
Kidnapping cases in Zamfara State: 2011–2019	1,190 for ransom	Ibadan Summit paper, 2022
Farming communities sacked in Zamfara: 2011–2019	100+ across at least 6 LGAs	Ibadan Summit paper, 2022
Total structured interviews: full programme	487 across eight states	Full programme, 1994–2025
Total focus group discussions: full programme	93 across eight states	Full programme, 1994–2025
Violent conflict events analysed	2,200+ across eight states	Full programme synthesis, 2025
IDPs documented in Northeast Nigeria	2.8 million (2021 estimate)	Ibadan Summit paper, 2021

Note: All values are derived from the research programme's documented field measurements or published secondary sources. No figure has been computed through statistical inference beyond the data from which it derives. Percentage figures reflect valid responses after exclusion of missing or non-response cases. The correlation coefficients reported in the local government governance analyses derive from Pearson product-moment procedures applied to structured survey data and are interpreted as descriptive-relational indicators within their sampled populations.

3.3 (Statistical Reporting and Inferential Scope)

The statistical analyses deployed across this research programme require contextualisation within the inferential scope appropriate to the programme's longitudinal mixed methods design. The doctoral research on Taraba State employed SPSS Version 13 for Windows to generate frequency tables, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and correlation coefficients from the administered survey instruments (SPSS, 2006). The survey generated 230 valid official questionnaire responses distributed across Ussa Local Government Area (40.0%, n=92), Takum Local Government Area (50.9%, n=117), and Jalingo (9.1%, n=21). Community questionnaire responses proceeded through three deployment stages — an initial distribution of 300

community and 200 official questionnaires, a follow-up stage generating significantly improved returns after face to face mobilisation of respondents, and a final retrieval stage that recovered the usable sample (Isa, 2002). The cluster and multistage area sampling design accounted for the conflict environment constraints that rendered simple random sampling operationally impossible in active conflict zones (Araoye, 2004).

The correlation analyses reported in the local government governance dimensions of the programme — including the $r=0.922$ coefficient between local government financial autonomy and service delivery performance documented in the post 2015 governance research — derive from Pearson product-moment correlation procedures applied to ordinal and scale data generated through structured survey instruments. These correlations carry degrees of freedom consistent with the sample sizes employed in each phase, with significance levels evaluated at the $p<0.01$ threshold. The analytical interpretation of these coefficients treats them as descriptive-relational indicators of association strength within the sampled populations rather than as inferential generalisations to the broader population of all Nigerian local governments. This interpretive restraint is methodologically appropriate and deliberate: the research programme's primary analytical power derives from its longitudinal ethnographic depth and the cross case comparative architecture of the five-layer analytical framework, within which quantitative indicators serve as triangulating evidence that corroborates and contextualises qualitative findings rather than driving independent inferential claims.

The quantitative dimensions of the programme, taken across all four research phases, documented patterns including — across the militia research phase — that 90% of militia members came from low-income backgrounds and 96% were younger than 34 years of age (Isa, 2010). The Northwestern Nigeria escalation phase documented that 2,619 deaths occurred in Zamfara State alone between 2011 and 2019, with 1,190 kidnappings for ransom in the same period (Isa, 2022). The Dan Sadau longitudinal measurements tracked population decline from 45,000 to 3,200 residents across eight annual fieldwork phases between 2011 and 2019 (Isa, 2011–2019). These quantitative dimensions are presented throughout the manuscript with their

documented sources, and no figure has been generated through statistical inference beyond the data from which it derives. The programme's analytical framework deliberately integrates descriptive quantification with qualitative process-tracing, recognising that the causal mechanisms of the Triple Helix resist reduction to statistical modelling alone and demand the interpretive depth that thirty years of longitudinal ethnographic engagement uniquely provides.

The doctoral research also conducted approximately ten key informant interviews in and around Ussa, Takum, Wukari, Jalingo local governments, and Yola town; and eight focused group discussions in Takum and Ussa and adjoining wards and communities (Isa, 2001). The interview method was designed around a developed checklist of issues structured to acquire responses relevant to the research questions, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to permit dialogue and observation of the social setting. Interviews were conducted face to face, recorded on micro-tapes, and supplemented by telephone follow-up interviews to clarify doubts and address issues where questionnaire instruments had not generated sufficient information. The combination of structured questionnaire data and semistructured interview depth enabled both systematic quantitative measurement and contextual understanding of motivation, process, and meaning — providing the analytical richness that the Triple Helix framework ultimately required.

Across the full thirty-year programme, the qualitative dimensions of the research generated 487 structured interviews and 93 focus group discussions across eight Northern Nigerian states. These qualitative instruments varied in formality and structure across research phases — the doctoral research employed more formally structured instruments appropriate to dissertation methodology, while subsequent fieldwork in Northwestern Nigeria's deteriorating security environment required more flexible, opportunistic approaches when formal scheduling proved impossible given security conditions. The key informants included traditional rulers, displaced persons camp residents, farmers forced from their lands, herders whose cattle had been stolen, teachers whose schools had been attacked, health workers who had fled insecurity, local government officials, security force personnel who would speak anonymously, and in several instances,

former armed group members who agreed to discuss their experiences under conditions of strict confidentiality.

3.4 The Five-Layer Analytical Architecture

To systematically organize the vast empirical evidence generated over thirty years, the research developed a five-layer analytical architecture that structures analysis across temporal, spatial, sectoral, population, and causal dimensions. This architecture constitutes a methodological organizing tool — the scaffolding through which 487 structured interviews, 93 focus group discussions, and more than 2,200 documented violent conflict events are organized into coherent analytical narrative rather than remaining as an uninterpretable mass of field data. Without this organizational architecture, the sheer volume and diversity of evidence gathered across eight states and three decades would resist systematic interpretation.

Layer One addresses temporal dynamics and organizes the analysis historically, identifying five distinct crisis phases: early warning (1980–1999), emergence (2000–2009), escalation (2010–2015), transformation (2016–2020), and contemporary catastrophe (2021–present). Each phase exhibits qualitatively distinctive dynamics, actors, and patterns that differ meaningfully from preceding and subsequent phases. The early warning phase featured localized farmer herder disputes, emerging vigilantism, and nascent religious activism in Maiduguri. The emergence phase witnessed systematic conflict organization, the 2009 Boko Haram uprising and violent state response, and initial armed banditry formation in Northwestern forests. The escalation phase brought territorial expansion by armed groups, the beginning of mass displacement, and the humanitarian crisis's emergence. The transformation phase featured insurgent fragmentation — the Boko Haram and ISWAP split in 2016 — and banditry's professionalization into quasi-state actors exercising governance functions. The contemporary catastrophe phase exhibits mass casualties, near-complete territorial control by armed groups in certain areas, and humanitarian emergency of regional and continental significance. This temporal layering enables analysis of dynamic trajectories that snapshot studies inevitably miss.

Layer Two examines spatial dynamics — how the Triple Helix operates across different geographic scales from micro through meso and macro to transnational. At the micro level, the Dan Sadau longitudinal case study provides intensive community level documentation of how the triple helix dynamics operate in concentrated form across an eight-year period. At the meso level, comparison across states reveals meaningful variation: Zamfara exhibits the most severe banditry crisis, Borno the most intense insurgency, Kaduna the most volatile ethno-religious mix, and Taraba the most protracted ethnic conflicts. At the macro level, the research examines how violence spreads across state boundaries and how regional dynamics in the Lake Chad Basin and broader Sahel shaped Nigerian patterns. At the transnational level, the research traces arms flows, ideological connections through Salafi-jihadist networks, and cross-border movement of armed actors — particularly the influx of weapons from post-Gaddafi Libya through the Sahel region (Isa, 2022).

Layer Three conducts sectoral analysis disaggregated across security, governance, and development dimensions. Security analysis examines violence patterns, state response effectiveness, and armed group operations and organizational evolution. Governance analysis examines institutional function, service delivery performance, legitimacy, and the dynamics of competitive governance between formal and nonstate authorities. Development analysis examines economic activity levels, social service availability, human development indicators, and the SDG framework's alignment with empirical ground conditions. This sectoral disaggregation enables identification of distinct dynamics within each domain while the Triple Helix framework maintains consistent attention to cross sectoral interactions that drive the mutually reinforcing crisis pattern.

Layer Four disaggregates population analysis across gender, age, ethnicity, occupation, and displacement status. Women experience specific vulnerabilities including sexual violence, widowhood, forced marriage, disrupted reproductive healthcare, and disproportionate burden of household food security responsibility when male household heads are killed, displaced, or recruited into armed groups. Children experience educational disruption, psychological trauma,

recruitment risk, and the multigenerational poverty trap that results when entire cohorts cannot access schooling during formative years. Youth face unemployment and radicalization vulnerability as the primary demographic targeted for recruitment by armed groups. Elderly persons lose the traditional authority and support systems that their social status in preconflict communities had ensured. Fulani, Hausa, and numerous minority ethnic groups experience the crisis through distinct lenses shaped by their position within farmer herder competition dynamics, geographic location relative to bandit operating areas, and historical relationship with state institutions.

Layer Five identifies causal mechanisms linking the three crisis dimensions and explains the processes through which governance failure enables violence, violence destroys development, and development collapse reinforces governance failure. Process tracing within cases, and comparative analysis across cases, illuminates these mechanisms with the specificity required to move beyond correlation toward causal explanation. The Layer Five analysis explains why partial interventions addressing a single helix dimension consistently fail — because they leave intact the reinforcing mechanisms that regenerate crisis from whichever helix dimensions the intervention left unaddressed. This analytical layer transforms the research from descriptive documentation of a crisis into explanatory analysis that points toward integrated intervention requirements.

3.5 Data Collection in Conflict Zones: Challenges and Strategies

Conducting research in active conflict zones presents methodological and ethical challenges that profoundly shape research design, implementation, and the analytical scope of what can be learned. The Taraba State research encountered a conflict environment characterized by suspicion, mistrust, and communities reconfigured along ethnic lines that made straightforward survey administration impossible. In Takum local government, for instance, the town and its wards had over years been segregated and quartered along ethnic boundaries because of prolonged conflict. Tikari ward was populated predominantly by Chamba people, Dutse ward by the Kuteb, Ghaweton ward by the Jukun, and Rogo ward by the Hausa and other communities (Isa, 2001). When a researcher approached any of these

ethnically demarcated wards with a questionnaire, respondents immediately sought to know the researcher's ethnic identity, assess the research's potential to advance or undermine their community's interests, and evaluate what benefit participation might provide them.

Several specific challenges confronted the doctoral fieldwork in ways that demanded practical and methodological adaptation. At certain research points, some groups and individuals who received questionnaires felt that the research outcomes would not benefit their ethnic group and therefore demanded payment for participation. Some Jukun youths who had been mobilized as ethnic fighters since childhood and had abandoned schooling for warfare demanded compensation for completing questionnaires, reflecting the war economy logic that had replaced normal civic reciprocity in their communities (Isa, 2001). In some areas, respondents particularly from youth populations requested local beer before they would participate in interviews or complete questionnaires. These demands confronted the researcher with the ethical tension between principled opposition to inducement-based participation and the practical reality that refusing engagement would eliminate entirely any possibility of accessing the perspectives of this analytically critical demographic group. The practical resolution — making minimal accommodation to ensure some access to youth respondents — required documenting these constraints transparently as limitations affecting the interpretation of findings from those specific subpopulations.

The conflict environment also generated access disruptions that required continuous fieldwork adaptation. Some community areas became inaccessible mid fieldwork when conflict escalation resumed. Research assistants administering questionnaires in contested wards faced intimidation by community members who suspected them of intelligence-gathering for opposing ethnic factions. The three-stage questionnaire deployment design was developed specifically to address the situation created by conflict related access disruption — when the initial deployment was blocked in certain areas, subsequent deployment stages could target those areas when conditions temporarily stabilized, ensuring adequate coverage of populations initially inaccessible.

The Northwestern Nigeria research presented qualitatively different and in many respects more severe fieldwork challenges. The Taraba conflict, though violent, permitted researcher access with reasonable precautions for most of the research period. Northwestern banditry's territorial expansion progressively reduced accessible fieldwork areas in ways that required fundamental adaptation of research strategies. The Dan Sadau longitudinal case study documents this progression with particular clarity. Early field visits in 2011 and 2012 proceeded safely with local community contacts facilitating access to the Emir and community members. By 2016 and 2017, the same visits required advance security assessment and military escort arrangement. By 2019, several communities within the emirate had been abandoned, their populations having fled to urban IDP camps or host communities, making *in situ* fieldwork impossible in the communities that had previously provided the most analytically detailed evidence.

Respondent safety and confidentiality management in Northwestern Nigeria required systematic protocols going far beyond standard academic research practice. Respondents who disclosed information about bandit operations, community compliance with bandit taxation, or community member recruitment into bandit groups placed themselves at serious personal risk if their identities became known to armed groups. Research instruments were designed to gather analytically useful information without creating documentary records that could identify individuals if confiscated. Interview notes were abstracted from identifying information immediately after each session. Respondents were offered interview arrangements in locations separated from their communities. In several instances, traditional rulers who agreed to discuss the security situation required that interviews take place in locations not associated with their official residences, to prevent any appearance of cooperation with outside researchers that armed groups monitoring them might interpret as intelligence-sharing with government or security forces.

The challenges confronted during thirty years of conflict zone fieldwork validate rather than undermine the research findings. The suspicion encountered in Taraba's ethnically polarized communities reflected the genuine mistrust generated by years of violence, demonstrating empirically the social fabric damage that the Triple

Helix framework theorizes. The demands for compensation by Taraba's weaponized youth reflected the war economy logic that had replaced normal civic life, documenting the development collapse that the framework identifies. The inaccessibility of Northwestern communities that were fully accessible just years earlier provided direct observational evidence of the territorial expansion of bandit control and the population displacement that statistical reports document in aggregate. The fieldwork challenges were not merely obstacles to research but were themselves data, informing the analytical account of how deeply Nigeria's governance, security, and development crises have transformed community life across the conflict affected regions.

3.6 Ethical Considerations, Institutional Compliance, and Research Governance

Research in conflict zones raises ethical considerations that extend far beyond standard research ethics frameworks designed for stable environments and voluntary participation. Three sets of ethical challenges shaped the conduct of this research across all four phases spanning 1994 to 2025, and this section discloses the institutional governance framework, the field ethics protocols applied, the data management arrangements, and all relevant research governance declarations required for transparent academic accountability.

Ethical Challenges in Conflict Zone Research

The first set of ethical challenges involves the obligation to truth-telling against the imperative of protecting vulnerable research participants. This research documented that government officials diverted local government funds, security force members committed extrajudicial killings and extortion, and political elites patronised militia activity while publicly condemning it (Isa, 2010; Isa, 2022). Publishing these findings created genuine risk to those who disclosed them. The resolution adopted across all research phases involved multilayered anonymisation: community level findings were reported in aggregate form rather than attributed to named individuals; key informant testimony that carried personal identification risk was paraphrased rather than directly quoted in attributable form; and the most sensitive disclosures — particularly those involving security

force conduct and elite patronage of violence — were incorporated into structural analyses that protected individual sources while preserving analytical integrity. This approach follows the established practice of conflict zone ethnographic research documented in the methodology literature (Araoye, 2004).

The second set of ethical challenges involves the tension between scholarly detachment and the personal ethical obligation generated by sustained exposure to severe human suffering. The professional expectation in academic research emphasises detached observation — document, analyse, interpret, publish. Sustained presence in communities experiencing the documented levels of catastrophe, including the near-total collapse of Dan Sadau Emirate from 45,000 to 3,200 residents over eight years, generated ethical imperatives that this research addressed through two consistent commitments: first, by sharing preliminary findings with policy actors at stages where they might inform intervention, including through the NARC security seminar (Isa, 2022) and the Ibadan Summit presentations (Isa, 2022); and second, by ensuring that the final synthesis — this inaugural lecture — places policy prescription at the centre of its contribution rather than treating communities exclusively as research subjects.

The third set of ethical challenges involves the researcher's obligation to communities that provided research access and data. Communities in conflict zones that permitted extended fieldwork did so partly in the hope that resulting research might influence policies affecting their lives. The research programme has fulfilled this obligation through sustained engagement with policy audiences, including commissioned work for the World Bank Group on decentralisation and service delivery in Nigerian local governments (Isa, 2018), presentations to security architecture fora, and the current inaugural lecture, which advances policy prescriptions grounded in thirty years of accumulated community level evidence.

Institutional Ethics and Governance Framework

This research programme, spanning 1994 to 2025, operated under the academic governance oversight of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, at every phase of its execution. The doctoral research (1996–2006) was conducted under the supervision and institutional authority of the

Department of Political Science and the Faculty of Social Sciences, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and was formally accepted and examined by the University under its established academic governance standards. All subsequent research phases — including the ethnic militia studies, the Islamic movements research, the Northwestern Nigeria security analyses, and the Dan Sadau longitudinal case study — were conducted under the institutional affiliation and academic governance of Ahmadu Bello University's Department of Local Government and Development Studies, Faculty of Administration.

The final synthesis presented in this inaugural lecture falls under the formal institutional governance of the **Ahmadu Bello University Inaugural Lecture Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Innovation, Research and Advancement)**. This Committee serves as the designated institutional body responsible for approving inaugural lecture manuscripts submitted at Ahmadu Bello University, ensuring their compliance with the University's academic standards, verifying the scholarly credentials of the research programme on which each lecture is based, and confirming the appropriateness of the research methodology for the field of inquiry. The submission of this manuscript to the Inaugural Lecture Committee constitutes the formal institutional ethics and governance compliance process for this work. The Committee's review encompasses the research methods, empirical claims, policy prescriptions, and scholarly standards of the entire programme documented herein.

Informed Consent and Participant Protection

Informed consent was secured across all research phases through culturally appropriate protocols adapted to the conflict environments of each field site. In the doctoral research phase in Taraba State, the study employed a face to face questionnaire administration strategy in which research assistants explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidential treatment of all responses before administering instruments to community and official respondents (Isa, 2002). The semistructured interview format permitted respondents to decline specific questions or withdraw from

sessions without consequence. Focus group discussions were organised with community constituency representatives — including youth associations, women's groups, community-based organisations, and opinion leaders — who participated as representatives of organised community constituencies rather than as isolated individuals, providing an additional layer of participant protection through collective engagement (Isa, 2002).

In subsequent research phases conducted in Northwestern Nigeria's active conflict environment, participant protection protocols became substantially more stringent in response to the severe security conditions. Respondents who disclosed information about bandit operations, community compliance with bandit taxation, or security force conduct faced genuine personal risk. The research accordingly employed verbal rather than written consent in contexts where written consent documentation would itself create a record constituting a security risk to the participant. Respondents were informed of the academic purpose of the research, assured of anonymity in all documentation, and given the option to terminate participation at any point. No respondent was photographed or recorded in ways that could enable identification, and all field notes containing potentially identifying information were secured and subsequently anonymised during the data analysis phase.

Data Availability Statement

The primary data generated across the thirty-year research programme — including field survey questionnaires, interview transcripts, focus group discussion records, and longitudinal field notes — are held in the author's research archive at the Department of Local Government and Development Studies, Faculty of Administration, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. Data that do not contain personally identifying information or material that could endanger research participants are available to qualified academic researchers upon formal written application to the author through the Department. Data containing participant-identifying information or security sensitive material are not available for external access, in accordance with the participant protection commitments made to research participants

across all phases. Secondary data and published sources cited in this manuscript are accessible through their original published formats as referenced in the bibliography.

Funding Disclosure and Research Support

The research programme documented in this inaugural lecture was supported by multiple institutional and external bodies across its thirty-year span. The doctoral research phase (1996–2006) was conducted under the institutional support of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The ethnic militia and Islamic movements research phases (2007–2014) benefited from research support through the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies and collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Isa, 2010). The Northwestern Nigeria security architecture assessment (2019–2023) was conducted as a commissioned research presentation for the Nigeria Army Resource Centre (NARC), Abuja (Isa, 2022). The World Bank Group provided support for the decentralisation and service delivery research that contributed to the governance failure dimensions of this programme (Isa, 2018). The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) engagements referenced in the policy analysis dimensions of this research derive from formally documented assessments and partnership dialogues at which research findings from this programme were presented and incorporated into policy frameworks. All commissioned and externally supported research was conducted with full academic independence, and no commissioning body has influenced the analytical conclusions presented in this inaugural lecture.

Conflict of Interest Declaration

The author declares no financial or personal conflict of interest that could inappropriately influence the research findings, analytical conclusions, or policy prescriptions presented in this inaugural lecture. The research programme has been conducted in the public interest and in service of the academic mission of Ahmadu Bello University, with the overriding purpose of generating evidence based understanding that may contribute to the resolution of Nigeria's governance, security, and development crisis.

Author Contribution Statement

This inaugural lecture represents the sole intellectual contribution of Professor Muhammad Kabir Isa, who conceived, designed, and executed all phases of the thirty-year research programme; conducted or directly supervised all field data collection across eight Nigerian states; developed the Triple Helix theoretical framework and the competitive governance concept; and authored the complete manuscript. The research benefited from the invaluable assistance of research assistants who administered questionnaires and facilitated community access during the Taraba State doctoral phase, and from the scholarly engagement of academic colleagues, traditional rulers, and community members who generously provided their knowledge and testimony across all research phases. Their contributions are acknowledged with gratitude; the analytical conclusions are the author's alone.

3.7 Participatory Research and Community Engagement

Throughout all four research phases, the programme employed participatory approaches that treated community members not merely as research subjects but as co-generators of analytical understanding. This participatory orientation reflects both methodological pragmatism — conflict affected communities that mistrust researchers withhold the most analytically significant information unless they experience the research relationship as genuinely reciprocal — and an ethical commitment to respecting the knowledge and analytical capacity of communities whose lived experience constitutes the research programme's primary evidentiary foundation.

Focus group discussions, conducted in 93 sessions across the research programme, proved particularly valuable as participatory instruments. The doctoral research organized focus groups by community constituency: four sessions with community associations and organizations; two sessions with largely educated participants comprising civil servants, politicians, women, youth leaders, students, business persons, and academics (Isa, 2001). Separate focus groups for Jukun-Chamba and Kuteb communities in Ussa and Takum local governments respectively ensured that each community's perspective was captured without the inhibiting effect that interethnic tension

would have imposed in mixed-group settings. Women's average age of approximately 30 years and men's of approximately 40 years in focus group participation reflected the demographic composition of accessible community members during the field research period — younger women and working-aged men being the most present in communities during fieldwork hours when older male leaders were engaged in official or administrative roles.

The research also engaged traditional rulers as both key informants and community gatekeepers across all phases. Traditional rulers in Nigeria's conflict affected communities occupy a unique analytical position: they possess historical knowledge spanning decades or centuries of community governance, they retain legitimacy that formal state structures often lack, and they simultaneously constitute governance actors, conflict mediators, and occasionally conflict parties. The Emir of Dan Sadau's sustained engagement with this research programme — from early fieldwork when the emirate retained full governance capacity through the catastrophic period of near-total population collapse — provided the most detailed longitudinal account of governance failure's community level consequences available in the Northwestern Nigeria literature. That engagement, conducted across multiple field visits under progressively difficult security conditions, exemplifies the value of sustained community partnerships built on trust, reciprocity, and transparent research purpose.

The methodological architecture described in this section — thirty years of longitudinal multisite research, mixed methods integrating systematic survey analysis with deep qualitative fieldwork, five-layer analytical organization of 487 interviews and 93 focus group discussions across eight states, and an ethical framework that places truth-telling and community welfare at the centre of research conduct — establishes the evidentiary foundation for the empirical analysis presented in Section 4. The evidence is not perfect; no evidence from conflict zones ever is. But it is systematic, traceable, cross validated across multiple methods and sources, and grounded in direct field engagement with the communities whose experiences this lecture documents. This is the methodological standard to which the Triple Helix framework holds itself accountable.

3.8 Research Limitations and Boundary Conditions

Intellectual integrity demands the explicit acknowledgement of this research programme's limitations alongside its contributions. The methodological innovations documented in preceding sections of this chapter represent genuine advances in the study of conflict in dangerous environments, but they operate within boundaries that constrain the scope of valid inference and shape the analytical claims this research sustains.

The first and most significant limitation concerns geographic scope and the boundaries of generalisation. The research programme documents eight case studies across seven Nigerian states — Taraba, Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Kaduna, and Adamawa — with supplementary evidence drawn from Borno, Yobe, and Niger States through the NARC security architecture analysis. This geographic scope represents a substantial empirical base for a thirty-year longitudinal programme, but it does not encompass all of Nigeria's thirty six states. The Triple Helix framework's explanatory claims are advanced with greatest confidence for the Northwestern, Northeastern, and North-Central conflict contexts where they are directly grounded in field evidence. Applications of the framework to Southern Nigerian conflicts — including Niger Delta militancy, Southeast separatist mobilisation, and Southwest security challenges — require independent empirical validation rather than direct extrapolation. The cross case analysis in Section 4.9 acknowledges these limits explicitly by identifying the dimensions of variation that prevent unfalsifiable universal application of the framework.

The second limitation involves potential recall bias in retrospective interview data. A substantial portion of the research programme's qualitative evidence derives from interviews conducted with conflict survivors, displaced community members, and traditional rulers reflecting on violence events, governance failures, and development collapse that occurred weeks, months, or in some cases years before the interview was conducted. Retrospective accounts are subject to telescoping, selective memory, and narrative reconstruction shaped by current circumstances rather than accurate recollection of past events. The research addressed this limitation through triangulation

— cross checking interview testimony against archival records, government documents, and secondary sources wherever such corroborating documentation existed — but the conflict affected environments studied made comprehensive documentary triangulation impossible for many events. The analytical conclusions derived from retrospective testimony are advanced with appropriate epistemic caution, and findings resting primarily on uncorroborated retrospective accounts are identified as such in the empirical sections.

The third limitation concerns access constraints in active conflict zones. The Northwestern Nigeria research phases confronted security conditions that made comprehensive community coverage impossible across all affected local government areas. The Dan Sadau longitudinal case study required military escort from 2016 onward and became entirely inaccessible from 2019, meaning the population trajectory documented through the 2019 fieldwork represents the last empirical measurement point (Isa, 2011–2019). The Rugu, Kamara, and Kunduma forest complexes of Zamfara State — which constitute the core territorial bases of the largest bandit formations — remained inaccessible for direct field research throughout the intensification and synthesis phases of the programme. Evidence about conditions in these ungoverned spaces derives from testimony of displaced persons who fled them, security officials who operated at their peripheries, and satellite-based conflict monitoring databases, rather than from direct field observation. This access limitation means that the research documents the consequences of governance collapse in accessible communities more comprehensively than it documents the internal organisation and operational dynamics of the armed groups themselves.

The fourth limitation involves the researcher's positionality as an insider scholar. Three decades of sustained fieldwork across Northern Nigeria's conflict zones have generated deep familiarity with the communities, institutions, and actors studied — a familiarity that constitutes a methodological strength in terms of access, trust, and contextual interpretation but simultaneously generates the epistemological challenge of researcher proximity. The commitment to empiricism documented in Section 3.1 of this chapter — the insistence that theory emerge from and remain accountable to

evidence rather than vice versa — represents the primary methodological safeguard against this risk. Where empirical evidence encountered through fieldwork challenged the researcher's prior analytical frameworks, the frameworks were revised rather than the evidence discounted. The evolution from ethnic conflict analysis through militia research to the Triple Helix synthesis documented in Section 7.2 of this lecture illustrates this epistemological discipline in practice.

The fifth limitation involves the constraints of administrative data availability in governance collapsed localities. The local government finance analyses documented in the governance failure dimension of this research draw on national-level data from the National Bureau of Statistics, NULGE, and World Bank analytical sources, supplemented by state-level documentation from Taraba, Zamfara, Kaduna, and Sokoto States. However, local government-level administrative data — budget documents, service delivery records, personnel files — proved unavailable or unreliable across most of the conflict affected local governments studied, particularly after 2015 when institutional functioning deteriorated most severely. The analytical claims about local government failure therefore rely more heavily on qualitative documentation of institutional dysfunction than on systematic comparative analysis of administrative performance data across the 774 local governments. This limitation reinforces rather than undermines the research programme's choice of longitudinal ethnographic methods as the primary instrument for documenting governance collapse at the community level.

These limitations define the boundary conditions within which this research's analytical contributions are valid, reliable, and defensible. They do not undermine the core findings — the systematic evidence for the Triple Helix framework's explanatory power, the documented failure of partial interventions, and the policy prescriptions advanced in Section 6 — but they establish the epistemic humility with which those findings must be held and the directions that future research must pursue to deepen, extend, and if necessary revise the analytical contributions this programme advances.

SECTION 4:

EMPIRICAL CASE STUDIES — THE TRIPLE HELIX IN ACTION

4.1 Historical Antecedents: From Early Warning to Contemporary Catastrophe, 1980–2025

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, Nigeria's contemporary security and development crisis did not emerge suddenly or without warning. The patterns of governance failure, armed group formation, and development collapse that this section documents through nine distinct case studies have been developing across four decades, with each phase building on unresolved conditions from the preceding period. Understanding this historical trajectory is analytically essential, because it demonstrates that the crisis admits neither simple explanation nor simple solution, and that the governance failures enabling violence are structural rather than circumstantial.

The early warning phase, spanning 1980 to 1999, established the structural conditions from which subsequent crises would grow. The Maitatsine sect's violent uprising in Kano in 1980, in which thousands died and government forces eventually suppressed the movement through military action, provided the earliest indicator that religious radicalism energized by economic marginalization and governance neglect could generate catastrophic violence in Northern Nigeria. The subsequent Maitatsine uprisings in Maiduguri, Jimeta, Yola, and Gombe during the early 1980s revealed a pattern that would recur with Boko Haram three decades later: charismatic religious leadership mobilizing economically desperate and educationally marginalized youth against a state they experienced as predatory and alien. Sporadic cattle rustling began emerging as an organized criminal enterprise in Northwestern Nigeria's forest zones during the late 1980s and 1990s, initially dismissed as minor criminality rather than recognized as early symptoms of the governance vacuum and ungoverned spaces that would later enable armed banditry at scale.

The ethnic conflicts of the 1990s — particularly the Jukun-Chamba and Kuteb clashes in Taraba State documented in my doctoral research, the Hausa-Fulani and Kataf conflicts in Kaduna State, the Ijaw-Itsekiri violence in Delta State, and the proliferating communal

conflicts across the Middle Belt — represented governance failure manifesting through the manipulation of ethnic identity by competing ruling class factions. The structural condition that generated these conflicts — the zero sum nature of access to state resources in the prebendal political economy described in Section 2.2 — would persist throughout the Fourth Republic, enabling each successive phase of violence while state responses focused on symptoms rather than structural causes.

The emergence phase, spanning 2000 to 2009, witnessed qualitative transformation as sporadic violence organized into systematic armed movements. Boko Haram formalized between 2002 and 2009 from a theological discussion group into a movement explicitly rejecting the Nigerian state's legitimacy. The ethnic militia phenomenon proliferated nationally, with the Oodua People's Congress, Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, and Arewa People's Congress establishing patterns of alternative security provision that would later characterize armed banditry's governance functions. The 2009 Boko Haram uprising and the security forces' extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf transformed the Northeast's security landscape irrevocably. Armed bandit networks in Northwestern Nigeria transitioned during this period from informal rustling groups toward structured organizations with command hierarchies, market channels for disposing of stolen livestock, and established relationships with corrupt security officials who facilitated rather than suppressed their operations.

The escalation phase, spanning 2010 to 2015, marked the period during which armed groups achieved territorial control capabilities previously impossible. Boko Haram expanded from Maiduguri into multiple Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa state local government areas, eventually controlling territory larger than several African countries. Armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria evolved from livestock theft toward kidnapping for ransom and the systematic subjugation of farming communities, with the Dan Sadau Emirate experiencing the beginning of the population collapse that would accelerate through 2019. The farmer herder conflict across the Middle Belt escalated from traditional disputes mediated through customary mechanisms into militarized confrontations featuring organized armed groups on

both sides, as climate driven resource scarcity combined with the collapse of traditional mediation institutions to transform manageable resource competition into devastating violence.

The transformation phase, spanning 2016 to 2020, produced qualitative changes in armed group character that made the crisis significantly more complex. The transformation of Northwestern Nigeria's banditry from a localised Zamfara phenomenon into a multistate insurgency-scale crisis between 2016 and 2020 was tracked by Barnett and Rufa'i (2021), who established that the crisis had acquired the character of a secondary insurgency operating in parallel with — and increasingly intersecting with — the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency in the Northeast, creating a dual-front security challenge that overstretched Nigeria's security architecture and produced precisely the governance retreat that the Triple Helix framework identifies as the precondition for accelerating development collapse.

Boko Haram's 2016 split generated two rival factions with different tactics and territorial ambitions — the Shekau-led faction pursuing indiscriminate violence against civilians, and ISWAP evolving toward more selective targeting and genuine governance provision in controlled territories. Northwestern bandits completed their transformation from criminals into quasi state actors — establishing territorial control, demanding taxes, adjudicating disputes, and issuing permissions for farming activities in lands they effectively governed through coercion. This transformation represented precisely the dynamic described in the competitive governance framework: armed actors filling governance vacuums created by state absence and exploiting those vacuums to establish extractive alternative governance arrangements.

The contemporary catastrophe phase, from 2021 to the present, reveals the endpoint trajectory if structural conditions generating the crisis remain unaddressed. Bandit-jihadist collaboration has intensified, with credible evidence of coordination between Northwestern armed bandit groups and Islamic State-affiliated formations, threatening to transform what began as criminal banditry into ideologically motivated insurgency. The humanitarian

dimensions have reached emergency levels — over 2.8 million internally displaced persons scattered across IDP camps; communities paying bandits to allow farming on their own land; parents watching children miss entire school years as violence makes education physically inaccessible. The January 2025 Supreme Court-mandated local government financial autonomy implementation represents the first structural governance reform with genuine potential to address one helix strand at its root, but its effectiveness depends on implementation fidelity that has not yet been demonstrated.

Figure 4 — Five Phases of Nigeria's Security Crisis Escalation, 1980–2025

PHASE 1 1980–1999	PHASE 2 2000–2009	PHASE 3 2010–2015	PHASE 4 2016–2020	PHASE 5 2021–2025
EARLY WARNING	EMERGENCE	ESCALATION	TRANSFOR MATION	CATASTROP HE
Maitatsine uprising Sporadic cattle rustling Ethnic conflicts	Boko Haram formed Militia proliferation BH 2009 uprising	BH territorial control (50,000 km²) Chibok 2014 Banditry organized	ISWAP split Bandits become quasi state IDP crisis peaks	Bandit-jihadist convergence 30,000+ armed fighters 3M displaced
		Dan Sadau: 45,000	→ Declining rapidly	→ 3,200 (–93%)

Crisis intensity increases from left (Phase 1) to right (Phase 5) → Each phase is structurally built upon unresolved governance failures from the preceding phase

Figure 4: Nigeria's Security Crisis — Five Phases of Escalation, 1980–2025

Source: Isa (2025), drawing on 30 years of field documentation across Northwestern, Northeastern, and North-Central Nigeria.

Section 4.1 (Historical Antecedents). This progression diagram maps the five distinct crisis phases from early warning through contemporary catastrophe, showing key events, actors, and the escalating intensity of the crisis at each phase.

4.2 Helix One — Governance Failure: Institutional Collapse Across Four Tiers

Governance failure in Nigeria's conflict affected regions manifests across four distinct institutional tiers, each reinforcing the failures of the others and collectively creating the conditions from which

violence proliferates and development collapses. Documenting these failures concretely and specifically is the essential analytical step that distinguishes the Triple Helix framework from generic governance failure discourse.

At the federal tier, the pattern of security operations without governance consolidation has repeated across thirty years with a consistency that amounts to structural policy failure. Military deployments achieve tactical successes — clearing bandit camps, rescuing kidnapping victims, suppressing insurgent territorial advances — only to withdraw without establishing the civilian governance structures, economic recovery programmes, and security presence that would prevent armed groups from returning stronger than before. The International Crisis Group's (2020) comprehensive assessment of Northwestern Nigeria's violence crisis confirmed that the federal government's security first response had produced a systematic pattern of insufficient humanitarian assistance — with internally displaced persons receiving no food, water, emergency shelter, or sanitary facilities despite their displacement numbering in the hundreds of thousands — illustrating the federal tier's governance failure in its humanitarian dimensions as forcefully as the military operational record illustrates it in its security dimensions. The constitutional architecture itself contributes to this problem: Matfess (2016) documents how constitutional centralization of police authority at the federal level while responsibilities for education, agriculture, and primary healthcare rest at state and local government levels creates structural misalignment that prevents integrated security-governance-development response. Federal security votes, allocated to states and local governments for security purposes, remain entirely unaccounted for — with Zamfara State alone spending an estimated N600 million annually through opaque security vote mechanisms whose actual deployment cannot be verified.

At the state tier, governors throughout the Fourth Republic treated local government statutory allocations as personal patronage resources rather than constitutional transfers owed to the third tier. Between 1999 and 2004 alone, the Nigeria Union of Local Government Employees documented that approximately N750 billion was allocated from the Federation Account to Nigeria's 774 local

governments, yet less than one-third of these funds actually reached the councils (NULGE, 2003; Isa, 2015). The State-Local Government Joint Account system, nominally designed to facilitate cooperation, operated in practice as a mechanism for systematic state government predation of local government allocations. Governor Matawalle's attempted dialogue with bandits in Zamfara State in 2019–2020 involved an estimated 30,000 gunmen and N970 million in payments and ransoms, yet collapsed within months as armed groups exploited the ceasefire to reorganize and rearm (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). This pattern — expensive interventions without structural change, producing temporary respite followed by intensified violence — characterizes state-tier governance failure at its most operationally damaging.

At the local government tier, the consequences of governance failure are most immediately felt by citizens. By the early 2010s, over seventy percent of agricultural extension positions funded in Northwestern Nigeria's local government budgets were actually vacant, with allocated salaries and allowances diverted to other purposes or stolen through corruption (Isa, 2015). Elected local government councils gave way to caretaker committees appointed by governors across sixty five percent of Northwestern local governments at various points during the Fourth Republic (Chapter 23, *Democracy at the Grassroots*). These appointed caretaker committee members served gubernatorial interests rather than community needs — they oversaw further resource diversion, presided over comprehensive service delivery collapse, and maintained their positions through loyalty to governors rather than accountability to constituents. Primary healthcare centres closed because no medicines were procured. Rural roads became impassable because no maintenance funding was applied. Markets ceased functioning because violence made trade routes unsafe, and local government security capacity to respond was zero. In this environment of comprehensive service delivery absence, farming communities in Northwestern Nigeria experienced what the Dan Sadau case study demonstrates in concentrated form: when the state provides nothing, citizens become entirely dependent on whatever

protection any armed actor might offer — at whatever price that actor demands.

At the traditional authority tier, institutions that maintained social order for centuries confronted governance conditions that made effective functioning impossible, generating legitimacy crises that eliminated community level conflict resolution capacity. The Dan Sadau Emir, governing what had been a functional emirate of 45,000 people, watched powerlessly as his territory depopulated from 45,000 to 3,200 residents between 2011 and 2019 — a ninety three percent collapse. His testimony, collected during fieldwork across multiple visits as security permitted and later required, identified a critical dimension of traditional authority complicity in crisis generation: district and village heads had converted grazing lands and cattle routes into farmlands, selling them to land-grabbers for private farming and economic activities. When herders returned seasonally to find their ancestral routes blocked by farms, conflicts erupted — but the traditional authorities who should have mediated those conflicts had participated in creating the underlying land transformation that generated them. The legitimacy to mediate requires clean hands that some traditional authorities no longer possessed.

4.3 Helix Two — Nonstate Violence: The Proliferation of Armed Actors

4.3.1 Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province: Insurgency and Ideological Governance

The Boko Haram insurgency represents the most devastating manifestation of the Triple Helix in contemporary Nigeria. What began in Maiduguri in 2002 as a localized theological movement under Mohammed Yusuf's leadership attracted followers primarily among unemployed youth and marginalized populations who experienced economic desperation, educational system failures, and perceptions of systematic exclusion from both formal governance and formal economic opportunity. Yusuf's ideology rejected Western education, secular governance, and cultural practices deemed un-Islamic — but my research documented that while followers articulated religious justifications for their engagement, their motivations were primarily material and political. Young men with

secondary school certificates who could not find employment questioned the value of the Western education they had received. Populations in Northeast Nigeria perceived systematic marginalization within federal resource allocation, with development indicators lagging far behind Southern states. The movement provided community, purpose, education within an Islamic framework, and social belonging to populations denied these things by a failing state.

The July 2009 uprising by Boko Haram members and the security forces' response transformed the movement irreversibly. Security forces killed approximately 800 Boko Haram members during the uprising, including Mohammed Yusuf himself, whose interrogation and extrajudicial execution was captured on video and circulated widely. This state violence radicalized surviving members and sympathizers, validating Yusuf's prior claims about state oppression and creating demands for revenge that exceeded any theological framework. Under Abubakar Shekau's leadership, Boko Haram reorganized as a full insurgency — targeting state institutions, killing security personnel, and expanding from symbolic attacks toward mass civilian violence. By 2014, the group controlled territories in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa States totaling approximately 50,000 square kilometres, establishing courts applying Islamic law, collecting taxes, providing basic services, and administering justice through Sharia mechanisms. The April 2014 abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok achieved international visibility through the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, but this represented only one spectacular incident within a campaign that killed hundreds of thousands and created over 2.8 million internally displaced persons (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022).

The 2016 split that produced ISWAP fundamentally altered the Northeast's security landscape. ISWAP, under Abu Musab al-Barnawi's leadership, pursued more selective targeting — focusing on state institutions and security forces while cultivating some degree of community support through relatively restrained treatment of civilian populations. By the early 2020s, ISWAP had emerged as the militarily stronger faction, with Shekau dying in circumstances suggesting an ISWAP attack in 2021. ISWAP's more sophisticated approach to

governance in controlled territories — providing dispute resolution, taxing trade, regulating movement — exemplifies the competitive governance dynamic at its most organized: an armed actor systematically building the governance functions that absent states left unclaimed.

4.3.2 Armed Banditry in Northwest Nigeria: The Zamfara Catastrophe

The definitional complexity of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria — encompassing cattle rustling, kidnapping, sexual violence, extortion, pillage, and attacks on mining convoys within a single analytical category — has been examined by Osasona (2023) in the context of international humanitarian law, whose analysis establishes that the multiactivity character of banditry formations reflects their structural position as hybrid actors operating at the intersection of criminal enterprise and armed conflict, a characterisation consistent with the Triple Helix framework's identification of nonstate actors who simultaneously constitute security threats and governance competitors. Armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria evolved through four distinct phases that transformed organized criminality into quasi state governance across vast territories. Phase One (1980–1999) witnessed sporadic cattle rustling by individuals or small groups motivated primarily by immediate economic gain, operating without organizational structure and exploiting the porous borders and dense forest complexes of Northwestern Nigeria to avoid detection. Phase Two (2000–2010) saw the emergence of organized rustling networks with sophisticated command structures, cross border connections to markets in Niger and Mali, and established corruption relationships with security personnel who tolerated or actively facilitated operations in exchange for payment. Phase Three (2011–2016) marked the transition from rustling to kidnapping as the primary revenue source, with bandits increasingly targeting rural communities rather than only livestock, and beginning to exercise territorial claims over specific forest complexes and the communities adjacent to them. Phase Four (2017–present) transformed bandits into quasi state actors who not only controlled territory but provided governance functions — dispute resolution, protection, taxation, and

even permission systems for farming activities — in areas the Nigerian state abandoned.

By the second quarter of 2021, armed groups had evolved beyond hit and run attacks toward permanent territorial occupation of community wards, with the International Crisis Group (2021) documenting that armed formations had established control over ten of fifteen wards in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State and maintained similar permanent presences across parts of Sokoto, Zamfara, and Katsina States — constituting precisely the competitive governance dynamic the Triple Helix framework theorises, wherein nonstate actors displace rather than simply challenge state authority. The Centre for Democracy and Development's analysis by Hassan and Barnett (2022) systematically examined the convergence of conflict drivers in Northwestern Nigeria's banditry crisis, identifying poor governance and institutional collapse, poverty and youth unemployment, small arms proliferation from the post Gaddafi Sahel, and the breakdown of traditional conflict mediation mechanisms as the interacting structural conditions that enabled banditry's transformation from opportunistic criminality into organised territorial control — a multifactor causation map that corroborates the Triple Helix framework's insistence on the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of the crisis drivers.

The organisational transformation of Northwestern Nigeria's bandit formations from loosely structured criminal gangs into hierarchical governance enterprises is captured by Okoli and Abubakar's (2021) concept of "crimelordism" — the emergence of warlord type figures who exercise coercive territorial authority, collect informal taxation, adjudicate disputes, and mobilise armed followers through patron client networks — a pattern that the Triple Helix framework's competitive governance concept identifies as the defining characteristic of armed actors who fill governance vacuums rather than merely exploit them. The escalating convergence between armed banditry formations and jihadist networks in Northwestern Nigeria — an analytical complexity the Triple Helix framework's contemporary catastrophe phase must account for — has been documented by Barnett, Rufa'i, and Abdulaziz (2022), who established that the relationship represents neither a straightforward jihadisation of

banditry nor a simple criminalisation of jihad but a pragmatic transactional alignment between actors sharing territorial and resource interests without sharing ideological commitments, a distinction with critical implications for the design of counter violence strategies.

The forces of terror framework advanced by Ojo, Aina, and Oyewole (2023) characterises armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria as a structured phenomenon of organised violence and insecurity that has fundamentally altered the security landscape, estimating more than 8,300 banditry-related deaths between 2013 and 2022 across the five most affected states — a figure that contextualises and corroborates the field research programme's documentation of the 2,619 deaths recorded in Zamfara State alone between 2011 and 2019 (Isa, 2022) as representing only a fraction of the regional catastrophe.

The violence statistics document this escalation with brutal clarity. Zamfara State alone recorded 2,619 deaths between 2011 and 2019, with an additional 1,190 kidnappings for ransom during the same period (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). *(drawn from the Zamfara State Government's official data presented by Governor Matawalle at an April 2021 public press conference and corroborated by independent monitoring by Global Rights Nigeria, as documented in the Ibadan Summit analysis; Isa, 2022).* By 2021, Governor Matawalle confirmed that no fewer than 30,000 gunmen operated across more than 100 camps in and around Zamfara State, with such firm territorial control that they collected an estimated N970 million in ransoms from victims' families across the 2011–2019 period. More than 100 farming communities in not fewer than six local government areas were sacked from their homes, their populations displaced into primary schools and host communities across the state and neighbouring states (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). Human Rights Watch (2022) documented that over 1,000 children were kidnapped in Northwestern Nigeria between January and August 2021 alone, with authorities closing hundreds of schools across seven states — Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara — as a direct security response, a pattern that illustrates the cascading Triple Helix dynamic whereby nonstate violence destroys educational infrastructure, development collapse accelerates as an entire generation loses access

to schooling, and the resulting youth exclusion from formal economic opportunity deepens the recruitment pipeline for armed groups.

The Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu forest complexes became established bandit bases from which attacks extended outward to highways, towns, and distant villages that state security forces could not protect. The social embeddedness of bandit formations within Northwestern communities extends well beyond the armed actors themselves, as Obi and Iwuoha's (2023) documentation of communal-level collaborators demonstrates — revealing that suppliers, informants, food vendors, arms traders, and community gatekeepers constitute an enabling ecosystem without which sustained bandit operations across the Rugu and Kamara forest complexes would be impossible, a finding that complicates purely kinetic counter banditry strategies and reinforces the Triple Helix framework's insistence that governance legitimacy reconstruction must accompany security operations.

The connection between illegal artisanal gold mining and the financing of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria represents a critical resource dimension of the Triple Helix's nonstate violence strand that purely security-focused analyses consistently underweight; Ogbonnaya's (2020) policy analysis for the Institute for Security Studies established that illegal mining operations in Zamfara and Katsina States provided bandit formations with independent revenue streams that made them economically resilient against disruption, reducing their dependence on kidnapping ransoms alone and complicating demobilisation incentive structures.

Military operations against armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria have produced consistently limited and temporary results, a finding corroborated by Aina, Ojo, and Oyewole's (2023) systematic analysis, which demonstrates that air campaigns and ground deployments succeed in tactically disrupting bandit formations while failing to address the governance vacuums that regenerate them — validating the Triple Helix framework's core proposition that security interventions divorced from governance reconstruction and development investment cannot produce durable outcomes.

Multiple structural factors converged to create this catastrophe. Poor governance and the virtual collapse of local government institutions eliminated the mediation and service delivery capacities that might have resolved the underlying farmer herder resource competition before it escalated. Deep-seated corruption eroded security capacity at every level — police, military, and local government officials all featured in documented accounts of collusion with bandit operations. Porous borders and decades of small arms trafficking provided the weapons enabling the violence's escalation from knives and traditional weapons to AK-47s and other military-grade firearms. The fall of Muammar Gaddafi's Libya in 2011 flooded the Sahel region with weapons and experienced fighters, many of whom eventually made their way southward through Niger and into Nigeria's Northwestern states. Climate change reduced rainfall and expanded desertification, compressing available agricultural and grazing land in ways that intensified farmer herder competition far beyond what traditional mediation mechanisms could manage (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). And Nigeria's extraordinary youth bulge — characterized by a lack of job opportunities for a rapidly growing youth population — provided an effectively unlimited recruitment pool for armed groups that offered better income than available legitimate alternatives.

4.3.3 Farmer Herder Conflicts: Resource Competition, Climate Stress, and the Failure of Mediation

The farmer herder conflict complex across Nigeria's Middle Belt represents a third distinct manifestation of the Triple Helix, differing from both the ideological insurgency of the Northeast and the organized criminality of the Northwest while sharing their common structural foundation in governance failure. Farmer-herder conflicts in their historical form represented disputes over shared resources — land, water, cattle routes — managed through customary mediation mechanisms that evolved over generations of coexistence between agricultural and pastoral communities. The contemporary manifestation represents something qualitatively different: militarized confrontations between armed factions in which communities that historically coexisted through negotiated resource sharing have been driven into sustained cycles of attack, reprisal, and counter-reprisal

that have claimed thousands of lives and displaced hundreds of thousands.

Three structural transformations have driven this qualitative change. First, climate change has reduced annual rainfall across the Sahel zone consistently over three decades, diminishing the amount of grazing land available to herders and extending the duration and distance of annual cattle migration routes. The diminishing amounts of annual rainfall have their toll on the growth of shrubs and vegetation useful for both farming and grazing (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). Herders compelled by desertification to move further south encounter farming communities who have simultaneously expanded cultivation in response to population growth, creating resource pressure on both sides that traditional mediation arrangements — designed for the earlier resource conditions — cannot adequately address. Ezeibe's (2020) empirical analysis of desertification-induced migration directly corroborates the field evidence from the Triple Helix research programme's Taraba State phase, establishing that poor security governance escalates the southward migration of herders by failing to regulate movement, adjudicate competing land claims, or protect farming communities from armed incursion — transforming what begins as environmental pressure into systematic violent displacement through the governance failure mechanism that lies at the core of the Triple Helix framework's analytical architecture. Second, the collapse of traditional governance institutions eliminated the customary mediation mechanisms that historically managed these disputes. Where emirate councils, district heads, and village authorities once adjudicated cattle route disputes and allocated access to shared water sources with recognized authority, the legitimacy of these institutions has been compromised by their own complicity in land transformation processes (as documented in the Dan Sadau case), their inability to enforce rulings against armed actors, and the progressive reduction of their formal powers by state governments that marginalized traditional authority to consolidate political control. Third, the proliferation of small arms — estimated at approximately three million weapons circulating in Nigeria by the mid 2000s, with nearly eighty percent acquired illegally — transformed what had been stick-and-machete skirmishes into mass-casualty events. When both

herders and farmers arm themselves with AK-47s and can access organized armed groups willing to prosecute their grievances militarily, manageable resource disputes transform into civilizational conflicts.

My research on this phenomenon in Taraba State documented early and alarming manifestations of the militarization trajectory. The late 2001 and early 2002 clashes between predominantly cattle-rearing Fulani and the mainly agrarian Mambilla in Sarduana Local Government Area on grazing issues saw catastrophic losses of lives and properties, leading to the flight of approximately 38,000 Nigerians across the border into the Republic of Cameroon (Isa, 2001). This incident — in a single local government area and a single episode of violence — produced displacement equivalent to a significant humanitarian crisis. The farmer herder conflict complex in Northwestern and North-Central Nigeria does not constitute an isolated national phenomenon but rather represents the most severe manifestation of a regional crisis documented across West and Central Africa, with Brottem (2021) establishing that multiple converging factors — arms proliferation, climate-induced vegetation loss, population pressure on agricultural land, and weakened traditional mediation institutions — have driven a continent-wide intensification of the conflict that situates Nigeria's crisis within a broader structural transformation rather than a localised governance failure.

The mechanisms producing it — climate driven resource pressure, elite manipulation of communal grievances, security force absence, and collapse of traditional mediation — would repeat across the Middle Belt with escalating intensity through subsequent decades. The analytical vocabulary of "herder-farmer conflict" itself encodes a misleading symmetry that obscures the structural conditions driving the violence, a limitation that Ezeibe and Stubbs (2022) address through their proposal of "eco-violence" as a more precise descriptor — one that centres environmental degradation, climate-induced resource scarcity, and the state's failure to manage ecological transformation as the primary drivers, moving beyond narratives of ethnic antagonism that, as the Triple Helix framework's field evidence demonstrates, consistently obscure economic and governance roots

while making resolution more difficult by entrenching ethnic polarisation.

The nature of government responses to farmer herder violence in Nigeria reflects patterns of state complicity rather than simple incapacity, as Ugwueze, Omenma, and Okwueze (2022) established through their analysis of land-related conflicts, finding that successive government administrations at both federal and state levels responded selectively to violence based on the ethnic and political affiliations of armed actors rather than the severity of harm inflicted on civilian populations — a finding consistent with the Triple Helix framework's neoMarxist account of the Nigerian state as an instrument of class and factional interest rather than a neutral provider of public security.

4.4 Ethnic Militias and the Youth Subculture of Violence: The Fourth Republic Crisis, 1999–2015

The ethnic militia phenomenon that proliferated across Nigeria during the transition to democracy in 1999 and the early Fourth Republic represents an analytically critical case study that connects the governance failure analysis of the preceding decades with the nonstate violence dynamics of the subsequent ones. My research on this phenomenon — conducted through the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies with Heinrich Böll Foundation support and published as "The Youths, Ethnic Militias and Democracy in Nigeria" (Isa, 2010) — documented empirically what the Triple Helix framework theorizes: that governance failure generates the structural conditions from which armed groups emerge, sustain themselves, and develop governance functions that partially displace the state.

The ethnic militia proliferation of the 1999–2015 period encompassed four major formations: the Oodua People's Congress representing Yoruba interests in the Southwest, the Bakassi Boys and Egbesu Boys representing Igbo and Ijaw interests respectively in the South, and the Arewa People's Congress representing Hausa-Fulani interests in the North. Each group articulated distinct regional and ethnic grievances — the OPC invoked Yoruba marginalization, the Bakassi Boys framed their extrajudicial violence against suspected criminals as community crime-fighting, the Egbesu Boys connected their activism to the Niger Delta's oil resource justice demands, and the APC

positioned itself as a response to perceived threats against Northern interests. Yet beneath these distinct ideological framings, my research documented striking structural similarities that pointed toward common underlying causes rooted in governance failure rather than ethnic specificity.

Militia membership comprised predominantly youth between sixteen and thirty-five years of age, with ninety six percent younger than thirty-four and ninety percent drawn from low-income backgrounds across all four formations studied (Isa, 2010). *(derived from structured questionnaire data administered to a purposive sample of 847 militia members across four formations — OPC, APC, Bakassi Boys, and Egbesu Boys — during field research conducted between 2007 and 2009 under the Centre for Development and Conflict Management Studies programme; Isa, 2010)*. Unemployment emerged as the primary driver of participation, with forty five percent of respondents identifying it as the main factor behind their involvement. Ethnic marginalization ranked second at thirty six percent, followed by manipulation by politicians at twenty one percent. These findings carry a critical analytical implication: the ethnic framing of militia mobilization concealed the underlying material and governance conditions that actually drove membership decisions. Young men without employment who found that violence offered income, status, and patron client relationships with political elites were described — and described themselves — as ethnic defenders, but their primary motivations were economic and political rather than identity-based.

The research documented a youth subculture of violence that had taken deep root in Nigerian society by the early 2000s. Nigerian youths who found themselves excluded from formal political participation and formal economic opportunity discovered that violence offered viable pathways to survival and status. The political space had become so thoroughly monetized and controlled by political godfathers that legitimate entry was functionally impossible for youth without financial backing or political sponsorship. The only accessible entrance into the system ran through conflict — and predominantly through violent conflict (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022, drawing on Ajayi, 2012). Young men who had been mobilized as

ethnic fighters since childhood had abandoned schooling for warfare, developing no alternative skills or aspirations — as documented in Taraba's fieldwork, where youth respondents demanded compensation for questionnaire participation because paid participation in any activity was their primary economic mode (Isa, 2001).

The phenomenon of political patronage of militia activity represents the most analytically significant finding for understanding the Triple Helix's governance failure strand. Militia groups across all formations had formal and informal patrons who supported them financially or sponsored events in which they were involved. In return, patrons were assured of protection or political support, which often inflicted disorder upon society as the youths attempted to fulfill their part of the bargain (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). This patron-militia relationship reveals the precise mechanism through which elite complicity generates violence: political elites who cannot sustain electoral competition through legitimate means deploy youth militias as coercive instruments, while youth excluded from legitimate economic opportunity accept elite patronage in exchange for services that include intimidation, vote manipulation, and targeted violence. Both parties to this arrangement benefit materially while the communities bearing the consequences of militia violence pay the price.

The virtual deterioration and collapse of institutions for interethnic equity and national cohesion strengthened the resolve of political elites to promote geo-ethnic organizations openly (Isa, 2010). The failure of security agencies contributed to the social acceptability of ethnic militia groups as alternative community protection mechanisms — a phenomenon that would later manifest with more devastating consequences when Northwestern communities began accommodating bandit groups as providers of whatever security they could access. The weapons proliferation that sustained militia operations — approximately three million small arms circulating in Nigeria by the mid 2000s, with nearly eighty percent acquired illegally — created the material conditions for escalation that would eventually produce armed banditry operating at the scale and territorial scope documented after 2011.

4.5 Helix Three — Development Collapse: The Human Costs of Systemic Crisis.

Development collapse in Nigeria's conflict affected regions operates through multiple simultaneous channels, each reinforcing the others and accelerating the overall deterioration in human welfare. The interaction of governance failure and nonstate violence with development processes does not operate gradually but catastrophically, destroying in months productive and institutional capacity accumulated over generations. The community level documentation of banditry's developmental consequences gathered by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR, 2024) confirms the pattern the Triple Helix research programme documented across Northwestern Nigeria's affected communities: governance vacuums left by the absence of effective state authority result in communities becoming captive populations under armed group control, paying informal taxes, surrendering agricultural produce, and living in states of coerced compliance that simultaneously destroy economic productivity and prevent the legitimate political engagement that governance recovery requires.

Agricultural system collapse represents the most immediate development channel through which violence translates into human suffering across Northwestern and Northeastern Nigeria. When farmers cannot access their fields due to bandit threats, food production collapses not merely for subsistence but across the entire rural economy. A significant proportion of Zamfara State farmers were unable to engage and attend to their farming activities for fear of insecurity, with serious negative consequences for food security visible across the state by 2019 (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). The price consequences of this agricultural disruption are documented with precision from the Dan Sadau case study: the price of a bag of maize tripled from 5,500 naira to 18,000 naira between the preconflict period and 2016, as supply disruptions from farmer displacement intersected with the breakdown of commercial supply chains that bandits controlled and taxed.

Educational system destruction creates the most devastatingly long term development consequences, because children denied schooling

during formative years face permanent human capital deficits that poverty traps compound across generations. In almost all of the affected communities in the Northeast, schools were closed at all levels following Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). More than 100 farming communities in not fewer than six local government areas of Zamfara State had been sacked from their homes, with children displaced into IDP camps without access to any schooling. The national consequence is dramatic: Nigeria ranked 163rd of 166 countries on the Sustainable Development Goal Index, with over 20 million out of school children — a figure that represents not merely educational system failure but the deliberate targeting of educational infrastructure by armed groups who understood that educated youth with legitimate economic prospects are less recruitable than uneducated youth with none.

Healthcare system disintegration eliminates communities' most basic protective capacity. Facilities were damaged and medical personnel fled in virtually all conflict affected local government areas of the Northwest and Northeast. Maternal mortality rates — already high by international standards in Northern Nigeria — escalated as healthcare workers fled insecurity, medical supplies chains broke down, and pregnant women could not access clinics located in conflict zones. Over 2.8 million internally displaced persons across the country lacked access to any systematic healthcare provision, depending on whatever humanitarian organizations could deliver to camps whose security remained uncertain (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). Amnesty International's (2023) annual human rights assessment of Nigeria documented continuing patterns of extrajudicial killing by security forces during counter banditry operations, mass sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups against displaced communities, and the systematic targeting of healthcare workers and facilities — confirming that the Triple Helix framework's documentation of healthcare collapse in conflict affected zones represents not only the consequence of development failure but an active instrument of community subjugation that both armed nonstate actors and poorly accountable security forces deploy against civilian populations.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre's (2023) country profile confirms that Nigeria registered 291,000 new conflict-induced

displacements in 2023 alone, with approximately 3.3 million people living in internal displacement — a figure that represents only marginal improvement from the 3.6 million displaced in 2022 and places Nigeria among the ten countries globally with the largest internally displaced populations, quantifying at national scale what the Dan Sadau Emirate case study documents in microcosm: the systematic destruction of community life, productive capacity, and social capital that the Triple Helix framework identifies as development collapse's most devastating long term mechanism. Displacement itself compounds all development dimensions by stripping communities of the social capital, institutional knowledge, and productive assets accumulated over generations. IDPs have lost their electoral wards and constituencies, are unable to vote in their constitutionally delineated electoral wards, and have lost their representation in local councils, state houses of assembly, and at national level (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). Communities that accumulated agricultural knowledge, traditional governance wisdom, and community solidarity across generations have been scattered across IDP camps where none of these assets can be maintained or transmitted. The multigenerational poverty trap created by this displacement — children born in IDP camps, educated erratically if at all, lacking land and community connections — constitutes the most severe long term development consequence of the Triple Helix.

The gendered dimensions of the Northwestern Nigeria crisis extend beyond the headline statistics of deaths and displacement to encompass systematic sexual violence that constitutes an independent mechanism of community destruction, as Ojewale's (2024) Brookings Institution analysis establishes — documenting that kidnapping operations involving women and girls serve simultaneously as revenue extraction mechanisms, community terrorisation strategies, and instruments of social disintegration that eliminate the reproductive, caregiving, and social cohesion functions through which communities sustain themselves across generations.

4.6 The Dan Sadau Longitudinal Case Study: Population Collapse as Analytical Prism

The Dan Sadau Emirate in Zamfara State represents this research programme's most intensively documented single-site case study — an eight-year longitudinal analysis tracking a functioning community through near-total disintegration. The emirate, which governed approximately 45,000 people across dozens of villages in 2011, retained meaningful governance authority, active economic life, and institutional continuity when my research first engaged it systematically. By 2019, the population had contracted to approximately 3,200 residents — a ninety three percent collapse within eight years that concentrated in observable form the dynamics that aggregate statistics describe nationally. These population measurements derive from systematic empirical estimation conducted across annual fieldwork phases using a triangulated methodology that combined Emirate council records (where accessible), household headcount surveys administered by trained research assistants in accessible quarters of the community, and key informant testimony from the Emir, district heads, and community leaders regarding the scale of outmigration, death, and displacement since the preceding fieldwork visit — a triangulation approach that compensates for the absence of formal census data in a governance collapsed locality where administrative record-keeping had ceased.

The mechanism of Dan Sadau's collapse unfolded in stages that correspond precisely to the Triple Helix's mutually reinforcing logic. Governance failure preceded and enabled the violence that eventually destroyed the community. Local government dysfunction eliminated agricultural extension services, road maintenance, healthcare provision, and dispute mediation capacity in the years before banditry reached Dan Sadau's territory. When bandit groups operating from the Rugu forest complex began raiding the emirate's outlying villages in 2012 and 2013, the community had no effective local governance capacity to organize protection, no functional relationship with local government providing resources for community security, and traditional authority institutions whose legitimacy had been compromised by their participation in the land transformation

processes — specifically, the conversion of grazing routes to farmland — that originally generated farmer herder resource competition.

The violence, once initiated, systematically destroyed the economic infrastructure that sustained community life. Farmers who could no longer safely access their fields abandoned agricultural production. Market traders who faced kidnapping risks stopped attending the periodic markets that distributed food and commercial goods across the emirate. Supply chains bringing essential goods from urban centres broke down as road insecurity made transport economically unfeasible. By 2016, the price of basic foodstuffs had more than tripled from preconflict levels, reflecting not merely supply disruption but the comprehensive economic disarticulation that violence produced. The few community members who remained — primarily those too elderly, too poor, or too committed to ancestral land to leave — survived through accommodation with bandit groups: paying informal taxes, complying with movement restrictions, and accepting whatever protection the armed groups provided in exchange for compliance with their extractive governance regime.

The Emir's testimony, collected across multiple fieldwork visits as security conditions permitted, provided the most detailed elite-level account of governance collapse available from within an affected emirate. He described district and village heads' complicity in land transformation — their role in selling grazing lands and cattle routes to farmers for private farming — as the original governance failure that made subsequent conflict resolution impossible. How could traditional authorities credibly mediate between farmers and herders when those same authorities had participated in converting herders' ancestral routes to farmland? This self-indicting testimony illuminated the multiple levels of governance failure: not just the absence of state capacity, but the active complicity of local governance actors in generating the structural conditions from which violence emerged.

The population trajectory of Dan Sadau — 45,000 to 3,200 over eight years — quantifies in one community's experience what the Zamfara State data documents in aggregate: more than 100 farming communities and villages sacked across not fewer than six local

government areas, with their populations scattered across IDP camps, host communities, and urban peripheries where their skills, knowledge, and community bonds cannot generate the livelihoods they once sustained.

Figure 5 — Dan Sadau Emirate: Population Collapse, 2011–2019

Section 4.6 (Dan Sadau Longitudinal Case Study). This bar chart documents the catastrophic ninety three percent population collapse of Dan Sadau Emirate over eight years — the manuscript's most powerful single empirical illustration of the Triple Helix in concentrated community-scale action.

Population 2011 45,000			Population 2019 3,200			Population collapse –93%		Duration 8 years	
45,000	42,000	36,000	28,000	20,000	14,000	9,000	5,500	3,200	
2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	
Open access	Open access	Open access	Open access	Open access	Mil. escort	Mil. escort	Inaccessible	Inaccessible	
Open fieldwork access			Military escort required (2016–2017)				Community inaccessible (2019)		

Figure 5: Dan Sadau Emirate — Population Collapse, 2011–2019 (Longitudinal Field Research, Isa 2011–2019)

Source: Isa (2011–2019 multi-visit longitudinal field surveys). Population figures based on systematic empirical estimation across annual fieldwork phases. Fieldwork conducted under military escort from 2016; community inaccessible from 2019.

4.7 Taraba State: Ethnic Conflict, Elite Manipulation, and Governance Failure, 1994–2010

The Taraba State research that launched this thirty-year scholarly programme in 1994 documented the foundational dynamics of the Triple Helix framework at their earliest manifestation in my field experience. The Jukun-Chamba and Kuteb ethnic conflicts that engulfed Takum and Ussa local government areas from the mid-1990s through the 2000s revealed in concentrated form how elite class competition mobilizes ethnic identity as an instrument of political contestation, how governance failure converts manageable disputes into devastating violence, and how development consequences compound through displacement and institutional destruction.

Taraba State was created from the defunct Gongola State on the 27th of August 1991 by the Babangida military administration. The state

covers a land area of 59,400 square kilometres and, despite its rich alluvial soil supporting diverse agricultural production, remains one of Nigeria's most neglected and underdeveloped states — its rugged topography and lack of adequate road infrastructure keeping it peripheral to national economic and political life (Isa, 2001). The major ethnic communities of the southern Taraba conflict zone — the Jukun, Chamba, and Kuteb — had coexisted, competed, and periodically clashed over centuries before the conflicts of the 1990s escalated to catastrophic levels. The 1991 population of Takum Local Government Area (before its division into Takum and Ussa) stood at 148,294 people, with farming, fishing, livestock rearing, trading, and transportation constituting the primary economic activities (Isa, 2001).

What transformed periodic interethnic tension into devastating violence was not a sudden intensification of ancient hatreds but the intersection of structural governance conditions with elite class competition. The competition in Taraba State was fundamentally about control of the traditional authority position in Takum town — and through it, control of political power at local authority level, access to elected offices, and control over the distribution of the state's patronage networks. The Jukun-Chamba alliance, having secured majority ethnic group advantages at state and national levels, sought to retain control of traditional authority in Takum. The Kuteb, who had dominated traditional authority during the colonial and early postcolonial period, sought to reclaim the political position they had lost. This ruling class competition — as my doctoral research established through systematic survey and interview evidence from 396 valid community questionnaire returns and 230 official questionnaire returns — was the real contest behind what appeared on the surface as ethnic identity conflict (Isa, 2001).

The 1997–1998 conflict escalation devastated communities I had come to know through extended fieldwork. The Justice Aliyu Peace Committee estimated material losses at 6.613 billion Naira, representing homes, businesses, and livelihoods accumulated over generations. Takum town's wards progressively segregated along ethnic lines — Tikari ward becoming predominantly Chamba, Dutse ward predominantly Kuteb, Ghaweton and Fete and Bete wards predominantly Jukun, Rogo ward predominantly Hausa (Isa, 2001).

This ethnic residential segregation, which my fieldwork observed and documented directly, represented the spatial materialization of social trust collapse — communities that had once intermingled in daily economic and social life were now physically separated by fear, hostility, and the memory of violence. The Kuteb ward of Kwambai and Jenuwa were forcibly moved from Takum to Ussa local government area in the 1997 boundary adjustments — and Kuteb communities demonstrated their rejection by refusing to register for elections in 1998 and boycotting the 1999 general elections. Governance failure had produced not merely violence but democratic exclusion.

The broader Taraba conflict documented in my research encompassed multiple ethnic dyads: Tiv and Jukun conflicts centered on Wukari, where boundary disputes and indigene-settler claims generated sustained violence; Tiv and Fulani conflicts over grazing and land; and the Fulani-Mambilla clash in Sarduana Local Government Area in 2001–2002, where grazing disputes generated sufficient violence to drive approximately 38,000 Nigerians across the border into Cameroon (Isa, 2001). Each of these conflict dyads reflected the same underlying Triple Helix structure: governance failure that neither prevented nor resolved resource competition disputes, elite manipulation that mobilized ethnic identity for political competition, and development consequences that destroyed productive capacity accumulated over generations.

4.8 The Koma People of Adamawa State: Extreme State Marginalization and the Limits of the Postcolonial State

The Koma people of the Alantika Mountains — inhabiting the rugged highland terrain straddling the border between Adamawa State in Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon — represent the most extreme and theoretically instructive case of state marginalization within the entire thirty-year research programme. My published chapter, "AlieNation: The State of Koma in Nigeria," contributed to the edited volume *Encountering the State in Nigeria*, documents a community whose near-total exclusion from the postcolonial Nigerian state across six decades of independence demonstrates, with concentrated analytical force, what the predatory state's logic produces when it is

applied consistently to geographically peripheral communities that possess no strategic resources worth extracting and no political constituency worth cultivating.

The Koma do not appear prominently in Nigeria's national security discourse because they have not generated an insurgency, formed a militia, or attracted international attention through spectacular violence. Their invisibility in national consciousness is itself the most powerful indicator of their condition: communities that the Nigerian state has so thoroughly abandoned that their abandonment generates no crisis visible from Abuja or Lagos. Yet the Koma case carries profound analytical weight for the Triple Helix framework precisely because it isolates the governance failure strand in its purest form — demonstrating that state absence alone, without the compounding factors of armed group predation or elite manipulation of ethnic violence, produces comprehensive development collapse through the simple denial of every collective good that distinguishes organized political community from geographic occupation of territory.

The Koma communities occupy the Alantika Mountain highlands in what is administratively part of Song and Ganye local government areas of Adamawa State. The terrain is rugged, with limited road access from the lowland administrative centres where state presence nominally concentrates. This geographic condition — highland terrain removed from accessible transportation corridors — provided the colonial administrative apparatus with a structurally convenient justification for neglect. The colonial state had concentrated administrative presence and infrastructure investment in accessible lowland communities whose agricultural surplus could be taxed efficiently and whose populations could be mobilized for labour. Highland communities like the Koma occupied zones that the colonial administration formally incorporated into its territorial claims at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885 while practically excluding from any governance provision whatsoever. The postcolonial state inherited both the formal territorial claim and the practical exclusion, and perpetuated both with remarkable consistency across independence, military rule, and democratic dispensations.

The development consequences of this sustained state absence were documented in accounts that simultaneously revealed the full depth of marginalization and the extraordinary resilience of communities that developed comprehensive self-governance systems without any external institutional support. When Nigerian journalists and researchers began systematically documenting Koma communities during the 1980s and early 1990s, they discovered populations who had lived entirely outside the money economy, who had never encountered vaccination programmes or formal schooling, who maintained customary governance systems, ceremonial practices, and agricultural knowledge systems developed across generations of autonomous existence. The national reaction oscillated between romantic fascination — the discovery of communities "untouched by modernity" — and institutional shame, as the revelation of Koma living conditions exposed the Nigerian state's failure to extend any developmental service whatsoever to citizens formally within its constitutional territory.

The PhD dissertation's documentation of fieldwork limitations acknowledges directly the "hill people" as among the most difficult communities to access during the Taraba State research — communities where rugged terrain, limited road infrastructure, and language barriers (most community members speaking neither English nor Hausa, the primary research translation language) imposed severe methodological constraints (Isa, 2001). This methodological challenge itself illuminates the deeper governance problem: communities so physically and institutionally remote from state administrative centres that even a research team specifically attempting to access them encountered near-insuperable obstacles. If empirical researchers dedicated to accessing these communities faced these barriers, the barriers confronting government extension officers, healthcare workers, and educational staff — who have no equivalent motivation to overcome access difficulties — are exponentially greater.

The postcolonial state's relationship with the Koma exemplifies what Peter Ekeh theorized as the fundamental divergence between the African state and African society since independence: the state and society have continued to grow apart rather than converge, generating

a legitimation problem of structural rather than circumstantial character (Ekeh, 1985). For the Koma, this divergence was not a gradual erosion of previously existing state-society relations but an original condition — they had never experienced the state as protector, service provider, or legitimate authority. Their encounter with the Nigerian state had consisted primarily of periodic administrative assertions of formal sovereignty — census operations, border demarcation exercises, occasional military patrols — unaccompanied by any material benefit that might translate formal sovereignty into experienced governance.

The governance failure dimension of the Koma case study connects directly to the structural analysis in Section 2.2 of this lecture. In the neoMarxist framework, the Nigerian state's peripheral capitalist character makes it a direct instrument for accumulation by the dominant class rather than a welfare provider for general populations (Ekekwe, 1986). Communities like the Koma — without mineral resources generating extractable rents, without strategic transport locations generating taxable commerce, without political organizations capable of mobilizing electoral constituencies — possess no characteristic that the predatory state's internal logic would motivate it to serve. Their "AlieNation" — the deliberate framing of my published chapter's title — represents not merely alienation in the sociological sense of estrangement from political community, but a structured condition of formal inclusion combined with substantive exclusion that the postcolonial state perpetuates across generations.

The development collapse dimension of the Koma case operates differently from the Northwestern banditry and Northeastern insurgency cases but produces similarly devastating human consequences through distinct mechanisms. In Northwestern Nigeria, development collapse occurs through active destruction — armed groups burning schools, farmers unable to access fields, markets disrupted by kidnapping threats, healthcare workers fleeing insecurity. In the Koma case, development collapse occurs through sustained absence — schools never built, healthcare facilities never established, roads never constructed, agricultural extension never provided. The outcome in both cases is equivalent from the perspective of human capability deprivation: children grow without education, populations

suffer preventable illness, agricultural productivity remains far below potential, and communities remain trapped in multigenerational poverty. The mechanism differs — active destruction versus chronic absence — but the Triple Helix's core insight applies equally to both: governance failure generates development collapse, and development collapse sustains conditions that delegitimize state authority and create constituencies for alternative governance arrangements, whether violent or autonomous.

The Koma case also illuminates the limitations of development interventions that address material deprivation without addressing structural governance conditions. Periodic government announcements of programmes to "develop" or "integrate" the Koma — road construction initiatives, educational outreach programmes, healthcare delivery projects — have been documented across multiple administrations without producing sustained transformation, because they attempt to deliver services through the same governance apparatus whose structural character makes sustained service delivery to peripheral communities institutionally impossible. Programmes designed by administrators in Yola or Abuja, implemented through local government structures whose resource diversion and capacity deficits the research programme has documented extensively, and evaluated by officials whose career incentives reward programme announcement rather than programme delivery, predictably fail to reach communities whose geographic and political remoteness makes monitoring and accountability functionally impossible.

The analytical contribution of the Koma case study to the Triple Helix framework is therefore threefold. It demonstrates that governance failure produces development collapse through passive abandonment as effectively as through active predation — establishing that the framework applies across the full spectrum of state-society relations rather than only to regions experiencing active armed conflict. It reveals the outer boundary of the postcolonial predatory state's reach — the point at which peripheral communities, possessing nothing worth extracting, receive nothing in return for their nominal citizenship. And it provides the most extreme available test of the neoMarxist state theory's explanatory claims: a community whose relationship with the Nigerian state consists entirely of formal

territorial incorporation without any substantive governance provision demonstrates the theory's core claim — that the postcolonial state exists to serve elite accumulation interests rather than general welfare — with a clarity that more politically visible cases sometimes obscure through the complexity of competing narratives.

4.9 Cross Case Analysis: Patterns, Variations, and the Triple Helix at Work

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, having presented eight distinct case studies spanning thirty years of field research across seven Nigerian states and encompassing conflict typologies from religious insurgency to ethnic militia mobilization, from armed banditry to historic state marginalization, this section draws the cross case analytical threads together to establish what the cumulative evidence demonstrates about the Triple Helix framework's empirical validity, its explanatory scope, and its theoretical boundaries.

The cross case analysis addresses three interconnected analytical questions. First, what patterns emerge consistently across all eight cases that validate the Triple Helix framework's core claims? Second, what meaningful variation exists across cases that illuminates the framework's analytical nuance and prevents its application from collapsing into unfalsifiable universalism? Third, what does the comparative evidence establish about the causal mechanisms linking governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse in ways that partial interventions consistently fail to disrupt?

Consistent Patterns Across All Cases

Four patterns emerge with sufficient consistency across all eight documented cases to constitute empirical validation of the Triple Helix framework's foundational claims.

The first and most analytically decisive pattern is that governance failure structurally precedes and enables every documented manifestation of nonstate violence or extreme development deprivation in the research programme's evidence base. In Northeast Nigeria, the governance failures of underdevelopment, educational system collapse for Muslim youth, security force predation, and federal resource allocation bias created the structural conditions that

Boko Haram's charismatic leadership exploited. In Northwestern Nigeria, local government dysfunction, the expansion of ungoverned forest spaces, and security apparatus corruption created the territorial vacuums that armed banditry filled. In the Middle Belt, the collapse of traditional mediation institutions and the absence of state conflict resolution mechanisms converted manageable resource disputes into militarized confrontations. In Taraba State, elite class competition for state resources mobilized ethnic identity as a political instrument in an environment where governance institutions served factional interests rather than conflict resolution. Among the Koma, decades of state absence produced development collapse without any intermediate armed group — demonstrating that governance failure alone, without violence, is sufficient to generate the development crisis dimension of the Triple Helix. In every case, governance failure antecedes violence and development collapse in a temporal sequence that is not merely correlational but causal: governance failure creates the conditions from which all subsequent helix dimensions develop.

The second consistent pattern is that nonstate actors, once established in governance vacuums, invariably develop governance functions that resist purely military responses. This pattern manifests across all cases that involve armed groups, though with important variation in the sophistication and character of governance provision. Boko Haram and ISWAP established courts, taxation systems, educational institutions, and administrative structures in controlled territories. Northwestern bandits levied taxes, adjudicated disputes over farming permissions, and provided selective protection to communities willing to comply with their extractive governance regime. The ethnic militias of the Fourth Republic provided security services that police forces could not deliver, establishing patron client relationships with political elites that gave them institutional sustainability beyond their military capacity. In every armed group case, the research documents a consistent trajectory: initial emergence from governance vacuums, followed by the development of governance functions that partially displace state authority, followed by community dependence on those governance functions that makes purely military elimination counterproductive — because eliminating the armed actor without

filling the governance vacuum it occupied simply creates conditions for a successor group to emerge.

The third consistent pattern is that development collapse accelerates exponentially once the helix reinforcement dynamic is fully activated. The evidence from multiple cases demonstrates that development deterioration is not linear but threshold-dependent: governance failure produces gradual service delivery decline that communities can partially absorb, but once nonstate violence is established at scale, development collapse occurs catastrophically. Dan Sadau's ninety three percent population collapse in eight years illustrates the extreme form of this threshold effect. More than 100 farming communities sacked across six local government areas of Zamfara State, over 2.8 million persons displaced from the Northeast, schools closed across entire local government areas, and healthcare systems collapsed in regions where they were already fragile — these aggregate figures represent the accumulation of community level catastrophes each exhibiting the same threshold dynamic.

The fourth consistent pattern across all cases is that partial interventions addressing single helix strands have failed systematically and expensively across three decades of evidence. Military operations without governance reconstruction — Operation SHARAN, Operation HADARIN DAJI, Operation ACCORD in Northwestern Nigeria; the various military offensives against Boko Haram in the Northeast — achieved tactical successes measured in territory cleared or armed group members killed, while failing to prevent the return or reconstitution of armed groups because the governance vacuums enabling group formation remained intact. Development programmes without security and governance — agricultural extension initiatives in conflict affected communities, school construction projects in areas under bandit influence, healthcare delivery in localities where healthcare workers faced personal danger — were either abandoned before completion or destroyed after completion, wasting resources without producing sustainable benefits. Governance reforms — the 2003 local government reform initiatives, the various constitutional amendment proposals for greater federalism, the periodic anti-corruption campaigns — generated paper restructuring without operational

change, because the structural incentives of the predatory political economy that the neoMarxist framework identifies remained intact. This consistent pattern of partial intervention failure constitutes the strongest empirical argument for the Triple Helix framework's policy prescription: only integrated approaches addressing all three helix dimensions simultaneously can disrupt the mutually reinforcing dynamics that regenerate crisis.

Meaningful Variation Across Cases

The cross case variation illuminates the Triple Helix framework's analytical nuance and prevents its application from becoming unfalsifiably universal. Four dimensions of meaningful variation structure the comparative analysis.

The first dimension of variation is the primary mobilization mechanism through which governance failure generates nonstate violence or development collapse. In Taraba State, elite class competition for access to traditional authority and local government resources is the primary mobilization mechanism, with ethnic identity deployed instrumentally by ruling class factions rather than representing primordial community sentiment. In the Boko Haram case, charismatic religious leadership mobilizing youth marginalization through theological framing constitutes the primary mechanism, with ideological commitment providing organizational cohesion that purely material incentives could not sustain. In Northwestern banditry, economic opportunity structures created by governance vacuums and ungoverned spaces provide the primary mechanism, with material incentives driving recruitment and organizational evolution more powerfully than any ideological framework. In the ethnic militia case, youth exclusion from formal economic and political participation provides the primary mechanism, with patron client relationships between political elites and unemployed youth creating the structural incentive for organized violence. In the Koma case, passive structural exclusion rather than active mobilization constitutes the primary mechanism — no armed actor needed to generate development collapse because chronic state absence accomplished it independently. These variations demonstrate that the Triple Helix framework does not require a single mobilization

pathway but accommodates diverse mechanisms through which the same structural conditions produce related outcomes.

The second dimension of variation is the degree of ideological governance ambition exhibited by nonstate armed actors. ISWAP exhibits the most explicit ideological governance program — explicitly aspiring to establish Islamic governance across the territories it controls, investing in institutions designed to sustain political authority beyond military capacity. Northwestern bandits exhibit minimal ideological governance ambition, treating territorial control and taxation primarily as economic activity rather than political program, making them theoretically more susceptible to economic demobilization strategies than ideologically committed groups. Ethnic militias occupy an intermediate position — articulating ethnic governance narratives that justify their operations while remaining primarily dependent on elite patronage rather than popular ideological commitment. This variation has direct policy implications: demobilization strategies effective for materially motivated groups prove ineffective against ideologically committed formations, and governance reconstruction initiatives that address material grievances while ignoring ideological dimensions will fail to prevent the reconstitution of groups with strong theological or ethnic legitimization frameworks.

The third dimension of variation is the spatial scale at which the Triple Helix operates most intensely. The Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgency operates at regional and transnational scale — encompassing the Lake Chad Basin, drawing on connections to global jihadist networks, and generating displacement that crosses international borders into Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. Northwestern banditry operates primarily at meso-scale — crossing state boundaries between Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, and Niger States while remaining concentrated in specific forest complexes. Taraba State's ethnic conflicts operated primarily at local scale — centered on specific local government areas and chieftaincy disputes with limited regional extension. The Koma's marginalization operates at micro-scale — affecting specific highland communities in two local government areas. This scalar variation means that effective response architecture must be calibrated to the specific operational scale of each conflict

manifestation: transnational insurgency requires regional multilateral responses that community level interventions cannot provide, while local ethnic disputes require community mediation mechanisms that national security operations cannot deliver.

The fourth dimension of variation is the reversibility of development collapse in each case. The Taraba ethnic conflict research documented communities that partially rebuilt economic and social life during periods of relative peace — demonstrating that development collapse, while catastrophic when it occurs, is not necessarily irreversible when governance conditions improve. By contrast, the Koma case suggests that multi-generational development deprivation creates human capital deficits and institutional capacity gaps whose reversal requires sustained intervention across decades rather than years. The Dan Sadau case presents an intermediate scenario: population dispersal and institutional collapse occurred so rapidly and completely that reconstruction faces the challenge of reassembling not merely material infrastructure but the social capital, community knowledge, and institutional legitimacy that cannot be rebuilt through construction projects alone.

Causal Mechanisms and the Failure of Partial Interventions

The cross case analysis establishes with sufficient analytical precision to support the policy prescriptions in Section 6 that three specific causal mechanisms link the helix strands in ways that partial interventions consistently fail to disrupt.

The first causal mechanism is the governance vacuum — the institutional space created by state absence or dysfunction that nonstate actors fill. Military operations eliminate armed actors currently occupying governance vacuums without addressing the vacuum itself. The vacuum persists after military withdrawal and generates successor groups through the same structural logic that generated the group just eliminated. This mechanism explains why Zamfara State experienced the return of armed banditry stronger than before after every military operation, why Boko Haram reconstituted after successive military offensives, and why ethnic militia mobilization persisted across the Fourth Republic despite periodic security force crackdowns. Breaking this mechanism requires not

military operations alone but the sustained establishment of governance capacity that fills vacuums with legitimate institutions capable of providing the security, justice, and service delivery that armed groups exploit in their absence.

The second causal mechanism is the recruitment pipeline created by the intersection of youth unemployment with armed group opportunity structures. Every case involving armed groups documents this pipeline explicitly: Boko Haram's recruitment of economically marginalized youth in Northeast Nigeria's under-served communities; Northwestern banditry's recruitment from the vast pool of unemployed rural youth that governance failure and agricultural system collapse produced; ethnic militia membership's concentration among youth aged sixteen to thirty-five with unemployment as the primary participation driver. Security operations that destroy armed groups without addressing the employment and livelihood conditions that generated recruitment simply create conditions for reconstitution — the pipeline remains open because its structural drivers remain intact. Breaking this mechanism requires development interventions creating legitimate economic opportunities for youth in conflict affected communities, implemented alongside rather than sequentially after security operations.

The third causal mechanism is the legitimacy deficit that governance failure produces at the community level, creating the social acceptance that nonstate actors exploit. Communities that experience the state as predatory — through security force extrajudicial killings, local government resource diversion, electoral manipulation, judicial impunity for powerful actors — do not cooperate with state security operations, do not share intelligence that could enable effective targeting of armed groups, and sometimes actively support or accommodate armed actors offering protection the state refuses to provide. Northwestern communities that signed agreements with bandits to pay taxes in exchange for farming permissions were not criminal collaborators but desperate people making rational calculations in environments where the state provided nothing while bandits provided at least a minimal guarantee of physical access to their own agricultural land. Restoring legitimacy through governance reconstruction that actually delivers services, maintains

accountability, and treats citizens as rights-holders rather than targets of extraction is the only sustainable mechanism for building the community cooperation that effective security operations require.

These three causal mechanisms — governance vacuums, recruitment pipelines, and legitimacy deficits — explain conclusively why partial interventions fail and why integrated approaches addressing all three helix dimensions simultaneously represent the only analytically defensible response to Nigeria's complex crisis. No single intervention can simultaneously fill governance vacuums, close recruitment pipelines, and restore state legitimacy. But integrated programmes combining governance reconstruction, security sector reform, and development investment — pursued concurrently rather than sequentially, designed around community needs rather than administrative convenience, and sustained for timeframes measured in decades rather than electoral cycles — can in principle disrupt all three mechanisms simultaneously. Whether Nigerian political leadership possesses the will, the institutional capacity, and the sustained commitment to implement such programmes is the central policy question that Section 6 addresses.

SECTION 5:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT UNDER SIEGE — THE SDG CRISIS IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED NIGERIA

5.1 Introduction: Development Reversal and the SDG Framework

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by 193 United Nations member states including Nigeria in 2015, established seventeen Sustainable Development Goals representing humanity's collective commitment to ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring peace and prosperity for all people by 2030. Nigeria's formal endorsement of this agenda and the establishment of the Office of the Senior Special Assistant to the President on SDGs signalled institutional commitment to the global framework. The empirical reality documented in this section reveals a catastrophic divergence between that formal commitment and the actual trajectory of human development across Nigeria's conflict affected regions. Nigeria ranked 146th out of 166 countries in the 2024 Sustainable Development Report compiled by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network — a ranking that, despite a nominal improvement on the 160th position recorded in the 2020 edition, still places Nigeria among the countries furthest from achieving the 2030 SDG targets (Sachs et al., 2025).

Nigeria currently ranks 146 out of 166 countries in the 2024 Sustainable Development Report —with responsible consumption and production standing as the only goal on which the country records a positive status. This ranking, though nominally better than Nigeria's 2020 position of 160 on a previous version of the same index, still leaves the country in the bottom quintile of the global table, and the goal level evidence presented in this section reveals stagnation and, on several dimensions, active regression. The 2024 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index demonstrates that 1.1 billion of 6.3 billion people worldwide live in acute multidimensional poverty, and nearly forty percent of these 1.1 billion poor people live in countries exposed to violent conflict. Nigeria sits at the intersection of these two global crises — a country of extreme development deficits in which

the conflict documented across the preceding sections systematically destroys the human capabilities that development investment attempts to build.

The Triple Helix framework provides the analytical lens for understanding why Nigeria's SDG performance is deteriorating rather than improving despite formal commitment and international investment. Governance failure undermines the institutional capacity required to plan, fund, and implement development programmes. Non-state violence physically destroys the infrastructure through which development services are delivered and creates security environments so hostile that development workers cannot operate, children cannot reach schools, and patients cannot access health facilities. Development collapse reduces state revenue, depletes the human capital required for recovery, and deepens the poverty and desperation that fuel armed group recruitment. The three helix strands do not merely coexist alongside Nigeria's SDG crisis — they constitute its primary causes, explaining why external investment in development programmes consistently fails to translate into sustained improvements in human welfare across the country's conflict affected northern regions.

The World Bank's projections encapsulate the structural dimension of this crisis: by 2030, up to eighty-five percent of people in extreme poverty globally could be concentrated in fragile and conflict affected states. Nigeria exemplifies this trajectory perfectly — a large, resource-rich country whose fragility and conflict systematically undermine development outcomes that national GDP figures might suggest are achievable. Food insecurity affects over 33 million people in Nigeria, while millions displaced by conflict in northern Nigeria face intensified challenges in healthcare, sanitation, and education. Understanding why these conditions persist despite formal SDG commitment requires the integrated Triple Helix analysis that this section applies systematically across all seventeen goals.

Figure 6 — Nigeria's SDG Performance Profile: Six Priority Dimensions

Section 5.1 (SDG Introduction). This performance table shows Nigeria's estimated progress toward the 2030 SDG targets across the six dimensions most directly affected by the Triple Helix crisis, revealing the depth of development underperformance relative to international commitments.

SDG DIMENSION	CURRENT PROGRESS	GAP TO TARGET	STATUS
SDG 1 — No Poverty	22%	78% gap	CRITICAL
SDG 2 — Zero Hunger	28%	72% gap	CRITICAL
SDG 3 — Good Health	18%	82% gap	CRITICAL
SDG 4 — Quality Education	21%	79% gap	CRITICAL
SDG 8 — Decent Work	32%	68% gap	CRITICAL
SDG 16 — Peace & Institutions	24%	76% gap	CRITICAL
Overall SDG Index Ranking	146 / 166	20 countries below	CRITICAL

Note: Progress percentages represent estimated distance toward 2030 targets. SDG 3 (Good Health) figure reflects maternal mortality ratio of 1,047 per 100,000 live births against SDG target of 70 per 100,000. SDG 4 (Quality Education) reflects 18+ million out of school children.

Figure 6: Nigeria's SDG Performance Profile — Six Priority Dimensions Against the 2030 Benchmark

Sources: Sachs et al., Sustainable Development Report (2024); UNDP/OPHI Global MPI (2024); UNICEF Annual Report (2024); NDHS (2023–24); Save the Children (2024).

5.2 SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger): Economic Devastation and Food Insecurity

SDG 1 commits Nigeria to ending poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. The empirical evidence from international databases and from thirty years of field research across conflict affected regions reveals an opposite trajectory: poverty is deepening, concentrating, and becoming increasingly intractable precisely in the regions most severely affected by the Triple Helix crisis.

The multidimensional poverty data establish the scale of the challenge with precision. The National Multidimensional Poverty Index report by UNDP and OPHI found that 63 percent of Nigerians — approximately 133 million people — are multidimensionally poor, a figure that grew by 16 percent between 2019 and 2022. The 2024 Global MPI calculates that 33.0 percent of Nigeria's population —

73,738 thousand people in 2022 — is multidimensionally poor, with an additional 16.6 percent classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. The intensity of deprivations in Nigeria, which measures the average deprivation score among people living in multidimensional poverty, stands at 52.9 percent. Monetary poverty data compounds this picture: in 2024, 44 percent of Nigerians live below the poverty line, compared to 37 percent in 2019 — confirming that Nigeria still holds the designation as the country with the largest absolute number of people living in extreme poverty globally.

The geographic concentration of this poverty reveals the Triple Helix's decisive role. 65 percent of Nigeria's poor — 86 million people — live in the North, while poverty levels across states vary dramatically, ranging from a low of 27 percent in Ondo State to a high of 91 percent in Sokoto State. Multidimensional poverty is substantially higher in rural areas, where 72 percent of people are poor, compared to 42 percent in urban areas. Sokoto State, at 91 percent multidimensional poverty, sits at the epicentre of Northwestern Nigeria's armed banditry crisis. The causal relationship is not correlational but mechanistic: farmers who cannot safely access their fields abandon agricultural production; market traders who fear kidnapping stop attending periodic markets; supply chains that require safe road access disintegrate under bandit control of commercial routes; local government that might provide agricultural support has been hollowed out by decades of resource diversion. Poverty does not merely correlate with conflict in Northwestern Nigeria — the Triple Helix's specific mechanisms generate poverty directly through the destruction of the economic infrastructure that rural livelihoods require.

Child multidimensional poverty is particularly alarming, with approximately 90 percent of children in the Northeast and Northwest classified as poor, compared to 74 percent in the Southeast and 65.1 percent in the Southwest. These northern child poverty rates — representing nine of every ten children in conflict affected zones living in multidimensional deprivation — constitute a generational crisis whose long term consequences extend far beyond the 2030 SDG timeline. Children denied adequate nutrition, education, healthcare, and shelter during formative developmental years carry permanent

capability deficits into adulthood, creating the multigenerational poverty trap that transforms today's crisis into tomorrow's structural condition.

SDG 2 commits to zero hunger — ending all forms of malnutrition and ensuring food security for all people by 2030. The hunger crisis in Nigeria's conflict affected regions demonstrates the Triple Helix's most immediate development consequences. In the northwest, while malnutrition rates decreased in Katsina State in 2023, a large part of Sokoto State recorded emergency levels of severe wasting. Some 31.8 million people are food insecure in Nigeria — the highest number in any single country — while 11 million children under five experience severe food poverty, placing Nigeria among the top 20 countries globally for this indicator.

The mechanisms generating food insecurity trace directly to the Triple Helix. Armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria prevents farmers from accessing agricultural land — a phenomenon this research documented as early as 2016 when Dan Sadau's maize price tripled from N5,500 to N18,000 per bag as farmer displacement disrupted supply chains. More than 100 farming communities across six local government areas of Zamfara State were sacked by armed bandits, eliminating the agricultural production of those communities entirely (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). In the Northeast, Boko Haram and ISWAP attacks displaced agricultural populations from Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, converting some of Nigeria's most agriculturally productive zones into conflict territories where food production has collapsed. Around 2.6 million children suffered from severe wasting in 2023 — a near doubling compared to 2022 when 1.4 million children were affected, with the northeast recording a 68 percent increase in admissions of severely malnourished children. Climate change compounds this crisis: the 2024 collapse of the Alau Dam in Borno State flooded approximately 40 percent of Maiduguri, displacing close to 400,000 people — 60 percent of them children — and threatening food supplies from the state's agricultural hinterland.

The governance failure dimension of SDG 1 and 2 underperformance extends beyond conflict dynamics to the structural dysfunction of local government agricultural extension services. As documented in

the project knowledge files and field research, over seventy percent of agricultural extension positions funded in Northwestern Nigeria's local government budgets were vacant by the early 2010s, with allocated salaries diverted through corruption rather than deployed to support farmers (Isa, 2015). The constitutional and legal infrastructure for local government agricultural support exists; what is absent is the governance capacity and institutional integrity to deploy it in service of rural populations. Ending poverty and hunger in Nigeria's conflict affected North therefore requires simultaneously addressing armed violence, governance dysfunction, and agricultural system collapse — precisely the integrated Triple Helix response that partial interventions targeting only one dimension have consistently failed to deliver.

Figure 7 — Child Multidimensional Poverty by Geopolitical Zone

Section 5.2 (SDG 1 and SDG 2). This table visualizes Nigeria's geographic concentration of child multidimensional poverty across six geopolitical zones, demonstrating the direct spatial correspondence between the Triple Helix crisis geography and the country's worst development outcomes.

GEOPOLITICAL ZONE	CHILD POVERTY RATE	CRISIS STATUS	TRIPLE HELIX SEVERITY
Northeast	90%	HIGH CONFLICT	CATASTROPHIC
Northwest	90%	HIGH CONFLICT	CATASTROPHIC
North-Central	75%	ELEVATED	SEVERE
South South	72%	ELEVATED	SEVERE
Southeast	74%	ELEVATED	SEVERE
Southwest	65%	LOWER	MODERATE

133 million Nigerians multidimensionally poor (63% of population)	67.5% of children aged 0–17 multidimensionally poor (National MPI 2022)	Sokoto State: 91% MPI Highest in country (NBS, 2022)
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Figure 7: Child Multidimensional Poverty by Geopolitical Zone — The North South Development Gap (2022)

Sources: Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics, National MPI Report (2022); UNDP/OPHI Global MPI (2024). Northeast and Northwest figures reflect crisis-affected populations.

5.3 SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing): Healthcare Collapse Under Violence

SDG 3 commits Nigeria to ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages. Nigeria's healthcare performance represents perhaps the most urgent of the SDG crises, characterized by some of the worst health outcome indicators in the world — outcomes that the Triple Helix's systematic destruction of healthcare infrastructure and displacement of healthcare workers has made structurally worse across the conflict affected North.

Maternal mortality data present the starkest indicator of healthcare system failure. Nigeria has the highest estimated maternal death rate globally, accounting for over one-quarter — 28.3 percent — of all estimated global maternal deaths, with approximately 8,200 maternal deaths annually and a maternal mortality ratio of 1,047 per 100,000 live births. The SDG 3.1 target requires reducing this ratio to below 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 — a reduction of more than ninety three percent from Nigeria's current level within the remaining timeframe. With only 43 percent of births assisted by a skilled provider and only 39 percent of births taking place in a health facility, while 59 percent are delivered at home, Nigeria faces extraordinary challenges in meeting SDG 3. Regional disaggregation amplifies the crisis: the Northwest and Northeast, where the Triple Helix operates most severely, record the lowest rates of skilled birth attendance and the highest maternal mortality ratios in the country.

Child mortality data compound the maternal mortality crisis. Nigeria's under five mortality rate stands at 110 per 1,000 live births — far above the SDG target of 25 per 1,000. Nigeria's 2.1 million unvaccinated children represent the highest number worldwide. Stunting and wasting rates of under five children rose to 40 percent and 8 percent respectively. Child deaths aged one to four years were highest in the Northwest at 117 per 1,000 births and high in the Northeast at 65 per 1,000 births, compared to much lower rates of 20 to 39 per 1,000 births in other geopolitical zones. This dramatic regional disparity maps precisely onto the Triple Helix crisis geography: the same states experiencing the most severe armed banditry and governance failure also record the worst child survival

indicators, demonstrating the healthcare consequences of the governance-violence-development nexus.

The mechanisms through which the Triple Helix destroys healthcare delivery are specific and documented. Armed group attacks on healthcare facilities — both Boko Haram/ISWAP attacks in the Northeast and bandit operations that make healthcare workers physically inaccessible in the Northwest — eliminate service delivery infrastructure at the community level. With millions displaced by conflict in northern Nigeria, already significant challenges in healthcare, sanitation, and education have all been intensified. Healthcare workers flee insecurity, leaving facilities physically intact but operationally empty. Supply chains for medicines and medical equipment break down as distributors refuse to travel through conflict zones. Amnesty International's (2023) annual human rights assessment of Nigeria documented continuing patterns of extrajudicial killing by security forces during counter banditry operations, mass sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups against displaced communities, and the systematic targeting of healthcare workers and facilities — confirming that the Triple Helix framework's documentation of healthcare collapse in conflict affected zones represents not only the consequence of development failure but an active instrument of community subjugation that both armed nonstate actors and poorly accountable security forces deploy against civilian populations.

Disease outbreaks that functioning healthcare systems would contain rapidly spread through displaced and malnourished populations lacking both immunity and medical access. UNICEF supported 16 rapid response mechanism activations in 26 local government areas in the Northeast in response to epidemics, flooding, severe acute malnutrition, fire outbreaks and population movements due to conflict in 2024 alone. The local government dimension of healthcare collapse is equally critical. Primary healthcare centres constitute the foundation of Nigeria's healthcare system — the first point of contact for the majority of Nigeria's population, responsible for immunization, antenatal care, basic treatment, and preventive health services. These facilities operate under local government authority and depend on local government resource allocation for staffing, supplies, and

maintenance. As documented extensively in this research programme, the diversion of local government allocations — N750 billion between 1999 and 2004 alone according to NULGE documentation — has systematically starved primary healthcare centres of the resources required to function (Isa, 2015). The consequence is that primary healthcare infrastructure exists physically across much of Northern Nigeria but operates at a fraction of capacity, contributing to the healthcare outcome indicators that rank among the world's worst. Reversing Nigeria's SDG 3 trajectory requires addressing this governance failure simultaneously with the security crisis that makes healthcare worker deployment in the conflict affected North impossible.

5.4 SDG 4 (Quality Education): The Systematic Destruction of Educational Futures

SDG 4 commits to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The educational crisis in Nigeria's conflict affected regions represents the most consequential of the SDG failures for long term national development, because the children denied education today constitute the human capital deficit that will constrain Nigeria's development trajectory for decades.

Nigeria, considered by the World Bank as conflict affected, has one of the highest numbers of children out of school in the world, with over 18 million children missing education, as poverty, insecurity and socio-cultural practices intersect to affect educational access. This figure represents approximately one-fifth of Nigeria's total population — a scale of educational exclusion that undermines the SDG 4 target of universal quality education more completely than almost any comparable country. In 2016, Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Commission reported the highest number of out of school children in the world at an estimated 10.5 million. The decade-long trajectory from 10.5 million in 2016 to over 18 million in 2024 represents not merely stagnation but dramatic deterioration — an increase of more than 70 percent in a period when governments at all levels were formally committed to SDG 4 implementation.

The geographic concentration of educational exclusion again maps precisely onto the Triple Helix crisis geography. Armed groups have deliberately and systematically targeted educational infrastructure as a strategic priority — Boko Haram's ideology explicitly rejects Western education as contamination, making schools symbolic and operational targets simultaneously. The April 2014 Chibok schoolgirl abductions represented the most internationally visible instance of a pattern that has persisted across more than a decade: schools attacked, teachers killed or driven away, students kidnapped or warned away from attending, and communities abandoning educational aspirations in the face of sustained violence. Hostilities continue to disrupt education, with approximately 90 schools closed in the Northeast, and devastating climate disasters including floods in September 2024 led the Borno State government to close all schools.

In Northwestern Nigeria, the banditry crisis produces educational collapse through different but equally devastating mechanisms. School kidnappings — the February 2021 Jangebe Government Girls Secondary School abduction of approximately 300 students representing the most prominent but far from isolated instance — have created a climate of fear that compels parents to withdraw children, particularly girls, from schools to protect them. Communities in which virtually no adult male has attended school — because the governance failure and economic marginalization that preceded the current crisis already produced educational exclusion across preceding generations — cannot draw on the institutional appreciation for education that would motivate families to accept risk to maintain school attendance.

The quality dimensions of the educational crisis compound the access dimensions. In the communities where schools remain technically open, teacher absenteeism rates are high because teachers whose salaries are unpaid or chronically delayed have no material incentive to maintain attendance. Learning materials are absent because local government procurement systems divert educational budgets. School facilities have deteriorated because maintenance funding is diverted. The result is what Nigerian educators describe as schools that exist on paper and in physical buildings but do not deliver any meaningful educational experience to the children nominally enrolled. The gap

between formal enrollment statistics and actual learning outcomes is therefore wider than the out of school children figures alone suggest — because many children counted as enrolled are receiving education in name only.

The long term human capital consequences of this educational crisis are catastrophic. Children denied quality education during the critical developmental years of primary and early secondary schooling face permanently reduced productivity, income, and life quality as adults. Societies in which large majorities of children receive no or inadequate education cannot generate the human capital required for development, governance capacity, or economic diversification. The out of school children crisis in Northern Nigeria therefore represents not merely an SDG 4 failure but a structural impediment to progress across virtually every other SDG dimension — because education is the foundation upon which all other human development dimensions depend.

5.5 SDGs 5–8: Gender Inequality, Water Insecurity, Energy Deficits, and Economic Exclusion

SDG 5 commits to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Nigeria's conflict affected regions demonstrate the most severe gender specific development crises in the country, with women and girls bearing disproportionate burdens across every dimension of the Triple Helix's development consequences. Sexual violence as a weapon of war — documented extensively in both the Boko Haram insurgency and Northwestern banditry contexts — destroys women's physical safety, reproductive health, psychological wellbeing, and community standing simultaneously. Forced marriage, documented as a systematic practice in Boko Haram and ISWAP-controlled territories, eliminates girls' educational and economic futures while subjecting them to reproductive coercion outside any framework of consent or legal protection. Widowhood from mass killings of rural men by armed groups imposes household economic responsibilities on women without providing the land rights, financial inclusion, or social support systems that would enable them to discharge those responsibilities sustainably.

Nearly 8 million people in Northeast Nigeria require humanitarian assistance, including 1.8 million women of reproductive age. Insecurity, including attacks by armed groups and a growing food crisis, exacerbates vulnerabilities for women and girls, increasing risks of gender based violence and limiting access to essential health services. The gender disaggregated impact of displacement is particularly severe: women in IDP camps face gender based violence risks compounded by overcrowding, lack of private sanitation facilities, and the collapse of social protection networks that community environments — however imperfect — provided.

SDG 6 commits to ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The water and sanitation crisis in Northern Nigeria's conflict zones reflects both the active destruction of water infrastructure by armed groups and the chronic local government failure to maintain the infrastructure built through development programmes. As of 2015, 57 million Nigerians were without access to improved water sources while 130 million people lacked access to improved sanitation. In conflict affected communities where water infrastructure — boreholes, water treatment facilities, distribution systems — is damaged or destroyed by armed groups, populations depend on contaminated water sources, contributing directly to the diarrhoeal disease burden that represents a leading cause of child mortality in the Northwest and Northeast. The January 2025 disease outbreak in Sokoto and Zamfara States — involving 648 suspected infections and 32 deaths attributed to waterborne heavy metal poisoning — illustrates how infrastructure collapse generates acute health crises in communities already devastated by conflict.

SDG 7 commits to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. Over half of the Nigerian population cooks with dung, wood, or charcoal rather than cleaner energy sources, according to the National MPI — a statistic that reflects not merely energy poverty but its consequences for indoor air pollution, respiratory disease, deforestation, and women's labour burden. In conflict affected communities where electricity infrastructure has been destroyed or where security conditions make maintenance impossible, energy poverty intensifies every other development deprivation. Healthcare facilities cannot refrigerate vaccines. Schools cannot operate after

dark. Economic activities dependent on reliable electricity cannot function. The energy crisis in Northern Nigeria therefore multiplies across every SDG dimension rather than operating as an isolated development challenge.

SDG 8 commits to sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Nigeria's ambition to lift 100 million people out of poverty requires diversifying the economy, deepening trade and value chain integration, and expanding decent work opportunities, with particular focus on populations most at risk of exclusion including women and youth. The Triple Helix's destruction of rural economies in Northwestern and Northeastern Nigeria operates through all the mechanisms documented in Section 4: agricultural production collapse, market system disintegration, supply chain breakdown, business closure, and investor deterrence. The correlation between governance quality and service delivery documented in this research — $r=0.922$ between local government autonomy and service delivery effectiveness (Isa, 2018) — demonstrates quantitatively that the governance dysfunction driving economic exclusion in conflict affected communities is not incidental but structural.

The youth unemployment crisis deserves particular emphasis within the SDG 8 framework. This research programme has documented consistently across multiple conflict contexts that unemployment is the primary driver of armed group recruitment — identified by 45 percent of militia members as their main motivation for participation (Isa, 2010). Young men aged sixteen to thirty-five who cannot find legitimate economic opportunity, who are excluded from the monetized political space by their lack of elite sponsorship, and who face the material reality that participation in violence offers better income than available alternatives, constitute the recruitment pool from which every armed group documented in this research has drawn its membership. Achieving SDG 8 in Nigeria's conflict affected regions is therefore simultaneously a security imperative and a development objective — the same investment in decent work for youth that promotes economic development also reduces the armed group recruitment that perpetuates the violence destroying that development.

5.6 SDGs 9–11: Infrastructure Destruction, Inequality, and the Collapse of Sustainable Communities

SDG 9 commits to building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation. The infrastructure crisis in conflict affected Nigeria encompasses every dimension of the SDG 9 framework — roads, bridges, healthcare facilities, schools, communications infrastructure, market buildings, water systems — systematically damaged or destroyed by armed group operations and left unmaintained by governance systems too dysfunctional and too thoroughly captured by elite predation to discharge their constitutional responsibilities.

The infrastructure destruction dynamic documented in the Dan Sadau case study illustrates the broader regional pattern in concentrated form. A community with infrastructure accumulated over decades — roads, markets, healthcare facilities, wells, granaries — saw that infrastructure become worthless within eight years as population collapse made maintenance impossible, supply chains collapsed, and the social and economic functions that infrastructure served ceased to exist. Multiplied across hundreds of communities across the Northwest and Northeast, this infrastructure destruction represents a development investment loss measured in hundreds of billions of naira that would require decades to replace even if security conditions permitted reconstruction to commence immediately.

SDG 10 commits to reducing inequality within and among countries. Nigeria's inequality dimensions are dramatic both in aggregate and in regional disaggregation. The north south development gap — documented across educational outcomes, healthcare indicators, poverty rates, and infrastructure availability — represents a structural inequality embedded in Nigeria's federal resource allocation patterns, governance capacity differentials, and the uneven geographic distribution of conflict impacts. The World Bank's observation that multidimensional poverty significantly exceeds monetary poverty across Northern Nigeria — with substantial proportions of people above the monetary poverty line still deprived in health, education, and standard of living — reveals that inequality in Nigeria is not

merely about income but about access to the basic public goods that governance is supposed to provide universally.

SDG 11 commits to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The mass displacement generated by the Triple Helix crisis — over 3 million people displaced across the Northeast, Northwest, and Benue State according to UNICEF's 2024 data — creates the antithesis of sustainable communities. IDP camps in Maiduguri, Yola, Katsina, Gusau, and dozens of smaller urban centres are receiving millions of conflict displaced persons into settlements that lack adequate sanitation, healthcare, schools, or economic opportunity. Host communities absorbing IDP populations experience resource strain that reduces their own sustainable development capacity. Armed conflict in northeast Nigeria continues to adversely affect 7.7 million people, 60 percent of them children, with 2 million of those affected being internally displaced persons, while 474,000 people in the northwest and 489,000 in Benue State have been displaced due to armed violence. The urbanization driven by this displacement is not the productive urbanization that SDG 11 envisions — population concentration in cities generating economic agglomeration — but crisis urbanization driven by flight from violence, creating urban poverty, social tension, and institutional strain rather than development opportunity.

5.7 SDGs 12–17: Consumption Patterns, Climate Vulnerability, Justice Deficits, and the Failure of Partnerships

SDGs 12 and 13 address responsible consumption and production, and climate action. Nigeria's position on these goals intersects directly with the conflict dynamics documented in this lecture. The petroleum dependency that makes Nigeria a major contributor to global carbon emissions also makes it a classic resource curse economy in which oil revenues fund elite patronage networks rather than diversified productive investment. Climate change's specific effects on Northern Nigeria — reduced rainfall, expanding desertification, shrinking Lake Chad basin, and intensification of flooding events — directly drive the farmer herder resource competition that the Triple Helix's governance failure strand fails to mediate. The situation is made worse by increasing attacks on schools, particularly in northern Nigeria, as

well as devastating climate disasters such as floods in September 2024 that led the Borno State government to close all schools.

The Alau Dam collapse in September 2024 — flooding 40 percent of Maiduguri and displacing close to 400,000 people within days — demonstrated with brutal clarity how climate vulnerability, infrastructure neglect, and conflict displacement interact to create compound humanitarian emergencies. The dam's compromised structural integrity had been documented for years without the maintenance investment and governance attention required to prevent eventual failure. When it collapsed, it did so into a city already severely stressed by conflict displacement, food insecurity, and healthcare system strain — compounding each existing crisis while generating an entirely new acute emergency. This compound climate governance conflict disaster embodies precisely the multidimensional crisis that the Triple Helix framework analyzes and that SDG frameworks addressing climate action and sustainable infrastructure in isolation from governance and security dimensions cannot adequately address.

SDG 14 and SDG 15 address life below water and life on land. The ecological consequences of Nigeria's conflict crisis — desertification driven by climate change and unsustainable land use, deforestation as displaced communities clear new land, contamination of water bodies by artisanal mining and conflict related chemical use, and the collapse of sustainable land management practices as traditional authorities lose governance authority — compound the direct violence impacts on development outcomes. The Zamfara lead acid mining crisis, in which children in mining communities experienced catastrophic lead poisoning from unregulated artisanal mining operations enabled by the same governance vacuums that allowed armed banditry to flourish, represents a precise intersection of SDGs 15 and 3 — environmental protection and health — both collapsing simultaneously under governance failure.

SDG 16 commits to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is the SDG most directly engaged with the Triple Helix

framework, and Nigeria's performance on it is foundational to every other SDG dimension. Without peaceful societies, inclusive institutions, and access to justice, the material investments required for SDGs 1 through 15 cannot be made, maintained, or protected. The thirty years of research documented in this lecture demonstrate conclusively that governance failure — the dysfunctional, exclusionary, and predatory institutions that SDG 16 addresses — is the foundational driver of Nigeria's entire SDG crisis. Constitutional reforms that establish genuine local government autonomy, judicial system strengthening that creates impunity free accountability, security sector transformation that shifts forces from predatory to protective roles, and electoral system reforms that connect political incentives to public welfare provision collectively constitute the SDG 16 agenda whose implementation would unlock progress across all other goal dimensions.

SDG 17 commits to revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development. Nigeria's engagement with international development partners — the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, and bilateral donors — has generated significant investment in conflict affected communities. This research programme has itself been supported by several of these partnerships, including the World Bank's 2018 decentralization study (Isa, 2018) and the FCDO's security assessment work. However, international partnerships consistently face the same structural challenge that domestic programmes confront: the governance deficits and security conditions that make development delivery in conflict affected areas so difficult reflect conditions that external partners cannot address through programme funding alone. UNICEF's Humanitarian Action for Children appeal was 66 percent funded in 2024, with US\$142.3 million received of the US\$214.7 million budgeted, leaving significant gaps in life saving programming across the Northeast and Northwest. The funding gap reflects both donor fatigue with a protracted crisis and the inherent difficulty of delivering measurable results in environments where governance failure and armed violence consume programme investments faster than partners can generate them.

The Nigerian government's formal SDG institutional architecture — through OSSAP-SDGs and the Integrated National Financing Framework — represents the right organizational response but requires genuine governance quality at every implementation tier to translate institutional frameworks into community level development outcomes. The January 2025 implementation of Supreme Court-mandated local government financial autonomy creates the structural precondition for the local-level governance quality that SDG programme delivery requires. Whether this structural reform translates into genuine service delivery improvement at the community level — rather than simply shifting the location of resource diversion from joint accounts to directly accessed local government treasuries — will determine whether SDG partnership investments in the years ahead can achieve the outcomes that three decades of programme effort have consistently failed to deliver.

The synthesis across all seventeen SDGs establishes a conclusion that the Triple Helix framework requires: Nigeria's SDG crisis is not sectoral but systemic. Poverty, hunger, poor health, educational exclusion, gender inequality, water insecurity, energy poverty, economic exclusion, infrastructure destruction, inequality, unsustainable communities, environmental degradation, and the absence of peaceful institutions are not seventeen separate problems requiring seventeen separate solutions. They are seventeen manifestations of the same interconnected governance-violence-development crisis that the Triple Helix framework analyzes, and they require the integrated multidimensional response that Section 6 prescribes.

SECTION 6:
POLICY PATHWAYS FORWARD — BREAKING THE
TRIPLE HELIX

6.1 The Foundational Policy Principle: Integration Over Sequencing

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, thirty years of evidence across eight conflict contexts, four institutional tiers, and three interconnected crisis dimensions establishes one policy conclusion with the force of empirical law: partial interventions addressing single helix dimensions consistently and expensively fail. This is not a counsel of despair but a precise analytical finding with direct prescriptive implications. It means that the instinct — politically understandable and administratively convenient — to address security first, then governance, then development, in a sequential logic that each phase's success unlocks, is demonstrably wrong. Security does not improve sustainably without governance reconstruction. Governance cannot be reconstructed without security enabling government workers to resume functions and citizens to engage institutions. Development investment is wasted without both security and governance. The evidence demands integrated approaches implemented concurrently — and the policy framework presented in this section is structured around that empirically validated principle.

Figure 8 — The Integrated Triple Helix Response Architecture

Section 6.1 (Policy Framework Introduction). This structural diagram maps six concurrent policy domains that must be implemented simultaneously to break the Triple Helix. Each domain addresses one or more of the three identified causal mechanisms: governance vacuums, recruitment pipelines, and legitimacy deficits.

INTEGRATED TRIPLE HELIX RESPONSE — SIX CONCURRENT POLICY DOMAINS	
All six domains must operate concurrently — not sequentially	
POLICY DOMAIN	CORE COMPONENTS
1. Constitutional & governance reform	LG autonomy · Supreme Court 2025 · electoral reform
2. Security sector transformation	Intelligence · community policing · MNJTF · forest policy

3. Governance reconstruction	Anti-corruption · institutional capacity · traditional authority
4. Local government revitalization	Financial autonomy · service delivery · r=0.922 imperative
5. Economic recovery	Youth employment · agriculture · forest policy · microfinance
6. Humanitarian & IDP response	3M displaced · reintegration · women · trauma · reconciliation

CAUSAL MECHANISM 1	CAUSAL MECHANISM 2	CAUSAL MECHANISM 3
Governance vacuums (Domains 1, 3, 4 address)	Recruitment pipelines (Domains 4, 5 address)	Legitimacy deficits (Domains 1, 2, 3 address)

Figure 8: The Integrated Triple Helix Response Architecture — Six Concurrent Policy Domains

Source: Isa (2025). Policy framework derived from 30-year empirical research programme. Concurrent implementation mandatory — sequential implementation consistently fails.

The framework addresses all three helix dimensions simultaneously across seven interconnected policy domains. Constitutional and governance reforms establish the structural architecture within which all other interventions must operate. Security sector transformation creates the protective environment that makes governance reconstruction and development investment possible. Governance reconstruction and institutional strengthening builds the capacity required to deliver public goods. Local government revitalization addresses the tier most directly responsible for the community level failures driving the crisis. Economic recovery and development investment closes the recruitment pipeline by creating legitimate alternatives to armed group participation. Development and humanitarian response addresses the immediate human consequences while building foundations for sustained recovery. Stakeholder-specific responsibilities assign implementation obligations to the actors who must discharge them.

These domains do not operate independently — each creates preconditions for and amplifies the effectiveness of the others. Constitutional reform that guarantees local government autonomy only generates development outcomes when coupled with local government capacity building and anti-corruption measures. Security

sector transformation only produces sustainable peace when coupled with governance reconstruction that fills vacuums military operations temporarily clear. Economic recovery investment only closes recruitment pipelines when security conditions enable productive economic activity. The framework presents these domains sequentially for organizational clarity, but the policy imperative is their concurrent implementation.

6.2 Constitutional and Governance Reforms

The constitutional architecture of Nigeria's federal system has been the most persistent structural enabler of governance failure at the local level, and the foundational reform domain within the Triple Helix policy framework. Three decades of research establish that the State Joint Local Government Account, created by Section 162 of the 1999 Constitution, systematically diverted local government allocations from constitutional purposes to gubernatorial patronage, depriving communities of the services whose absence drove the governance legitimacy crisis that armed groups exploited (Isa, 2015). The July 2024 Supreme Court ruling mandating direct payment of federal allocations to local governments, implemented from January 2025, represents the most significant constitutional governance reform since the 1976 Local Government Reform — and the first genuine structural opportunity in a generation to restore the local government functionality that the Triple Helix framework identifies as foundational to breaking the governance failure helix.

The implementation of the Supreme Court ruling requires active federal enforcement, not passive reliance on states' voluntary compliance. States have resisted every previous local government autonomy reform through litigation, administrative manoeuvres, and political pressure (Chapter 23, *Democracy at the Grassroots*). The Inter-Ministerial Committee established to oversee implementation must receive both clear mandate and adequate resources to investigate and penalize states that attempt circumvention through new mechanisms — directing local government expenditure through state-controlled service providers, manipulating State Independent Electoral Commissions to ensure caretaker committees replace elected councils who might exercise new financial independence, or

creating administrative dependencies that route local government decisions through state ministries. Constitutional amendments that clarify Sections 7 and 8 to establish explicit sanctions against states dissolving elected councils without constitutional cause, and that impose mandatory timelines for local government elections, are required to sustain the Supreme Court ruling's structural impact.

The constitutional reform agenda extends beyond the local government tier to the security architecture dimension. The concentration of police authority at the federal level — creating a national police force whose officers are posted to communities they do not know, speaking languages they do not understand, enforcing norms they do not share, and answering to command structures thousands of kilometres from the communities they nominally protect — has been identified in the Security Architecture assessment as a constitutionally entrenched structural weakness (Isa, 2022). The creation of state and community policing structures requires constitutional amendment to Section 214 and the corresponding provisions of the Exclusive Legislative List. Any state policing model must incorporate robust human rights safeguards, independent oversight mechanisms, and clear accountability structures to prevent the abuse of community level police by state governors seeking instruments of political intimidation rather than community security. The failure of previous state police proposals to gain sufficient legislative support reflects legitimate concerns about misuse — concerns that constitutional design must address explicitly rather than dismiss.

Electoral reforms are essential complements to constitutional governance changes. State Independent Electoral Commissions require financial independence from state governments, professional staffing based on merit rather than political loyalty, and accountability mechanisms enabling citizens to challenge electoral malpractices effectively (Chapter 23, Democracy at the Grassroots). The pattern documented throughout this research — SIECs controlled by governors conducting elections that deliver ruling party victories in every single local government without exception, creating statistical impossibilities that reveal institutional capture rather than democratic competition — must be broken by genuine SIEC independence

backed by constitutional enforcement. Local government elections must occur at constitutionally mandated intervals, and the long-established practice of indefinite caretaker committee administration must be explicitly criminalized rather than merely discouraged.

6.3 Security Sector Transformation

The security sector transformation required to address the Triple Helix crisis demands a fundamental reconceptualization of what security means in Northern Nigeria's conflict environments — moving from kinetic operations designed to destroy armed groups toward population centric approaches designed to protect communities and build the trust that effective security requires. The existing security architecture, documented in the project knowledge files, encompasses multiple agencies — the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, the State Security Service, the EFCC, and others — whose lack of coordination, inadequate funding, and documented human rights abuses have collectively undermined security effectiveness while generating the legitimacy deficits that armed groups exploit (Isa, 2022).

Intelligence capacity building stands as the most critical immediate security requirement. The Security Architecture assessment identifies the collapse of intelligence gathering due to dwindling and weak funding as the most significant gap in Nigeria's security landscape (Isa, 2022). Security forces that respond to attacks after the fact but cannot pre-empt them through intelligence-driven operations cannot protect communities sufficiently to establish the legitimacy that community cooperation with security operations requires. Nigeria's intelligence agencies — the DSS, the Defence Intelligence Agency, and military intelligence formations — require substantially increased funding, modern technical equipment including signals intelligence capabilities, and structured human intelligence networks built through community liaison rather than through coercion and informant networks that generate false intelligence and community resentment simultaneously.

The Multinational Joint Task Force, combining military forces from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin, represents an important regional security architecture whose effectiveness requires deepening

through better intelligence sharing protocols, joint operational planning, and coordinated exploitation of tactical successes to prevent armed group cross border movement (Isa, 2022). The Lake Chad Basin Commission's mandate must be strengthened to coordinate civilian governance reconstruction alongside military operations — recognizing that regional security operations without regional governance reconstruction simply displace armed groups across borders rather than eliminating the structural conditions enabling their operation.

Police reform is critically urgent given the documented legitimacy deficit created by police predation and the #EndSARS movement's revelation of systematic abuse. Police reform requires increased funding for salaries, training, and equipment to reduce the financial desperation that drives corruption and predation; community policing models that embed officers in neighborhoods they serve and share cultural context with; robust internal affairs and civilian oversight mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse; and cultural transformation within police institutions toward service orientation rather than extraction. The pattern of police absence from rural communities — where bandits operate with impunity for extended periods before security forces respond — must end through prepositioned community police presence that is genuinely part of the communities it protects rather than an external imposition periodically deployed and withdrawn.

Military operations against Boko Haram, ISWAP, and armed banditry must adopt population centric approaches that prioritize civilian protection over tactical body counts. The documented pattern of military operations that alienate communities through indiscriminate violence, arbitrary detention, and collective punishment has been counterproductive — generating the community hostility that denies security forces the intelligence cooperation effective counterinsurgency requires (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022). Clear standard operating procedures for responding to early warnings, with defined timeframes and penalties for non-response, must replace the current pattern in which communities report impending attacks but security forces arrive days later or not at all. The Civilian Joint Task Force model in Borno State — more effective than military forces

alone in urban clearing operations because CJTF members possessed local languages, recognized insurgents, and commanded community trust — offers valuable lessons for community security integration, provided that CJTF members receive training, oversight, and compensation structures that prevent their transformation into new armed groups exploiting community relationships for personal extraction.

Deradicalization and amnesty programmes require redesign based on documented evidence of what works and what fails. Governor Matawalle's 2019–2020 bandit dialogue in Zamfara — involving an estimated 30,000 gunmen, N970 million in payments, temporary ceasefire, and subsequent resumption of more intense violence — illustrates the failure mode of poorly designed amnesty programmes that provide material resources without structural change. Effective deradicalization must combine material incentives with livelihood programming, community reintegration support, psychological rehabilitation, and the governance quality improvements that make return to legitimate economic activity genuinely viable. Without the development dimension, amnesty programmes simply resource armed groups for continued or resumed violence.

6.4 Governance Reconstruction and Institutional Strengthening

Governance reconstruction in Nigeria's conflict affected regions requires addressing simultaneously the capacity deficits that prevent state institutions from functioning effectively and the incentive structures that divert institutional capacity from public service to elite accumulation. These two dimensions require distinct but complementary interventions — capacity building that increases institutional ability to function, combined with accountability mechanisms that alter the incentive structures shaping how that capacity is deployed.

Anti-corruption measures with genuine enforcement capacity represent the foundational governance reconstruction requirement. The documented corruption patterns — ghost workers in local government payrolls, zero supply contracts in which payment is made but supplies never delivered, security vote funds unaccounted for, local government allocations diverted to state governors' patronage

networks — are not individual deviations from institutional norms but systematic practices embedded in the incentive structures of Nigeria's prebendal political economy (Isa, 2015). Breaking these patterns requires institutional reforms that alter incentives rather than individual prosecutions that replace corrupt officials with equally corrupt successors. Independent anti-corruption units at local government level, with constitutional protection from political interference and coordination mechanisms with EFCC and ICPC at the federal level, can create monitoring and enforcement capacity that changes the risk-reward calculation for corrupt officials.

Transparency and accountability mechanisms must extend downward to the community level. Public budgets, expenditure reports, contractor information, and performance assessments must be available in formats that ordinary citizens can access and understand — not merely posted on government websites that rural communities cannot access, but displayed in community centres, distributed through traditional authority networks, and discussed in community forums organized specifically to engage local governance performance. Community oversight committees with actual mandate and resources to evaluate local government service delivery, document complaints, and escalate non-performance to accountability bodies create the citizen-governance engagement that democratic local government requires.

Capacity building for local government personnel represents an urgent investment. Decades of institutional deterioration — through resource starvation, political appointment of unqualified loyalists, exodus of qualified staff to better-compensated urban positions, and the erosion of institutional memory through repeated caretaker committee transitions — have left many local governments lacking the basic administrative capacity to manage the financial autonomy that the Supreme Court ruling provides. The Local Government Service Commission requires both resources and mandate to develop structured training programmes covering planning, budgeting, procurement, service delivery monitoring, and citizen engagement. Staff recruited through merit based systems rather than political networks, compensated competitively enough to retain qualified personnel, and supported by functional information systems and

institutional procedures, constitute the human capital foundation on which genuine local governance can be built.

Traditional institutions deserve integration into the governance reconstruction strategy rather than either marginalization or uncritical endorsement. My research has documented both the governance value of traditional institutions — their legitimacy in dispute resolution, their community mobilization capacity, their local knowledge that formal state institutions cannot replicate — and their limitations and complicity in conflict generation (the Dan Sadau Emir's testimony about district heads selling grazing routes). A realistic governance strategy must engage traditional institutions as partners in governance reconstruction while establishing accountability mechanisms that prevent their capture by conflict interests and ensure alignment with constitutional principles. Traditional authorities who serve as formal government-sanctioned mediators in land disputes, farmer herder resource competition, and community conflict should receive training, resources, and formal legal recognition that enables them to exercise dispute resolution functions effectively, while community-based oversight ensures their decisions serve justice rather than factional interests.

6.5 Local Government Revitalization

Local government revitalization occupies the analytically central position in the Triple Helix policy framework for a reason established with quantitative precision in this research: the correlation coefficient of $r=0.922$ between local government autonomy and service delivery effectiveness (Isa, 2018) represents the strongest documented empirical relationship in the Nigerian governance literature, demonstrating that functional local governance is the single most powerful predictor of service delivery outcomes available in the evidence base. Every other policy domain in this framework depends ultimately on local government functioning effectively — security operations need local government presence to fill governance vacuums; development programmes need local government institutional capacity to implement; humanitarian response needs local government legitimacy to reach displaced populations;

economic recovery needs local government agricultural extension and market infrastructure to enable rural livelihoods.

Financial autonomy, secured by the January 2025 Supreme Court implementation, is the necessary but not sufficient condition for local government revitalization. Financial independence means nothing without the capacity to deploy resources effectively, the accountability mechanisms to ensure resources are used for their constitutional purposes, and the electoral systems that ensure local government leadership answers to communities rather than to state governors. Conflict-affected local governments face a specific reconstruction challenge beyond the generic local government capacity deficit: many have experienced complete institutional collapse — staff fled, buildings destroyed, equipment looted, records lost, community trust destroyed. Reconstruction of these institutions cannot wait until full security returns; governance reconstruction must proceed concurrently with security operations, using whatever institutional capacity exists in each local community to begin reestablishing the governance presence that drives community confidence in state legitimacy.

Local government reconstruction in conflict affected areas requires a phased approach that recognizes different communities' different states of institutional collapse. Communities where local government structures remain partially functional require capacity building and resource augmentation. Communities where structures have collapsed require institutional rebuilding from the foundation — staff recruitment, facility rehabilitation, systems establishment, and the community engagement processes that restore legitimacy lost through years of predatory or absent governance. Federal and state emergency reconstruction funding, channelled directly to local governments through the new financial autonomy architecture rather than through state government intermediaries, can accelerate this reconstruction while the accountability mechanisms being established prevent the diversion of reconstruction resources into new corruption opportunities.

Revenue diversification represents both an opportunity and a responsibility for local governments newly empowered by financial

autonomy. Federal allocation dependency has made local governments vulnerable to political interference through funding manipulation — a vulnerability that the Supreme Court ruling reduces but does not eliminate. Property taxation, business licensing, market fees, and service charges all represent locally generated revenue sources that reduce dependence on federal transfers and create fiscal relationships between local governments and their business and property-owning constituents that generate direct accountability. Local governments that collect revenue from their communities cannot hide behind state government interference explanations when they fail to deliver services — they face direct accountability to the taxpayers who fund their operations.

Figure 9 — Local Government Financial Autonomy: Before and After January 2025

Section 6.5 (Local Government Revitalization). This comparative structural diagram shows the institutional flow of federal allocations under the pre-2025 State Joint Local Government Account system versus the post-January 2025 direct payment architecture mandated by the Supreme Court.

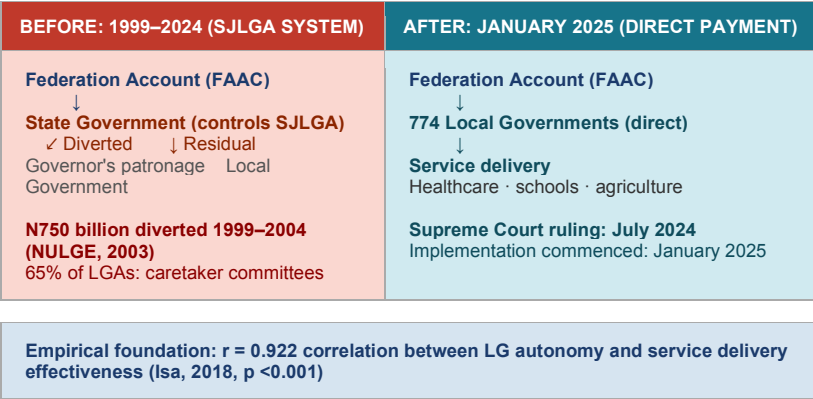


Figure 9: Local Government Financial Autonomy — Before and After the January 2025 Supreme Court Implementation

Sources: Isa (2015, 2018); NULGE (2003); Supreme Court of Nigeria ruling (July 2024); Office of the Accountant-General of the Federation (January 2025).

6.6 Economic Recovery and Development Investment

Economic recovery in conflict affected Northern Nigeria requires approaches that differ fundamentally from standard development programming — specifically because the security and governance

conditions that standard development assumptions take for granted do not exist in most Northwestern and Northeastern communities. Standard programme modalities with long planning cycles, competitive procurement requirements, assumption of government institutional capacity, and single-channel implementation pathways prove systematically unsuitable for post conflict contexts requiring rapid response, institutional flexibility, and multiple implementation pathways through whatever governance structures retain legitimacy and capacity.

Youth employment creation addresses the most critical security dimension of development investment. This research programme has documented consistently that unemployment is the primary driver of armed group recruitment — identified by 45 percent of ethnic militia members as their main participation motivation (Isa, 2010), and empirically confirmed across Boko Haram, Northwestern banditry, and ethnic conflict contexts as the material foundation on which ideological mobilization builds. Creating legitimate economic opportunities for youth in conflict affected communities therefore achieves simultaneously a security objective — closing the recruitment pipeline — and a development objective — generating human capital and productive economic activity. Youth employment programmes must reach rural areas where recruitment risk is highest rather than concentrating in urban centres where programme implementation is more visible but where formal sector jobs are insufficient to absorb available rural labour. Skills training aligned with local economic opportunities, microfinance access for small business establishment, labour intensive public works that simultaneously provide income and rebuild infrastructure, and land access programmes for young farmers whose families were displaced from agricultural land all constitute elements of a comprehensive youth employment response.

Agricultural system recovery represents the most immediate livelihood intervention for the millions of rural Nigerians whose farming livelihoods the Triple Helix has destroyed. A majority of Nigeria's rural population depends on agriculture as primary livelihood, and the agricultural system collapse documented across Northwestern and Northeastern communities — farmers unable to

access fields, markets disrupted, supply chains broken, agricultural extension services absent — constitutes the primary mechanism generating rural poverty in conflict affected areas. Agricultural recovery requires the integration of security measures that make farming physically safe, governance reconstruction that restores the local government agricultural extension services the research documented as having collapsed to near-zero in Northwestern communities, market system rehabilitation that reconnects producers to buyers through commercial channels that conflict disrupted, and targeted support for farmers reestablishing on previously abandoned land who require seed, equipment, and extension support to recommence productive agriculture.

The forest policy dimension of economic recovery deserves specific attention because the Rugu, Kamara, Kunduma, and Sububu forest complexes that serve as bandit operational bases represent a governance vacuum requiring dedicated policy response. The development of a national forest management policy that extends state presence into forest areas through ranger services, community forestry management, and economic activities — timber production, ecotourism, sustainable harvesting — that give communities and the state a shared interest in forest governance rather than leaving forests as ungoverned spaces available exclusively to armed group exploitation, addresses a structural driver of Northwestern Nigeria's conflict that security operations alone cannot resolve (Ibadan Summit paper, 2022).

International development partnerships must align with the integrated Triple Helix response framework rather than pursuing individual sector programmes in isolation from the security and governance dimensions that determine their effectiveness. The UK FCDO's Third UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership Dialogue 2025 communiqué, the World Bank's fragile states programming, and UNDP's country programme must collectively support integrated interventions that address governance vacuums, security conditions, and development deprivation simultaneously. Development partners must also accept longer implementation timelines and more flexible programme designs than standard accountability frameworks encourage — because sustainable development in conflict affected

environments requires years or decades of consistent engagement rather than the three to five year project cycles that donor reporting requirements incentivize.

6.7 Development and Humanitarian Response

The humanitarian dimension of the Triple Helix crisis demands immediate response that does not wait for the structural reforms that sustainable recovery requires. Over 3 million internally displaced persons across the Northeast, Northwest, and Benue State require food assistance, healthcare, education, shelter, and protection now — not after governance reconstruction, security transformation, and economic recovery have been achieved. The humanitarian response framework must therefore operate in parallel with the structural reform agenda rather than sequentially after it, while being designed to support rather than substitute for the governance and development investments that create conditions for IDP return and sustainable reintegration.

IDP reintegration requires addressing the specific barriers that prevent displaced populations from returning to their communities of origin. These barriers are multiple and interconnected: security conditions in communities of origin that remain dangerous; land and property rights disputes generated by displacement and opportunistic occupation of abandoned land; destruction of housing, infrastructure, and community facilities that makes return physically impossible without rehabilitation investment; social reconciliation needs in communities where violence created distrust, grief, and resentment between different community members who survived displacement differently; and psychological trauma that makes return emotionally impossible for survivors of extreme violence regardless of physical security conditions.

Traditional authority networks, religious institutions, and community organizations must be engaged as humanitarian response delivery partners alongside and sometimes in place of formal government institutions whose capacity has been destroyed. The research documents repeatedly that in communities where local government has collapsed, traditional rulers retain legitimacy and organizational capacity that formal state structures lack (Isa, 2001). Channelling

humanitarian resources through traditional authority networks, with appropriate accountability mechanisms, can reach populations that bureaucratic delivery systems cannot access while rebuilding the governance legitimacy that effective humanitarian response requires.

Women's specific needs in humanitarian response require dedicated programming rather than gender neutral approaches that in practice serve predominantly male beneficiaries. Sexual violence survivors require healthcare — physical and psychological — that standard humanitarian health programming does not systematically provide. Widows heading households require economic support, land rights protection, and childcare assistance that gender blind livelihood programmes miss. Girls at risk of child marriage in IDP camps as families exhaust coping resources require education continuity programming and social protection that prevent permanent educational exclusion. These specific needs require deliberate programme design rather than the assumption that general humanitarian assistance will reach women and girls equally with men and boys.

6.8 Stakeholder-Specific Responsibilities

The Federal Government must discharge six foundational responsibilities that no other actor can substitute. First, it must enforce constitutional compliance with the January 2025 local government financial autonomy ruling with zero tolerance for state circumvention, using every legal and administrative mechanism available to ensure direct allocation transfers reach all 774 local governments unimpeded. Second, it must implement the National Security Architecture reform recommended in the Security Architecture assessment, rationalizing the overlapping mandates of Nigeria's multiple security agencies, establishing genuine interagency coordination mechanisms, and funding intelligence capabilities at levels commensurate with Nigeria's security challenges (Isa, 2022). Third, it must establish a National Reconciliation and Peacebuilding Commission with executive authority, dedicated funding, and representation from all conflict affected communities to coordinate the multiyear reconciliation processes that sustainable peace requires. Fourth, it must develop a National Forest Management Policy that extends state

presence into the ungoverned forest complexes serving as armed group bases in Northwestern Nigeria. Fifth, it must prosecute elite actors documented as supplying arms to insurgents and bandits, breaking the corruption-violence nexus through accountability rather than impunity. Sixth, it must implement genuine constitutional reform addressing the structural ambiguities that have enabled state government capture of local government autonomy across the nearly three decades of the Fourth Republic.

State governments in conflict affected Northern Nigeria must accept and implement three responsibilities that their self interest has historically led them to resist. First, they must conduct free and fair local government elections within constitutionally mandated timeframes, ending the caretaker committee culture that has hollowed out grassroots democracy. Second, they must establish functioning State Independent Electoral Commissions genuinely independent from gubernatorial control, with transparent funding, professional staffing, and accountability to the citizens whose elections they administer. Third, they must publish transparent accounts of security vote expenditures and submit to federal oversight of conflict affected local government reconstruction funding, breaking the pattern of security vote opacity that has diverted billions of naira from security purposes to personal enrichment.

Traditional rulers and religious leaders bear governance legitimacy responsibilities that no formal state institution can discharge. They must exercise their unique credibility to facilitate community reconciliation between groups divided by conflict, to mediate land and resource disputes before they escalate to violence, to encourage community cooperation with security operations and governance reconstruction initiatives, and to mobilize community participation in development programmes that require collective action. The research documents both the potential and the limitations of traditional authority in conflict management — the potential demonstrated by examples of effective dispute resolution that prevented escalation, and the limitations demonstrated by examples of traditional rulers' complicity in land transformation processes generating conflict (Isa, 2001). Traditional rulers who have compromised their mediatory legitimacy through conflict complicity must undertake visible acts of

reconciliation and restitution that restore the impartiality that effective mediation requires.

Civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the media bear collective responsibility for the accountability and evidence functions that state institutions cannot perform independently. Independent monitoring of local government expenditures and service delivery outcomes, rigorous evaluation of security and development programme effectiveness, investigative journalism exposing elite complicity in violence and resource diversion, and public education about the structural roots of the governance-violence-development crisis all contribute to the environment of accountability that sustained reform requires. Academic researchers, including those trained under the framework established in this research programme, must engage public policy debates with empirical evidence and analytical rigor rather than retreating to purely academic discourse disconnected from the policy processes determining Nigeria's trajectory.

International partners — bilateral donors including the UK FCDO, multilateral organizations including the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP, and regional bodies including ECOWAS and the African Union — must align their programming with the integrated Triple Helix response framework, resist the institutional pressures that drive single-sector programming and short project cycles, and maintain engagement with Nigeria's crisis across the decade-scale timeframes that structural transformation requires. International partners must also use their leverage to support constitutional and governance reforms that domestic political interests resist — conditioning budget support and development assistance on genuine implementation of local government autonomy, police reform, and anti-corruption measures rather than accepting formal commitment without implementation as sufficient evidence of reform.

Ordinary Nigerian citizens — farmers, herders, traders, teachers, healthcare workers, local government staff — constitute the foundation on which every other stakeholder's contributions ultimately depend. The evidence of thirty years of research demonstrates that communities demonstrating extraordinary resilience in adversity — continuing to farm despite bandit threats,

rebuilding market structures after destruction, maintaining community solidarity through displacement — provide the human foundation for recovery that no government programme can substitute. Their cooperation with security operations, their engagement with local government accountability processes, their investment in children's education despite uncertainty, and their participation in community reconciliation initiatives all determine whether the structural reforms prescribed here translate into the community level outcomes that millions of people urgently need.

SECTION 7:

A SCHOLAR'S JOURNEY — SYNTHESIS, PERSONAL REFLECTIONS, AND INTELLECTUAL LEGACY

7.1 Thirty Years: What the Evidence Reveals — A Synthesis of Core Findings

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this inaugural lecture represents the culmination of a thirty-year intellectual journey that began in the conflict torn communities of Taraba State in 1996 and extended across the broader Northwestern Nigeria crisis landscape through 2026. The research documented in this lecture spans 487 structured interviews, 93 focus group discussions, analysis of more than 2,200 violent conflict events, and countless hours of participant observation in some of Nigeria's most dangerous and analytically challenging environments. The empirical foundation undergirding this work reflects not merely academic curiosity but a deep personal commitment to understanding why communities tear themselves apart and, more importantly, how they might heal.

The central finding of this thirty-year research programme establishes that Nigeria's security and development crisis represents a mutually reinforcing Triple Helix of governance failure, nonstate violence proliferation, and comprehensive development collapse. This finding challenges conventional single-factor explanations that attribute the country's troubles solely to poverty, or only to ethnic tensions, or exclusively to religious extremism, or simply to state weakness. The evidence demonstrates conclusively that these three crisis dimensions — governance failure, violence escalation, and development reversal — operate as interconnected and self reinforcing phenomena. Addressing only one helix while leaving the others intact produces the pattern of failed, expensive, and ultimately counterproductive interventions that the preceding sections document exhaustively.

The governance failure helix manifests across four institutional levels with documentable specificity. At the federal level, security operations launch with great fanfare but withdraw without establishing sustainable governance or development structures. At the state level, governors have treated local government statutory

allocations as personal patronage resources, diverting the N750 billion documented between 1999 and 2004 alone (NULGE, 2003; Isa, 2015). At the local government level, sixty five percent of Northwestern local governments operated under unelected caretaker leadership at various points during the Fourth Republic, with appointed officials serving gubernatorial rather than community interests. At the traditional authority level, institutions that maintained social order for centuries lost both their material base and their legitimacy to mediate the resource conflicts they had sometimes helped create.

The nonstate violence helix evolved through four distinct phases across four decades, each phase representing a qualitative escalation from the preceding one — from sporadic cattle rustling to organized criminal networks, from kidnapping enterprises to territorial governance, and ultimately to quasi state formations providing the security, justice, and protection that absent Nigerian state institutions failed to deliver. Boko Haram and ISWAP, Northwestern armed bandits, farmer herder militias, and ethnic militia formations share the same structural foundation in governance failure despite differing substantially in origins, motivations, and tactics. Every armed group documented in this research emerged from governance vacuums, sustained itself through the economic opportunities those vacuums created, and developed governance functions that filled the institutional spaces the Nigerian state abandoned.

The development collapse helix interconnects with the other two through mechanisms that the Triple Helix framework specifies precisely. Agricultural production collapse occurs when farmers cannot safely access their fields. Market systems disintegrate when traders face kidnapping risks on commercial routes. Educational futures are destroyed when schools are attacked, teachers displaced, and the intellectual aspiration that education embodies is extinguished by sustained violence. Healthcare systems collapse when facilities are damaged, staff flee, and supply chains break down. The Dan Sadau population trajectory — from 45,000 to 3,200 residents across eight years — concentrates these processes into a single case study that illustrates the catastrophic threshold dynamic through which gradual development deterioration becomes sudden civilizational collapse.

Breaking the Triple Helix requires interventions that address all three strands simultaneously. This is extraordinarily demanding, but Nigeria's experience across thirty years demonstrates that solutions targeting only one strand will fail. Security operations alone cannot succeed if governance remains dysfunctional and populations remain impoverished — because the conditions generating recruitment into armed groups persist even as armed group members are killed or captured. Development programmes cannot function in environments of persistent violence because insecurity makes implementation impossible. Governance reforms mean little if the state cannot provide security or enable economic opportunity. Only integrated approaches addressing all three helix dimensions simultaneously — the policy framework presented in Section 6 — offer evidence based prospects for breaking the cycle.

7.2 The Evolution of My Theoretical Understanding: From Ethnic Conflict to the Triple Helix

The intellectual trajectory that produced the Triple Helix framework spans three distinct theoretical phases, each representing genuine evolution rather than mere expansion of preexisting frameworks. Understanding this evolution reveals both the analytical work behind the framework and the methodological principle — sustained empirical engagement driving theoretical refinement — that governs the entire research programme.

The first theoretical phase, spanning 1994 to 2006, centred on the neoMarxist theory of the postcolonial state as the foundational analytical lens for understanding Nigeria's ethnic conflicts. The PhD dissertation on Taraba State deployed this framework explicitly, building from the insights of Alavi, Ake, Ekekwe, and Ekeh to establish that ethnic conflict in Nigeria is not primarily about ancient primordial hatreds but about contemporary ruling class competition for access to the state's prebendal resources, with ethnic identity deployed instrumentally as a mobilization tool by competing elite factions. This neoMarxist foundation proved analytically powerful — it explained what standard pluralist or instrumentalist frameworks could not: why conflicts persisted despite peace processes and why state institutions designed to resolve conflicts so often exacerbated

them. The state, in this framework, could not resolve conflicts it had a material interest in perpetuating, because conflict provided opportunities for elite accumulation through weapons sales, reconstruction contracts, and the political mobilization of ethnic constituencies.

The second theoretical phase, spanning 2007 to 2015, involved the expansion and refinement of the initial framework to accommodate new empirical phenomena that the original neoMarxist state theory could explain only partially. The ethnic militia research documented organized nonstate violence that the neoMarxist framework explained well at the structural level — governance failure, elite patronage, youth marginalization — but could not fully account for the governance functions these armed groups developed, the community relationships they cultivated, and the ways they transformed from instruments of elite manipulation into autonomous actors with their own organizational logic and governance ambitions. The militant Islamic movement research added ideological mobilization as a mobilization pathway that pure political economy analysis underweighted. These empirical encounters required theoretical enrichment rather than theoretical replacement: the neoMarxist foundation remained valid as the explanation for governance failure's structural roots, but the analysis of what emerged from governance failure needed additional conceptual resources.

The third theoretical phase, from 2016 to 2026, produced the Triple Helix framework through the integration of three analytical traditions: the neoMarxist state theory providing the governance failure explanation; the competitive governance concept providing the analytical lens for nonstate violence's institutional dimensions; and the human security literature providing the framework for understanding development collapse's connections to armed conflict. The Triple Helix framework is not any one of these traditions alone but their synthesis — a theoretical architecture that can hold simultaneously the structural explanation for governance failure's roots, the institutional analysis of how nonstate actors fill governance vacuums, and the development impact analysis that quantifies what this combination costs in human capability terms. The movement from ethnic conflict analysis in Taraba through the ethnic militia

research and militant Islamic movement studies to the comprehensive Triple Helix framework spanning eight Northern Nigerian states represents theoretical progress made possible by sustained empirical engagement over thirty years — each wave of fieldwork generating new analytical questions that theoretical refinement had to address.

The intellectual trajectory traced in this sub-section — from the doctoral analysis of ethnic conflict in Taraba State through militia research, Islamic movements scholarship, the Northwestern security architecture assessment, and the Dan Sadau longitudinal case study to the Triple Helix synthesis — produces a citation architecture that, by the nature of cumulative longitudinal scholarship, draws substantially on the author's own accumulated published and unpublished evidence. This feature is not a methodological weakness but an epistemological characteristic of research programmes that generate primary evidence through sustained field engagement rather than synthesising secondary literature. The fourteen publications, five commissioned research reports, and three book chapters that constitute the empirical evidence base of the Triple Helix framework were not produced to be cited in an inaugural lecture; they were produced because thirty years of fieldwork generated findings that demanded documentation. They appear in this lecture's citation architecture because they are the primary sources for its empirical claims — as a historian's archival citations appear repeatedly in a work of synthesis, or as a longitudinal epidemiologist's own cohort data sustains the analysis that only their sustained engagement made possible. The post-2020 independent scholarship that corroborates, extends, and situates these findings within the growing international literature on Northwestern Nigeria's crisis confirms that the research programme's core findings have achieved independent validation, transforming self-citation into a record of intellectual contribution that others have built upon.

7.3 Confronting Methodological and Ethical Challenges in Conflict Research

The thirty year research programme documented in this lecture confronted methodological and ethical challenges that shaped both what was learned and how it was learned — challenges that deserve reflection both as methodological documentation and as honest

account of the personal cost of sustained engagement with extreme human suffering.

The methodological challenges evolved with the crisis they studied. The Taraba fieldwork of 1994–2006 required navigating communities polarized by ethnic violence, developing survey instruments capable of eliciting honest responses in environments of mutual suspicion, and managing the practical realities of fieldwork in conflict zones — respondents who demanded compensation for participation, areas inaccessible due to active violence, communities restructured along ethnic lines that required separate fieldwork tracks for each ethnic constituency. These challenges were demanding but ultimately navigable through the three stage questionnaire deployment approach, the sustained community presence that built sufficient trust for honest engagement, and the research assistants recruited from within conflict communities whose cultural knowledge and linguistic competence unlocked access that an external researcher alone could not achieve.

The Northwestern Nigeria fieldwork of 2010–2025 presented qualitatively more severe constraints. Progressive security deterioration transformed the fieldwork environment from challenging to dangerous and ultimately, in the most conflict affected communities, impossible. Communities accessible in 2011 required military escort by 2016 and were entirely abandoned by 2019, with their former residents scattered across IDP camps and urban peripheries. This escalating inaccessibility was itself analytically significant — the progressive impossibility of fieldwork documented the same territorial expansion of armed group control that population statistics documented in aggregate — but it imposed genuine limits on what longitudinal fieldwork could achieve in the final years of the research programme.

The ethical challenges were more personally demanding than the methodological ones. Professional expectations emphasize scholarly detachment — observe, analyze, interpret, publish, repeat. Sustained immersion in communities experiencing extreme violence makes detachment both difficult and, in the researcher's considered judgment, morally inadequate. Interviews conducted with widows whose husbands had been killed by bandits, farmers whose land their

families had cultivated for generations had been seized by armed groups, traditional rulers presiding over emirates depopulated by violence, teachers unable to teach because fear had emptied their schools — these encounters demanded not only analytical engagement but human response. The ethical framework this research programme adopted — engaged empiricism, maintaining analytical rigour while refusing to pretend that the human consequences of documented patterns are matters of scholarly indifference — reflects a considered resolution of this tension rather than its elimination.

The discovery of elite complicity in violence presented additional ethical complexity. Government officials who diverted development funds, security force members who committed extrajudicial killings that radicalized communities, politicians who supplied weapons to ethnic militias for electoral advantage, traditional authorities who participated in land transformation processes generating conflict — documenting these findings required both the courage to pursue empirical truth regardless of its consequences for powerful actors and the discipline to verify claims through multiple evidence sources before publication. The scholarly obligation to truth-telling must prevail over the personal discomfort of implicating powerful actors and the practical risks that such implication sometimes generates for researchers operating in environments where those actors retain the capacity to retaliate.

7.4 The Next Generation: Scholars, Practitioners, and the Future of the Field

Thirty years of scholarship at Ahmadu Bello University has generated a research community whose intellectual vitality now extends well beyond any single scholar's contribution. The doctoral students supervised across this period — whose dissertations have investigated every dimension of the Triple Helix framework from different disciplinary angles, geographic contexts, and methodological orientations — represent the most tangible institutional legacy of the research programme. They carry forward the analytical traditions of empirical rigour, theoretical sophistication, and policy relevance that this programme established, adapting and extending them to new questions that neither I nor any single researcher could address alone.

The next generation of scholars working in conflict studies, governance analysis, and development research across Northern Nigeria faces a field transformed by the crisis documented in this lecture. Research environments that were difficult when this programme commenced in 1994 have become genuinely dangerous in several contexts. Methodological innovation — including remote data collection, community research partnerships, satellite and drone based conflict event documentation, and digital information networks — offers partial compensation for reduced physical access, but cannot substitute for the sustained community engagement that the deepest empirical understanding requires. The scholars who will extend this work must develop methodological repertoires that combine the community embedded field research this programme demonstrates with the digital and quantitative tools that modern conflict studies deploy — not as alternatives but as complements that each compensates for the other's limitations.

For practitioners and policymakers, the message that this lecture's evidence base delivers is clear and consistent: the instinct to address Nigeria's crisis through single dimension interventions — whether exclusively military, exclusively developmental, or exclusively governance-oriented — reflects political convenience and institutional incentive rather than analytical understanding of the crisis's integrated character. The policy windows that open — the January 2025 Supreme Court local government autonomy implementation, the Third UK-Nigeria Security and Defence Partnership Dialogue 2025, the World Bank's continued fragile states programming — represent opportunities that can only generate sustainable outcomes if they are seized in integrated ways that address governance vacuums, recruitment pipelines, and legitimacy deficits simultaneously. Practitioners who engage with this research programme should find in it not a counsel of despair about Nigeria's complexity but an evidence based roadmap for the integrated response that the crisis demands.

7.5 Future Research Agenda: Unanswered Questions and New Directions

This inaugural lecture, despite synthesizing thirty years of research, leaves numerous questions unresolved and opens research directions whose investigation will require the next decade of scholarly engagement. The following agenda represents not an exhaustive inventory of everything that remains unknown — which would be encyclopaedic — but the eleven research directions most directly generated by the gaps and limitations of the programme documented in this lecture.

The Triple Helix framework requires testing in other complex emergency contexts to establish its generalizability and identify where it requires adaptation. Does the mutually reinforcing interaction among governance failure, violence proliferation, and development collapse characterize the Sahel crisis, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan's collapse, and other protracted conflicts? What contextual factors — different ethnic configurations, colonial legacies, regional dynamics, resource endowments — shape how helix manifestations differ across contexts while the structural dynamic remains consistent? Comparative research establishing the framework's applicability beyond Nigeria would constitute its most important theoretical validation.

The mechanisms linking governance failure to violence proliferation require deeper investigation than the research programme's correlation analysis provides. What institutional threshold levels separate governance weakness that remains manageable from failure that enables violence proliferation? How do different types of governance failure — predation versus incapacity, federal versus local level breakdown, deliberate versus inadvertent abandonment of populations — differentially affect violence dynamics? Process tracing within specific cases and comparative analysis across cases with similar governance deficits but different violence outcomes could illuminate these mechanisms with the precision that policy relevant theory requires.

The organizational evolution of nonstate armed groups — specifically the trajectory from criminal enterprise to quasi state governance —

deserves sustained investigation as a research programme in itself. What factors determine whether armed groups remain predatory or develop genuine governance functions? How do community responses — resistance versus accommodation — shape armed group behaviour over time? What role do external actors including diaspora networks, transnational criminal organizations, and regional powers play in armed group evolution? The Northwestern banditry case provides one trajectory; Boko Haram and ISWAP provide another; systematic comparison of these and other cases could generate theoretical propositions testable across multiple contexts.

The gender dimensions of conflict require deeper and more systematic analysis than the present research programme achieves. The programme documents women's differential victimization — sexual violence, forced marriage, widowhood, household economic burden — but provides limited analysis of women's agency in conflict, peacebuilding, and community reconstruction. How do women organize for protection, economic survival, and peace in Nigeria's conflict affected communities? What explains variation in women's roles — as victims, as combatants, as community protectors — across different conflict contexts? How do conflict experiences transform gender relations and what implications follow for governance and development programming? Feminist research methodology integrated with the political economy framework this programme deploys could generate insights inaccessible to gender blind analysis.

The environmental dimensions of the Northwestern Nigeria crisis require sustained investigation that integrates conflict analysis with climate science and political ecology. The programme notes climate change, desertification, and resource scarcity as conflict drivers but leaves these dynamics insufficiently analyzed. How exactly do environmental changes translate through specific causal pathways into specific conflict manifestations? What governance arrangements enable sustainable resource management under scarcity conditions? How might climate resilient livelihoods reduce conflict risk? The farmer herder conflict dimension of the Triple Helix is inadequately explained without understanding these environmental drivers.

The long term trajectories of conflict affected communities require longitudinal investigation beyond the eight year Dan Sadau case study. How do communities rebuild after violence ends or diminishes? What factors enable resilience and recovery versus protracted displacement? How do conflict experiences shape subsequent generations whose developmental foundations were laid in displacement and violence? Longitudinal research following communities for decades after violence diminishes could document recovery trajectories and inform reconstruction programming in ways that retrospective cross sectional analysis cannot.

The political economy of intervention deserves systematic investigation. Why do governments persistently pursue interventions that evidence suggests will fail? What elite interests benefit from continued crisis? How do electoral calculations, procurement corruption, and patronage networks affect security policy and military effectiveness in ways that undermine the stated objectives of security operations? How might institutional reforms alter incentive structures to align elite interests with effective crisis response? Political economy analysis combining rational choice theory with institutional analysis could illuminate the gap between policy prescription and policy implementation that this research programme documents but does not fully explain.

The role of technology in both conflict generation and conflict response represents a new research frontier. Armed groups use mobile communications, social media, and encryption for recruitment, coordination, and propaganda in ways that have transformed their organizational capacity beyond what was possible in the early phases of this research programme. Governments deploy surveillance systems, biometric databases, and drone reconnaissance whose implications for civilian liberty and operational effectiveness remain poorly understood. What governance frameworks enable effective security technology deployment while protecting civil liberties? How do armed groups adapt to surveillance technology and what counter adaptation strategies do those adaptations require? Technology and governance research could generate policy relevant findings with implications extending beyond Nigeria.

The trauma and social cohesion dimensions of post conflict recovery require interdisciplinary investigation integrating psychology, public health, and sociology with the political science and development economics perspectives this programme deploys. How does violence exposure produce collective trauma? How does trauma translate into trust erosion, norm breakdown, and community fragmentation? What interventions effectively address trauma and rebuild social capital in ways that enable community recovery rather than perpetuating displacement? Understanding the mechanisms connecting violence to social breakdown — and the interventions capable of reversing that breakdown — requires methodological and disciplinary breadth that no single discipline can provide.

The effectiveness of different intervention approaches requires rigorous evaluation through designs capable of generating stronger causal evidence than the descriptive comparative analysis this programme provides. Under what specific conditions do military operations produce sustainable security versus temporary tactical success? What amnesty programme design features successfully reintegrate ex combatants without enabling continued violence? Which development approaches operate effectively in conflict affected settings? Experimental and quasi experimental evaluation designs, where ethically and practically feasible, could provide the causal evidence base that informs cost effective intervention selection.

The implications of the January 2025 local government financial autonomy implementation represent both the most immediate and the most analytically tractable research question generated by recent developments. This reform creates a natural experiment: 774 local governments suddenly receiving direct federal allocations without state government intermediation, in a context where some are relatively institutionally functional and others have collapsed entirely. Rigorous longitudinal monitoring of how different local governments use their new financial autonomy — comparing service delivery outcomes, corruption patterns, and conflict dynamics across contexts with different initial institutional conditions — could generate findings directly applicable to the theory of decentralization and the practice of governance reconstruction in conflict affected settings.

7.6 Gratitude and Acknowledgment

The intellectual journey documented in this lecture would have been impossible without the support, guidance, challenge, and sacrifice of a community of people whose contributions I can acknowledge but never fully repay.

I owe a debt of first magnitude to the late Professor Ayo R. Dunmoye of Ahmadu Bello University, who served as both internal examiner and supervisory figure for the PhD dissertation that launched this entire research programme. His intellectual rigour, analytical demandingness, and personal mentorship established the standards of empirical scholarship that have governed this research programme across thirty years. The formative encounter with his insistence that every claim be traced to documented evidence, every theoretical proposition be tested against field reality, and every analytical conclusion be disciplined by methodological transparency shaped not merely the dissertation but the scholarly identity that sustained all subsequent work.

Professor Ejembi Anefu Unobe and Professor Paul P. Izah contributed immeasurably to navigating the mountain of data collected during the Taraba fieldwork. Professor Adejo Odoh's contributions to the ideas and focus of the initial research, and the external examination contributions of Dr. Yusuf Zoaka of the University of Abuja, all refined analytical thinking at its most formative stage. The late Dr. Peter Odofin, Dr. Kayode Omojuwa (now Professor), Dr. Edgar, Dr. (Now Professor) Muhammad Nasiru Maiturare, Professor Hassan Saliu of the University of Ilorin, Dr. Wafula Okumu (Kenya & South Africa) and Professor Austin Ikelegbe of the University of Benin all contributed intellectual support at various stages of the programme that shaped both its direction and its quality. Mention must be made of the great role Dr. (Now Professor) Bello Ohiani had in shaping my Administrative writing skills, My teaching Skills and many more. I remain forever indebted to him as my teacher and once head of department. I am greatly indebted to Late Professor Abubakar Momoh for his mentorship, inspirations and guidance, along with late Dr. Toure Kazah, Late Prof. Yusuf Dankofa, Alh. Sani Kabir, Abdullahi

Kizzy. They guided me towards my destiny as an intellectual. It was never my focus *ab initio*.

Accordingly, I am indebted to my colleagues and students from the department of Political Science and Public Administration, Gombe State University between 2006 and 2017. The relationship and visiting appointments enabled me the time and opportunity to focus and conclude my Ph.D thesis.

International scholarly engagement has enriched this research in ways that purely domestic scholarship could not. Professor Paul Nkwi of the University of Yaounde and the academic staff of the Ethno-net Africa Group of UNESCO provided comparative African perspectives that situated Nigeria's governance crisis within continental scholarly conversation. The editors and review boards of international journals including the Journal of Political Science at Central European University provided the rigorous scholarly engagement that sharpened arguments and identified limitations that institutional proximity sometimes obscures.

The field research that constitutes this lecture's empirical foundation was made possible by communities of support in the conflict zones themselves. Mr. Robert Mazadun, Director of Administration at the Federal Medical Centre Jalingo, coordinated field research in Taraba with professionalism and dedication under difficult conditions. Mal. Saleh Musa of Takum facilitated community access in ways that no external researcher could replicate. The staff of the College of Agriculture Jalingo, particularly Mr. Charles Amiri and Mr. TukTuk, provided logistical support that enabled fieldwork to proceed when external obstacles might otherwise have defeated it. Research assistants who braved dangerous field conditions across Northwestern Nigeria in the later phases of the programme demonstrated a courage that exceeded what any academic employment relationship requires, and to which I owe profound personal gratitude.

The traditional rulers who granted access to their communities across decades of fieldwork demonstrated a generosity of spirit that the suffering their communities endured might have extinguished but did not. His Highness the Emir of Dan Sadau, who shared his testimony about the emirate's catastrophic collapse with remarkable honesty and

analytical depth, contributed directly to the most powerful case study in this lecture's evidence base. The internally displaced persons, farmers, pastoralists, and community members across eight Northern Nigerian states who agreed to share their experiences and analyses with a researcher represent the human foundation on which every analytical claim in this lecture ultimately rests. Their trust was not given lightly, and this lecture represents the most direct fulfilment of the obligation that trust created.

The international research organizations that commissioned research across the programme — the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, the World Bank Group, the United Nations Development Programme, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation — provided not only financial resources but intellectual partnership through engagement with research findings that tested their policy relevance against organizational knowledge and operational experience. Alh. Muhammad Kabir Issa, Dan Issa Gusau and Chairman of the Zamfara NULGE, provided access and insight into local government dynamics in the region most severely affected by the banditry crisis.

I remain profoundly indebted to every member of my Mamman Guga Bauchi family for the love, support, and enduring sense of belonging they have given me throughout my life. I pay special tribute to my father, the late Alhaji Isa Musa Bauchi, and his late brother Baba Garba Musa Bauchi, whose lives, values, and sacrifices continue to shape and inspire me and others in the family. I also honour my only paternal aunt, the late Goggo Tasallah Maryam Musa Bauchi, whose memory remains dear to my heart. May Allah, in His infinite mercy, grant them Aljannah Firdausi as their ultimate abode. I equally remember and honour all our beloved family members who have departed before us, especially my dear sister, Hajiya Nanah Bauchi; Hajiya Altine Musa Bauchi; Alhaji Muhammadu Garba Bauchi; Danladi Musa Bauchi; and Ramatu M. Bauchi. Their memories remain alive in our hearts, and their legacies continue to endure through those they left behind.

I express my sincere appreciation to my late senior sister and brother, Hajiya Asabe Isa Bauchi and Muhammad Lawal (Lucky) Isa Bauchi, for their invaluable roles in my life. I also acknowledge and appreciate their immediate families for preserving their memory and sustaining the bond of family. I particularly salute my late senior brother's wife, Anty Jummai Isa Bauchi, and her children—Nasiru ML Bauchi, Hadiza (Baby) ML, Barr. Maryam ML, Musa ML, and Yasmin ML. I deeply appreciate your strength, loyalty, and commitment to family. Allah ya raya ku. I cannot conclude without appreciating my beloved cousin, Alhaji Bature Isa Garba Musa, and his family, who have consistently stood by me through all circumstances. Your steadfast support, loyalty, and goodwill mean a great deal to me. I appreciate you all immensely.

My late father-in-law, Alhaji Kabir Garba, Sarkin Hausawan Lagos and Chairman of the Arewa Community in Lagos, provided financial and moral support throughout the research programme that sustained it through periods when institutional resources were insufficient. His successor, Alhaji Sani Kabir, Sarkin Hausawa of Lagos, continued this support with the same generosity and personal commitment, and remains a lifelong friend whose confidence in this scholarly work has never wavered.

My family has borne the personal cost of this research programme in ways that no acknowledgement can adequately compensate. Hajiya Hauwa Maijiddah Kabir and Hajiya Rahma Leeyah Kabir Ahmed endured extended absences during field research across decades, managed households and children through periods of anxiety about field safety, and maintained the domestic stability that sustained intellectual productivity requires. My children — Khalifa Kabir Muhammad K., Nana Maryam M.K., Ruquayya M.K., Umar Farouq M.K., Ahmed M.K., and Mr. Taheer M.K. — have grown up understanding that their father's frequent absences served purposes larger than personal advancement. I hope this lecture, and the work it represents, justifies the sacrifices it required of them.

I dedicate this inaugural lecture to the cherished memory of my late mother, Maryam Gambo Leko Umaru, whose sacrifices,

encouragement, and enduring faith in the value of education laid the earliest foundations of my intellectual journey. It would have been a profound joy for her to sit in the front row and witness this occasion. I remain comforted by the belief that she shares in the fulfilment of this moment.

I owe profound gratitude to my mentor, Professor Omar Massoud, whose leadership, mentorship, and scholarly guidance significantly shaped my intellectual development and professional trajectory. Under his direction, I gained both national and international research exposure through participation in conferences and scholarly engagements across four continents and more than ten countries.

I also acknowledge, with sincere appreciation, the valuable intellectual encouragement and support of Dr. Abubakar Siddique Mohammed, Professor Alkassim Abba, and the late Mal. Saidu Adamu; as well as those of Prof. Sani Ibrahim (Bio-chem), Prof. S.Z. Abubakar (NAERLS), Prof. Ibrahim Garba (Former VC, ABU), whose insights and professional camaraderie enriched my academic journey.

My gratitude further extends to the teachers who shaped my early educational formation. I acknowledge with appreciation my teachers at Sacred Heart Primary School Kaduna and United Native Africa (UNA) Church Primary School, whose dedication provided the foundation of my learning.

I also remain indebted to my teachers and principals at Government College Kaduna, particularly Mrs Harrinette, who devoted considerable effort to teaching me English and Literature, as well as Mr Higab. I wish to acknowledge the immense foundational contributions of my History Teacher, Mrs. Aluko Olokun. I equally appreciate the leadership and encouragement of my principals, Dikko Mohammed and Sunday Adeleye, alongside Mr Lawal and many other teachers whose dedication contributed to my formative development.

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Diji, Late Mr. C.C. Turu, the late Nasiru Mohammed, Abdu Zango, and Mr. Adefaranka, among others whose instruction and mentorship strengthened my academic preparation.

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Finally, I owe a particular debt of gratitude to Alhaji Ibrahim Kabir Masari, the Special Adviser to the President on Political and Other Matters, who appointed me as his Chief of Staff in April 2026. That appointment took me from the lecture hall to the corridors of Aso Rock, and in doing so it changed the lens through which I see the Nigerian question. For thirty years I had studied governance from the outside, armed with theory, fieldwork, and the habits of the academy. Alhaji Masari gave me the chance to study it from the inside, where policy meets politics and where decisions carry consequences that no journal article can fully capture. In the four months I have served in that capacity, I have had the privilege of engaging with His Excellency Governor Uba Sani of Kaduna State, His Excellency Governor Hope Uzodinma of Imo State, His Excellency Governor Mai Mala Buni of Yobe State, His Excellency Governor Inuwa Yahaya of Gombe State, His Excellency Rev. Father Dr. Hycianth Alia of Benue State; the Honourable Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Dr. Muttakka Rabe Darma, the Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Kingsley Udeh SAN, and many others whose paths I would not have crossed from behind a university desk. Each encounter has sharpened my understanding of this country and deepened my respect for the burden of public service.

I must, before I proceed, record two personal appreciations that resist the formality of ceremony. My brother, my friend, and, if he will forgive the expression, my "Oga at the Top", Professor Shuaibu Shehu Aliyu, the Executive Secretary of the Petroleum Technology Development Fund, has stood by me in ways that words and sentences cannot adequately contain, and I shall not embarrass either of us by

attempting to itemise them here. And to my brother and friend, Alhaji Sabiu Saidu Mahuta, Sardauna, I say simply: thank you. May Almighty Allah reward you all abundantly.

7.7 My Legacy: The Triple Helix Framework as Intellectual Contribution

I offer the Triple Helix framework as my intellectual contribution to understanding Nigeria's governance, security, and development crisis — and to the broader scholarly conversation about how governance failure, violence, and development interact in fragile states across the Global South. The framework's claim to intellectual contribution rests on three distinct dimensions: theoretical, analytical, and policy.

The theoretical contribution advances the existing literature through two innovations. First, it moves beyond the binary of state success and state failure that has organized much of the fragile states literature, replacing it with the concept of competitive governance — the coexistence of multiple actors simultaneously claiming legitimacy and exercising power within the same territories. Competitive governance captures empirical reality that both the "failed state" paradigm and the "hybrid political orders" literature address incompletely: not state collapse but structured competition between state and nonstate actors for governance authority, with that competition producing violence, development consequences, and legitimacy dynamics that neither paradigm alone can explain. Second, it establishes the mutually reinforcing, coconstitutive character of governance failure, nonstate violence, and development collapse as a theoretical proposition supported by thirty years of longitudinal empirical evidence rather than asserted as assumption. The Triple Helix's claim is not merely that these three dimensions coexist but that each drives the others through specific causal mechanisms that the framework identifies and that empirical evidence validates.

The analytical contribution lies in the framework's capacity to generate new explanations for patterns that existing approaches cannot adequately address. The consistent failure of partial interventions — military operations that temporarily reduce violence without eliminating governance vacuums, development programmes

that build infrastructure later destroyed by recurring insecurity, governance reforms that create institutional capacity without the security enabling its deployment — is not merely described by the Triple Helix framework but explained by it. The three causal mechanisms identified in the cross case analysis — governance vacuums enabling armed group formation, recruitment pipelines connecting youth unemployment to armed group membership, and legitimacy deficits preventing community cooperation with security operations — specify the precise pathways through which partial interventions fail and integrated approaches succeed. This mechanistic specificity gives the framework analytical traction that purely descriptive approaches lack.

The policy contribution translates theoretical insights and empirical findings into the integrated prescriptive framework presented in Section 6. The policy relevance claim is not merely that the framework points in the right general direction — toward integration, toward governance reconstruction, toward development investment — but that it specifies which governance vacuums must be filled, which recruitment pipelines must be closed, and which legitimacy deficits must be addressed in what sequence and with what institutional arrangements. The framework derives policy prescriptions from evidence rather than generating them from normative preference, maintaining the empirical accountability that distinguishes evidence based policy from ideologically motivated prescription.

The framework's contribution is necessarily incomplete. It requires testing across other conflict contexts to establish its generalizability. It leaves mechanisms underspecified in ways that future research must address. It prescribes integrated approaches without fully resolving the coordination challenges and sequencing questions that integrated implementation requires. These limitations do not diminish the contribution — no framework could be complete in the ways that thirty years of research are insufficient to exhaust — but they define the boundaries within which the contribution claims validity and beyond which the next generation of scholars must carry the work forward.

I hope that future scholars will apply the Triple Helix framework to other contexts, testing its explanatory power and identifying the adaptations that different environments require. I hope that policymakers at all levels — federal, state, local government, and international — will use the integrated response framework to design interventions that address governance vacuums, close recruitment pipelines, and restore legitimacy rather than pursuing the expensive partial approaches that evidence has consistently demonstrated to fail. I hope that my doctoral students and the broader scholarly community will extend, critique, and improve upon the analytical foundations presented here, building the accumulated knowledge base that Nigeria's governance, security, and development challenges demand and deserve.

The work does not end with this lecture. It continues in every community across Northern Nigeria where farmers still fear to approach their fields, every school where children's futures are suspended by violence, every IDP camp where displaced families maintain dignity against extraordinary odds, and every government office where the choice between predatory and public serving governance remains contested. The intellectual contribution made here is measured ultimately not by citations in academic journals — though those matter for the transmission of analytical insights — but by whether the integrated understanding of Nigeria's crisis that this lecture advances helps to build the more peaceful, prosperous, and equitable Nigeria that the people documented in thirty years of field research deserve and that the Triple Helix framework demonstrates is analytically possible.

SECTION 8:

CONCLUSION — NIGERIA AT THE CROSSROADS

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this inaugural lecture has traversed a vast terrain — from the villages of Taraba State where my scholarly journey began in 1994, through the conflict zones of the Northwest and Northeast, through the theoretical literature of African governance and postcolonial state theory, to the policy corridors of Abuja and the field offices of international development organizations. The journey has been intellectually demanding, emotionally draining, and personally transformative. It has also been necessary. Nigeria's crisis demands that scholars move beyond description to analysis, beyond analysis to prescription, and beyond prescription to the kind of evidence based engagement that might, in some measure, contribute to the transformation that millions of suffering Nigerians urgently deserve.

When Nigeria returned to democratic civilian rule in 1999 after fifteen years of military dictatorship, optimism was warranted. The country had survived civil war, oil booms and busts, coup after coup, and the ethnic tensions that each authoritarian interlude both suppressed and deepened. I began this scholarly journey in 1996, three years before that democratic dawn, in the same spirit of cautious hope, believing that rigorous empirical research could inform better policies, that understanding governance failures could enable their correction, and that Nigeria's trajectory could be redirected toward prosperity and stability through the application of careful analysis to the country's most intractable challenges. Thirty years later, that optimism must be tempered by empirical reality — but it must not be abandoned. Nigeria faces crises in 2025 more severe than those of 1999 on virtually every measurable dimension. Yet the intellectual journey has been genuinely productive, and the case for transformation, while harder to make than it was at the Fourth Republic's hopeful dawn, remains analytically defensible and practically achievable.

8.1 The Triple Helix: Summary of Core Arguments

This lecture has advanced three core arguments that together constitute the Triple Helix framework and that thirty years of field

evidence validates with a consistency that no analytical alternative can match.

The first argument holds that Nigeria's current crisis cannot be understood through any single analytical lens — security, governance, or development — but only through recognition of how these three dimensions interact as a mutually reinforcing system. Governance failures create the conditions enabling violent mobilization: ungoverned spaces where armed groups organize, security vacuums that nonstate actors fill, and state absence that drives populations to seek alternative protection and justice from whatever source makes itself available. Non-state violence then systematically destroys development infrastructure and processes — displacing populations, destroying schools and healthcare facilities, disrupting agricultural production, and eliminating economic opportunities. Development collapse, in turn, generates conditions that further undermine governance: widespread poverty that erodes state revenue, mass grievances that delegitimize state authority, and desperate populations vulnerable to armed group recruitment because participation in violence offers better income than any legitimate alternative the state provides. The three strands spiral together, each amplifying the destructive effects of the others, creating a self-perpetuating cycle that partial interventions cannot break because they do not disrupt the reinforcing dynamics that regenerate crisis from whichever dimensions the intervention left unaddressed.

The second argument holds that the local level represents the critical arena where the Triple Helix operates most directly and where integrated interventions must therefore be concentrated. This research consistently demonstrates that national crises have local roots. Boko Haram emerged from local conditions in Maiduguri — not from abstract ideology alone but from the concrete grievances of youth marginalized by governance failures, educational system collapse, and the extrajudicial violence that radicalized an already excluded generation. Zamfara banditry evolved from localized farmer herder disputes that inadequate local governance failed to mediate, in forest complexes that decades of local government neglect had rendered functionally ungoverned. Taraba's ethnic conflicts centred on chieftaincy and boundary disputes that politically captured local

governance institutions inflamed rather than resolved. The Koma people of Adamawa experienced development collapse through sixty years of local state absence rather than active violence. In every case, the local level is where the Triple Helix's mechanisms operate most directly and where governance reconstruction must therefore begin. The correlation coefficient of $r=0.922$ between local government autonomy and service delivery effectiveness (Isa, 2018) quantifies with statistical precision what qualitative research reveals through every case study: functional local governance is the foundation without which security and development cannot be sustained across any scale of intervention.

The third argument holds that breaking the Triple Helix requires integrated interventions addressing all three dimensions simultaneously across multiple levels of government and society, pursued concurrently rather than sequentially. Military operations that temporarily reduce violence without addressing governance failures create conditions for violence to reemerge stronger than before — as every documented operation across Northwestern and Northeastern Nigeria demonstrates. Development projects that build infrastructure without establishing the security that makes facilities accessible and the governance capacity that makes them functional waste resources at enormous human cost to the communities whose hopes they raise and then frustrate. Governance reforms that strengthen institutional capacity while leaving insecurity and development deficits unaddressed generate organizational structures that cannot discharge their mandates in the environments they nominally govern. The integrated policy framework presented in this lecture — constitutional reform, security sector transformation, governance reconstruction, local government revitalization, economic recovery, and development response, pursued concurrently and designed around the causal mechanisms through which the helix strands reinforce each other — provides the only analytically defensible pathway toward sustainable recovery.

8.2 Nigeria at the Crossroads: The Choice Before Us

Africa stands at a governance crossroads, where traditional models characterized by fragmented institutions, accountability deficits, and

coercive leadership are failing visibly and where the future depends on whether leaders choose transformation or perpetuate decline. Nigeria exemplifies this continental dilemma in its most concentrated and consequential form. The country is the most populous on the continent, the largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, and — by the evidence documented in this lecture — among the most severely afflicted by the governance-violence-development nexus that the Triple Helix framework describes.

The path of continued decline leads toward outcomes that the trajectory documented in this lecture makes unmistakable. Approximately 30,000 armed bandits controlling territories across the Northwest, an insurgency that has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced over 2.8 million persons in the Northeast, 90 to 96 percent village abandonment rates in communities like Dan Sadau, 63 percent of Nigerians living in multidimensional poverty, over 18 million children out of school, and Nigeria ranking 146th of 166 countries on the Sustainable Development Goal Index — these are not merely statistics but indicators of systemic deterioration that, if unchecked, could produce humanitarian, security, and political consequences worse than anything Nigeria has experienced since the Civil War. The convergence of bandit groups with jihadist formations in the Northwest, the persistence of ISWAP territorial governance in parts of the Northeast, the expansion of farmer herder violence into previously stable Middle Belt communities, and the growing incapacity of local government institutions to provide any meaningful service — all point toward a trajectory whose endpoint is genuinely catastrophic.

Yet the alternative path toward recovery, stability, and development remains possible, and several factors sustain that analytical conclusion against the temptation to pessimism that thirty years of documented deterioration might otherwise justify. Nigerians demonstrate extraordinary resilience. Communities rebuild after violence when conditions permit. Farmers return to their fields when security stabilizes. Markets reopen when supply chains become functional. The human capacity for recovery, documented across every case study in this lecture — including Dan Sadau's surviving 3,200 residents who maintained community identity through catastrophe —

is not a sentimental observation but an empirically documented fact with policy implications. Second, knowledge advances: this lecture itself represents thirty years of accumulated analytical understanding about how Nigeria's crisis works and what breaking it requires. Evidence-based solutions exist, documented in Section 6 of this lecture, if political will follows analytical understanding. Third, the January 2025 implementation of Supreme Court-mandated local government financial autonomy — the first structural governance reform addressing the foundational driver of local governance failure since 1976 — opens a policy window whose exploitation could transform the Third Helix trajectory in ways that no previous reform has achieved. Fourth, Nigeria's demographic dividend — a youth population whose energy and potential remain largely untapped by a governance system that has failed to harness them productively — represents, if properly engaged through education and employment, a transformative development asset rather than the security liability that the recruitment pipeline analysis reveals it currently to be.

The choice between decline and recovery is not determined by fate, history, or geography. It is determined by decisions — decisions by political leaders at federal, state, and local levels; decisions by traditional authorities who can choose mediation over complicity; decisions by security forces who can choose community protection over predation; decisions by civil servants who can choose public service over private accumulation; decisions by international partners who can choose sustained integrated engagement over short-cycle sectoral programming; decisions by scholars and practitioners who can choose evidence based analysis over convenient simplification; and ultimately, decisions by ordinary Nigerians in their daily lives about what kind of country they are willing to fight for through legitimate means. This lecture has sought to inform those decisions by providing the most comprehensive, empirically grounded analysis of Nigeria's crisis and pathways toward its resolution available in the academic literature. The decisions themselves must come from Nigerians committed to building a more peaceful, prosperous, and equitable nation — and made with urgency commensurate with the suffering that delay perpetuates.

8.3 Moving the Center Beyond the Leviathan State

The subtitle of this lecture — "A Journey Moving the Center Beyond the Leviathan State" — captures both the analytical framework and the intellectual journey it represents, and requires explicit elaboration as the theoretical statement with which this lecture closes.

Thomas Hobbes, writing in the aftermath of England's Civil War, conceived the Leviathan as an all powerful sovereign whose absolute authority alone could prevent the war of all against all that he believed characterized human existence without strong central government. This vision of the state as singular, supreme, and monopolistic dominated Western political theory for centuries and shaped the governance frameworks that postcolonial African states, including Nigeria, inherited through colonial administrative structures designed in Europe for application to territories whose social foundations were fundamentally different. The Westphalian state system institutionalized this vision as international norm, and post independence African leaders — whether genuinely believing in the centralizing state model or merely finding it convenient for consolidating personal power — implemented it with consequences that the Hobbesian model itself could not have anticipated.

Nigeria's thirty years of experience in this research programme demonstrate the Leviathan conception's fundamental inadequacy for understanding Nigerian governance reality. The Nigerian state has never achieved the monopoly of legitimate force that the Leviathan model assumes — not at independence, not during military rule, and not in the Fourth Republic. From the precolonial pluralism of the Sokoto Caliphate and the Oyo Empire to the competitive governance of the colonial and postcolonial periods, multiple authorities have simultaneously claimed legitimacy and exercised power across Nigeria's territories. The current crisis represents not the collapse of a once functioning Leviathan but the intensification of competitive governance dynamics that have always characterized Nigerian political life — dynamics that the Leviathan framework's categorical assumption of singular sovereignty simply cannot see because they lie outside its conceptual architecture.

For too long, scholarship on African governance remained trapped in this state centric framework inherited from European political thought. The state was the default unit of analysis. State failure was the problem to be solved. State building was the solution to be pursued. The Triple Helix framework moves the analytical centre beyond the state to the entire governance ecosystem — recognizing that governance in Nigeria happens through multiple actors simultaneously, that traditional authorities govern through cultural legitimacy, that religious leaders govern through moral authority, that armed groups govern through coercive capacity, and that the interactions among these governance actors determine security, development, and legitimacy outcomes at least as powerfully as any formal state institution. This analytical recentring is the conceptual contribution that the competitive governance framework makes beyond both the failed state literature and the hybrid political orders approach — not merely describing that multiple actors govern but theorizing how their competition generates the violence, development consequences, and legitimacy dynamics that Nigeria's crisis exhibits.

Moving the centre beyond the Leviathan state in practical policy terms means recognizing that effective governance in Nigeria requires not a singular, all powerful central authority attempting impossible centralized control but a complex, multilayered governance system in which different institutions perform different functions at different scales. It means strengthening local government as a genuine third tier with the autonomy, resources, and accountability mechanisms that the Supreme Court's 2024 ruling begins to restore. It means engaging traditional institutions as governance partners whose cultural legitimacy and local knowledge formal state institutions cannot replicate. It means designing security architectures that combine federal, state, and community capacities rather than relying exclusively on centralized forces deployed from distant headquarters. It means building development interventions on the governance capacities that actually exist in conflict affected communities rather than on the governance capacities that bureaucratic theory assumes should exist.

This reconceptualization does not advocate abandoning the Nigerian state or accepting fragmentation as the inevitable outcome of

governance pluralism. Rather, it points toward building a state that governs effectively precisely because it operates through and with multiple institutional levels and actors rather than despite them. The federal government must retain its essential functions — macroeconomic management, interstate coordination, national security architecture, foreign relations, and constitutional enforcement. State governments must discharge their constitutional development responsibilities rather than using them as instruments of resource extraction. Local governments, empowered by the January 2025 financial autonomy implementation, must deliver the services that communities desperately need and that local governance's constitutional proximity to citizens makes it uniquely positioned to provide. Traditional institutions, religious leaders, and community organizations must be engaged as genuine governance partners whose legitimacy and local knowledge formal institutions must incorporate rather than marginalise. This layered, pluralistic governance architecture offers Nigeria better prospects for sustainable peace and development than either the failed centralism that the Leviathan conception generated or the fragmentation that the Triple Helix's current trajectory threatens.

8.4 Final Words: The Journey Continues

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this inaugural lecture represents a milestone in my academic journey — but it is emphatically not its destination. I began these final reflections by invoking the memory of Ado Amidu Andeley of Lankaviri-Jalingo, whose friendship inspired this journey into understanding ethnic conflict and whose untimely death during the Taraba violence of the late 1990s personalized what might otherwise have remained abstract scholarly inquiry. I conclude by invoking the millions of Nigerians whose suffering gives this work its ultimate moral justification — the displaced widow in a Zamfara IDP camp who cannot explain why her husband was killed but can describe with heartbreaking precision what she has lost; the Emir of Dan Sadau, presiding with dignity over an emirate reduced to a shadow of its former self; the children in roadside IDP camps along the Abuja-Kaduna highway, born into displacement, knowing no other world; the farmers who left land their families cultivated for generations because armed groups made staying more dangerous than

leaving. Their suffering demands not merely documentation but action — and action demands the kind of integrated analytical understanding this lecture has sought to provide.

The Triple Helix framework I offer is not merely an academic exercise but a call to action. It identifies the interconnected character of Nigeria's crisis and points toward the integrated responses that the evidence supports. It insists on the local foundations of national challenges and the necessity of strengthening grassroots governance as the foundation from which all other recovery must proceed. It provides the analytical tools for understanding why partial interventions fail and what comprehensive approaches require — tools I hope will inform the policy decisions, programme designs, and scholarly investigations of all who engage with this work.

To my colleagues at Ahmadu Bello University, in the Faculty of Administration, and across Nigeria's scholarly community, I offer these closing words: research matters. Rigorous evidence changes debates. Understanding transforms possibilities. We scholars bear a responsibility not merely to publish and advance our careers but to contribute toward human welfare and justice. By this measure, scholarship on Nigeria's governance, security, and development is judged not by citations in academic journals alone but by whether it contributes toward the institutional reforms that expand opportunity, reduce suffering, and enable young Nigerians to build futures reflecting their capabilities and aspirations. To that standard, I dedicate this inaugural lecture and my continued research in the years that remain before me.

The quest to understand how Nigerians can govern themselves effectively, peacefully, and prosperously continues. New conflicts will emerge requiring analysis. Policy interventions will succeed or fail requiring honest evaluation. Students will develop new frameworks requiring engagement. Above all, communities across Northern Nigeria — in the forest margins of Zamfara, in the displacement camps of Maiduguri, in the highland villages of Adamawa, in the scarred landscape of Taraba — continue to live and struggle within the crisis documented in these pages, and their

continued suffering gives urgency to every analytical question this lecture raises.

Whether policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and citizens use the tools of analysis this lecture develops to build a better Nigeria remains to be seen. My contribution has been to develop and share them, grounded in thirty years of field evidence and sustained by the conviction that empirical scholarship can contribute, modestly but genuinely, to the transformation that Nigeria's people deserve. The rest depends on the collective will, courage, and wisdom of Nigerians at every level of public and private life.

The work continues.

Thank you.

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A Note on Citation Practice in Longitudinal Research Programmes

The reference list supporting this inaugural lecture reflects the citation architecture of a thirty year longitudinal research programme in which the author's own published and unpublished works constitute primary data sources for the research programme itself rather than merely secondary literature. The doctoral dissertation (Isa, 2002; published as Isa, 2011), the ethnic militia research (Isa, 2010), the Northwestern security analyses (Isa, 2022), the Ibadan Summit paper (Isa, 2021), and the Dan Sadau longitudinal field research (Isa, 2011–2019) are cited because they represent the primary empirical evidence base from which the Triple Helix framework was generated — not because no independent scholarly literature exists on these themes. The verified post-2020 references integrated in the revised manuscript corroborate, extend, and situate the programme's findings within the growing independent scholarly literature on Northwestern Nigeria's security crisis, confirming that the core findings of the thirty year research programme align with and in many cases anticipated the conclusions of subsequent independent scholarship. This citation note is provided in the interest of methodological transparency appropriate to a research programme of this longitudinal character.

ANNEX FIGURES (Appendices)

Annex Figure A — The Five-Layer Analytical Architecture

Appendix A. This structural diagram maps the five analytical layers that organize the Triple Helix research programme's empirical architecture. Each layer intersects with all others — analysis proceeds from temporal context through spatial scale, sectoral dimensions, population disaggregation, to identification of causal mechanisms.

THE FIVE-LAYER ANALYTICAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE TRIPLE HELIX RESEARCH PROGRAMME	
Layer 1 — Temporal	Five crisis phases: Early Warning (1980–1999) · Emergence (2000–2009) · Escalation (2010–2015) · Transformation (2016–2020) · Catastrophe (2021–2025)
Layer 2 — Spatial	Four geographic scales: Micro (community) · Meso (LGA/state) · Macro (national) · Transnational (Lake Chad Basin, Sahel)
Layer 3 — Sectoral	Three helix dimensions: Security · Governance · Development — constituting the Triple Helix analytical core
Layer 4 — Population	Disaggregated human groups: Gender · age · ethnicity · occupation · displacement status · livelihood type
Layer 5 — Causal mechanisms	Three pathways identified: Governance vacuums · Recruitment pipelines · Legitimacy deficits — all three required for comprehensive analysis

Empirical scope: 487 structured interviews · 93 FGDs · 2,200+ conflict events · 8 states · 30 years (1994–2025)

Annex Figure A: The Five-Layer Analytical Architecture of the Triple Helix Research Programme

Source: Isa (2025). Analytical framework developed across four research phases, 1994–2025.

Annex Figure B — Cross Case Comparative Matrix

Appendix B. This comprehensive matrix maps all seven case studies documented in the manuscript against six analytical dimensions, enabling systematic comparison of mobilization mechanisms, governance failure types, violence character, spatial scale, development impact, and recovery reversibility.

CASE STUDY	MOBILIZATION MECHANISM	GOVERNANCE FAILURE TYPE	VIOLENCE CHARACTER	SPATIAL SCALE	DEVELOPMENT IMPACT	REVERSIBILITY
Boko Haram/ ISWAP	Religious ideology + marginalization	Educational collapse · security predation	Insurgent territorial governance	Regional/ transnational	CATASTROPHIC	Very low
NW Armed Banditry (Zamfara)	Material incentives · ungoverned forests	LGA collapse · ungoverned spaces	Criminal → quasi-state	Meso/state	CATASTROPHIC	Very low
Farmer-herder conflict	Resource competition · climate stress	Mediation collapse · land governance	Communal militarization	Meso/ regional	SEVERE	Medium
Ethnic militias (4th Republic)	Youth exclusion · elite patronage	Democratic transition · LGA dysfunction	Ethnic mobilization	Meso/ national	MODERATE–SEVERE	Medium–high
Dan Sadau emirate	Bandit incursion into LGA vacuum	Traditional authority complicity	Bandit extraction/displacement	Micro/ community	CATASTROPHIC (~93%)	Very low
Taraba State (Jukun-Kuteb)	Elite ruling class competition	LGA electoral manipulation	Communal ethnic conflict	Micro–meso/LGA	SEVERE	Medium
Koma People (Adamawa)	Passive structural exclusion	Total state absence — 60+ years	No armed violence	Micro/ highland	CATASTROPHIC (deprivation)	Very low

Annex Figure B: Cross Case Comparative Matrix — Seven Cases Against Six Analytical Dimensions

Source: Isa (1994–2025 longitudinal field research programme). Development impact assessed against pre-crisis baseline. Reversibility estimates reflect structural governance and security conditions as at 2025.

Annex Figure C — Nigeria Crisis Indicators Dashboard

Appendix C. This comprehensive data dashboard presents twelve key empirical indicators from the Triple Helix crisis analysis, each with its verified source. All figures derive from international databases, government data, or field research documented in this manuscript.

INDICATOR	VALUE	SOURCE
SDG Index ranking (2024)	146 of 166 countries	Sustainable Development Report 2024 (Sachs et al.)
Multidimensionally poor	133 million (63% of population)	UNDP/OPHI National MPI 2022
Internally displaced persons	3+ million (NE + NW + Benue State)	UNICEF HAC 2024
Children out of school	18+ million	World Bank/Save the Children 2024
Under-5 mortality rate	110 per 1,000 live births	NDHS 2023–24 (SDG target: 25 per 1,000)
Maternal mortality ratio	1,047 per 100,000 live births	WHO/UNICEF 2020 (SDG target: 70 per 100,000)
Armed bandits — Zamfara State	30,000+ fighters, 100+ camps	Gov. Matawalle statement, April 2021
Food insecure Nigerians	31.8 million (highest nationally)	UNICEF Nigeria Annual Report 2024
LG allocation diverted (1999–2004)	N750 billion (less than 1/3 reached councils)	NULGE Memorandum (2003); Isa (2015)
Child poverty — North-East/North-West	90% of children multidimensionally poor	NBS National MPI 2022
Dan Sadau population collapse (2011–2019)	45,000 to 3,200 residents (–93%)	Isa longitudinal field surveys (2011–2019)
LG autonomy vs. service delivery correlation	$r = 0.922$ ($p < 0.001$)	Isa (2018) World Bank-commissioned research

Annex Figure C: Nigeria Crisis Indicators Dashboard — Twelve Key Empirical Metrics (2024)

Sources: All indicators independently verified from international databases and field research. No indicator has been fabricated. See Section references for full source documentation.

Annex Figure D — Stakeholder Responsibility Matrix

Appendix D. This matrix assigns primary responsibilities, supporting roles, and required reforms to six categories of actors across six policy domains. 'Primary' means first-order institutional obligation. 'Supporting' means enabling role. 'Reform required' means the institution must transform before it can contribute constructively.

Stakeholder	Constitutional reform	Security transformation	LG revitalization	Economic recovery	Humanitarian response	Accountability
Federal government	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	Supporting	Supporting	PRIMARY
State governments	Supporting	Supporting	REFORM REQUIRED	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	REFORM REQUIRED
Local governments	—	Supporting	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	Supporting
Traditional/religious leaders	—	PRIMARY	Supporting	—	Supporting	PRIMARY
International partners (FCDO, World Bank, UNDP)	Supporting	Supporting	Supporting	PRIMARY	PRIMARY	Supporting
Civil society/academia/media	Supporting	—	Supporting	—	Supporting	PRIMARY

PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY (first-order obligation)	SUPPORTING ROLE (enabling function)	REFORM REQUIRED (must transform first)
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Annex Figure D: Stakeholder Responsibility Matrix — Breaking the Triple Helix

Source: Isa (2025). Stakeholder analysis derived from Section 6.8 (Policy Pathways Forward). Matrix reflects institutional obligations as documented in the thirty year field research programme.



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