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**ASSIGNMENT: Write a short note on violent conflict on a geo-political zone in Nigeria**

Firstly, we consider what violence is. Violence consist of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social, or environmental damage and prevets people from reaching their full human potentials(fisher et al, 2000).

A **geopolitical zone** is an administrative division of Nigeria. The six **zones** were created during the regime of president General Sani Abacha. Nigerian economic, **political**, and educational resources are often shared across the **zones**.

**Country Context and Background**

This report focuses on conflict in North East, North Central, and South South Nigeria. Each of these three geopolitical zones has a unique history and context of conflict.

**North east Nigeria** comprises six states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. This zone has been the most severely affected by conflict of any zone in Nigeria over the last decade. Conflict and violence in North East Nigeria is primarily attributable to Boko Haram, the terrorist group responsible for human rights abuses across Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. The violent radicalization of the Boko Haram members and the resulting military operations have reportedly affected nearly fifteen million people since 2009. This conflict has triggered an acute humanitarian and forced displacement crisis, with devastating social and economic impacts on the population, further deepening underdevelopment and regional inequalities. The most affected states are the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. The most affected groups are women, children, and youth. Boko Haram’s tactics have included multiple modes of attack, including suicide bombings, seizure and destruction of entire villages, forced displacement, abductions, sexual violence targeting women, and forced recruitment of men. Although Boko Haram-held territory has reduced in size over the last few years, the group continues to perpetrate consistent attacks in North Eastern states.

**NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA** consists of the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and Plateau, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In recent years, conflict in the North Central zone has both escalated and expanded as tensions between farmers and herders have risen. This conflict is multi-faceted and complex. The conflict centers around agricultural households and nomadic cattle-herding groups who come into conflict over land access. As the population in North Central Nigeria increases, the amount of land used for farming also increases, often into areas that have traditionally served as cattle grazing areas. At the same time, climate change and the Boko Haram insurgency reduce the amount of land suitable for grazing in North East Nigeria, forcing herding communities to expand their routes into increasingly Southern areas. This competition over land and resources is compounded by religion and ethnicity – herders are most members of the minority Fulani ethnic group and are generally Muslim. Farmer-herder conflicts often consist of attacks by one group and subsequent retaliation from the other community. Although attention to this issue is growing, to date there has been little response directed towards affected parties and few resources allocated towards reconciliation and prevention of future conflict.

**SOUTH SOUTH NIGERIA** is made up of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers states. This area is renowned as Nigeria’s source of oil wealth; widely perceived as the economic force driving Nigeria forward. Nevertheless, this resource wealth has not translated to economic success for most inhabitants of these states. Instead, the region suffers from ecological degradation as a result of oil spills, high rates of youth unemployment, and extensive inequality between the local population and employees of oil companies. These issues are compounded by ethnic and political tensions in the region. In particular, ethnic minority groups have frequently clashed in competition for oil wealth; political tensions in this zone also run high. All of these factors have resulted in high levels of crime. Militant and pirate groups have operated in the region for decades, targeting oil companies, pipelines, and individuals. Killings, abductions, and robberies are not uncommon, and many people have been displaced from their homes or communities as a result of the violence. The figure below summarizes key events affecting conflict and poverty in Nigeria since 2010.

Although conflict in Nigeria predates the inception of civil rule in 1999, the frequency of conflicts in all the geo-political zones at one time or the other in the present democratic dispensation calls for concern. Osita (2007) heaps the blame of Nigeria‘s violent conflicts on corruption and the abrupt termination of the late General Abacha, one of the ruthless military dictators Nigeria has ever had. His demise triggered spontaneous culture of ―revivalism and agitation among different social grouping‖ (Osita 2007: 21). This was because pent up aggression under the ruthlessness of Abacha‘s regime now found expression among the various ethnic groups. Added to this is the fact hat long period of repressive military rule has led to the militarization and bastardization of the psyche of Nigerians (Agbaje, 2003), hence the frequent conflicts in form of religious and ethnic in the country. The discussion above contextualised conflicts in the Nigerian fourth republic within the long period of military rule. The **violent conflicts** that have troubled **Nigeria** include ethnic **conflicts**, religious **conflicts**, political **conflicts**, terrorism, militancy, youth restiveness, electoral **violence**, and the like.

**Ethnic and religious tensions**: Many conflicts in Nigeria occur along ethnic and religious fault-lines, or narratives around them are couched in such terms. This is not surprising given the significant overlap between ethnic and religious boundaries in the country, and how quickly this aggravates existing or new conflict fault-lines. Most of northern Nigeria which, for instance, makes up about two-thirds of the country’s land mass is predominantly Muslim, with pockets of significant Christian minority groups. The southern part of the country is predominantly Christian, but again with an equally substantial number of Muslim communities, especially in the Yoruba-dominated south-west.

**Nigerian government**: The government of Nigeria has been waging wars on several fronts, including responding to the proliferation of militant groups in the Niger Delta, the war on terror against Boko Haram, religious and ethnic-based conflicts breaking out between communities, as well as recent incidences of farmer-herder conflicts over access to and control of land, among others. Its main goal is to stem the tide of insurgency and instability caused by non-state groups across the country. It uses the might of the Nigerian army to stop rebellions and terrorist attacks, negotiate to curb unrest, and generally implement policies to advance.

Over the years, the Government of Nigeria, with the support of partners and stakeholders, has invested enormous resources in the prevention and management of violent conflicts in the country. Yet the causes and manifestation of destructive conflicts have persisted as Nigeria continues to witness violent conflicts, particularly relating to the following: the Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East (already weakened but not completely defeated); the deadly farmers nomadic pastoralists conflicts  predominantly in the North Central parts (but also nationwide); piracy, oil bunkering and pipeline vandalization by militants in the Delta; and, kidnapping for ransom in the southern parts of the country.  
  
The country is passing through a major humanitarian crisis that has resulted in more than 5 million displaced by the insurgency in the North-East since 2009.

There is growing realization that something must be done differently to effectively address Nigeria’s current threats to peace and security, in the context of UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Antonio Guterres’ push for prevention. How can the UN leverage its influence and strategically support Nigeria in addressing current threats to peace and stability, considering the country’s specificities?

This paper looks at the prevailing situation in Nigeria and argues that current challenges, if tactfully handled, can be transformed into opportunities to enhance existing capacities and mechanisms for peacebuilding and prevention of violent conflicts.

The UNSG’s emphasis on a proactive approach to conflict prevention and sustaining peace is particularly relevant to a country like Nigeria. In addition, the current discussion on how to enhance roles of UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) to actualize this renewed vision is timely and Nigeria may provide a good test of the drive towards a paradigm shift. This Issue Brief serves as a contribution to that discussion