



**EFFECT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT ON NIGERIA'S
FOOD INSECURITY AND GASTRONOMY DIPLOMACY**



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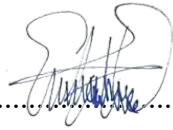
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Abstract

The effect of internal and external armed conflict on Nigeria's food security is a factor in the country's economic growth and development, as well as in Nigeria's gastronomy diplomacy. As insecurity and tourism are an unlikely blend, the food crisis in Nigeria is a hindrance to showcasing Nigeria's rich gastronomic prowess, which is one of Nigeria's soft power tools. Soft power diplomacy involves subtle coercion to alter preferences and choices and promote local alternatives in the national interest. International politics is tilting towards more soft than hard power to achieve its aims and objectives. However, the lingering internal and external crisis and its effect on food insecurity hinder the full exploration of the soft power of Nigeria's gastronomy diplomacy. Apart from several other soft power tools which Nigeria can maximize, food, which has been used to promote culture and tourism as an integral part of human existence, is elevated in this work as a principal soft power asset. Nigeria's rich gastronomy is certainly a notable strength as well as its diverse culture and untapped natural resources. The findings of this research, arising from the application of qualitative research methodology, specifically using documentary research, collected from relevant research reports, academic books and papers, as well as official documents and information from relevant ministries and international organizations, reveal the strength, beauty and opportunities of Nigeria's gastronomy as well as its cultural diversity and rich landscape, as a unique opportunity to shift from a dependency on oil to a fully diversified economy. Nigeria's rich cuisine is therefore presented as a powerful tool for soft power diplomacy, inspiring and attracting the world.

Keywords: food insecurity, conflict, soft power, foreign policy, gastronomy diplomacy

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Sonari Martha Uraih

DEDICATION

This Independent Study is dedicated to my mother, (Late) Chief Mrs. Roseline Young-Harry. Her strength and words of wisdom are priceless.



DECLARATION

I, Sonari Martha Uraih, do hereby declare that this research is entirely my own work and that it is original unless specific acknowledgments confirm otherwise. I have done this Independent Study by myself, under the close supervision of an advisor.


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Date: 28 October 2026


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Date: 28 October 2026

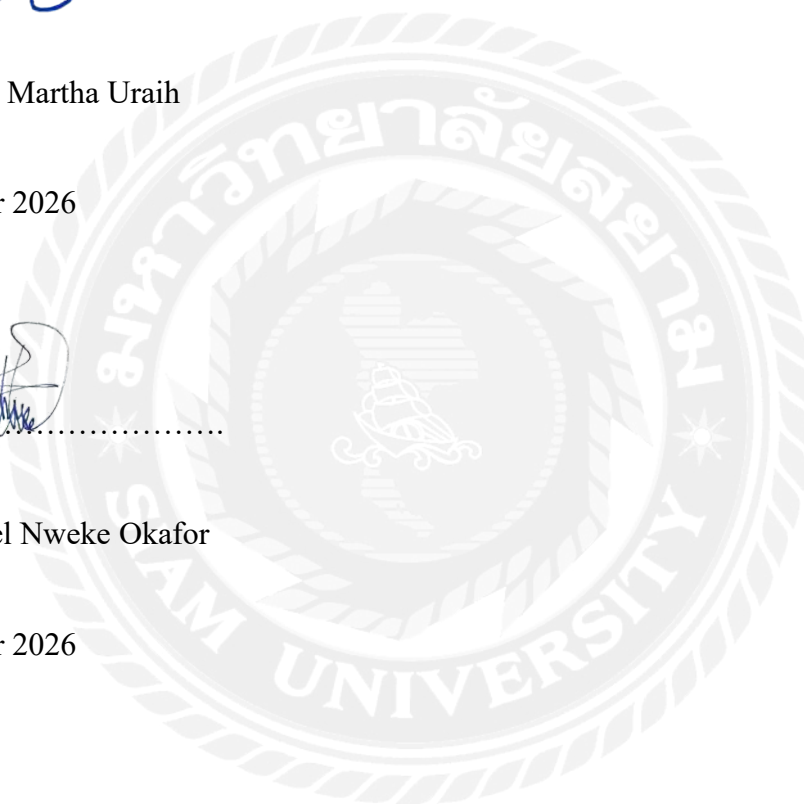


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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Significance of the Research

Reutlinger (1985) defined the concept of food insecurity as a lack of access to food which could be either chronic or transitory. Similarly, food insecurity can also refer as a lack of guaranteed food supply to a country's population. It refers to the existential threats that consistently plunge a nation into food scarcity, including inadequate food production, processing, and storage. Food insecurity cuts across the non-availability of food but also hinders the strategy of generating wealth from food tourism. This means all stakeholders consciously aim to avert scarcity by paying attention to consistent food production, processing, and storage. For a country to attain this crucial feat of food security, efficient government policies are of core importance. While functional government policies can contribute to food security, several factors can result in food insecurity. This can occur when a country experiences a crisis or when a situation in a different country leads to a food shortage in another country.

This research examined the impact of internal and external armed conflict on Nigeria's food production, which also significantly affects the influence of Nigeria's gastronomy diplomacy as a soft power tool. It is pertinent to note that in recent times, a major accomplishment of Nigeria's soft power can be seen in the successful export of Afrobeat music beyond Africa's shores. This is a testament to how Nigeria's soft power can be progressive. Afrobeat music, which combines traditional African rhythms with jazz, highlife, funk, and chanted vocals, has undoubtedly made the Nigerian music industry a global force. From the successes recorded in the entertainment sector, there is definitely a lot to explore from Nigeria's other soft power credentials, such as its rich cuisine, gastronomy culture, as well as festivals.

Lately, Nigeria's food production has consistently declined due to internal and external armed conflicts, as well as inconsistent government policies. This has resulted in the inflation of food item

costs, an increase in hunger and poverty, and simultaneously a reduction in the potential of using food as a tool for soft power.

The Nigerian economy was predominantly based on farming before the country gained its independence ((Hopkins, 1973). At the time, food sufficiency was sustainable due to its rich arable land and favorable weather conditions; staple foods such as maize, rice, beans, cashew nuts, melon, millet cassava, banana, plantain soybeans, kola nut, bitter kola, rubber, sorghum, palm oil/kernel, yams, and other fruit crops were in abundance. Despite the crude farming methods, Nigeria thrived in farming and produced cash crops for trade across the Sahara and the Atlantic Ocean.

The political and economic development of the territories constituting present-day Nigeria was significantly altered by British intervention in Lagos in 1851 and the formal annexation of Lagos as a Crown Colony in 1861 (Crowder, 1978). The colonial administration began an agenda that discouraged the production of food crops and concentrated more on cultivating cash crops to grow Britain's wealth and Europe (Hopkins, 1973). The dominance of colonial masters on the Nigerian soil soiled the healthy and promising agricultural atmosphere, as the colonial intrusion introduced unfavorable systems such as quotas and tariffs, which ordinary commodity farmers opposed. While the farmers recorded shortages and the gradual encroachment of poverty and food deficit due to the British policies, Britain and its European trade partners smiled to the bank.

The discovery of oil in Nigeria not only led to a shift from agriculture but also resulted in a decline in food self-sufficiency due to the heavy pollution of land, water, and air caused by human activities associated with oil exploration. Between 1919 and the late 1960s, Nigeria displayed its pride in food sufficiency through its groundnut pyramids in the northern region of Nigeria, and Benue State of Nigeria was called the "Food Basket of the Nation". This symbolized wealth, pride, and the potential to become a tourist destination. However, this remarkable agricultural progress gradually declined over the years due to a combination of policy neglect, the discovery of crude oil, rural–urban migration, and

inadequate investment in the agricultural sector. Consequently, many of the iconic groundnut pyramids that once symbolized Northern Nigeria's agricultural prosperity have disappeared, with some of their former sites being converted into public spaces, including football fields and other urban developments (Adebayo, 2015). The decline of these agricultural landmarks reflects the broader deterioration of Nigeria's once-thriving export crop economy and underscores the country's increasing dependence on oil revenues at the expense of agricultural development. In the words of late Alhaji Alhassan Dantata, a prominent groundnut trader, "Kano was famous for its magnificent groundnut pyramids during Nigeria's period of agricultural boom in the 1960s and early 1970s". Its groundnut pyramids became synonymous with the country's agricultural wealth, and Kano was regarded as an economic hub in West Africa. A pyramid could be built with as much as 15,000 full bags of groundnut.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Revealing and exploring modern-day Nigeria comes with a great sense of reverence for the country's rich cultural heritage, diversity, and vast natural resources. The trajectory of Nigeria's growth and progress as a people and nation has been remarkable, owing to the riches of the country, which extends beyond borders into the world of arts, music, fashion, and cuisine.

Nigeria is the most populous nation on the African continent and, indeed the world's most popular black nation, with a robust economy based mainly on sectors such as Oil & Gas, Agriculture, Manufacturing, and Technology. Nigeria has made giant strides toward economic growth and development, showcasing resilience, innovation, and creativity. Nigeria has increasingly been positioned as an important business and investment hub in Africa, reflecting the size of its economy, large domestic market, strategic location, expanding commercial networks and substantial youthful population. The African Development Bank has described Lagos and the Federal Government of Nigeria as being promoted internationally as one of the fastest-growing business hubs in Africa, while initiatives aimed at

improving trade facilitation and investment have sought to strengthen Nigeria's position as a regional trade and investment hub (African Development Bank, 2018; Rand Merchant Bank, 2022).

In view of this backdrop of Nigeria's great potential, it has been necessary to investigate ways to shed more light on areas of potential that have been largely experiencing a dearth of favorable policies ensuring food security, as it transcends to many other facets of livelihood as individuals and as a great nation. The extent of the use of gastronomy diplomacy to promote and project foreign policy is a subject matter that strikes a chord of interest, as seen in other climes such as China and Chinese technology, Thailand's Thai Silk, and Thai Tourism.

For decades now, Chinese cuisine has become very popular in Nigeria. Indeed, it has become a thing of class and status to eat Chinese food at fancy restaurants in Nigeria at an exorbitant price. This drive for Chinese food did not begin overnight but evolved to be an intentional aspect of their cultural diplomacy, (Chapple-Sokol, 2013). The Chinese have mastered the art of soft diplomacy by exporting martial arts, technology, and cuisine. With the changing tempo of international politics, Nigeria must align with the evolving world political dynamics by exploring its land's riches to their peak. This can be achieved only by favorable government policies and a shift from the current status as consumers, to producers.

Unlike the Nigerian Afrobeats music and sports prowess that has gained world recognition, the rich Nigerian cuisine is a potentially powerful tool for soft power diplomacy, a vehicle to project our foreign policy that has not been explored to its highest potential. Social media has been the medium to showcase the greatness of the Country's rich cuisine to the world. In 2021, the Russia-Ukraine war and Russia's clampdown on Black Sea wheat exports were catalysts for alarming inflation on staple foods such as wheat and its by-products in Nigeria. This was mainly due to the country's heavy dependence on wheat imports to meet local demand, a situation that was avoidable.

It has almost become a norm in Nigeria, where traders of essential commodities use every conflict as a yardstick to increase the prices of goods and services. The farmer-herder clash in the middle belt region of Nigeria causes a ripple effect of increased food prices in the southern or eastern regions of the country (International Crisis Group, 2020). This also occurs when conflict arises in neighboring countries; for instance, a conflict in Niger Republic has caused an increase in the price of beef in Nigeria. Over the years, it has become increasingly disturbing how internal or external conflicts influence the nutritional well-being of Nigerians and, by extension, the potential exploitation of Nigeria's soft power diplomacy (International Crisis Group, 2020).



Figure 1:Farmer Herder Photo
Source: www.africacenter.org

Farmer-herder clashes are not alien to the Nigerian climate. However, in recent times, they have become recurring and have evolved into banditry, becoming a persistent problem for the government and a nightmare for the citizens. While many assumptions exist regarding the root cause of these incessant clashes, political or otherwise, the ripple effect is general as it affects everyone irrespective of status and, most importantly, the economic drive.

1.3 Research Questions

The specific questions that the research intends to address include the following:

- i. Can improved security alleviate hunger and poverty?
- ii. Can Nigeria's growth potential be explored in gastronomy diplomacy?
- iii. How does insecurity affect the exploitation of Nigeria's soft power potential?

1.4 Research Objectives

The key objective of this research can be summarised as follows:

- i. To identify the need to improve security to alleviate hunger and poverty;
- ii. To identify Nigeria's growth potential in gastronomy diplomacy;
- iii. To examine Nigeria's soft power potential and the adverse effect of insecurity on its exploitation.

1.5 Research Methodology

This research applied the qualitative research method by using a documentary research method. All documentary data were collected from related research reports, academic books, and papers, as well as official documents and information of related ministries and international organizations concerned. All collected documentary data were analysed by content analysis, critical analysis, and logical analysis throughout the data process to achieve comprehensive research results, discussion, conclusion, and recommendation.

1.6 Limitation of the Study

This research depended chiefly on secondary data because access to direct interviews with government officials for an official recount of the subject matter has been challenging. Secondly, while there is information available on various dimensions of insecurity, the novel focus of this research on its implications for Nigeria's gastronomic diplomacy limited the availability of archival records or other sources of primary data.

1.7 Definition of Terms

For clarity, some keywords in this research are defined according to their usage context.

Conflict: A clash or disagreement resulting in unharmonious conditions, including violence. Usually between two persons, or a group of persons. In this context, the term refers to incessant skirmishes within certain troubled regions in Nigeria that have hindered adequate food supply due

to the inability to carry out normal farming activities that will increase food supply to the other parts of the country.

Food Insecurity is the non-guaranteed food supply to a country's population. It refers to the existential threats that consistently plunge a nation into food scarcity: food production, processing, and inadequate storage. Food insecurity cuts across the non-availability of food to hinder plans to generate wealth.

Soft Power: Soft power refers to the use of attraction, persuasion, and innate influences and capacities to set agenda as well as to influence the behavior of other nations. It is the ability to shape the preferences of others through subtle means rather than coercion. It is also known as diplomacy of the mind and heart. Soft power in this research suggests the use of Nigeria's rich cuisine to attract wealth through tourism, putting our cuisines in the limelight as other countries have successfully done.

Foreign Policy: Foreign policy refers to objectives, strategies, as well as actions carried out by a state or a non-state actor in its relations with other partners in the international system. It reflects the actor's interests, values, and preferences and guides its decisions and behaviors in the global arena. The subject matter refers to the set down, rules, norms, and regulations already implemented to achieve a positive outcome in trade relations or national security.

Gastronomy Diplomacy: Food is an essential component of a national experience. As previously highlighted, gastronomy diplomacy is a way of communicating a people's culture. It explores and attracts tourists to the delicacies synonymous with different regions to create a memorable experience.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

2.1 Introduction

Food insecurity and its impact on gastronomy diplomacy is an influential soft power resource that occupies a specialized area of diplomatic research. Reviewing previous writings related to the concept, it becomes clear that many scholars have actually explored Nigeria's food insecurity in relation to diplomacy and indeed the extent of the impact of food shortage on Nigeria. What has been lacking is a clear correlation between the implications for food insecurity on diplomacy. This research focuses on this aspect of diplomacy, specifically gastronomy diplomacy and the conclusion is that there is a need to harness more of Nigeria's soft power potential through improved security.

Gastronomy diplomacy is a subtle yet significant instrument of international relations and politics, attracting considerable scholarly attention regarding its role in advancing national interests and fostering intercultural understanding. Food functions beyond its cultural boundaries and serves as a medium through which nations project heritage and influence abroad. According to Nye (2004), "soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion or payment". Cuisine, therefore, constitutes an important cultural resource through which states can generate attraction and enhance their international image. Supporting this view, Chapple-Sokol (2013) argued that "food is a universal language that can be used as a means for creating cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions and cooperation", while noting that "gastro-diplomacy attempts to win hearts and minds through people's stomachs".

Similarly, Rockower (2012) posits that national cuisines can also serve to brand countries and can be tools of public diplomacy. This is established on the knowledge of the effect of food in

creating wealth. However, the possibility of food being weaponized and even used as a tool of war is a subject to be discussed.

Food, an essential commodity for human survival, has historically been weaponised as an instrument of war to weaken and subdue opposing populations. During the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970), the blockade of food supplies contributed to widespread famine, particularly in the secessionist region of Biafra, where thousands of children suffered from kwashiorkor, a severe form of protein-energy malnutrition (Madiebo, 1980)



Figure 2: Starving Children of Biafra
Photo credit: Amost Tauna Daily Post

However, food can be explored to create prosperity, national harmony and even serve as a magnet for tourists. In places like Thailand, food is explored for its intrinsic potential. People travel around to taste popular delicacies like Thai glass noodles, mango-sticky rice, and a variety of tom-yum soups. Food has been used to communicate a people's cultural identity. Sam Chapple-Sokol defines culinary diplomacy as the “use of food or cuisine as a tool to create Cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions and cooperation” (Chapple-Sokol, 2013).

This level of cooperation could be channeled to put one country on the global map, attract people from other countries to its beauty and promises of adventure, and create wealth.



Figure 3: Thai Cuisine
Source: www.khaolakexplorer.com

This study delves into the uniqueness of the Nigerian space, its potential, and its challenges. A dearth in the food supply due to armed conflicts hinders the pursuit of Nigeria's soft power diplomacy through culinary potential.

Rockower (2012) added that “gastro-diplomacy is the act of winning hearts and minds through stomachs” (p. 235). Rockower’s article identifies nation building and branding through gastro-diplomacy citing the successful feat achieved by countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and South Korea in this regard. Rockower’s approach further emphasize the effectiveness of a friendly and simple method to nation branding through skilled chefs, restaurateurs and the diplomatic communities as non-state actors.

While Paul’s recipe for gastro-diplomacy does not suggest a replacement of formal diplomatic engagement between and among nations, an outstanding aspect of the article underscores the importance of nation branding in nation building through gastro-diplomacy.

Unequivocally, the possibility of attaining the feat of using food as a tool for diplomacy in Nigeria may seem cumbersome, given the security challenges that affect the image branding of the country and food production. Furthermore, being an import-dependent country, whereby internal and external conflict could further strain food supply creates another challenge in this regard. A

case in point is the propensity for a surge in food prices due to an international conflict as well as a local one. The Russia-Ukraine crisis was blamed for wanton increase in the cost of flour and related staple food products across the country.

James Farrer as well as the Michelin guide demonstrates how cosmopolitanism and culinary nationalism, as exemplified in the development of Shanghai, have become a destination for the world's top celebrity chefs, journalists, commentators, and evaluators (Michelin Guide, 2018). Farrer's position shifts from an overall nation branding to creating a destination identity through city branding and a destination for culinary pluralism.

More recently, Nigerian chef Hilda Effiong Bassey (popularly known as Hilda Baci) brought global attention to Nigerian cuisine by setting the Guinness World Record for the longest cooking marathon by an individual. Following official verification, she was recognized for cooking continuously for 93 hours and 11 minutes, during which she prepared over 100 pots of food, showcasing the richness and diversity of Nigerian gastronomy to a global audience (Guinness World Records, 2023; *The Cable Lifestyle*, 2023) projecting Lagos State as a cosmopolitan destination for culinary exploits. Accomplishments of this magnitude are potentials yet untapped but can potentially place Nigeria on the world map for culinary exploration further emphasizing Lagos as the business hub of Africa.

The gap this study sought to address is the limited scholarly attention given to the impact of insecurity on Nigeria's ability to harness soft power diplomacy through its rich gastronomic heritage. While existing literature has extensively examined the relationship between insecurity and food security, relatively few studies have explored how insecurity undermines the country's capacity to project soft power through gastronomy diplomacy. A study by Olanrewaju and Balana (2023) provides a perspective that is particularly relevant to Nigeria's contemporary security challenges. They argued that conflicts arising from forced displacement, fatalities, economic

inequality, and ethno-religious tensions have significantly disrupted household food security. The findings of the study further demonstrate a strong relationship between insecurity and declining food supply, particularly in northeastern Nigeria, where Boko Haram insurgents have systematically targeted agricultural production, food infrastructure, and rural livelihoods. These conditions not only exacerbate food insecurity but also diminish the availability, diversity, and cultural authenticity of Nigerian cuisine, thereby constraining the country's ability to leverage gastronomy as an effective instrument of soft power diplomacy.

2.2 Effect of External Armed Conflict on Food Insecurity in Nigeria

External armed conflicts provide benefits for some countries especially those who supply arms and ammunitions as well as those who fill the supply gap created by countries in conflict, including those under international sanctions (World Bank Group, 2022). At the same time, others not directly affected by the conflict suffer significantly especially with regards to the ability to meet the food and sundry needs of the populace. Nigeria falls into the latter category, primarily due to the country's significant reliance on imported goods and food commodities. A major case in this aspect is wheat.

Black-sea wheat from Russia remains one of the cheapest options for meeting local demands, and as such, Russia is responsible for 17% supply of Nigeria's wheat intake (Aglionby, 2022). The outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war led to a significant increase in the price of this staple food in Nigeria. For instance, the price for 100kg of wheat experienced an over 100% increase in price (30,000 Naira or 40USD to 65,000 Naira or 80USD). As a result, the cost of bread skyrocketed from 350 naira to 1700 naira. One might wonder why an increase in wheat prices threatens food security. The answer lies in the fact that wheat is a major staple product in Nigeria that translates to items like bread, cake, pasta, noodles, and spaghetti among others which are primary staples consumed in almost all households.

Wheat consumption in Nigeria is a relatable example of the effect of negative agricultural policy impact on our food insecurity. According to (Kimmage,1991), the Accelerated Wheat Production Program was a way to provide a cheap source of wheat to reduce dependence on imported wheat, however, it failed to address the primary task of reducing imports.

It is important to contextualize this development within Nigeria's broader political economy. During the oil boom of the 1970s, the substantial increase in government revenue stimulated a surge in wheat importation, fundamentally altering the country's food consumption patterns. Prior to this period, white bread was consumed primarily by urban elites and was not regarded as a staple food across most Nigerian communities. However, rising incomes, rapid urbanization, expanding foreign exchange earnings, and changing dietary preferences led to a significant increase in the demand for wheat-based products, particularly bread (Andrae & Beckman, 1985; Kimmage, 1991). As a result, several major flour milling companies were established or expanded their operations to satisfy the growing domestic market. Although wheat had long been cultivated on a limited scale in parts of northern Nigeria, where climatic conditions were favourable, domestic production remained insufficient to meet the rapidly growing demand (Abalu & D'Silva, 1980; Kimmage, 1991). Consequently, Nigeria became increasingly dependent on imported wheat from the 1970s onward, marking the beginning of a structural reliance on wheat imports that has persisted despite subsequent government efforts to promote local production and import substitution. By 1980, wheat accounted for approximately 12.3 percent of Nigeria's total grain consumption, compared with only about 1 percent in 1960, illustrating the profound transformation in national dietary patterns (Pinstrup-Andersen, 1985; Kimmage, 1991).

Wheat consumption reached a peak of 1.5 million tonnes in 1985, just before the massive oil price crash from \$35 per barrel in 1980 to less than \$10 in 1986 (Ayoola, 2022), which put a

huge strain on Nigeria's resources. Consequently, in 1987, Nigeria imposed a ban on wheat importation, which accounted for over 90% of wheat consumption due to limited domestic wheat production, resulting in a massive drop in wheat consumption to less than 250,000 tonnes in 1989. The import ban stimulated efforts to increase local production, reaching a peak of 140,000 tonnes in 1987. This was still insufficient to meet the temporarily decreased demand for wheat products. (Ayoola, 2022).

Empirical analysis 2019-2022

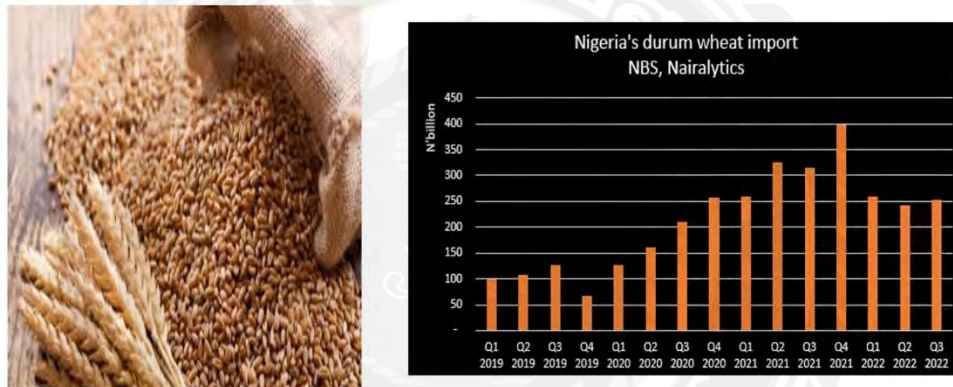


Figure 4: Nigeria's Durum Wheat Import Analysis
Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Wheat still remains a primary staple food in Nigeria, both rural and urban areas used to make bread, biscuits, pasta, and other baked goods (Ojo & Adebayo, 2012). Nigeria is one of the largest wheat importers in Africa, with most of its wheat coming from the United States, Canada, and Russia. However, the high cost of imported wheat has led to efforts to promote local production. The government incentivizes farmers to grow wheat and encourages the development of local milling and processing industries. Despite these efforts, local wheat production in Nigeria remains relatively low, and the country continues to rely heavily on imports to meet its growing

demand for this crucial staple food. As a result, Nigeria is vulnerable if external armed conflict affects the supply of wheat to the country.

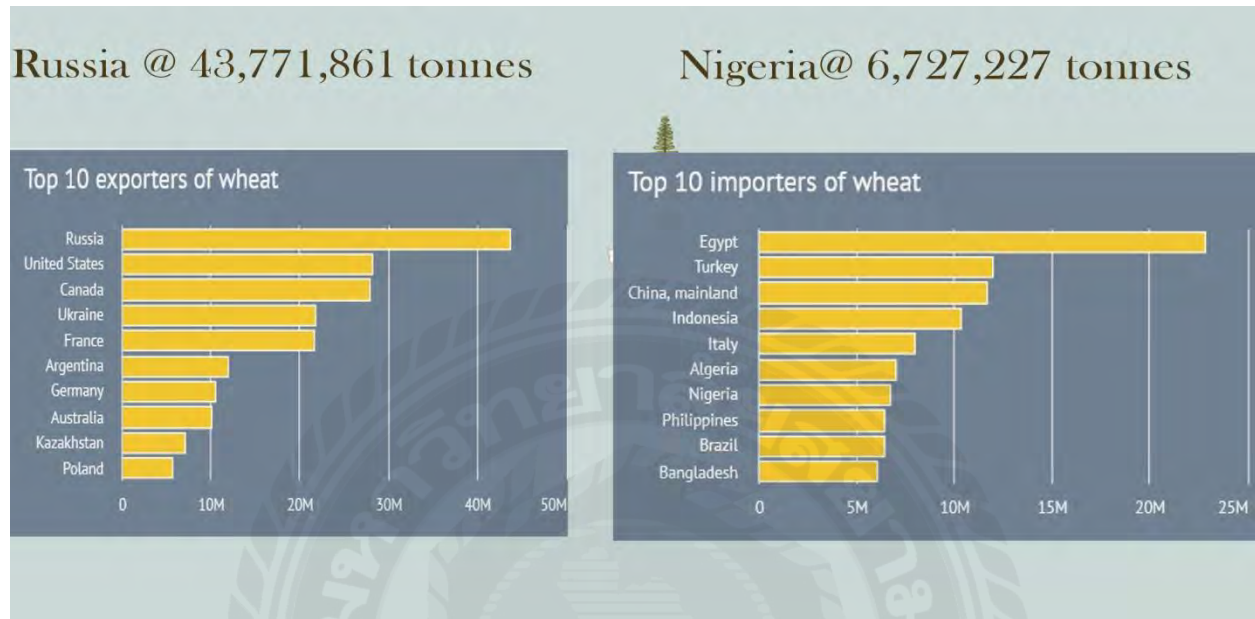


Figure 5: Nigeria's Wheat Import and Russia's Wheat Export
source: www.tradingeconomics.com

The above figure shows Russia and the other countries in the wheat export business and Nigeria's ranking according to patronage. It shows that Nigeria's patronage of 6,727,227 tons of wheat accounts for about 16% of Russia's total output of 43,771,861 tons of wheat per year, listing Nigeria as the largest importer from West Africa. Attempts by the Federation of the Agricultural Commodity Association of Nigeria to revive the wheat industry have been unsuccessful, as foreign investors are more interested in local options, such as cassava flour. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) identified Nigeria among the top 20 importers of wheat. In 2015, Nigeria was ranked 11th. In 2016, the country ranked 18th, while in 2017, it ranked ninth. In 2018, it was in the 13th position, and 2019, it again ranked 13th. From 2014 to 2021, according to Statista GmbH, a Germany-based international research group, Nigeria has been among the principal importing countries of wheat, flour, and wheat products. What is the way out of this wave of obsession with imported wheat products? This approach

involves increased government investment in promoting the cassava value chain and exploring the use of local substitutes made from homegrown options. For instance, in place of wheat bread, rice, corn, or potatoes, plantain flour can be substituted for wheat, and all these options are abundant in Nigeria.

2.3 Impact of Internal Armed Conflict on Food Production and Distribution

Nigeria's northern and middle belt parts are known for rich arable lands, which can feed the nation and export products to earn forex. Far back in the 1990s, the farmer-herder clashes began to pose an existential threat to food security (Ogbe & Ogali, 2022). Between 2015 and 2019, the ongoing clashes claimed over 3,600 lives and homes, leading to a high level of internally displaced persons and a massive decline in the food supply in Nigeria. These conflicts have reportedly cost the country millions of dollars, which could have been channeled to yield more positive outcomes for the agriculture sector.

The negative impact of internal conflict on Nigeria's food production is evident (FAO, 2021). It would be recalled that in the early 2000's, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) gained traction and became a significant threat to the government and society at large in the southern region (Ojakorotu, 2009). The ostensible objective of the militant group was to expose the atrocities of the big oil investors on the natural environment and seek inclusion in the somewhat lopsided distribution of resources, and this was done by crippling oil production through the bombing of gas/oil distribution pipes, kidnapping expatriates in exchange for ransom. These practices, however, have decreased in recent times (Human Rights Watch, 2019). As a result, the once beautiful, accommodating, and peaceful region has gained a reputation as one of the most dangerous places to visit in Nigeria ((Institute for Economics & Peace [IEP], 2022), hindering its potential as a tourist destination (World Bank, 2020) despite its rich political and cultural history. The Middle Belt and Northern regions have also experienced significant disruptions to agricultural production as a result of persistent insecurity. Farmer-herder conflicts and climate-related migration have contributed to

tensions over land and agricultural resources, disrupting rural livelihoods and agricultural activities (Olaniyan & Okeke-Uzodike, 2015). In addition, violent conflict can reduce agricultural production by disrupting farmers' access to farmland, labour, markets, and other productive resources, as demonstrated by the effects of the Boko Haram insurgency on agricultural productivity in Nigeria (Adelaja & George, 2020). These disruptions can contribute to food insecurity and undermine the productive capacity of affected communities.

The far-reaching impact of Nigeria's security challenges has created significant economic constraints that undermine the country's development trajectory and constitute a major focus of this study. Insecurity has weakened investor confidence, disrupted productive activities, increased the cost of doing business, and impeded the implementation of economic reforms and development initiatives. An examination of Nigeria's economic performance since the return to democratic governance in 1999 reveals an initial period of robust growth, followed by a gradual slowdown influenced by a combination of security challenges, policy inconsistencies, fluctuations in global oil prices, and broader macroeconomic conditions.

The restoration of democratic rule in 1999 ushered in renewed investor confidence and substantial foreign direct investment, particularly in the telecommunications and banking sectors. The democratic transition also encouraged many skilled Nigerians in the diaspora to return home, contributing their expertise to national development and economic expansion. Consequently, Nigeria recorded an average annual GDP growth rate of approximately 6.65% during the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007), which increased to about 7.98% under President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2008–2010). However, economic growth slowed to a consistent decline to 4.80% through the President Ebele Goodluck Jonathan's administration (2011-2015). (Ukpe, 2021). Nigeria recorded a power shift from incumbent to opposition rule in 2015 and also a decline in growth to

0.31% between 2015 and 2023, mainly due to inconsistency in growth-enabling policies and a myriad of security challenges (Ogbu, 2023).

Farmer–herder conflicts in Nigeria have persisted between 2020 and 2024, with reports indicating that the intensity and geographical spread of violent confrontations have remained largely unchanged, resulting in significant casualties, displacement, and destruction of livelihoods (SBM Intelligence, 2025). The protracted insecurity has compelled many farming communities to abandon their farmlands for fear of attacks by armed groups, thereby disrupting agricultural production and exacerbating food insecurity (International Crisis Group, 2020). Scholars attribute the persistence and escalation of internal conflicts in Nigeria to a complex interaction of factors, including competition over land and water resources, climate change, population pressure, weak governance and conflict-resolution institutions, ethnic and communal tensions, and the proliferation of small arms. In particular, climate-related pressures and population growth have intensified competition over shrinking land, grazing areas, vegetation and water resources, thereby contributing to farmer–herder conflicts in several parts of the country (Okwor, 2016; Onuh, 2023).

In addition, concerns have been raised about the politicisation of violence in Nigeria, particularly where political competition, local power struggles and electoral interests intersect with existing communal and armed conflicts. Scholars have identified the activities and interests of political elites as factors that can contribute to electoral violence and weaken democratic institutions (Ojukwu et al., 2023). Such dynamics can complicate efforts to address the underlying causes of conflict and strengthen accountability. Although such claims remain contested and require further empirical substantiation, the pervasive effects of insecurity on Nigeria's agricultural ecosystem are undeniable, contributing to declining farm productivity, disruption of rural livelihoods, constrained food supply, and heightened threats to national food security.

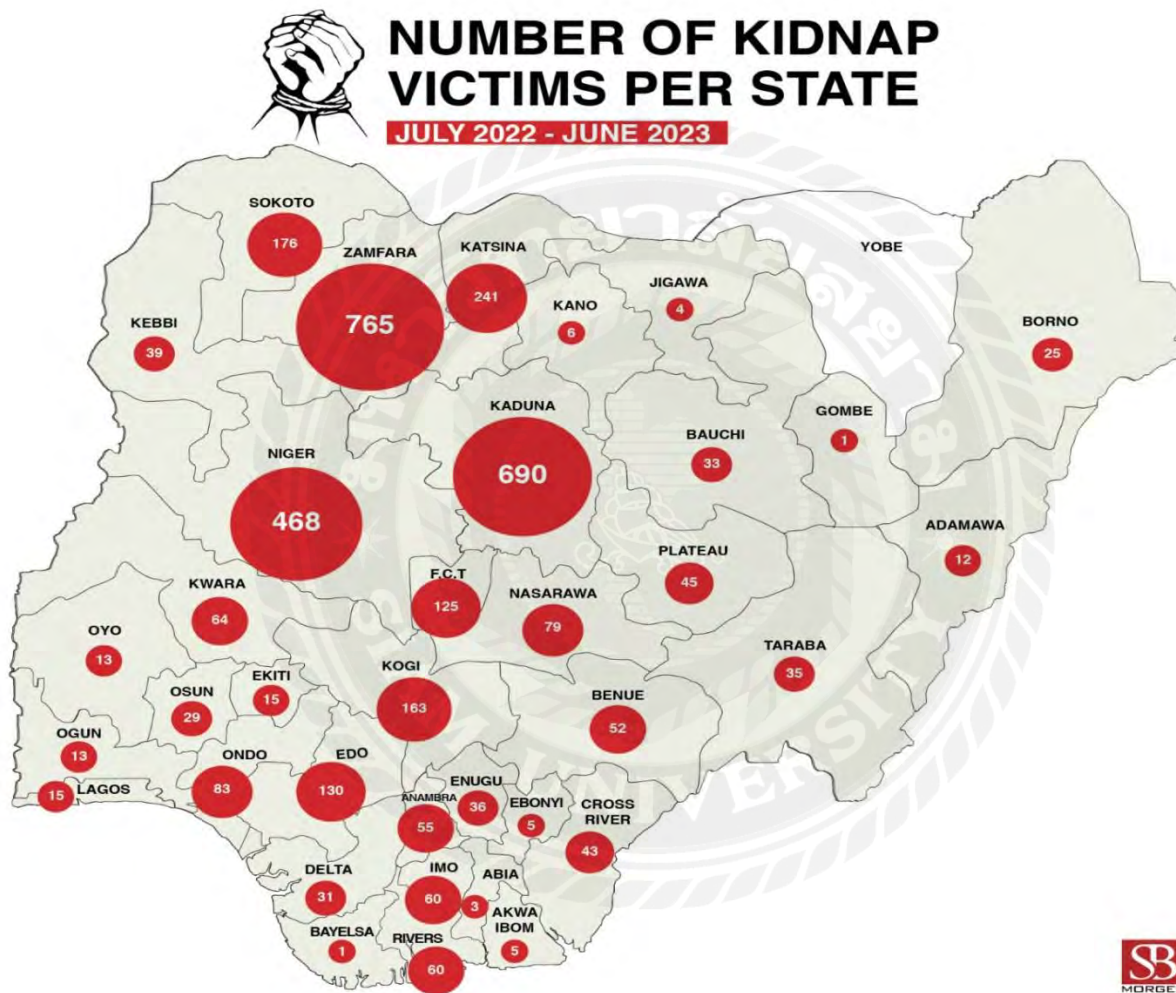


Figure 6: Data of Kidnap Occurrences per State
Source: SBM Intelligence

While Benue accounts for a large percentage of Nigeria's food supply, these incessant farmer-herder clashes have resulted in internal revenue loss and a multiplier effect on the state's general farming business climate. The price of foods like yam tuber and grains in other parts of

the country has significantly increased. Despite security challenges, another point of food price increase is poor infrastructure and multiple taxations. A lorry truck of yam traveling from Benue or Niger States to Lagos is confronted with multiple taxations, both legal and illegal taxes, within the routes, which affects the prices of goods upon getting to their final destination. Occurrences of this nature have resulted in clashes on these routes between community youths and truck drivers.

Lagos State is a densely populated state in southwestern Nigeria with an estimated population exceeding 20 million people. Food staples such as beans, yams, tomatoes, and other agricultural produce are largely transported into the state from northern Nigeria through established domestic supply chains. However, persistent insecurity in food-producing regions has disrupted production and transportation, reducing food supplies to major urban markets such as Lagos and contributing to sharp increases in food prices, with food inflation exceeding 40% in 2024 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024; World Bank, 2024).

There is a need to adopt a more drastic approach to address the menace, as food remains one of the basic necessities for survival. The Lagos State government introduced fresh farm markets where food produce can be sold within local communities. Still, despite the effort, food prices have remained at a high cost and are almost unreachable to the common man.

2.4 Government Response to Food Insecurity caused by Internal Armed Conflict

Government responses to internal armed conflict in Nigeria have often been characterised by the need to address immediate humanitarian and security crises while also confronting persistent underlying vulnerabilities. The recurrence of violent attacks, displacement and humanitarian emergencies has raised concerns about the effectiveness of measures to prevent violence and ensure accountability for perpetrators. These conflicts have had particularly severe consequences for women and children, who are among the most vulnerable groups in conflict-affected communities. In 2022, approximately 8.4 million people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe

States were projected to require humanitarian assistance, of whom about 6.7 million, representing 80 per cent, were women and children (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2023). The humanitarian crisis also exposed women and children to heightened risks of displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, gender-based violence and disruption of access to essential services. Furthermore, Civil Societies and NGOs also contribute by delivering food, awareness creation and fund raising to cater to the most vulnerable. However, these are inadequate in addressing the menace, as the bulk of the responsibility for securing lives and property lies with the government.

The 2022 report of the United Nations Resident Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria reveals that there are 4.1 million internally displaced persons from Yobe, Borno, and Yobe states in northeast Nigeria are at risk of food crisis. Similarly, in 2022, 1.74 million children were also projected to suffer from severe malnutrition. The northeast, in the past twelve years, has been constantly ravaged by insecurity: the kidnapping of school children (276 Chibok girls) in 2014, the kidnapping of 387 Kuriga Chukun area in Kaduna State, and a demand for 1-billion-dollar ransom, the invasion of suburbs, and killings in Abuja. Furthermore, over 3,620 people have been kidnapped across Nigeria by Gunmen between July 2022 and June 2023, and a record 5 billion naira was paid for ransom (SBM Intelligence, 2025). However, there have been fewer arrests than the number of menaces perpetrated.

Juxtaposing the above statistics with and also considering Nigeria's youthful population, it is interesting to note that the country still has a high demand for food, and that the food market is significantly profitable. This is because Nigeria depends mainly on imports to fill the gap in demand, which is the primary reason for the astronomical increase in the price of wheat during the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022. Even in times of war, a country like Ukraine could donate 25,000 tons of wheat to Nigeria to tackle food insecurity. This could be possible because the Ukrainian government prioritizes food production despite the war. The Ukrainian agricultural system is

characterized by the coexistence of two agricultural structures viz large-scale industrial agribusiness and family-based farming. Large-scale industrial agribusiness specializes in grain production and oil seeds for export. At the same time, family farms, comprising various small and medium-sized family farms in the suburbs, are focused on producing vegetables, potatoes, fruits, grains, dairy, and meat products for domestic sale and personal consumption.

It follows therefore that intentional policies are necessary steps to pursue a sustainable and food-secure country as a copy-paste approach may not be feasible in the Nigerian climate; however, leaders in charge of agricultural policies could adopt a system tailored to our specific needs. Although many have proposed the cattle ranching system as a solution to end the farmer-herder conflict, the ranching system is capital-intensive for individual farmers to operate. Although ranching has been widely proposed as a sustainable solution to the recurring farmer-herder conflicts in Nigeria, its adoption has been hindered by the high capital requirements for establishing ranch infrastructure, limited access to finance, inadequate government investment in the livestock sector, and the absence of comprehensive support policies for pastoralists transitioning from open grazing systems (International Crisis Group, 2017; Suleiman et al., 2015).

Cattle farmers have proposed that a controlled grazing system to be more effective in producing beef and dairy. This has come with many merits and demerits; the open grazing was the birth of farmer-herder clashes in various regions in Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2018). Although it is a cheaper and culture-based practice, total stoppage and adoption of more modern farming may be unrealistic.

Cattle herding forms an integral part of the socio-economic and cultural life of many Fulani communities in Northern Nigeria and has historically served as an important livelihood system and marker of pastoral identity (FAO, 2002). Over the years, however, cattle herders have both suffered from and, in some instances, been implicated in conflicts involving cattle rustling,

farmer–herder disputes, banditry, and other forms of insecurity. These conflicts have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of livestock and livelihoods, displacement of pastoralist communities, and disruption of agricultural production (Oti et al., 2019; Ojo, 2023). These conflicts have resulted in loss of lives, destruction of livestock and livelihoods, displacement of pastoralist communities, and disruption of agricultural production. Nevertheless, the historical and cultural significance of pastoralism to many Fulani communities means that policies addressing insecurity and food production need to consider the preservation of legitimate pastoral livelihoods alongside the need to protect farming communities, strengthen security, and promote peaceful coexistence. In response to these clashes, government officials have continued to propose cattle ranching as an option and this indicates to have been borne out of the workability of ranches in foreign climes without much consultation with the players in the field of cattle farming.

Many pastoralist communities have advocated greater government support for ranching and improved livestock-management systems as a means of addressing challenges associated with open grazing and cattle rustling (Ibrahim et al., 2016; Ducrotoy et al., 2016).



Figure 7: Fulani Cattle Herder
Source: Naziru Mikalu BBB News

The Federal Government has also pursued legislative and policy measures to address the persistent farmer–herder conflict. In June 2024, the Senate passed the National Animal Husbandry and Ranches Commission Bill for a second reading and referred it to the relevant committees for further legislative consideration. The proposed legislation seeks to establish a regulatory framework for modern livestock management through ranching and to reduce dependence on open grazing. Nevertheless, the bill has elicited considerable debate among policymakers, livestock associations, and the general public. While proponents regard ranching as a sustainable strategy for mitigating farmer–herder conflicts and modernizing the livestock industry, critics contend that ranching alone cannot provide a comprehensive solution. They argued that the conflict is multidimensional and requires complementary measures, including improved security, effective land administration, climate adaptation strategies, investment in livestock infrastructure, equitable resource governance, and inclusive stakeholder engagement (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Government is a continuous entity, but the Nigerian system is unique, so the continuity of government policy is not always guaranteed (Ogbe & Ogali, 2002) While deliberations may be ongoing regarding ranching, some state governments have taken proactive measures to end herder-farmer clashes arising from open grazing by prohibiting open grazing within its territory, while some have retained laws on open grazing. Some actors in the agriculture sector would find the policies of government favourable, others may begin to adapt to the same policies. However, successive governments could embark on policy change, resulting in policy somersault, which often leads to a crisis. A case in point is livestock farming as has been highlighted above. Only an aspect of agriculture under deliberation; fruit and vegetable farming could adopt more modern means, such as using Artificial Intelligence to set up unmanned farms to boost production, reduce cost, and ensure the safety of farmers.

2.5 Foreign Involvement In Nigeria's Internal Armed Conflict and Its Effect on Food Security

Scholars have identified multiple factors underlying the persistent armed conflict in northern Nigeria and its adverse effects on agricultural production and food security. Rather than attributing the Boko Haram insurgency to a single cause, Pérouse de Montclos (2014) argued that it emerged from a complex interaction of political, economic, social, and religious dynamics. Similarly, Empirical studies have identified a range of interconnected socioeconomic and political factors underlying the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. These include poverty, unemployment, socioeconomic inequality, poor governance, political marginalisation and economic dislocation. Evans and Kelikume (2019), using econometric analysis of Nigerian data for the period 1980–2017, found that poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption and poor governance were significant factors associated with Boko Haram terrorism. Similarly, Adesoji (2010) argues that the emergence and expansion of Boko Haram were facilitated by prevailing economic dislocation and the dynamics of party politics and political competition, alongside religious and ideological factors. These findings suggest that the insurgency cannot be adequately explained by religious extremism alone, but should also be understood within the broader context of socioeconomic deprivation, governance deficits and political grievances. These structural conditions have fuelled violent extremism, disrupted farming activities, displaced rural communities, destroyed agricultural infrastructure, and constrained food production, thereby exacerbating food insecurity in northern Nigeria. The decline in agricultural output has implications not only for national food security but also for Nigeria's capacity to leverage its rich culinary heritage as an instrument of gastronomy diplomacy and soft power.

However, it is evident that armed insurgency became most prominent in the country in 2009 with the operations of the Boko Haram terrorist group which left many out of their comfort

zone and sources of livelihood, predominantly farming. The militant group has been responsible for thousands of deaths in northeast Nigeria and also some parts of West Africa International Crisis Group, (2014). In its counterinsurgency campaign against Boko Haram, the Nigerian Armed Forces succeeded in confining many insurgent elements to the Sambisa Forest in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria, and an area adjoining the Chad Basin National Park. Although the forest remained a strategic stronghold for the insurgents for several years, sustained military offensives significantly weakened their operational capacity. In 2014, Cameroonian special forces intensified cross-border operations to prevent Boko Haram from expanding into Cameroonian territory. These operations, undertaken in coordination with Nigeria and other members of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), disrupted key supply routes and contributed to the recapture of several communities previously occupied by the insurgents (Associated Press, 2014; International Crisis Group, 2014).

In partnership with the United States, the Nigerian government has purchased 12 super Tucano fighter jets to manage the insecurity in the northeast. All 12 aircraft were delivered between 2021 and 2023 after the revamped agreement with President Donald Trump to supply Nigeria with the fighter jet. A similar partnership with the Italian government is being proposed to acquire 24 fighter jets to boost its Air Force fleet. While these arrangements are commendable and have quelled the situation to an extent, there are still challenges in food supply. Total confidence is to be restored as farmers are yet to return to the farms for fear of the unknown, and following the abduction of school children and communal clashes, which have led to many deaths.

"The United Nations set up a Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Maiduguri, northeast Nigeria, signed an Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in violence and child labor. The group, formed to support Nigerian security forces against Boko Haram and to protect local communities, has also been involved in providing security at the camps for internally displaced persons" (UNICEF, 2022 p.37).

Religious organizations also play a significant role in providing humanitarian assistance to victims of conflict and humanitarian crises, often as an expression of their faith-based commitment to charity, compassion, and social justice (Clarke & Jennings, 2008; Ferris, 2011). Such assistance commonly includes the provision of food, educational materials, medical supplies, shelter, and psychosocial support to affected populations, particularly where state institutions have limited capacity to respond effectively. In many instances, these interventions are motivated by humanitarian concerns and are delivered without explicit political or material expectations.

In Nigeria, faith-based organizations have complemented government and international relief efforts through extensive humanitarian outreach. One notable example was the late Prophet Temitope Balogun Joshua (T.B. Joshua) of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), whose philanthropic activities extended beyond Nigeria to countries affected by natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies, including Haiti following the devastating 2010 earthquake (Marshall, 2018). Similarly, international faith-based organizations have frequently provided relief assistance during periods of conflict, famine, and displacement, with support often driven by humanitarian, religious, and development objectives (Ferris, 2011).

Nevertheless, scholars acknowledge that humanitarian assistance may occasionally serve multiple purposes. Beyond addressing immediate human suffering, aid may also reinforce the social presence of religious organizations, strengthen community relationships, or, in some instances, facilitate evangelization and attract new adherents (Clarke & Jennings 2007; Hefferan et al., 2009). While such motivations remain the subject of scholarly debate and vary across organizations and contexts, the immediate impact of faith-based humanitarian interventions is often the timely provision of essential assistance to vulnerable populations. At the same time, humanitarian aid that is poorly coordinated or prolonged without sustainable development

strategies may inadvertently create dependency or generate unintended social and political consequences (Anderson, 1999).

The Economic Community of West African States, in a quest to establish a Security Mechanism, birthed the Early Warning System in May 2003 after successive attempts in 1993 and 1999, respectively. The Early Warning was a response to the uncontrolled armed conflicts, coups d'état, militias, and mercenaries within the region. It provided a mechanism to gather data and analyze security information in real-time by relying on data from international organizations, NGOs, United Nations, Regional government and media. The system is designed to work by feeding information into the security system, and it feeds back to the concerned regions, notifying them of impending crises. It was considered that a more proactive action to the crisis would be more cost-effective than a reactive approach compared to the loss of lives and properties and peacekeeping. The situation is described as follows:

“Although certain military operations and security interventions have yielded temporary gains against insurgent groups in Nigeria, systemic issues such as corruption, weak intelligence coordination, and socio-economic grievances have undermined long-term security effectiveness” (Titus, 2025, p. 52).

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), adopted in 2008, serves as the regional organisation's overarching strategy for conflict prevention and peace building. The framework seeks to mainstream conflict prevention into regional policies and programmes, strengthen the capacities of Member States and civil society organisations, enhance early warning and planning mechanisms, promote peace building initiatives, and foster cooperation among regional and international stakeholders in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction (ECOWAS, 2008).

These are responses by external forces designed to manage the security challenges within the ECOWAS region; however, juxtaposing these interventions with the current security reality in Nigeria and other member states, the Early Warning could be termed a white elephant project. The same conflicts being proposed to manage have persistently recurred in Chad, Mali, Guinea, and Niger Republic.

Several scholars and policy analysts have argued that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has adopted an inconsistent approach to the promotion of democracy and constitutional governance in the region. While ECOWAS has generally responded more decisively to military coups through sanctions, suspensions, and diplomatic pressure, its response to constitutional manipulation and democratic backsliding by civilian governments has often been perceived as comparatively constrained (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2024; Melly, 2024). This perceived inconsistency has led to criticisms that ECOWAS places greater emphasis on unconstitutional changes of government through military intervention than on constitutional amendments or electoral practices that may weaken democratic accountability.

A recent example is the constitutional reform in Togo, where the National Assembly adopted amendments introducing a parliamentary system of government under which the President of the Republic is elected by Parliament rather than through direct universal suffrage. Although the reforms generated significant domestic and international debate over their implications for democratic governance and political accountability, ECOWAS's response was viewed by many observers as comparatively muted when contrasted with the robust sanctions imposed on military-led governments in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger following their respective coups d'état (International IDEA, 2024; Bousso, 2024).

Most importantly, the somewhat slow response by ECOWAS to quell the crisis within its region has a symbiotic effect on the food supply. The Nigeria-Niger Republic diplomatic face-off following the ousting of Mohamed Bazoum resulted in strained trade relations between the bordering states of Nigeria and the Niger Republic, leading to astronomical inflation of goods due to the closed borders and ECOWAS sanctions, as well as Nigeria's withdrawal of electricity supply to the Niger Republic. (Daily Trust, 16 Sept. 2023).

2.6 Summary of Chapter 2

This chapter explores the impact of food insecurity on Nigeria's soft power diplomacy, particularly through culinary potential. It postulates how food insecurity in Nigeria could be exacerbated by internal and external armed conflicts, which could hinder the country's ability to harness its soft power potential through culinary diplomacy. This also extends to the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war on Nigeria's food supply, particularly wheat imports, resulting to an increase in staple food prices and food insecurity. It further elucidates how internal conflicts, such as farmer-herder clashes, have negatively impacted food production and distribution, resulting in food shortages and price increases.

The Government's response to food insecurity includes some initiatives, such as an increase in the minimum wage; however, more needs to be done to address the root causes of the problem, including the use of more tact in managing the farmer-herder crisis. Foreign involvement in Nigeria's internal armed conflict has had a mixed impact on food security, with some interventions providing temporary relief while others have been ineffective.

Potential Solutions to be considered may include increased government investment in promoting the cassava value chain and exploring local substitutes for imported wheat products, adoption of modern farming techniques, such as using Artificial Intelligence to set up unmanned

farms, to boost production and reduce costs, implementation of policies to address the root causes of internal conflicts, such as farmer-herder clashes, and promote sustainable agriculture practices.

Nigeria's food insecurity is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach to address the root causes of the problem. By harnessing its culinary potential and promoting sustainable agriculture practices, Nigeria can improve food security and enhance stronger soft power diplomacy.



CHAPTER 3

Nigeria's Soft Power Prowess

3.1 Introduction

This chapter proceeds from the reviewed literature related to gastronomy diplomacy and food scarcity exacerbated by insecurity. It identifies how the nation's recovery from this predicament requires immediate and decisive actions while acknowledging the use of food as a tool to promote soft power and enhance the country's image as well as its development. If food can be deployed as a tool for national development and influence, it should therefore be seen as a significant national discourse. Therefore, the chapter interrogates the several factors – like conflicts, climate change, and ineffective agriculture policies – that contribute to the Nigeria's food crisis with a view to advancing steps for food sufficiency as well as food abundance. As Nigeria continues to grapple with food inflation, rising to over 40%, the aim of influencing and attracting international interests from far and near to Nigeria's rich cuisine, and harnessing the benefits for national development could be defeated due to food shortage. The chapter therefore outlines opportunities to favorably address this dynamic.

3.2 Exploring Nigeria's Soft Power Assets: Food and other Potentials

Soft power is a term frequently used in international relations, which describes a capacity to influence others without coercion or force but rather by attraction and persuasion (Nye, 2004). It is accomplished by highlighting a nation's intellectual, technological, and cultural strengths that attract foreigners.

Nigeria's vibrant agricultural sector as well as its cuisine is among the nation's most characteristic traits. These possess very significant and largely untapped soft power potentials particularly because of the absence of a national strategy to harness them. Agriculture has

fundamentally served as bedrock of the nation's economy for the provision of food, employment generation as well as the sourcing of raw materials – cash crops – for both local and international markets (Adesina, 2017). However, apart from the economic dynamics of Nigeria's agricultural and culinary heritage, it is also a valuable cultural asset capable of being applied as a form of soft power.

Nigeria's food sector has garnered international acclaim for its rich flavours and diverse ingredients, reflective of the country's wide diversity as seen in the GTCO Annual Food and Drink Festival. Nigerian cuisine has attracted international visibility by the help of the teeming Nigerian diaspora community, international food festivals and food tourism among others (Guaranty Trust Holding Company 2024). This rising global appreciation strategically positions Nigeria as a powerful gastronomy diplomacy hub. Clearly, Nigeria's agricultural and food potential stand as powerful tools of attraction and to foster international interest as well as economic opportunities for the country (Nye, 2004).

Nigeria's image abroad, is also displayed and showcased through its human and material resources. The skills of its nationals on several fronts as well as its immensely talented citizens, are very well known and could contribute to its enhanced reputation abroad and the fostering of goodwill among other countries. Among these skills include, Nigeria's expertise in film (Nollywood), music and the creative arts, In-vitro Fertilization (IVF), domestic auto manufacturing (Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing), and top fintech platforms (Paystack and Flutterwave) and even sports among others.

Nigeria's oil and gas industry has traditionally overshadowed the country's industrial and manufacturing sectors. However, in recent years, Nigeria has gained increasing international recognition for advances in domestic manufacturing, particularly within the automotive industry.

Two indigenous companies, Proforce Defence Limited and Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing (IVM), exemplify the country's growing industrial capacity and technological innovation. Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing, established in 2007, is Nigeria's first indigenous automobile manufacturing company. The company has distinguished itself by producing affordable vehicles tailored to local market needs while contributing to employment generation, technology transfer, and import substitution (Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing, n.d). Similarly, Proforce Defence Limited has earned international recognition for designing and manufacturing armoured vehicles and defence equipment for both domestic and international markets, demonstrating Nigeria's expanding capability in high-value manufacturing and defence technology. Innoson has become a prominent participant in Nigeria's automotive sector, manufacturing automobiles, trucks, buses, and utility vehicles for the continent's markets.

Since Innoson cars are specifically designed for African roads and conditions, many African nations with comparable infrastructure challenges can find them a sensible option. With its robust, locally produced automobiles, Innoson has elevated Nigeria to prominence in the continent's industrial sector. The fact that Innoson has successfully sold automobiles to other African countries, such as Mali and Sierra Leone, shows that Nigeria can compete on the world manufacturing stage. Through these exports, Nigeria's reputation as a center of innovation and industrial development is enhanced, economic cooperation is bolstered, and diplomatic ties are strengthened. Nigeria's innovation and production in the automobile sector can be further developed and deployed as a soft power platform by investing in the Innoson brand's spread throughout Africa and beyond.

Also, Nigeria's industrial development is gaining momentum with companies such as Proforce Limited which has established itself in the security and defence industries. The Nigerian

armed forces and law enforcement agencies of other countries use Proforce's armoured vehicle production expertise. Proforce was founded in 2008 and has since grown to be a reputable brand in the armored vehicle market. It is recognised for manufacturing dependable, superior goods that adhere to global standards. The Nigerian Army and Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company (IVM) entered into a partnership to strengthen local production and modification of military equipment, including armoured fighting vehicles and other military hardware. The partnership was formalised during a meeting held at the Army Headquarters in Abuja on 2 January 2018 between the Nigerian Army, led by the then Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Y. Buratai, and the management of IVM, led by its Chairman, Dr. Innocent Chukwuma. The agreement included plans for the supply and modification of military vehicles, the production of armoured fighting vehicles, the provision of engines, chassis and other equipment, and the enhancement of the capacity of Nigerian Army personnel to support the joint venture (Owoeye, 2018).

In terms of medical service, a particular area of interest which is also gaining enormous acclaim, and which drawing clients from all over the continent and the diaspora, is that of In-vitro Fertilization (IVF) and has come to represent Nigeria's capacity to offer top-notch healthcare services.

“Furthermore, with its remarkable advancements in In-vitro Fertilization (IVF) in recent years, Nigeria has become a major participant in African medical tourism. IVF was initially primarily a medical procedure provided in industrialized nations, but it is now available in Nigeria through a number of cutting-edge facilities” (Azeez, 2024, p. 1).

Clinics with high success rates and excellent treatment, such as Nordica Fertility Centre, The Bridge Clinic, and others, have become well-known worldwide. These clinics employ seasoned medical professionals, many of whom have studied overseas, and are furnished with cutting-edge medical equipment.

The Country's soft power is strengthened in a number of ways by this growing IVF industry. In the first place, it dispels the myth that high-quality healthcare is exclusive to countries outside of Africa and establishes the nation as a pioneer in the field in Africa. Second, Nigeria develops goodwill among other countries and strengthens its tourist economy by drawing in overseas patients. Because it promotes Nigeria as a place to receive treatment as well as a nation with a developing ability for innovation and excellence in the health sector, medical tourism is a type of soft power. Long-term growth in the IVF sector and the promotion of other specialised medical services can help to further establish Nigeria's standing as the continent's centre for medical tourism. Beyond IVF, Nigeria is home to a growing number of healthcare professionals and researchers contributing to global health knowledge. Nigerian scientists have played pivotal roles in combating diseases like malaria, Ebola, and COVID-19, further strengthening Nigeria's position in the global health space. This will draw in international investment and generate new job opportunities in the health sector, which would further boost the nation's economy.

Nigeria has also become a popular destination for affordable beauty cosmetic procedures such as liposuction, breast enhancement surgeries, Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL), (Michael et al., 2023) and the Intravenous Beauty Drips commonly used to achieve a curvy outlook for women as well as skin brightening and lightening for those who wish to enhance their complexion (Enigbokan et al., 2020). While acknowledging that in most global crises there are up and down sides, this increase in patronage of Nigerian medical facilities and practitioners for these beauty procedures can be attributed to the devaluation of the naira in 2023 making Nigeria a more affordable option as a result of the drop in oil prices. As the beauty and cosmetology trend continues to define preferences, more opportunities can be explored and exploited to promote Nigeria's soft power potential in this field of cosmetic procedures.

In addition, Nigeria's fintech industry, in particular, has made the country's digital sector one of its most promising platforms for flexing soft power. With the emergence of businesses like Paystack and Flutterwave, Nigeria has become a centre for financial technology solutions for the African and international markets. Significant problems in the African financial ecosystem are being resolved by these businesses, including those that facilitate e-commerce, enable smooth cross-border payments, and advance financial inclusion. After its founding in 2015, Paystack rose to prominence as Nigeria's top payment processing provider. As expressed by the co-founder, Ezra Olubi, “It became an important participant in Nigerian e-commerce since it allowed businesses to take payments through a variety of channels such as cards, bank transfers, and mobile money”.

When US-based payment giant Stripe purchased Paystack in 2020 for \$200 million, the company became well-known worldwide (Adetola Sulaimon, 2020). This development established Nigeria as a significant participant in the global fintech ecosystem. Through the acquisition, Nigeria demonstrated to the world that its people possess the ability, creativity, and resources necessary to create businesses that can compete on a worldwide level. Another massive Nigerian fintech company, Flutterwave, has partnerships with international businesses like Visa and Mastercard, and offers payment options across several African nations. Flutterwave is a testament to Nigeria's promise as a tech leader, having grown to become one of the most valuable businesses in Africa, with a valuation of over \$1 billion. Nigeria's reputation in the fintech sector has been enhanced by Flutterwave's success in providing easy-to-use financial solutions for African individuals and enterprises, hence augmenting the country's soft power. Nigeria is gaining recognition for its IT talent, in addition to its fintech capabilities.

The breadth of Nigeria's computer expertise has been demonstrated by organisations like Andela, which links African software developers with international tech corporations. Nigeria contributes to the global digital economy and enhances its reputation as a nation with highly

skilled and inventive labour by exporting its tech capabilities. The growth of innovation centers in Lagos, Abuja, and other cities has further solidified Nigeria's position as a pioneer in the African digital landscape. In addition to having positive economic effects, these technological developments strengthen Nigeria's soft power by presenting the nation as a center of entrepreneurship, invention, and creativity. Nigeria can strengthen its leadership in Africa's digital revolution by promoting the growth of its Information Technology sector and showcasing its achievements globally.

3.3 Soft Power through the Nigerian Entertainment Industry

Nigeria's entertainment industry, particularly Nollywood, constitutes one of the country's most significant sources of soft power. Nollywood is widely recognized as the second-largest film industry in the world by production volume (Igwe, 2015) and produces thousands of films annually. Over the years, the industry has expanded its global reach through digital streaming platforms such as Netflix and YouTube, enabling audiences across the United States, Europe, Asia, and other regions to access Nigerian films with ease. This increased international visibility has enhanced Nollywood's influence beyond the African continent.

The contribution of Nollywood to Nigeria's soft power is substantial. Through its films, the industry projects African narratives, cultural values, traditions, languages, and lived experiences to global audiences, thereby fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Nigeria's rich cultural heritage (Nye, 2004; Miller, 2016). By presenting Nigerian stories, cultural practices, languages and social experiences to international audiences, Nollywood serves as an important medium of cultural diplomacy and soft-power projection. Its films have contributed to the international visibility of Nigerian culture and have provided audiences outside Nigeria with

alternative representations of Nigerian society, thereby contributing to the country's cultural image and international engagement (Akinwale, 2013).

The romantic and historical epic storylines of Nollywood offer a window into Nigerian culture, morals, and everyday life for audiences across the world, contributing to intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange (Haynes, 2016). By dispelling negative stereotypes and promoting Nigeria as a dynamic, creative, and vibrant nation, this cultural export contributes to reshaping international perceptions of the country and enhancing its soft power resources (Nye, 2004; Oloruntoba & Falola, 2020).

Millions of Nigerians are employed by Nollywood, which also contributes significantly to the country's economy through revenue-generating overseas distribution agreements. By doing this, the sector showcases Nigeria's creative and economic potential in addition to its culture. Nigeria's cultural influence is strengthened by the success of its Nollywood films abroad, which make it possible for the nation to share its customs, values, and stories with the rest of the globe. Furthermore, Nollywood facilitates cross-cultural cooperation since Nigerian filmmakers frequently collaborate with actors, producers, and directors from other countries. This strengthens Nigeria's position as a cultural leader in Africa and beyond and promotes increased cross-cultural exchange worldwide.

Nigeria's fashion industry also constitutes a significant component of the country's soft power resources. Driven by a youthful and creative population, the sector has developed a reputation for producing distinctive designs that blend indigenous textiles, cultural heritage, and contemporary global trends. Nigerian fashion has gained prominence both domestically and internationally, with designers showcasing their collections at major fashion events across Africa, Europe, and North America, thereby enhancing the country's cultural visibility and creative

influence (Nwafor, 2021; British Council, 2021). As one of Africa's largest creative economies, Nigeria is home to numerous fashion entrepreneurs and designers whose works have contributed to the global recognition of African fashion. The industry's economic significance is equally noteworthy. According to Statista Market Insights (2025), Nigeria's apparel market is valued at approximately US\$10 billion and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.23% between 2025 and 2029 (Statista Market Insights, 2025). Beyond its economic contribution, the fashion industry serves as an important instrument of cultural diplomacy by promoting Nigerian identity, stimulating employment, encouraging entrepreneurship, and strengthening the country's soft power on the global stage.

Thailand's promotion of its silk industry demonstrates how cultural products can be transformed into effective instruments of cultural diplomacy and soft power. Events such as the Thai Silk Festival have evolved beyond platforms for commerce and wealth creation to become strategic avenues for showcasing Thailand's cultural heritage, strengthening its national image, and enhancing its international influence (Nye, 2004). The Thai government has recognized that in an increasingly globalized and interdependent world, where advances in mass communication and digital technologies facilitate cross-cultural interaction, cultural diplomacy serves as a powerful means of promoting mutual understanding, international cooperation, and sustainable economic development (Mark, 2009; Nye, 2004). Similarly, Nigeria's rich cultural diversity—including its textiles, cuisine, music, films, festivals, and traditional arts—constitutes a significant reservoir of soft power. If strategically promoted through coherent cultural diplomacy policies, these cultural assets could shape global public opinion, enhance Nigeria's international reputation, strengthen national branding, foster youth entrepreneurship, and generate employment and wealth (Nye, 2004; Oloruntoba & Falola, 2020).

Similarly, various tools are available to elevate our soft power prowess through Nigeria's rich gastronomy and local beverages, our excellent fashion sense, and traditional fabrics such as Adire, Aso-Oke, Akwocha, and numerous prospective tourist destinations. If harnessed, these could provide a sustainable alternative to our oil-dependent economy.

3.4 Armed Conflicts and Other Challenges in Harnessing Nigeria's Gastronomy Soft Power

Conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups in Nigeria have arisen in Nigeria since its independence from Britain in 1960 and have had overwhelming effects on the country. One of such was the civil war, which occurred between 1967 and 1970 which devastated a large section of the country. New agitationist groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) were formed in the Eastern Region of Nigeria over similar challenges which caused the aforementioned Nigerian civil-war. This was a call for the Igbos, one of Nigeria's most populous ethnic groups, and other ethnicities in eastern Nigeria to become independent states. They have questioned the Federation's continued existence and are in favour of the new state that the ancestors of the land battled to establish between 1967 and 1970.

Another significant conflict is the environmentally motivated strife in the Niger Delta region of the south, and the emergence of militant groups there has put the Nigerian government's authority over the area in jeopardy, also affecting the country's oil economy as well as the fisheries and agricultural sector of that region. Furthermore, in the country's west, more autonomy from the Federation of Nigeria is being demanded by other Yoruba ethnic groupings as well as other organizations in Hausa-Fulani northern parts Nigeria.

At the local and national level, little is known about how armed conflicts affect agricultural and food production (Blattman & Miguel, 2010; Martin-Shields & Stojetz, 2018). The Agriculture

sector appears to be especially susceptible to violence in many developing countries for several reasons. First, there is the desire to seize territory and create rival governments among the newly formed terrorist groups like ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Both depend on a robust agricultural foundation and a stable food supply. Due to the implications for food insecurity, it is crucial to understand the nature of the relationships between agriculture and conflict. More than half of the 815 million undernourished people in the world as of 2016 resided in nations dealing with violence, conflict, and fragility, where the prevalence of undernourishment is higher than in other nations (UNICEF, 2017). The worrisome association between food insecurity and conflict suggests the dire situation of the agriculture sector in war-ridden areas. Food insecurity conditions can worsen and serve as a catalyst for future wars when agricultural production, trade, food systems, market structures, and supply chain mechanisms are disrupted by conflict (Eme et al., 2014).

When the Boko haram insurgency began in 2009, it primarily targeted the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa in the northeast. It is sometimes suggested that the agricultural sector in northeastern Nigeria has been most negatively impacted, given that over 80% of the rural population relies on farming for crops or cattle. There have also been significant population shifts in and out of Nigeria's northeast due to the Boko Haram insurgency. Additionally, the region is home to 5.1 million people who experience severe food insecurity and over 15 million individuals who experience food insecurity (UNICEF, 2017). There have apparently been severe declines in the agricultural sector in the afflicted region, particularly in the production of staple crops such as rice, sorghum, corn, cowpeas and millet (Kimenyi et al., 2014). Furthermore, the devastation of roads, bridges, communication systems, and other physical infrastructure has restricted market access, which has interfered with the supply chain. Many of the claims made about the devastating effects of Boko Haram on agriculture using a nationally representative household level panel

dataset that includes observations during the conflict, shows that Nigerian households' total agricultural production is significantly reduced when exposed to the insurgency, primarily due to a decrease in the production of staple crops like cassava, soya, sorghum, rice, and yam, which are key crops in the conflict-affected regions. Insurgency also contributed to a decline in hired labour and agricultural wages, but not the hours worked by household members on farms. These hold important policy implications for economic development in conflict areas.

In the Far North Region of Cameroon, the Boko Haram conflict devastated large-scale vegetable farmers' businesses. It undermined the livelihood of thousands of others who depended on it. For sustenance, farmers were left stuck with deteriorating harvests of perishable crops as the volume of farm products fell. With its commanding view of the Republic of Chad's capital, Ndjaména, Mokolo was formerly a central agricultural and commercial hub that drew people from neighboring nations such as Chad, Mali, and Sudan. The town is abandoned and essentially cut off from the rest of the country, with little to no business being conducted there. In northern Cameroon, migration from the conflict caused turmoil, interrupted routine farming, and strained destitute communities. This was made worse by the highly unfavorable weather in this part of the nation (Nforngwa, 2016), which impacted agricultural productivity.

As a result of Boko Haram's destructive impacts, many people who commuted from the North to as far south as Lagos, Ibadan and Ogbomoso to supply various food items, including pepper, tomatoes, and fish gave up on this line of work (Awodola & Oboshi, 2015). They had been personally impacted by this since they no longer had money from the sale of these products, which they could have used to purchase further food. As a result, three agriculturally producing states in northeastern Nigeria—Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe—faced food supply instability. The food crisis that engulfed northeastern Nigeria spilled over into neighboring regions of the Niger

Republic, northern Cameroon, and southern Chad, highlighting the trans boundary nature of food insecurity and its implications for regional stability.

In addition, Nigeria experienced its first military coup d'état on 15 January 1966, marking the military's entry into governance. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was appointed Military Governor of the Eastern Region under the new military administration. Later that year, on 29 July, a counter-coup brought Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power as Head of State. Ojukwu's refusal to recognize the authority of the federal government, owing to disagreements with Gowon over constitutional and political issues, culminated in a prolonged national crisis that eventually led to the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Siollun, 2009; Stremlau, 1977). During the conflict, many post-independence development programmes in Eastern Nigeria were suspended or abandoned. Agricultural plantations, farm settlements, extension services, and fertilizer distribution schemes were severely disrupted, while widespread destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of millions of people significantly reduced agricultural production and contributed to acute food shortages and increased dependence on food imports (Ekundare, 1973; Madeibo, 1980; Korieh, 2012). The mass return of Igbo populations from other parts of Nigeria, particularly the North, further reduced agricultural labour availability and increased pressure on food supplies in the Eastern Region (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Korieh, 2012).

The beginning of the war disrupted food production more than ever before resulting in significant food importation because there was a deficiency in the favourable environment required for agricultural productivity (Nwazor et al., 2019). Similar to this, a number of agricultural infrastructures were destroyed, and the majority of the initiatives started between 1962 and 1968 as part of the Eastern Nigeria Development Plan were abandoned. The large Igbo repatriation from other parts of the country, particularly Northern Nigeria, was to further compound the loss of

labour in agriculture and result in an astronomical growth in population and a corresponding spike in the demand for food. The Nigerian Red Cross reports that between September and October 1966, over a million people, mostly of Igbo descent and primarily from Eastern Nigeria, left various locations in Northern Nigeria and returned to their ethnic areas in the East as a result of the pogroms that had occurred before the war. Furthermore, tensions and animosity towards Easterners meant that by the time the civil war finally broke out in 1967, over 4 million of them had returned home from other parts of Nigeria. Expectedly majority of these returnees were Igbo, while the sudden rise in population further aggravated the pressures especially on the limited resources of the region, which were already over stretched. Naturally, the many families who had to provide accommodations for their relatives who were returning took on the responsibility of reintegration and resettlement. As a result, the surge of returnees put strain on food supply and perhaps jeopardised the region's food security. As an aside, Eastern Nigeria had the highest population densities prior to this time, with roughly 420 people per square kilometer, compared to 337 in the West, 170 in the Mid-West, and 106 in the North (Ikpe, 1994).

Furthermore, food shortages were inevitable given that the majority of the population inflow to the East occurred in September 1966, right before the conclusion of the cassava planting season and the start of the yam harvest season (Ikpe, 1994). Martin has noted that the return of Igbo from other regions contributed to the population growth of the Ngwa people and, in fact, other parts of Igboland prior to the war. Additionally, as more refugees fled into rural Biafra with each city that came under federal control, the pressure on the region's land resources increased, exacerbating the already dire food situation (Martin, 1988).

The loss of agricultural land was another major consequence of the Nigerian Civil War. As communities were displaced from captured territories, many former farmlands were converted into

temporary residential areas for internally displaced persons. Across Igboland, civilians fled into villages, forests, and creeks, where they erected makeshift shelters, often beneath tree canopies, to escape advancing Nigerian troops. In many instances, these displacements occurred either shortly before or immediately after the harvest season, resulting in the abandonment of crops and the destruction of homes and farmlands. Consequently, affected populations suffered the dual loss of their means of livelihood and their food supply (Oparaocha-Ekwe, 2004).

Evidence indicates that several communities whose agricultural produce was destroyed during the conflict struggled to recover for many years after the war. For example, Owerri and its surrounding communities reportedly lost nearly all their yam harvests, either through heavy consumption by troops following the town's capture in September 1968 or through widespread looting (Oparaocha-Ekwe, 2004). As a result, these communities were unable to regain their former status as major yam-producing areas. This decline was not due to a lack of agricultural expertise among the local population but rather to the extensive destruction of farmland, displacement of farming communities, and the long-term disruption of agricultural production caused by the war (Oparaocha-Ekwe, 2004).

Almost all of Igboland's principal food-producing regions were under federal forces' control by the end of 1968 (Korieh, 2018). The sections of Biafra that produced food were mostly the outside regions, particularly the yam, rice, and other staples produced in Abakiliki and Ogoja to the north; the Onitsha, Atani, and Anam axis to the west; and the Ikwerre and Etche districts to the south. With very few exceptions, the major staples were and are essentially lacking in the centre region of Biafra, which was ultimately compacted and shrunk by military defeat (Harneit-Sievers, et al., 1997).

It has been suggested that the federal soldiers' capture of important food-producing regions including Ngwa, Arochukwu, Bende, Abakiliki, Nsukka, and Onitsha was the cause (Akpan, 1976). After the war, many of the locations where farmlands were looted had individuals returning home and starting over from scratch. To begin a new life, some were even forced to borrow cassava stems and seed yams from neighbors. In the instance of Ohaji, in Imo State, this unsettling tendency has limited yam production to the following villages, which have been able to resume since the end of the civil war: Ochia, Iguru, Ikwerede, Asaa, Obile, Ihie, Mgbu Isii, and Umuapu (Nwulu, 2004).

Due to the devastating effects of the war, some yam crop species, such as ji oko, ji Ibibio, and ji Iyaghiri, have either completely disappeared from the earth or are now only found in limited quantities. On the other hand, many people blame the civil war period, during which the majority of the crop was consumed, for the lower quality of cocoyam being cultivated in Igboland (Ibezie, 2003). This is also the reason why a lot of people in Edda started using rice as a substitute crop, challenging yam's hegemony in the region. Similarly, food production was diverted by the population shift in Igboland. While the forced evacuation of people resulted in the looting of their harvest and farmlands, the migration of people into formerly agriculturally exclusive areas caused the loss of farmlands, which ultimately had a negative impact on food production. As a result, desirable farmlands were used as havens for the population of escaping refugees. This movement also renounced the customary farming technique of following, which contributed to the food shortage throughout the war.

One of the positives of the Bola Ahmed Tinubu administration to devalue of the Nigerian naira paved a higher purchasing power to tourists at the expense of the general populace. At the same time, while this may seem profitable to food vendors providing services to the highest bidder,

a xenophobic crisis could erupt through resentment for visitors who may have a higher purchasing power. Lower crimes rates are often linked to climes where food availability is not a challenge, which is why countries like Thailand have been able to promote Thai cuisine through tourism.

Food shortage in Nigeria is a critical issue that directly impacts the well-being of its population. With over 220 million people, Nigeria faces significant challenges along the food value chain, including production, distribution, processing, and storage. Challenges, such as climate change, conflict, natural disasters, and pandemic-related shocks, have led to food scarcity and increased prices, affecting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 of zero hunger. Factors contributing to the worsening food crisis in Nigeria include bad harvests, dysfunctional markets, and conflicts that exacerbate food insufficiency.

The country's struggle to maintain success in hunger reduction is evident, with millions at risk of famine, particularly in the North East, where female-headed households are more food insecure than others. Additionally, the lack of access to land and credit for rural women farmers widens the gap between rich and poor, hindering progress towards ending hunger. To address food insecurity in Nigeria, various interventions are being implemented. Donor agencies provide support through shock-responsive social protection, food vouchers, cash transfers, health and nutrition education, and psychosocial support to affected families.

Efforts are also being made to promote the use of technology in food production, processing, and storage, reintroduce agriculture extension workers, and facilitate access to markets for food products. Food shortage in Nigeria is a multifaceted issue influenced by environmental, social, and economic factors. Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort involving government interventions, humanitarian responses, and community engagement to ensure food security and improve the well-being of the most vulnerable populations in Nigeria.

3.5 Opportunities in Harnessing Nigeria's Gastronomy Soft Power

Having examined the challenges confronting Nigeria's gastronomy soft power, it is equally important to highlight the numerous opportunities available for realizing the country's gastronomy diplomacy potential. One of Nigeria's greatest comparative advantages lies in its human capital. According to Becker (1993), human capital comprises the knowledge, skills, education, experience, and health that individuals possess, which enhance their productivity and contribute to economic and social development. This perspective emphasizes that people are valuable national assets whose capabilities can be strengthened through sustained investment in education, training, healthcare, and skills development. Consequently, building human capital has become a central objective of national development strategies worldwide. To assess countries' ability to develop and effectively utilize the talents and competencies of their populations, the Human Capital Index provides a useful benchmark by measuring the extent to which nations nurture and deploy human potential across different stages of life (World Economic Forum, 2015).

Nigeria's performance on global human capital metrics has historically revealed significant gaps placing the country near the lower end, reflecting challenges in education quality, workforce readiness, and overall productivity outcomes (World Economic Forum, 2015). Demographic indicators, such as a high child dependency ratio and a youthful median age, present a dual reality: a strain on current resources but also a powerful opportunity for long-term growth if properly harnessed. A youthful population, when equipped with relevant skills and knowledge, can become a strategic asset rather than a developmental burden.

Given Nigeria's large and youthful population, the country's human capital represents a strategic resource that, if effectively harnessed, could significantly enhance its gastronomy diplomacy initiatives, strengthen its cultural influence, and contribute to sustainable economic development. This is where human capital intersects with soft power. Beyond economic

contributions, a well-developed population enhances a nation's global standing through innovation, culture, and intellectual influence. Nigeria's demographic advantage positions it to exert influence not only within Africa but also globally. However, realizing this potential depends on sustained investment in education, skills development, and taking advantage of the high mobility of Nigerians acclaimed to be among the most mobile populations across the globe.

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has implemented several policy initiatives aimed at strengthening its education sector. The recommendations of the Ashby Commission (1960) laid the foundation for post-independence educational development, while the National Policy on Education introduced major structural reforms, initially adopting the 6-3-3-4 system of education, which sought to integrate vocational and technical education into the school curriculum (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013; Gyang, 2007). With the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in 1999, the structure was subsequently consolidated into the 9-3-4 system, comprising nine years of compulsory basic education (six years of primary and three years of junior secondary education), followed by three years of senior secondary education and a minimum of four years of tertiary education. This reform was designed to expand access to quality education, improve literacy, reduce school dropout rates, and equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary for national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013; Universal Basic Education Commission [UBEC], 2023).

Reforms, such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), emphasized value reorientation, poverty reduction, and human empowerment through education (Obioma, 2007). Similarly, the Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector highlighted key priorities, including access, quality assurance, vocational training, and improved funding mechanisms (Gyang, 2007). These efforts reflect a growing recognition that education must not only be accessible but also relevant to the demands of a modern, knowledge-based economy.

Within this broader framework lies an emerging opportunity: the use of human capital as a vehicle for gastronomy diplomacy. Nigeria's rich culinary heritage represents an underutilized asset in its soft power strategy. The global rise of food culture as a diplomatic and economic tool suggests that countries can project influence through cuisine, hospitality, and cultural expression. By investing in culinary education, food entrepreneurship, and hospitality management, Nigeria can position its cuisine as a symbol of national identity and global engagement.

The development of skills in gastronomy and related industries can create employment opportunities while also enhancing Nigeria's international image. Culinary professionals, restaurateurs, and food innovators can serve as cultural ambassadors, promoting Nigerian cuisine on the global stage. This aligns with broader trends in which nations leverage cultural industries to strengthen their global presence and attract tourism.

At the same time, health remains a critical component of human capital development. A healthy population is better positioned to participate productively in education, employment, and innovation, while poor health can adversely affect educational attainment, labour productivity, and overall economic performance (Barro, 1996; Jaiyeoba, 2015). In Nigeria, successive health policies and reforms, including the Primary Health Care (PHC) framework, have sought to expand access to essential health services and improve health outcomes (World Health Organization [WHO], 2024; World Bank, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these interventions has been constrained by persistent systemic challenges, including inadequate and inefficient financing, shortages and maldistribution of health workers, inadequate health infrastructure, and weaknesses in governance, coordination, and policy implementation (WHO, 2024; World Bank, 2024). These constraints limit the contribution of the health sector to human capital development and, consequently, Nigeria's broader productivity, innovation, and economic development.

Ultimately, Nigeria's greatest opportunity lies in aligning its human capital development strategies with emerging global dynamics. By investing not only in formal education and healthcare but also in creative and cultural sectors such as gastronomy, the country can transform its population into a source of soft power. This approach would enable Nigeria to strengthen its global influence, diversify its economy, and achieve more sustainable development outcomes.

3.6 Summary of Chapter 3

The chapter examines Nigeria's soft power potential, highlighting the various instruments including, food, technology and culture among others. It explores the potential for soft power through various industries, including Automotive manufacturing (Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing); Healthcare (IVF and medical tourism); Fintech (Paystack and Flutterwave); Entertainment (Nollywood and cultural exchange); and Fashion (vibrant industry with global potential).

Furthermore, the chapter appraises the impact of food insecurity and conflict on the country's development as a major challenge in harnessing the wide benefits of Nigeria's rich cuisine as an attraction and tool for national development. This was done, noting that Nigeria's food shortage crisis is exacerbated by insecurity, climate change, and ineffective agriculture policies. However, the opportunities to boost Nigeria's soft power by leveraging its resources, expertise, and cultural strengths are also discussed.

Nigeria's significant advancements in IVF and medical tourism, attracting international patients and positioning Nigeria as a destination for affordable IVF procedures, while also making giant strides in the fintech industry, is brought to the fore through companies like Paystack and Flutterwave that provide innovative financial solutions for businesses. The Nollywood and music industry is a significant source of soft power, showcasing Nigeria's rich culture and stories to a

global audience, while also serving as a viable platform to promote entertainment, tourism, and its film-making prowess thereby dominating the international entertainment market.

Nigeria's creative fashion industry further emphasizes Nigeria's strength and voice among the creatives of the world, placing it as a fashion hub of Africa. By harnessing its soft power potential, Nigeria can improve its global reputation, attract investment, and promote economic development.



CHAPTER 4

Institutional Factors Debilitating Nigeria's Soft Power Export

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Nigeria's demography and human capacity, the role of Nigerian institutions in the promotion of its soft power prowess and the challenges encountered in the process of export. These challenges arising from corruption, poor institutional funding, bureaucratic bottle necks, lack of cooperation between and among government agencies and lack of a defined and coherent national branding strategy, further weaken the exploitation of Nigeria's rich cultural capital to leverage international influence (Okafor, 2022).

Consequently, an examination of the institutional factors debilitating Nigeria's soft power export is essential for understanding the gap between the country's soft power potential and its actual global influence. By identifying and analyzing these institutional impediments, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on Nigeria's foreign policy, national image, and strategic positioning within the international system.

4.2 Nigeria's Migration Profile and Food Export

It is important to reiterate that Nigeria is Africa's demographic giant, with an estimated population of approximately 238 million people in 2025, making it the continent's most populous country. This large and youthful population, coupled with increasing international migration, has resulted in a vibrant Nigerian diaspora that contributes significantly to the country's cultural, economic, and diplomatic engagement across the globe (Adepoju, 2005; World Bank, 2025)

Nigerians have been migrating abroad since before the arrival of the colonialists. The Hausa transnational ties are a case in point in this regard. Similarly, the trans-Saharan trade,

particularly in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, was another cardinal manifestation of mass migration, in some sense. Mecca and Medina pilgrimages also took place during the pre-colonial times. However, a major turning point in the forced migration of Nigerians to the New World was the transatlantic slave trade. Large-scale labour migration from Nigeria to Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Benin Republic, and Ghana was also a result of the colonial era. This movement was necessary for the development of plantations, mining, and public administration (Adepoju, 2005). Nigerians first migrated to the United Kingdom during this time, and later, the United States also became a popular migratory destination, especially for those seeking higher education, in parallel with migration to other African nations. Even though it was initially intended that these migrants would return to Nigeria to take over the positions vacated by the departing British colonial government, some of them chose to remain at their new locations (Hernandez-Coss & Bun, 2007).

The significance of the Diaspora as a catalyst for social and economic advancement has not gone unnoticed on a worldwide scale. In 2006, with the creation of the Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD), The World Bank and The United Nations-initiated High-level Dialogue on Migration and International Development (UNHLD MID). This developed as a major forum to interrogate the subject of migration and development and also received far-reaching official acknowledgement (Kalm, 2010). The UN notes that greater integration and globalisation contributed to this realisation. It aimed to highlight the beneficial effects that migration, when backed by appropriate legislation, may have on the development of both the nations of origin and the countries of destination. The African Union (AU) recognised the African Diaspora as a sixth development "zone" in addition to West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and North Africa, demonstrating the institutionalisation of the Diaspora's rapid growth as a significant source of foreign exchange for Africa at the continental level (African

Union, 2005). The Diaspora's contributions to African development are closely linked to the AU's definition of this region. Formal recognition of this significant African population zone has been established since the African Union Executive Council's April 2005 proclamation, which was titled "African Diaspora" (African Union, 2005).

Development and identity were the two main topics of discussion during the 2012 Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) legislative week. Economic, educational, gender, health, youth, and ways to help Africa were among the development-related concerns. The millions of people who currently identify as African Diaspora around the world and their relationships to Africa and the African community of their ancestors were the main topics of identity disputes (Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, 2012).

Nigeria, being the most populous black nation, has a high number of diaspora communities. As such, there is a high demand for local Nigerian food condiments abroad. These include, Yams, garri, palm oil, smoked fish, Nigerian rice, spices, plantains, yam and plantain flour. Furthermore Nigerian food items are also lucrative business ventures for vendors in this line of business due to its high demand. However, challenges encountered by business owners of Nigerian food-exporting outfits have complained of a wide range of problems including corruption at ports, discrimination, lack of access to international markets, and bureaucracy encountered are difficult to overcome.

The Nigerian diaspora plays a significant role in sustaining and promoting Nigerian cuisine abroad. As diaspora communities adapt to new social and cultural environments, food remains an important marker of identity and a means of preserving cultural heritage. While social integration often requires the acquisition of new linguistic and cultural competencies, traditional cuisine continues to reinforce a sense of belonging and serves as a bridge between Nigerians and their host communities.

The experience of Nigerian Ofada rice in the United Kingdom illustrates both the opportunities and challenges associated with promoting Nigerian food internationally. According to available market evidence, Ofada rice is imported into the UK primarily by two importer-distributors (Adekunle & Filson, 2009) Withus Foods and God's Promise Ventures both of which source their products from Ultimate Foods, one of Nigeria's largest rice producers. Withus Foods imports approximately 10 tonnes of Ofada rice annually, while God's Promise Ventures imports about 5 tonnes. Despite this, both firms invest relatively little in the promotion and marketing of the product, limiting its visibility beyond the Nigerian diaspora. Distribution is largely confined to direct sales and a small number of market stall holders in London, while many Nigerian caterers and restaurants remain unaware of reliable suppliers. This limited distribution network constrains the wider acceptance and commercial expansion of Ofada rice within the UK market.

Evidence from surveys of the Nigerian diaspora further demonstrates the cultural significance of rice consumption. Nine out of every ten respondents reported consuming rice either regularly or frequently, suggesting that rice remains a staple food among Nigerians living abroad. This strong and sustained demand presents an opportunity for Nigeria to leverage indigenous food products such as ofada rice as instruments of gastronomy diplomacy. By strengthening supply chains, improving product branding, and expanding international distribution networks, Nigeria could enhance the global visibility of its culinary heritage while simultaneously promoting agricultural exports, cultural identity, and national soft power.

According to a survey, over 80% of Yoruba Nigerians living abroad were aware of ofada rice, indicating that the product had a high level of product recognition (Adeyeye & Adeyemi, 2019). They are completely aware of the characteristics of the product, even though they seem to know very little about the precise description of what makes up ofada rice. The "taste and

pleasurable experience" of an ofada rice meal is primarily where members of the Nigerian Diaspora who consume the rice get their product knowledge. The potent, unique scent of cooked ofada rice and the fiery, hot stew (or sauces) that are served with are two obvious and distinctive characteristics. Both aromatic and non-aromatic forms of ofada are in demand since they are regarded as "organic" and therefore a healthier rice option.

According to the same survey, 60% of respondents would eat ofada rice exclusively or as their preferred option if it were widely available, and another 20% would do so sometimes (Adeyeye & Adeyemi, 2019). There are widely varying estimates of the size of the Nigerian diaspora in the UK. It is estimated that, in the UK & Ireland, there are roughly 340,000 members of the Nigerian diaspora and that 70% of Nigerians in the UK & Ireland are of Yoruba origin (Office for National Statistics, 2021). This gives a target market of 238,000 consumers of ofada. Based on a per capita consumption of rice of 45kg per person per year, and assuming that 1 out of 90 rice meals is prepared using ofada, the potential demand for ofada is forecast at 120tonnes per annum in the UK & Ireland. The potential demand at 120 tonnes dwarfs the estimated 60 tonnes formally and informally imported into the UK & Ireland with 60 tonnes of unmet demand representing a real commercial opportunity for producers and importer distributors. While this should account for progress to local producers exporting local commodities overseas, bureaucracy and corruption in the regulatory agencies hinder this progress, such that goods from Nigeria become easily exported to the diaspora from neighboring African countries due to less bureaucratic bottle neck and more defined policies (Ojadi, 2022).

4.3 Role of NAFDAC and SON in Promoting Export

The intensification of food quality control procedures, particularly for imported commodities, has become more important as a result of the globalization of the food trade. Food

industries are required to adhere to and apply certain regulations, legislations, guidelines, and acts from various countries when processing their products. The government bears the responsibility of guaranteeing that the food industry adheres to the set standards, legislation, and enforcement programs in order to assure the safety and quality of food.

In Nigeria, the principal regulatory agency responsible for ensuring standards for food safety and quality, in terms of both product and process, is the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Process standards relate to the circumstances in which products are made, packed, or refined; product standards specify the quality, safety, and authenticity that goods should possess (e.g., minimum nutrition content of a food item, maximum pesticide residues on agricultural product) (Wilson & Otsuki, 2001). The production, import, export, marketing, distribution, sale, and use of food, medications, cosmetics, medical equipment, chemicals, and prepackaged water are all subject to regulation and control by NAFDAC. Under Nigeria's current regulatory framework, food products manufactured, imported, exported, advertised, sold, distributed or used in Nigeria are subject to NAFDAC registration and regulatory control (NAFDAC, 2025, Regs. 1–3).

The goal of NAFDAC's export control measures for regulated goods is to guarantee that goods leaving Nigeria are healthful, secure, and of high quality in order to preserve Nigeria's reputation in the global marketplace, while in the same vein, boosting the nation's foreign exchange revenues. Nigeria's export is on the premise that products are duly registered regardless of whether it is imported or produced locally. In order to export regulated produce, a potential exporter must write to the Director General of NAFDAC making available every required information for each consignment of intended export, and proof that the regulated product has been registered with NAFDAC.

The Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) was formed by Act No. 56 of 1971 and amended under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry. It bears exclusive responsibility for standardisation and quality control in the Nigerian economy. It develops standards for products and processes, ensures compliance with government policies on standards and quality of products produced locally and imported, and conducts investigations into quality assurance systems, including product certification, laboratories, and manufacturing operations. It further collaborates with relevant national and international organisations to ensure consistency in standard specifications; it also possesses the authority to seize, confiscate, and destroy substandard goods and products, as well as to close factories that are discovered to be producing substandard or defective goods and products.

Although regulatory agencies such as the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), and the Nigeria Customs Service are mandated to facilitate trade and ensure compliance with export standards, exporters continue to report bureaucratic bottlenecks, regulatory inefficiencies, multiple inspection requirements, and administrative delays. These challenges increase the cost of doing business and have encouraged some exporters to route products through neighbouring West African countries with more efficient export systems, thereby diminishing Nigeria's visibility and recognition as the country of origin of such products (Iyoboyi & Na-Allah, 2015; Madaki, 2001; Ojadi, 2022). A look at a major non-food export, for contrast, also reveals the same challenge.

According to Engr. Janet Adeyemi, President of Women in Mining (WIM) Nigeria, most gemstones sourced from Nigeria are reportedly traded by players from other African countries because of the activities of middlemen and trade bottlenecks within the sector. In her presentation,

Opportunities in the Industrial and Gemstones Sector, delivered at the 59th Annual International Conference of the Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society (NMGS) in March 2024, Adeyemi stated that “it was quite worrisome to discover that most gemstones sourced from Nigeria are being paraded by players from other African countries because of middlemen invasion, on account of trade bottlenecks in the sector.” She further stated that “it is believed that Nigeria contributes about 10 per cent (\$1.2 billion) of the total \$12 billion revenue generated annually by Thailand from gemstone trade” and argued that Nigeria was “losing tremendously on all sides,” thereby underscoring the need to reorganise the country’s gemstone and jewellery sector and position Nigeria as a global hub (Women in Mining Africa, 2024).

The foregoing reveals a huge opportunity for Nigeria to do the needful by addressing these import/export regulatory bottlenecks to create a vibrancy in our exports that would shift the country from consumption nation to a productive one, create wealth, and keep the youthful population gainfully engaged. This will also guarantee the potential for food exports to remain a significant purveyor of Nigerian soft power.

4.4 Food Security: Addressing the Challenge of Power Supply

It is often known that Nigeria's unstable power supply is among the country's most significant obstacles to industrial and economic growth (Adenikinju, 2003; World Bank, 2020). As Nigeria is blessed with an abundance of natural and human resources, it begs the question, why after over a century of existence and 65 years of independence, the country continued to grapple with energy sufficiency? It is pertinent to note that the main issue is not the absence of enough electricity, but that of the fluctuating nature of the power supply, due to power instability, as a result of which, households and businesses that depend on energy are unable to forecast when they will be able to get needed power supply from the national grid power. In most cases, an unstable

power supply is equivalent to having no power supply since the job that requires electricity may have been completed before the supply is made available or the power may have been cut off before the intended usage was prepared. When a power supply's flip-flop characteristic damages the equipment it powers, it can also be thought of as having negative power.

Nigeria is the biggest producer of oil in Africa, but the countless barrels of sweet crude, also known as bonny-light, that are produced every day—both legal and illegal—have never been converted into enough electricity for more than half of the country's 220 million inhabitants. Therefore, the over-reliance and more than sporadic scarcity of the primary energy source utilised to create electricity is the primary and fundamental reason of Nigeria's unstable power supply.

Nigeria can be compared to the United States of America to get a sense of the magnitude of this old issue. Although the United States had a population of approximately 319 million at the time, roughly twice Nigeria's population, it was reported to generate approximately 270 times more electricity than Nigeria. This stark disparity illustrates the substantial gap in electricity-generation capacity between the two countries and highlights the infrastructural constraints confronting Nigeria's economic and industrial development (Duke, 2015).

When analysing Nigeria's electric power sector, it is easy to see that gas-thermal power plants account for the majority of energy, with hydropower facilities accounting for the remaining portion. Nigeria's ancient, inefficient electric grid has the regrettable feature of regular, unannounced blackouts, including power outages brought on by grid maintainability issues (Duke, 2015).

Some Nigerians have also complained that while the country exports electricity to surrounding nations like the Niger Republic, Nigerians suffer domestically. Experts, however, claim that the power exported is minimal and typically results from agreements that let Nigeria

utilise shared natural resources, such as a hydropower plant on a river that both Nigeria and the Niger Republic share (Okafor, 2022; Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission [NERC], 2023).

The Nigerian government's approach to the electric power issue has also been characterised by Dr. Kandeh Yumkella, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), as an ad hoc policy lacking a clear plan on how to offer long-term remedies. He stated "When power supply goes off, we get the generator. We never sat down to ask where we want the nation to be in the next 20 to 25 years, how fast we want it to grow, how much jobs we want to create and what sectors of the economy we need to develop" (Yumkella, 2015).

Similar to the above is the long-standing issue facing the electric power industry is the inadequate availability of gas. There is no gas supply infrastructure for new power plants like the Geregu and Omotosho Power Plants in the South-West. Poor transportation infrastructure, frequent pipeline vandalism, high levels of gas flares, the distance between power plants and gas supplies, political considerations for project locations, and a lack of alignment between gas and power sector rules all contribute to the problem of gas for power. Another problem with the recently privatised electricity sector system is regulation and oversight, which is a known difficulty. For those involved in the power sector to operate successfully, effective regulation is required. However, it is still unclear if the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) has the regulatory expertise to properly control the operations of these many power sector participants (Omoju, 2014).

Another difficulty is the conventional issue of inadequate transmission capacity. Because of the poor, deteriorated, and low maintenance state of transmission systems, transmission loss in the electricity sector is considerable. When new independent power plants are connected, the transmission networks can even fail (Omoju, 2014). The Nigerian energy problem has been mostly

caused by the government's unstable energy policies for example, monopolies in power generation, transmission, distribution, and sales have been encouraged by government policy for more than 50 years. An organisation with complete control over power generation and supply has been the policy since the founding of ECN in 1950 and the creation of NEPA in 1972. It is clear that the previous policies have not benefited the system if, after all these years, the administration is now proposing measures to unbundle the economy's electricity sector.

Nigerians celebrated when the government turned over power generation, transmission, and distribution to private firms on November 5, 2013. At the very least, Nigerians thought that since these businesses were privately owned, they would engage qualified employees right away to contribute to the expansion and improvement of the system. However, Nigerians from all walks of life are still complaining years of a worsened power sector (Ukoko et al., 2014). For reasons that only they know, these new businesses continue to engage the services of some inept NEPA and PHCN employees.

The two most significant electrical sources in Nigeria, thermal energy and hydroelectric power, are likewise impacted by the climate. The amount of water used for hydroelectric power is determined by precipitation. The amount of rainfall in a particular place is beyond human control. Over the years, the Kainji dam's output and efficient power distribution have been impacted by the low rainfall in the West African region. Saline water is typically utilised to cool thermal energy plants, such as the Egbin thermal plant in Lagos, which occasionally results in forced shutdown.

The major challenge brought by paucity of power supply in the country is the inability to effectively harness the value chain in food processing. As a result, Nigeria loses an estimated 40-50% of its annual food production to post-harvest waste (Adeleke et al., 2021), severely restricting both domestic food security and export potential. Furthermore, as a result of this energy deficit the

growth of large-scale food processing industries has been severely hampered, forcing approximately 80% of food processing to remain at small-scale subsistence levels (Ogunjimi & Adebayo, 2022). Consequently, Nigeria struggles to meet local demand, let alone capitalize on the growing diaspora market for Nigerian food products worth an estimated \$1 billion annually (Nwachukwu et al., 2023), or leverage food effectively as a tool of soft power in international relations.

Amid the foregoing, there are some schools of thought that remain persistent in the view that agriculture remains the major employer of labour for Nigeria's teeming population and the means to achieving national development, providing dignifying labour as well as essential by-products for industrial development. All of this is premised on the immense human capacity potential of the country as will be discussed next.

4.5 Harnessing Nigeria's Human Capacity in Achieving Food Security

In the pursuit of sustainable food security in Nigeria, the role of human capacity development cannot be overemphasized. Human capital constitutes one of the most critical resources for improving agricultural productivity, promoting innovation, strengthening food systems, and ensuring long-term national development. Nigeria possesses a significant demographic advantage, with a predominantly youthful population, creating substantial opportunities for agricultural transformation and economic growth. To harness this demographic dividend effectively, sustained investment in education, vocational training, agricultural extension services, entrepreneurship, and skills development remains imperative.

Recognizing the strategic importance of human capital, governments and international development organizations have consistently emphasized capacity building as a prerequisite for sustainable development. Annual policy communiqués and development frameworks continue to

advocate for investments in human capital as a means of enhancing productivity and improving socioeconomic outcomes. The World Economic Forum (WEF) introduced the Human Capital Index (HCI) to assess how effectively countries develop and utilize the knowledge, skills, and health of their populations throughout the life course. The index evaluates countries on a scale ranging from 0 (lowest performance) to 100 (highest performance) by examining educational attainment, workforce participation, employment outcomes, and skills development across different age groups. Beyond measuring current performance, the index assesses countries' preparedness to maximize future human capital by evaluating investments in education, lifelong learning, and labour market outcomes.

The Human Capital Index provides detailed information on a country's talent pool, including educational attainment, skills development, employment, and the extent to which human capital is effectively utilised across different stages of the life course. These indicators provide important insights into a country's capacity to develop talent, enhance productivity, foster innovation, and support sustainable economic development. Despite Nigeria's considerable demographic potential, its human capital performance has remained relatively weak. According to the World Economic Forum, Nigeria ranked 120th out of 124 countries, with an overall Human Capital Index score of 45.43, placing it among the lowest-performing countries globally (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2015). The report assessed human capital through indicators covering education, skills, and employment, and noted that Nigeria was among the lowest-ranked countries in sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting persistent challenges in education, skills development, and the effective utilisation of its workforce. These human capital deficiencies have important implications for agricultural productivity, technological adoption, food production, and, ultimately, Nigeria's capacity to achieve sustainable food security.

The selected indicators presented in Table 1 further illustrate Nigeria's demographic structure, labour force characteristics, educational attainment, and economic capacity, highlighting the urgent need for sustained investment in human capital development as a critical component of achieving food sustainability.

Table 1:
Nigeria's Human Development Index Report

S/N	Rating Factor	Benchmark	Outcome (000)
1.	total population	(1,000s)	183,523
0.	working age population	(1,000s)	97,066
0.	tertiary educated population	(1,000s)	11,277
0.	aged dependency ratio	percentage (%)	5.1
0.	child dependency ratio	percentage (%)	82.7
0.	median age of population	years	18
0.	GDP per capita	constant '11 US\$, PPP	6,082
0.	labour force participation rate	percentage (%)	56.1
0.	employment-to-population ratio	percentage (%)	52.8

Source: *World Economic Forum 2015*

The analysis of Nigeria's human development index (HDI) only shows that more work needs to be done to increase capacity and human capital, particularly in the areas of tertiary education, vocational skill development, agriculture and, most importantly, creating a knowledge-based economy. It is also crucial to remember that young people are the centre of human capital development and capacity building. As a result, a nation with an 82.7% child dependency ratio

shows that much work needs to be done to build up the capacity of Nigeria's young population with the aim of building a highly independent and resourceful population that meets its basic needs. This is due to the fact that a youth population that relies on parents cannot support the long-term growth of their nation.

Nonetheless, Nigeria has always understood the importance of good health and education for the advancement of the country. Therefore, since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria's successive administrations have tried a range of legislative initiatives to construct strong and sustainable health care and education delivery systems that would support the development of high-caliber human capital for the country's advancement. Regarding education, the first strategy Nigeria implemented after gaining independence was based on the 1960 Ashby Commission report, "Investment in Education" (Gyang, 2007).

The National Policy on Education (NPE), first formulated in 1977 and subsequently revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007, and 2013, has served as the cornerstone of educational development in Nigeria. The policy emerged from the recommendations of the National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos in 1969, which brought together experts, government representatives, religious organisations, professional bodies, and other stakeholders to deliberate on the future direction of education in the country (Gyang, 2007). Initially, the NPE provided the framework for the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 education system. However, educational reforms have since led to the adoption of the 9-3-4 system, which integrates nine years of compulsory basic education, followed by three years of senior secondary education and four years of tertiary education. The overarching goal of the policy remains the enhancement of the quality, accessibility, relevance, and overall standard of education in Nigeria.

The Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE), a second education reform initiative launched by the military government in 1976, sought to make education in Nigeria free in 1976 and mandatory in 1979 (Gyang, 2007). However, a number of factors weakened this approach, therefore it did not yield the anticipated outcomes (Azikiwe, 2007). Next to this came the well-known Universal Basic Education (UBE) program, which begun in Sokoto on September 30, 1999, under the direction of Olusegun Obasanjo, who was president at the time. According to Gyang (2007), the UBE policy sought to provide children aged 3 to 14 with a foundational education for three years in Early Children Care Development and Education (ECCDE), six years in primary school, and three years in junior secondary school. The program also includes the almajiris, children of migrants and nomads, mass literacy, and other marginalised and vulnerable communities as component targets. The policy is implemented in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA), two global development initiatives of the United Nations (UN). To help attain these objectives, Nigeria introduced the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2003 (Gyang, 2007). Value reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth generation, and mass empowerment through education are the five main concerns of the NEEDS (Obioma, 2007). All of these are meant to raise the standard of living and overall well-being of Nigerians while also transforming them into important players in social and economic change.

The Roadmap for the Nigerian Education Sector, a new policy document released by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) in April 2009, is also noteworthy. The four main strategies of this reform measure include; access and equality, standards and quality assurance, technical and vocational education and training, and funding, resource mobilisation, and utilization—are intended to address the shortcomings and inadequacies in Nigeria's educational system (Gyang, 2007). As Gyang pointed out, this reform intends to involve stakeholders such as; government,

organized private sectors and international funding partners to transform all Nigerian schools into producing high achieving, functional and self-reliant students, from all three subsectors of education namely; basic education, post basic education and tertiary education (Gyang, 2007).

The perceived necessity to enhance the current unfavourable conditions of the Nigerian educational system in order to enable it to develop and generate high-grade workforce made the implementation of this measure necessary. This is because it was realised that the country's workforce has consistently been receiving low-quality human resources from the three levels of the school system.

Enrolment across all levels of Nigeria's educational system has continued to increase, driven by population growth, expanding access to education, and rising demand for tertiary qualifications. Nigeria's higher education sector has expanded considerably since 1970, when the country had only five universities. By 2026, the number of accredited universities had increased to more than 300, comprising federal, state, and private institutions regulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) (National Universities Commission [NUC], 2025; Oyedeyi, 2026). This expansion reflects sustained efforts to improve access to higher education and accommodate Nigeria's rapidly growing youth population. However, challenges persist regarding the quality of education, inadequate funding, infrastructural deficits, staffing shortages, and the employability of graduates. Nevertheless, Nigeria's educational policies continue to emphasise science and technology, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and innovation as strategic priorities for developing the skilled workforce required for national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013). Beyond education and skills development, the productivity of a country's human resources is also influenced by the health and well-being of its population. A healthy population is better positioned to participate effectively in education,

employment, and productive economic activities, making health an essential component of human capital development. Consequently, weaknesses in healthcare provision and population health can constrain labour productivity and diminish the contribution of human capital to agricultural production, food systems, technological adoption, and broader national development.

Health is seen as a vital resource for development everywhere in the world. It even directly influences or has a connection to the education component of the development of human capital, which impacts growth generally. Better health has the potential to lessen the depreciation of education capital, which increases the positive impact of education on growth, according to Barro (1996) and Jaiyeoba, (2015). Lustig (2006) concluded that health is an asset with both intrinsic and instrumental value based on the findings of a study conducted in Mexico on the connection between growth and health. Accordingly, he stated that being healthy is a source of wellbeing and is widely regarded globally (Jaiyeoba, 2015). Given the scope of policy reform initiatives in the health sector since the nation's founding, Nigeria appears to have recognised this truth earlier. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has enacted more than 24 health-related policies, including five consecutive national policies (HSDT, 2009).

Between 1960 and 1985, several national development plans included the first four of these concepts. Prior to 1985, health strategies were predicated on the idea that access to healthcare facilities and the availability of healthcare providers were crucial for enhancing population health (HERFON, 2006). A Primary Health Care (PHC) policy was subsequently enacted by the Federal Government in 1988 and subsequently reviewed in 2004. For the first time, the policy offers guidance on the idea or concepts and principles of primary health care (PHC) based on data regarding the country's health issues and requirements, including the prevalence of disease. With the exception of a few places where it is brought up, Nigeria's 1999 constitution is more silent than

outspoken when it comes to health issues. To clarify the structure, roles, and responsibilities of the various levels of government on health issues in Nigeria, the National Health Bill (May 2008) underwent legislative consideration and was subsequently enacted as the National Health Act, 2014. The Act provides a comprehensive framework for the regulation, development, and management of Nigeria's health system and delineates the responsibilities of the federal, state, and local governments in healthcare delivery (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014).

Furthermore, deliberate efforts are being made through the educational system to ensure that Nigeria's health providers continue to grow in order to fulfill the country's health priorities and demand. Since it takes a healthy population to produce commendable development advances in all facets, the main goal of all these policies, programs, and initiatives is to promote improved health conditions for all Nigerians through the supply of high-quality healthcare. *"Health is wealth,"* underscores the fundamental role of the health sector in promoting social and economic development. There is substantial evidence that improved health outcomes enhance labour productivity, human capital development, and overall economic growth. In Nigeria, investment in the health sector remains central to achieving sustainable development and improving the quality of life of its growing population. Current national development frameworks, including the Nigeria Agenda 2050 and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2021–2025, recognise health as a critical component of human capital development and an important determinant of sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The Nigeria Agenda 2050 places healthcare, alongside education and food security and nutrition, within its Human Capital Development pillar, reflecting the importance of a healthy population to national productivity and socioeconomic transformation (Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning [FMBEP], 2023). Similarly, the National Development Plan (2021–2025) identifies the development of a vibrant, educated, and healthy population as a major national objective and recognises health as essential for enabling citizens to

live socially and economically productive lives (Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning [FMFBNP], 2021). These policy frameworks therefore underscore the strategic importance of investment in healthcare as a means of strengthening human capital, improving productivity, reducing poverty, and promoting inclusive economic development.

However, it should be noted that, similar to education, the Nigerian health sector faces significant issues that have limited its efficacy and efficiency. Nevertheless, Nigeria has made significant progress in growing its health industry since its founding to enhance its human capital. The bad news is that, because of certain challenging obstacles, the actions done in the health and education sectors have not yet resulted in comparable results.

4.6 Case Study of Specific Conflicts and Their Impact on Food Security

Conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups have arisen in Nigeria since its 1960 separation from Britain. The civil war, which shook the nation's foundations between 1967 and 1970, was one of these wars. Pressure groups like the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) were formed in the Eastern Region of Nigeria as a result of the war's devastation. These parties are calling for the Igbos, one of Nigeria's most populous ethnic groups, and other ethnicities in eastern Nigeria to become independent states. They have questioned the Federation's continued existence and are in favour of the new state that their ancestors battled to establish between 1967 and 1970. Over the years, there has been environmental strife in the Niger Delta region, and the emergence of militant groups which has kept the Nigerian government's authority over the region in jeopardy as more demands for autonomy from the Federation of Nigeria is being demanded by other ethnic groupings and organizations in southwest and northern Nigeria.

At both the local and national levels, understanding of the mechanisms through which armed conflict affects agricultural production and food security remains limited, particularly in conflict-affected developing countries. The agricultural sector is especially vulnerable to violence because armed groups may seek to seize productive land, control territory, disrupt markets, and establish alternative systems of political and economic authority. Such dynamics have been evident in the activities of terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. The relationship between conflict and agriculture is particularly important because of its implications for food insecurity. In 2016, more than half of the world's 815 million undernourished people lived in countries affected by conflict, violence, and fragility, where food insecurity was generally more prevalent (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, & WHO, 2017). Conflict can undermine food security by destroying agricultural production and infrastructure, restricting access to farmland and productive inputs, disrupting markets and trade, displacing farming populations, and reducing household incomes. Evidence from Nigeria, for example, demonstrates that conflict can affect food security through agricultural input and income shocks, with intensified Boko Haram attacks associated with reduced dietary quality and food consumption (George et al., 2020). Similarly, Eme et al. (2014) identify conflict, including farmer–herder clashes and the activities of Boko Haram, as important contributors to Nigeria's food insecurity through population displacement, reduced cultivation of farmland, destruction of agricultural assets and produce, and disruptions to food availability. Thus, armed conflict and food insecurity can reinforce one another: conflict disrupts agricultural production, food markets, and supply systems, while deteriorating food-security conditions may contribute to social tensions and increase the risk of further conflict.

When the Boko haram insurgency began in 2009, it primarily targeted the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa in the northeast. It is sometimes suggested that the agricultural sector in northeastern Nigeria has been most negatively impacted, given that over 80% of the rural population relies on farming for crops or cattle (Adelaja, & George, (2019). There have also been significant population shifts in and out of Nigeria's northeast due to the Boko Haram insurgency. Additionally, the region is home to 5.1 million people who experience severe food insecurity and over 15 million individuals who experience food insecurity (FAO, 2017). There have apparently been severe declines in the agricultural sector in the afflicted region, particularly in the production of staple crops such as rice, sorghum, corn, cowpeas, and millet (Kimenyi et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the devastation of roads, bridges, communication systems, and other physical infrastructure has restricted market access, which has interfered with the supply chain. Many of the claims made about the devastating effects of Boko Haram on agriculture are based on a nationally representative household-level panel dataset that includes observations during the conflict. Specifically, we find that Nigerian households' total agricultural production is significantly reduced when exposed to the insurgency, primarily due to a decrease in the production of staple crops like cassava, soya, sorghum, rice, and yam, which are key crops in the conflict-affected regions. We also find that the insurgency led to a decrease in hired labour and agricultural wages, but not the hours worked by household members on farms. These findings have important policy implications for economic development in conflict areas.

In the far northern region of Cameroon, the Boko Haram conflict devastated large-scale vegetable farmers' businesses and undermined the livelihood of thousands of others who depended on it for sustenance. Farmers were left stuck with deteriorating harvests of perishable crops as the volume of farm products fell. With its commanding view of the Republic of Chad's capital,

Ndjaména, Mokolo was formerly a major agricultural such as Chad, Mali, and Sudan and commercial hub that drew people from neighboring nations, such as Chad, Mali, and Sudan. The town is abandoned and essentially cut off from the rest of the country now, with little to no business being conducted there. In northern Cameroon, migration away from the core of conflict caused turmoil, interrupted routine farming, and strained destitute communities. This was made worse by the extremely unfavourable weather in this part of the nation (Nforngwa, 2016), which had an impact on agricultural productivity.

Due to Boko Haram's destructive impacts, many people who commuted from the North to as far south as Lagos, Ibadan and Ogbomoso to supply various food items including pepper, tomatoes, and fish gave up on this line of work (Awodola & Oboshi, 2015). This had personally impacted them since they no longer had money from the sale of these products, which they could have used to purchase further food. As a result, three agriculturally producing states in northeastern Nigeria—Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe—faced food supply instability. The food crisis that roiled north-eastern Nigeria and spread through the south garnered attention in Niger Republic, northern Cameroon, and southern parts of Chad.

In addition, Nigeria experienced its first military coup d'état on 15 January 1966, marking the military's entry into governance. Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was appointed Military Governor of the Eastern Region under the new military administration. Later that year, on 29 July, a counter-coup brought Colonel Yakubu Gowon to power as Head of State. Ojukwu's refusal to recognize the authority of the federal government, owing to disagreements with Gowon over constitutional and political issues, culminated in a prolonged national crisis that eventually led to the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Siollun, 2009; Stremlau, 1977). During the conflict, many post-independence development programmes in Eastern Nigeria

were suspended or abandoned. Agricultural plantations, farm settlements, extension services, and fertilizer distribution schemes were severely disrupted, while widespread destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of millions of people significantly reduced agricultural production and contributed to acute food shortages and increased dependence on food imports (Ekundare, 1973; Madeibo, 1980; Korieh, 2012). The mass return of Igbo populations from other parts of Nigeria, particularly the North, further reduced agricultural labour availability and increased pressure on food supplies in the Eastern Region (Falola & Heaton, 2008; Korieh, 2012).

The Nigerian Red Cross reports that between September and October 1966, over a million people, mostly of Igbo descent and primarily from Eastern Nigeria, left various locations in Northern Nigeria and returned to their ethnic areas in the East as a result of the pogroms that had occurred before the war. Furthermore, tensions and animosity towards Easterners meant that by the time the civil war finally broke out in 1967, over 4 million of them had returned home from other parts of Nigeria. Expectedly majority of these returnees were Igbo, while the sudden rise in population further aggravated the pressures especially on the limited resources of the region, which were already over stretched. Naturally, the many families who had to provide accommodations for their relatives who were returning took on the responsibility of reintegration and resettlement. As a result, the surge of returnees put strain on food supply and perhaps jeopardized the region's food security. As an aside, Eastern Nigeria had the highest population densities prior to this time, with roughly 420 people per square kilometer, compared to 337 in the West, 170 in the Mid-West, and 106 in the North.

Furthermore, food shortages were inevitable given that the majority of the population inflow to the East occurred in September 1966, right before the conclusion of the cassava planting season and the start of the yam harvest season (Martin, 1988) has noted that the return of Igbo from other

regions contributed to the population growth of the Ngwa and, in fact, other parts of Igboland prior to the war. Additionally, as more refugees fled into rural Biafra with each city that came under federal control, the pressure on the region's land resources increased, exacerbating the already dire food situation (Martin, 1988). The issue of farmlands being lost once captured areas were evacuated and people moved onto previously designated farmlands for residence also existed. People in Igboland fled into villages and creeks where they erected makeshift homes, frequently beneath tree shadows, as town after town collapsed. This was mostly done to avoid the onslaught of ravenous Nigerian soldiers. These flights were conducted before or after harvests in the majority of cases as a result, they lost their harvests in addition to their houses and farmlands. In fact, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that many of the towns whose harvests were destroyed by these soldiers never fully recovered, even after years had passed.

As an illustration, consider Owerri and the surrounding areas, which were reported to have lost almost all of their yams either to heavy eating during the fighting period that followed the town's fall in September 1968 or to looting. For these and other reasons, the people have up till now been unable to reclaim their previous position as important yam producers. Not because the locals weren't skilled yam farmers before the war, but even the small amount that was produced all but vanished after the conflict. Almost all of Igboland's principal food-producing regions were under federal forces' control by the end of 1968. The sections of Biafra that produced food were mostly the outside regions, particularly the yam, rice, and other staples produced in Abakiliki and Ogoja to the north; the Onitsha, Atani, and Anam axis to the west; and the Ikwerre and Etche districts to the south. With very few exceptions, the major staples were and are essentially lacking in the centre region of Biafra, which was ultimately compacted and shrunk by military defeat (Harneit-Sievers et al., 1997).

It has been suggested that the federal soldiers' capture of important food-producing regions including Ngwa, Arochukwu, Bende, Abakiliki, Nsukka, and Onitsha was the cause (Akpan, 1976). After the war, many of the locations where farmlands were looted had individuals returning home and starting over from scratch. To begin a new life, some were even forced to borrow cassava stems and seed yams from their luckier neighbours. In the instance of Ohaji, in Imo State, this unsettling tendency has limited yam production to the following villages, which have been able to resume since the end of the civil war: Ochia, Iguru, Ikwerede, Asaa, Obile, Ihie, Mgbu Isii, and Umuapu (Nwulu, 2004). Due to the devastating effects of the war, some yam crop species, such as ji oko, ji Ibibio, and ji Iyaghiri, have either completely disappeared from the earth or are now only found in limited quantities. On the other hand, many people blame the civil war period, during which the majority of the crop was consumed, for the lower quality of cocoyam being cultivated in Igboland (Ibezie, 2003). This is also the reason why a lot of people in Edda started using rice as a substitute crop, challenging yam's hegemony in the region (Godwinokoubi, et al., 2020).

Similarly, food production was diverted by the population shift in Igboland. While the forced evacuation of people resulted in the looting of their harvest and farmlands, the migration of people into formerly agriculturally exclusive areas caused the loss of farmlands, which ultimately had a negative impact on food production. As a result, desirable farmlands were used as havens for the population of escaping refugees. This movement also brought about the total renunciation of the customary farming technique of fallowing, which contributed to the food shortage throughout the war.

4.7 Negative Impact of Fuel Subsidy Removal on Nigeria's Food Security

The delivery of subsidized petroleum products in Nigeria has been the focal point of discourse by Nigerian decision makers for several years, as successive governments have consistently expressed concerns on fuel subsidy sustainability, as well as the huge payments made by the government in association with the discovery of corrupt practices within the subsidy regime (Aigbe & Oshoma, 2020). The family, being the smallest unit of society, relies on the affordability of petroleum products (APK, PMS, AGO) for household and business purposes; however, an increase in price has always had a detrimental multiplier effect on all other economic sectors.

Omotosho (2020) asserted that the Nigerian government implemented a gasoline subsidy scheme to mitigate the macroeconomic effects of oil price shocks on the economy. In this arrangement, domestic marketers receive payment from the government for the difference between the regulated domestic price and the Expected Open Market Price (EOMP), which is set by the Petroleum Products Pricing and Regulatory Agency (PPPRA). However, over the years, this practice has been explained to have been injurious to the economy due to the unaccountability of funds.

According to The Cable Lifestyle (2023), the withdrawal of subsidies has a cascading effect on food and income insecurity. Rising fuel prices increase the cost of transit and food distribution, resulting in shortages and price increases. The elimination of gasoline subsidies might worsen hunger and malnutrition in Nigeria, where food insecurity is already a serious problem, especially for a large majority of Nigerians including the elderly and children.

As a result of the removal of the subsidy on petroleum products, food, an essential commodity, has persistently become scarce and expensive to the average Nigerian. This is because the increasing cost of transportation is constantly factored into food costs. Farmers also have had to spend more on the cost of transporting food produce to end users. The cost of gasoline

experienced a sharp rise from 160 naira to 700 naira, following President Tinubu's declaration of subsidy removal in May 2023.

The removal of subsidies is a bold step taken by the Tinubu Administration, which promises immense benefits in the long run. However, in the short term, it has brought untold hardship to the general populace, reduced purchasing power, reduced access to essential goods, and general inflation in cost of living. While the biting effect of these government decisions continues to take a toll, government intervention is inevitable to reduce the multiplier effect of hardship.

Although the government may have increased minimum wage, introduced cheaper transportation for civil servants, biting economic hardship continues to linger further widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

4.8 Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter discusses the challenges Nigeria faces in attaining food security as well as the chances of reaching its gastronomy soft power potential and development, dearth of institutional cooperation and poor funding with apt attention in addressing inequality and human capacity development. Nigeria's food crisis worsened by insecurity, ineffective agricultural and government policies, has potential to affect its soft power as much as other aspects of the Nigerian economy including automotive, healthcare, fintech, entertainment, and fashion industries.

The chapter further elucidates migration and food export, focusing on Nigeria's significant diaspora community, which creates demand for local food products abroad, as well as the role of regulatory bodies like NAFDAC and SON, reiterating their crucial roles in ensuring food safety, quality, export and income generation.

Unstable power supply and insufficient electricity experienced in Nigeria, and how it hampers economic growth through its negative effect on small and medium enterprises was also

discussed. A possible boost in this sector will promote economic growth through reduced food prices and increase purchasing power of basic essentials. In all of these, the Nigerian human capacity development ranks low thereby underscoring the need for improved education and healthcare. Significant challenges were noted in human development, particularly in education and healthcare, and efforts to improve these sectors have been slow-paced, indicating that more work needs to be done. To address these challenges, Nigeria needs to enhance food security and agricultural productivity through intentional and sustainable policies with a focus on continuity in government action.

Nigeria has experienced various conflicts, including the Biafran Civil War and the Boko Haram insurgency, as well as the friction between Nigeria and Niger Republic, which have had a significant impact on food security. These conflicts have led to displacement, loss of livelihoods, damage to agricultural infrastructure, an increase in food prices, and generally an exacerbation of food insecurity.

The summit of increased hardship was the removal of subsidy on premium motor spirit, locally known as fuel subsidy, on 29th May, 2023, by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which came with mixed reactions. As a result, the prevailing hardship and drastic plummeting of the living condition of Nigerians have lingered, making it more difficult for a significant proportion of Nigerians to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter.

By tackling these issues, Nigeria can unlock its potential for economic growth and development. Overall, while Nigeria faces complex development challenges that require a comprehensive approach to address issues such as education, healthcare, conflict, and economic instability, there are still opportunities to address same through thorough and consistent governmental action.

CHAPTER 5

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

The most promising approach to addressing food insecurity in Nigeria lies in creating a peaceful atmosphere in the country that engender the condition and safety of farmers as well as the ease in the movement of food products across the country. However, it is essential to add that the responsibility of the government to quell the brewing crisis in the country cannot be treated as an abstract situation that requires external aid as it is the primary responsibility of the government to secure lives and properties of its citizens.

5.2 Recommendation and Conclusion

Recommendations in this regard fall under two major points: the restoration of peace in hotspots and the provision of a stable power supply. Nigeria is endowed with a youthful and enterprising human population, and has the potential to develop with minimal government intervention. A stable power supply will boost small and medium-scale enterprises as a major driving force for economic growth.

Addressing these two factors will create a multiplier effect: more businesses will thrive, production costs will decrease, agricultural output will rise, and a more attractive business environment will emerge, boosting investor confidence. This, in turn, will lead to the generation of new employment opportunities. Studies have shown that communities with access to food and job opportunities tend to have lower crime rates. This suggests that individuals engaged in gainful employment are less likely to engage in criminal activities, thereby helping to address the issue of insecurity.

With the rapid advancement of technology, it is now possible to develop innovative solutions that can help farmers increase their yields, reduce waste, and improve the quality of their crops. For example, precision agriculture, which utilizes sensors, drones, and other technologies to monitor crop and soil conditions, can help farmers optimize their resource use and enhance their yields.

In addition to technology, there is also a need for policy interventions to address food insecurity in Nigeria. The government could provide more subsidies to farmers to encourage them to adopt sustainable farming practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture. The government could also invest in infrastructure, such as roads and irrigation systems, to improve access to markets and increase the efficiency of the agricultural supply chain. Thailand has adopted a sustainable approach to crop production, allowing for multiple harvests of a particular crop in the same year, thereby ensuring food availability beyond the stipulated season.

To promote soft power through our rich gastronomy would promote a gradual shift from oil dependency to a more diversified economy through gastronomy diplomacy. Nigerian delicacies have begun to gain worldwide recognition as the recent increase in visits to Nigeria during “Detty December” is a testament to the potential of our rich gastronomy to garner international attention.

The central argument in this research is that Nigeria possesses the substance and endowments to achieve its development aspirations and to gain phenomenal international reputation. As demonstrated all through the research my dearest contributions to food systems across the globe 18th of its white diaspora as well as its innovation music and film industry have gained international influence and recognitions as a result Nigeria is clearly a global leader in culture and food specifically however the research has demonstrated the presence of a concerning paradox which is in the fact that Nigeria’s global ascendancy in the aforementioned domains exists in juxtaposition with domestic challenges and structural deficits prominent among these are the

pervasive insecurity unstable power supply this conclusion presents the research findings and argues that the task of mitigating the aforementioned challenges constitutes the necessary decoration for attaining Nigerians clear and evidence potential to achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, the research has considered Nigeria's task in attaining the recommendations of the sustainable development goals. Frequent policy somersaults were identified as the major mechanism by which government led development efforts have experienced varying degrees of failure. Such somersaults are most evident across the agricultural spectrum as well as the uncoordinated reforms in the power sector and, more recently, the uncoordinated subsidy removal on petrol products. Each of these policy somersaults has increased local uncertainty and international concern thereby compounding local transaction costs across all facets of the economy. The national inflation as well as the local currency fluctuation has resulted in a failure in achieving long term sustainable government planning which is critical for attracting foreign direct investment in the key sectors of food production and the development of Nigeria's power and energy infrastructure.

In mitigating the above, the core of the theoretical contribution of this research is set in its recommendation to reframe Nigeria's development challenges, not as the scarcity of resources or talent, as indeed Nigeria's enormous human capital was very well described, but in squarely outlining government's policy inconsistencies as well as the inadequate prioritization of the needs of the Nigerian people ranging from security to food supply.

Similarly, among the key findings of this research which clearly stands out for its novelty and policy orientation is that of Nigeria's diverse and under documented gastronomy heritage which is untapped but can serve as a veritable tool for global engagement, attraction of foreign direct investment as well as achieving the sustainable development goals in Nigeria. Indeed, several works exist on Nigeria's creative economy but the focus has largely hinged on the popular music

and film and fashion industry. However, this research has systematically examined the food sector for its potential in the world of diplomacy from primary agriculture to food processing and packaging especially in the diaspora-led international distribution framework. The key finding in this regard is that the Nigerian cuisine is a significant national asset with the potential for boosting Nigeria's trade and development aspirations including tourism and Nigeria's diplomacy. Essentially, food is a true source of soft power for Nigeria.

Evidence gathered in the course of the research indicates the growing interest in Nigerian cuisine largely without much government effort in this regard. Nigeria's variety of spices and seasonings, its staple crops including cassava and yams as well as its prominent dishes like jollof rice and egusi soup among others have gained visibility across food markets in Europe, North America, Asia, other parts of Africa and the Middle East. This visibility has also generated secondary benefits including the increase in demand for bulk food items from Nigeria and food bloggers producing positive content about Nigeria's food.

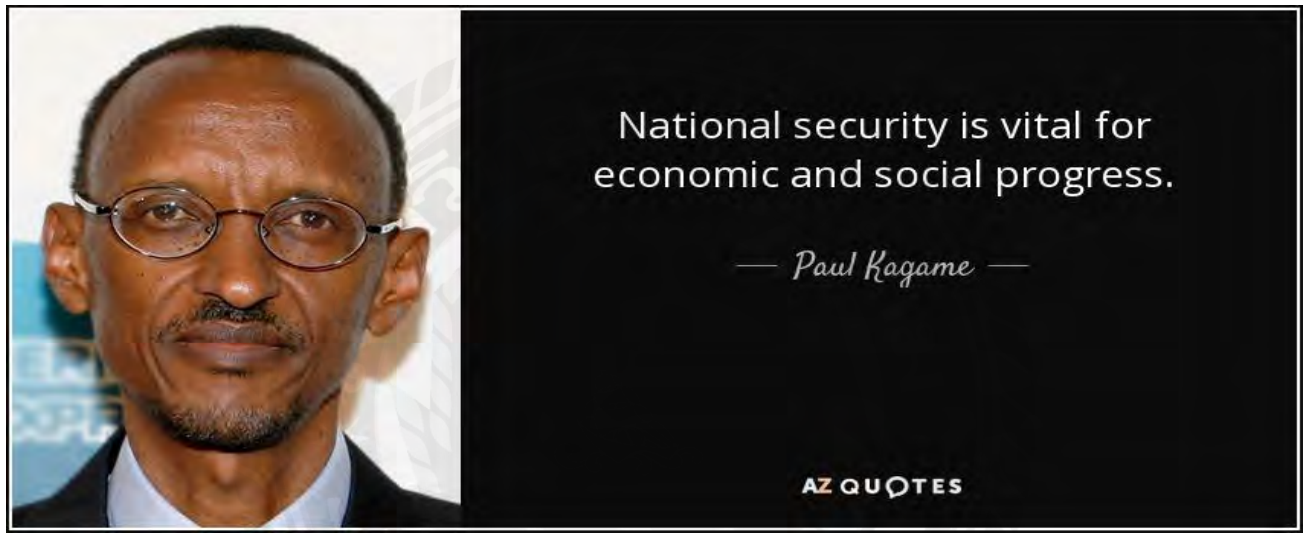
The problem still persists in the sense that Nigeria is yet to fully explore this potential. A significant aspect of the foreign demand for Nigeria food and agricultural products is being taken advantage of by other countries like Ghana which have relative success in food processing and electricity supply. It is important to address these challenges to maximize the benefits for Nigeria

Foreigners who encounter Nigerian cuisine are highly likely to seek additional information about Nigerian investment opportunities, technology hubs, and tourism destinations. This suggests a pathway from palate to portfolio that has not been systematically exploited by Nigerian trade or diplomatic missions. The research thus recommends a coordinated inter-ministerial strategy linking agriculture, culture, and foreign affairs.

While participation in Detty December activities continues to increase year after year, despite Nigeria experiencing security challenges, more can be achieved when all regions in Nigeria

are at peace and the government leverages these annual activities to boost economic growth through tourism.

Many reasons have been alluded to the influx of people to Lagos, Nigeria to spend Christmas, a season known as *Detty December*, some of which are our entertainment, fashion, food, and medical tourism. In a nutshell, more can be achieved with a more secure environment.



5.3 Photo Gallery

This study would on the possibility of boosting Nigeria's soft power through gastronomy diplomacy would be incomplete without a glimpse of the rich traditional delicacies synonymous to the diverse cultures in Nigeria.



Photo credit: Instagram,- de_hotplate_22

This plate features Nigerian native **jollof rice**, a smoky, flavorful rice dish cooked with rich tomato and pepper sauce. It is accompanied by assorted meats, including spiced offals, spiced cow skin ("ponmo") and goat meat, garnished with colorful peppers. On the side, there's peppered snail, a delicacy coated in a spicy, savory sauce.



Photo credit Instagram: Obysfoodsupplies and chef_obilicious

This image showcases Nigerian swallow dishes accompanied by two types of soups: **Efo Riro** (a rich vegetable soup made with spinach, assorted meats, and spices) and **Egusi Soup** (a melon seed-based delicacy with meat and snails). The white packs in the background are **pounded yam**, a smooth, starchy side dish perfect for scooping the flavorful soups.



Photo credit: Facebook- African Intercontinental Recipes

This dish features **boiled ripe plantains**, a sweet and soft delicacy paired with stir-fried vegetables and prawns cooked in a rich, spiced tomato sauce. It is complemented by a crispy, golden-brown fried fish, adding a savory touch.



Photo credit: Facebook- African Intercontinental Recipes

This is **Egusi soup**, a popular Nigerian dish made with ground melon seeds, palm oil, vegetables, and a mix of meat or fish. It is rich, flavorful, and often paired with swallows like pounded yam or eba.



Photo credit: Allure. vanguard.com

Pepper Soup is a popular Nigerian dessert or starter. It is a spicy thin soup made in a variety of ways, either with beef, chicken, or fish. This is best served hot, as it is a star on almost all Nigerian occasions.



Photo credit: Instagram chummexfoods

This is **Nkwobi**, a traditional Igbo delicacy made with cow foot, spiced and cooked in a rich palm oil and ugba (oil bean) sauce. It is a savory, spicy dish often served as a bar snack or special treat in Nigerian gatherings.



Photo credit: allnigerianfoods.com

This is **Abacha**, also known as African Salad, a traditional Igbo delicacy made from fermented cassava (tapioca), palm oil, ugba (oil bean), and a blend of spices. It is typically garnished with onions, vegetables, and sometimes fish or meat, making it a vibrant and flavorful dish.



Photo credit: www.cable.ng

This is **Nigerian suya**, a popular northern street food made of thinly sliced meat (usually beef or chicken) skewered on sticks and coated with a rich, spicy peanut-based seasoning called yaji. It is grilled to perfection and often enjoyed with sliced onions, cucumbers and cabbages.

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