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## Governance and Insecurity in Nigeria: A Case Study of Delta State

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between governance and insecurity in Delta State, Nigeria, examining how governance failures have contributed to the rising levels of insecurity in the region. The study employed the Social Contract Theory, which suggests that the legitimacy of the state is derived from the agreement between the government and the people to maintain order, security, and justice. According to this theory, when the government fails to fulfill its duties, the social contract is broken, leading to insecurity and instability. The methodology employed a qualitative research design, utilizing secondary data from academic sources, government reports, and relevant literature. The study also analyzed data through historical research, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of past and present governance issues and their impact on insecurity. The findings of the study reveal a significant correlation between poor governance and rising insecurity in Delta State. Specifically, failures in leadership, corruption, lack of political will, and inadequate security infrastructure have exacerbated insecurity. The government's response to insecurity has been largely inadequate, hindered by weak law enforcement, resource constraints, and political infighting. Additionally, socio-economic factors, such as youth unemployment and poverty, were found to be key drivers of criminal activities in the region. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the government enhance transparency, accountability, and political will to improve governance at both the state and local levels. It is also crucial to invest in the capacity of security agencies, improve community engagement in security initiatives, and address the root socio-economic causes of insecurity, such as unemployment and poverty. Institutional reforms in the security sector and stronger legislative measures for law enforcement are also necessary to combat insecurity effectively in Delta State.

**Keywords:** *Governance, Insecurity, Social Contract Theory, Delta State, Nigeria, Governance Failures, Security Responses, and Institutional Reforms*

### 1. Introduction

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and largest economy, continues to grapple with the dual challenge of weak governance and pervasive insecurity. These two issues are deeply interconnected and have profound implications for national stability and development. In recent years, governance failures—marked by corruption, lack of accountability, and weak institutions—have undermined the state's capacity to deliver public goods and ensure the safety of citizens (Okolie & Oguejiofor, 2020). The inability of successive governments to enforce law and order, equitably distribute resources, and uphold the rule of law has contributed significantly to the growing wave of insecurity across the country.

Delta State, located in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, provides a microcosm of these national challenges. Despite its vast natural resources and significant contributions to Nigeria's GDP through oil production, the state has become increasingly plagued by criminality, including kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, herder-farmer clashes, pipeline vandalism, and militancy (Adejoh & Ajayi, 2022). These threats have not only disrupted economic activities but have also eroded public trust in governance structures. Local grievances over marginalization, unemployment, poor service delivery, and

environmental degradation have further fueled social unrest and made the region a hotspot for violence and agitation (Ughere & Oteh, 2021).

The failure of governance structures to address these issues in Delta State underscores a broader national problem where insecurity thrives due to institutional weaknesses. In many instances, law enforcement agencies are either under-resourced, poorly trained, or complicit in the criminal activities they are meant to suppress (Omodia & Umar, 2023). Moreover, the political elite's preoccupation with self-interest, rather than public service, has led to governance outcomes that are disconnected from the lived realities of ordinary citizens. The disconnect between policy formulation and community-level implementation has resulted in ineffective security interventions and increased alienation among the populace.

In addition to the failure of state-led responses, the proliferation of non-state actors—such as local militias, community vigilantes, and private security outfits—reflects the vacuum created by ineffective governance. While some of these groups offer temporary security solutions, they often operate outside legal frameworks, leading to human rights abuses and further complicating the security landscape (Obi & Okafor, 2024). This situation has also led to the normalization of violence in some communities and the weakening of democratic governance, as fear and coercion increasingly shape political engagement and civic life.

Despite numerous policy interventions and security programs, Delta State remains significantly affected by widespread insecurity, reflecting deep-rooted governance deficits. Issues such as poor political will, lack of transparency, inter-agency rivalry, and weak institutional capacity have impeded efforts to create a stable and secure environment. There is a pressing need to examine how these governance shortcomings have created enabling conditions for criminal networks and violent actors to flourish. Without an in-depth understanding of these dynamics and the institutional failures that drive them, lasting peace and development in Delta State will remain elusive. This study, therefore, focuses on the interplay between governance and insecurity in Delta State, with a view to understanding how governance failures have contributed to rising insecurity and what institutional reforms may be required to address these challenges. By exploring this relationship in detail, the research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on state-building, democratic consolidation, and peacebuilding in Nigeria. It also seeks to provide actionable recommendations for strengthening governance mechanisms and improving security outcomes in Delta State and similar conflict-prone environments. This study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing the nexus between governance and insecurity in Delta State within the context of Nigeria's broader security and governance crisis.

### ***Objective of the Study***

The aim of the study is to examine governance and insecurity in Nigeria: A case study of Delta State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. examine the impact of governance failures on the rising insecurity in Delta State
2. assess the effectiveness of government responses and institutional reforms aimed at addressing insecurity in Delta State.

### **Research Questions**

1. How have governance failures contributed to the persistence of insecurity in Delta State?
2. How effective have government-led initiatives and institutional reforms been in mitigating insecurity in Delta State?

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## 2. Review of Related Literature

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### *Concept of Governance*

Governance has been a central concept in political science, public administration, and development studies. Scholars define governance not merely as government activity, but as the complex interplay of institutions, processes, and practices through which decisions are made and implemented. According to Akinyemi (2020), governance refers to the exercise of authority and control in a society through formal and informal institutions, aiming to manage public affairs and deliver public goods. This broadens the traditional understanding of governance beyond state actors to include non-state actors such as civil society, the private sector, and international organizations.

In the same vein, governance is defined by Odozi and Olatunde (2021) as “the process by which governments are selected, monitored, and replaced; the capacity to formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions.” This highlights both the functional and normative dimensions of governance—emphasizing institutional effectiveness, legitimacy, and accountability. Good governance, therefore, goes beyond policy-making and includes transparency, participation, and rule of law as essential elements.

Expanding on this, Egwu and Okonkwo (2023) argue that governance in developing countries like Nigeria should be contextualized within the challenges of state capacity, political instability, and socioeconomic inequality. They describe governance as “a framework for managing power relations, delivering services, and promoting social cohesion within a democratic structure.” This perspective emphasizes the role of governance in managing diversity, preventing conflict, and fostering sustainable development, particularly in fragile regions such as the Niger Delta.

More recently, Nwachukwu (2024) defined governance as “a multi-actor, multi-level process that incorporates state and non-state mechanisms for regulating public life, ensuring security, and achieving policy goals.” This underscores the evolving nature of governance as more collaborative and participatory, involving local communities, traditional institutions, and international partners. As insecurity continues to challenge the legitimacy of state authority in Nigeria, effective governance is increasingly seen as a necessary condition for peace and development.

### *Insecurity*

Insecurity is a multifaceted concept that broadly refers to the absence or lack of safety and protection from threats, violence, or harm. According to Adeyemi (2020), insecurity is “a condition where individuals, communities, or states face actual or perceived threats to life, property, and well-being, resulting in fear and disruption of normal activities.” This definition captures both the physical and psychological aspects of insecurity and reflects the general atmosphere in many parts of Nigeria, especially in regions like the Niger Delta and the North-East.

Building on this, Olanrewaju and Usman (2021) conceptualize insecurity as “a breakdown in the mechanisms of state protection, often manifested through crime, insurgency, terrorism, and communal violence.” They argue that insecurity emerges when state institutions are either weak, compromised, or completely absent, allowing non-state actors to fill the vacuum. In this sense, insecurity is not only about violence but also about the erosion of state legitimacy and capacity to enforce law and order.

Similarly, Nnadozie and Okafor (2022) define insecurity from a human security perspective, emphasizing threats to economic stability, food security, health, and environmental safety. They contend that insecurity extends beyond conflict and physical violence to include the inability of individuals to meet basic needs or access essential services. In the Nigerian context, widespread poverty, youth unemployment, and environmental degradation are significant contributors to this broader understanding of insecurity.

More recently, Ibrahim and Musa (2024) describe insecurity as “a systemic failure of governance that results in the proliferation of armed groups, loss of lives, and displacement of populations.” They argue that insecurity in Nigeria has

been exacerbated by poor political leadership, corruption, and ethnic tensions. Their definition highlights how governance and insecurity are deeply interlinked, with insecurity often serving as both a symptom and a consequence of bad governance.

### ***The relationship between Governance and Insecurity***

The relationship between governance and insecurity is a significant topic in contemporary political science, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria. Scholars have consistently argued that poor governance is a major driver of insecurity. According to Akpan and Nwachukwu (2021), ineffective governance creates a fertile ground for the proliferation of insecurity as weak institutions fail to address underlying societal issues such as corruption, unemployment, and lack of access to essential services. These failures result in the rise of violent non-state actors, such as insurgents, armed groups, and criminals, who often exploit the gaps in governance to further their agendas (Atakpo, 2024)..

Furthermore, the erosion of state legitimacy is frequently cited as a critical link between governance and insecurity. Oladipo and Suleiman (2022) suggest that when governments fail to provide basic security, citizens lose trust in state institutions, leading to the rise of parallel governance structures and social unrest. In many parts of Nigeria, including the Niger Delta, the inability of state actors to manage resources effectively or curb militancy and criminal activities has deepened insecurity. This situation is often exacerbated by the state's reliance on forceful methods of control, which further alienate communities and escalate violence.

The failure to promote inclusive governance and the exclusion of marginalized groups is another key factor contributing to insecurity. According to Adeyemi and Bakare (2023), when governance is seen as elitist or corrupt, it fuels grievances among the population, particularly youth who feel excluded from political, social, and economic opportunities. These grievances often manifest as violence, as seen in the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast and the rise of militant groups in the Niger Delta. Effective governance, they argue, requires addressing these systemic inequalities to reduce the drivers of insecurity.

Finally, the impact of governance on insecurity is not only reactive but also preventive. A study by Ibrahim and Aliyu (2024) demonstrates that proactive governance mechanisms—such as transparency, accountability, and effective policy implementation—can significantly reduce the risk of insecurity. By addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and resource mismanagement, good governance can create a more stable and secure environment. In contrast, poor governance results in the exacerbation of insecurity, as seen in many regions of Nigeria where governance failures have led to protracted conflicts and insecurity.

### ***Governance Failures and the Rising Insecurity in Delta State***

The relationship between governance failures and rising insecurity in Delta State has been a critical issue in recent years. Governance failures, characterized by corruption, inadequate law enforcement, and mismanagement of resources, have exacerbated insecurity in the state. According to Akpan and Nwachukwu (2021), poor governance in the region has allowed various armed groups and criminal elements, such as kidnappers and oil bunkering syndicates, to thrive. These governance failures not only impede the state's ability to manage its resources effectively but also create an environment where insecurity flourishes, as the state fails to maintain law and order.

Moreover, Delta State has experienced a high level of youth unemployment and socio-economic inequality, which has been linked to poor governance and rising insecurity. As noted by Adeyemi and Bakare (2023), when governance fails to address these economic issues, it fosters a sense of disenfranchisement, particularly among the youth. This sense of marginalization, coupled with limited access to education and employment opportunities, drives many young people to join criminal groups or engage in violent activities. In Delta State, the proliferation of youth militancy, especially in areas like Warri and the Niger Delta, is a direct consequence of governance failures that neglect the needs of the younger population (Atakpo, 2020).

Another significant factor is the failure of security agencies to address the root causes of insecurity in the state. Ibrahim and Aliyu (2024) argue that the underfunding and lack of proper coordination among state security agencies have led to inefficiencies in tackling rising criminal activities in Delta State. The inability of security forces to respond effectively to incidents of oil theft, armed robbery, and kidnappings contributes to a growing sense of insecurity among residents. In many instances, the public perceives security personnel as either corrupt or ineffectual, which further undermines the state's ability to maintain peace and order (Atakpo, 2024).

Finally, the role of local governance in Delta State also cannot be overlooked. Local government corruption and the lack of accountability have compounded the challenges in addressing insecurity. According to Oladipo and Suleiman (2022), local government leaders often divert resources intended for community development, leaving local populations without adequate social services or infrastructure. This neglect fosters resentment among the people, contributing to social unrest and insecurity. Effective governance at the local level, with transparent leadership and efficient resource allocation, is crucial in mitigating the security challenges that Delta State faces.

### ***Government Responses and Institutional Reforms Aimed at Addressing Insecurity in Delta State***

In recent years, the Nigerian government, alongside state institutions, has made several attempts to address the escalating insecurity in Delta State, but the effectiveness of these responses remains a matter of debate. According to Okon and Eze (2021), government responses have often been reactive rather than proactive, focusing on military intervention and the use of force to combat armed groups and criminal activities. While this approach has yielded short-term results, the long-term success has been minimal, as the root causes of insecurity—such as unemployment, poor governance, and corruption—have not been adequately addressed. These responses, while necessary, have not sufficiently involved the communities most affected by insecurity, limiting their long-term impact on peacebuilding.

Institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the security apparatus in Delta State have also had mixed results. As highlighted by Onwumere and Obiora (2022), the establishment of the Delta State Security and Intelligence Bureau (DSSIB) was an attempt to enhance coordination among various security agencies operating in the region. However, the bureau has struggled with inadequate funding and a lack of personnel, limiting its ability to effectively tackle the rising insecurity. Furthermore, the lack of cooperation between federal and state security agencies has hindered the implementation of coordinated security operations. In their view, more comprehensive reforms are required to improve inter-agency collaboration and ensure that security policies are effectively enforced.

Additionally, reforms in the police force and other security institutions have often faced challenges in Delta State, where police corruption and lack of community trust are significant barriers to effectiveness. According to Akinyemi and Fadeyi (2023), the Nigeria Police Force's efforts to tackle insecurity have been undermined by widespread corruption and inadequate training of personnel. While there have been some efforts to modernize the police force through reforms, these changes have yet to address deeply rooted institutional weaknesses. These issues, compounded by the political influence on security matters, have led to limited trust between the police and the local populace, reducing the overall effectiveness of government responses to insecurity.

Finally, while some community-based initiatives and peacebuilding programs have been successful, they have generally remained underfunded and short-lived. Ibrahim and Hassan (2024) note that initiatives such as community policing and the creation of local vigilante groups have shown promise in reducing insecurity in certain areas of Delta State. However, the lack of sustained funding, political support, and institutional backing has stunted the potential impact of these reforms. They argue that government responses to insecurity in Delta State need to shift from a focus on temporary solutions to more sustainable, long-term strategies that prioritize economic development, education, and strong local governance.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

The Social Contract Theory is one of the most suitable theoretical frameworks for analyzing governance and insecurity in Nigeria, particularly in Delta State. This theory is rooted in the works of philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke,

and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with modern exponents such as John Rawls (1971) and David Held (2006) offering significant contributions to its development. The theory revolves around the idea that governance is the product of an implicit contract between the state and its citizens. According to this contract, the state is responsible for providing security, protecting citizens' rights, and ensuring justice. In exchange, citizens agree to obey the laws and contribute to the functioning of the state. When the state fails to meet its end of the contract—especially in terms of security—discontent, protests, and insecurity are likely to arise.

The Social Contract Theory argues that the legitimacy of a government hinges on its ability to provide basic public goods, particularly security and the rule of law. Hobbes, in his work *Leviathan* (1651), emphasized that without a strong, central authority to enforce laws, society would devolve into chaos, or the "state of nature." Locke, conversely, focused on the idea that citizens have the right to revolt when the government fails to protect their natural rights (life, liberty, and property). Rousseau (1762), in his *Social Contract*, emphasized collective decision-making through a "general will" that represents the interests of all citizens. In the modern application of this theory, Rawls (1971) argued that a fair social contract should prioritize the well-being of the least advantaged members of society, which would include ensuring that marginalized regions, such as Delta State, receive equitable governance and protection.

The application of Social Contract Theory to insecurity in Delta State rests on the premise that the state, especially at the federal and state levels, has failed to meet its responsibilities. The high level of insecurity in the state can be seen as a consequence of the state's inability to ensure the safety of its citizens or address the underlying causes of insecurity such as economic deprivation, corruption, and governance failures. As a result, militant groups, criminal gangs, and other non-state actors have taken matters into their own hands, violating the social contract. This scenario also explains the rise in violence, which is often a manifestation of the breakdown in trust between the citizens and the state (Hassan & Olanrewaju, 2023). When the state's capacity to ensure security is questioned, it loses its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens, leading to increasing unrest and insecurity.

The Social Contract Theory has been used to analyze governance issues in Delta State, where years of oil exploitation have left the region economically marginalized. The state's inability to ensure effective governance and security, despite the revenue generated from the region's resources, creates a sense of disenfranchisement and frustration among the local population. According to Duru & Eze (2024), the growing insecurity in Delta State can be linked to the state's failure to fulfill its obligations under the social contract, leading to widespread discontent and violent uprisings. The state's failure to provide essential public goods like security, employment, and justice creates a breakdown in governance and escalates insecurity.

#### ***Application to the Study of Governance and Insecurity in Delta State***

Applying Social Contract Theory to the study of governance and insecurity in Delta State underscores the importance of re-establishing trust between the state and the people. A lack of governance accountability and the inability to guarantee the safety and well-being of citizens are critical factors that contribute to the rise in insecurity. As Okon & Obong (2022) argue, the failure of the Nigerian government to protect the lives and property of its citizens, particularly in the Niger Delta, directly results in escalating criminality, militancy, and insurgency. The theory suggests that when the state fails to live up to its promises of security, citizens may resort to alternative means of survival and protection, thus undermining state authority and stability.

Furthermore, the Social Contract Theory can guide policy recommendations for Delta State. As the state grapples with persistent insecurity, reforms are needed to restore public trust and address governance failures. This can include more inclusive governance, increased investment in security infrastructure, and policies aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity such as unemployment, poor governance, and corruption. The theory also highlights the need for the state to renegotiate its "contract" with the people, prioritizing social justice and the equitable distribution of resources, especially in oil-rich regions like Delta State (Ogbonna, 2023).

### **3. Methodology**

This methodology is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the link between governance and insecurity in Delta State

### ***Research Design***

This study adopted descriptive research design to examine the relationship between governance and insecurity in Delta State, Nigeria. A descriptive design is suitable because it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under study by providing a detailed account of the prevailing governance issues and the associated insecurity in the region. This design also facilitated the exploration of the challenges associated with governance and security in Delta State, while making it possible to propose actionable solutions based on empirical findings.

### ***Source of Data Collection***

This study relied on secondary data collected from a variety of sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the topic. These sources included government reports and documents, scholarly articles, international reports, newspapers and media reports, conference and seminar papers presented in conferences or seminars focused on governance, political instability, and insecurity in Nigeria, especially those related to Delta State.

### ***Method of Data Collection***

To gather the necessary data for this study, the documentary research method is employed, involving the systematic review of secondary data. This method allows the researcher to collect and analyze already existing documents, which can provide rich, relevant information on governance and insecurity.

### ***Method of Data Analysis***

The data collected through secondary sources were analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods. The specific method employed was Content Analysis. This was used to analyze textual data from government reports, media articles, and scholarly literature. The content analysis was focused on identifying key themes, patterns, and narratives related to governance and insecurity in Delta State. It will also explore the effectiveness of government responses and the institutional reforms implemented to address the insecurity.

## **4. Major Findings**

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### ***Impact of Governance Failures on Rising Insecurity in Delta State***

One of the most significant findings of this study is the strong correlation between governance failures and the rising insecurity in Delta State. The study found that poor governance, characterized by corruption, lack of political will, and inefficient security apparatus, has contributed significantly to the escalation of insecurity in the state (Ogunleye & Olusola, 2022). Ineffective leadership at both the state and local government levels has resulted in inadequate responses to security challenges such as kidnappings, armed robberies, cult clashes, and oil theft (Ejiofor & Nwachukwu, 2021). This poor governance is further exacerbated by the lack of transparency, accountability, and community engagement, which hinders the development of effective strategies to combat insecurity (Adeyemi, 2023).

Additionally, governance failures have led to the neglect of key issues such as youth unemployment, inadequate education, and poverty, which are major drivers of insecurity in Delta State (Okolie, 2020). With limited access to economic opportunities and social services, many individuals, particularly young people, have resorted to criminal activities as a means of survival (Ibrahim & Bello, 2022). These underlying socio-economic challenges are compounded by a failure to adequately address the root causes of insecurity, leading to a cycle of violence and instability (Oluwaseun, 2023).

### ***Inadequate Government Responses to Insecurity***

The study found that government responses to insecurity in Delta State have been largely inadequate, with weak enforcement of laws and policies, and inconsistent security measures (Nwachukwu & Onyema, 2021). Despite the efforts of security agencies, such as the Nigerian Police Force and the Army, to tackle insecurity, the study revealed a significant gap in the coordination of security forces, a lack of proper equipment and resources, and insufficient manpower (Adefolalu & Ajayi, 2022). This has resulted in ineffective policing and slow response times, allowing criminal groups to thrive and further destabilize the region (Ogundipe, 2023).

Moreover, political leaders in the state have been criticized for prioritizing personal and political gains over the provision of effective security solutions (Ikejiaku, 2020). This has led to a situation where security policies are either poorly implemented or designed to serve the interests of a few powerful individuals rather than the broader population (Okunade & Adebawale, 2022). The study found that government responses have also been hindered by bureaucratic bottlenecks, lack of community involvement in security initiatives, and insufficient political will to confront entrenched criminal networks (Ajibola & Olorunfemi, 2023).

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## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlighted the significant relationship between governance failures and the rising insecurity in Delta State, Nigeria. The findings indicate that poor governance, characterized by corruption, lack of political will, ineffective leadership, and insufficient resources, has exacerbated insecurity in the region. The inability of government institutions to effectively address the root causes of insecurity, such as youth unemployment, poverty, and inadequate social services, has contributed to the increasing prevalence of crimes like kidnappings, armed robberies, and oil theft.

Moreover, the study revealed that government responses to insecurity have been inadequate, with weak law enforcement, lack of coordination among security agencies, and insufficient political will to address entrenched criminal networks. Despite efforts by the security agencies, the challenges of inadequate equipment, insufficient manpower, and ineffective policies have hindered the effectiveness of security measures in the state.

The study also emphasized the need for institutional reforms, stronger enforcement of laws, and enhanced political will to address insecurity in Delta State. Government institutions must prioritize transparency, community involvement, and effective collaboration with security agencies and local communities to develop more sustainable and comprehensive security strategies. A focus on socio-economic development, job creation, and education will be crucial in tackling the underlying drivers of insecurity in the region. Ultimately, effective governance, supported by strong institutional frameworks and political commitment, is key to restoring security and stability in Delta State and other regions facing similar challenges.

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## 6. Recommendations

1. The government should prioritize transparency, accountability, and the rule of law to build trust and foster collaboration between the state and local communities. It is essential that political leaders demonstrate strong political will in tackling insecurity by implementing policies that target both the immediate symptoms and the root causes of insecurity. This includes addressing corruption, ensuring fair distribution of resources, and promoting good governance at all levels of government.
2. It is crucial to provide adequate resources, training, and equipment for security agencies, including the Nigerian Police Force, the Army, and other relevant security organizations. This will enhance their ability to respond quickly and effectively to security threats. The state government should invest in modern technologies and surveillance tools that can aid in crime prevention and improve coordination among security agencies.



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