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Matric Num: 19/ENG05/002

**Violent conflict on a geo-political zone in Nigeria**

Over the past decade, the Boko Haram insurgency has dominated discussions on Nigeria’s security. However, since 2017, the conflict between farmers and herders across the country has claimed even more lives than Boko Haram and is now one of the country’s most pressing security concerns. Since 2009, the Boko Haram insurgency and subsequent responses have ravaged northeast Nigeria, killing over 100,000 civilians and leaving 7.7 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. At the heart of the conflict has been youth – whether as perpetrators, defenders or victims of extreme violence – yet they are all too often excluded from formal and traditional peacebuilding efforts.

Farmer-herder violence

For generations, farmers and pastoralist herders throughout West Africa have lived in relative harmony - a mutual partnership which kept cropland fertile and cattle well-nourished. However, increased competition between these two groups caused by population growth, environmental degradation, the expansion of cultivated land and regional instability has led to the breakdown of farmer-herder relationships and widespread violence.

Nigeria suffers a variety of complex political problems including inequality, corruption, oil disputes, national disunity, and the [Boko Haram](http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739) insurgency.

This seven year conflict and humanitarian crisis in the north has killed [20,000](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/11/world-faces-worst-humanitarian-crisis-since-1945-says-un-official) and displaced 2.6 million people. Despite the government’s announcement in 2016, that the group had been ‘crushed,’ attacks have continued throughout 2017 from Madeguiri city to the [Lake Chad Basin](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-idUSKBN1AO2F2) in [IDP camps](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/idp-camps-nigeria-hit-suicide-bombers-170724090127650.html), [universities](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/boko-haram-attack-nigeria-oil-team-killed-50-170727235033498.html), and [mosques](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/deadly-blast-hits-mosque-nigeria-maiduguri-170717143346103.html). The plight of refugees fleeing the violence is also worsening with the current severe [drought](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/03/drought-worsens-deadly-conflict-between-fulani-herdsmen-nigeria-farmers) and [impending famine](https://edition.cnn.com/2017/03/11/africa/un-famine-starvation-aid/index.html) across northeast Nigeria.

Violence has also intensified in rural areas between [Fulani herdsmen and farmers](https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jan/03/drought-worsens-deadly-conflict-between-fulani-herdsmen-nigeria-farmers) amid claims of trespassing and sabotage. This cycle of violence is also catalysed by the drought.

The events of [Abuja in 2000](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abuja_bus_crash_riots) and [Jos in 2001](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2001_Jos_riots) were [riots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riots) between [Christians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_in_Nigeria) and [Muslims](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Nigeria) in [Jos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos), [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria) about the appointment of a Muslim politician, Alhaji Muktar Mohammed, as local coordinator of the federal programme to fight poverty. Another such riot killed over 100 people in October 2001 in Kano State.

In 2002, the Nigerian journalist [Isioma Daniel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isioma_Daniel" \o "Isioma Daniel) wrote an article that led to the demonstrations and [violence that caused the deaths of over 200 in Kaduna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miss_World_riots), as well as a [fatwa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwa) placed on her life. The [2002 Miss World](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miss_World_2002) contest was moved from Abuja to London as a result. The rest of the 2000s decade would see inter-religious violence continue in Jos and Kaduna.

The dynamism of this study generally sought to understand why the Nigerian state has remained deeply divided and prone to structural violence especially in the North Central zone despite all governmental and nongovernmental efforts at ensuring stability, and fostering unity in diversity and peaceful coexistence among its regionally, ethnically and religiously diverse population. The study was an attempt to understand and shed some light on a phenomenon that has had debilitating consequences on the Nigerian state and its people, and left some gaps in our knowledge of the circumstances that harness or hinder the integrative and peace-generating function of federalism in Nigeria.

The adoption of the conflict transformation approach in dealing with structural violence in the North central zone was also explored and examined in order to understand how the approach can work in the Nigerian federation, and in enhancing political stability in Nigeria. In understanding the phenomenon, the study specifically examined structural violence and the various challenges posed by structural violence in the Nigerian political space. It also explored the concept of violence in the Nigerian federal structure from 2011-2015 in relations to the North central Zone. In an attempt to investigate the phenomenon, the study employed a qualitative research method for gathering and analyzing data.

In achieving the objectives of the study, the thesis assessed the context of federalism all over the world, and narrowing it down to the Nigerian example, its origins and other contextual issues connected to it, structural violence was also examined extensively, and its key concepts, including incidences of structural violence in the north central zone and the overlying and underlying causes. The conflict transformation theory and the structural conflict/violence theory were adopted for the theoretical discourse.