Chapter 4
Violence, Politics, and Food Insecurity in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This chapter explores how violence and politics affect food security in Nigeria against the backdrop of existential oil, cult, herdsmen versus farmers conflict and Boko Haram insurgency. It examines the contribution of politics and violence in the rising rate of food insecurity in parts of Nigeria. When villagers run away from the violence of cult groups, herdsmen and farmers clashes, and the terror of Boko Haram, the impact on availability and affordability of food requires more accountability. So is the link between oil violence and food insecurity, considering how the industry, through pollution, has considerably reduced cultivable land and fishing in the Niger Delta. Relying on secondary and primary data, the chapter argues that a complex mesh of illegal political relationships and considerations in frequent cases of non-state and criminal armed violence is fast reducing men and women labor in peasant agriculture, such that availability and affordability of food have become threatened.

INTRODUCTION
Food Security Information Network report (FSIN, 2019) on the global food security situation, identified 113 million people currently in acute food insecurity. Two-third of this number reside in eight countries, including Nigeria. Conflict and natural disasters were mentioned as two main factors responsible for this. In the same vein, the Food and Agriculture Organization insisted in a 2017 report, stated that

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the greatest number of the world’s undernourished people were in regions affected by conflict (FAO 2017). Rural communities are more prone and affected by these conflicts, and therefore tend to face the greatest challenge of access to food during and after conflicts. This context is crucial, considering the oil and cult debacle in the Niger Delta, herdsmen versus farmers clashes in parts of the country, and Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast. The resource-based nature of these conflicts and politics around them delineate specific trajectories.

The global food security discourse became intense after the foundation laid by FAO in 1996. That year, over 190 representatives of countries assembled in Rome for a summit. The meeting ended with the Rome Declaration on Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action. They pledged reduction in the number of people living in hunger, especially in developing countries, by at least half, by 2015. One interesting aspect of the summit and the declaration was the pledge of commitments, including creating social, political and economic atmosphere conducive for achieving sustainable food security, where men and women are active participants. This declaration has frequently been cited as a basis for a shared pursuit of food security, at the individual, household, regional, and international fronts.

Decades since that declaration, Africa is the only continent where the food security situation has not become better. What accounts for this? The question of violent conflict and nature of politics, in a country that has continued to pay lip service to agriculture since oil and gas became her main foreign exchange and national income earner remains crucial in the discourse of food security in the case of Nigeria. Yet this has not been sufficiently explored. How are oil conflicts, farmers and herdsmen clashes and Boko Haram insurgency contributing to food insecurity in Nigeria? The chapter addresses this question, with content analysis derived data sets from mainstream discourses of politics, conflict and food security.

**BACKGROUND**

Food insecurity has been conceptualized in terms of citizens’ inability to access adequate food and nutrition (Satter, 2007 Purokayo & Umaru, 2012). Discussions of the definition of food security easily point to the Food and Agriculture Organization which contends that:

*Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. The four pillars of food security are availability, the stability of supply, access and utilization (FAO, 2004:4).*
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