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Impact of media reportage of violent conflicts on security in Plateau State

By
[1]ASHIRU Baba Mohammed., [2]ZAMANI Andrew Prof., & [3]IDRIS Bashir Abdullahi
[1-3]Institute of Governance and Development Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria

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Abstract

In conflict-prone environments, the media is never a bystander it is a participant, and its narratives can determine whether violence escalates or recedes. Nowhere is this reality more consequential than in Plateau State, Nigeria, where recurrent cycles of communal violence since 1999 have claimed approximately 11,749 confirmed lives across 420 communities, yet the role of media reportage as an active security variable remains systematically underexplored. This study drives two specific objectives to examine how media framing of violent conflicts particularly sensationalisation, emotional language, and unverified casualty figure influences security outcomes in Plateau State; and to investigate the impact of repeated media coverage of past massacres on security behaviours, including displacement, arms acquisition, vigilante formation, and area avoidance. The study adopted a qualitative research design, employing content analysis of publicly available archival documents, journal publications, media reports, and official records relevant to the Plateau State conflict ecosystem. Data were analysed thematically, with findings interpreted through the explanatory lens of Framing Theory. The findings establish that sensationalised framing, ethnically inflected language, and unverified casualty figures consistently correlate with heightened inter-communal suspicion, community mobilisation for self-defence, erosion of institutional trust, and retaliatory violence confirming that media does not merely reflect conflict realities but actively constructs threat perceptions that translate into measurable security responses. Furthermore, repeated media references to historical massacres were found to constitute an independent security risk, operating through cognitive threat-priming mechanisms that elevate perceived vulnerability and normalise pre-emptive defensive behaviours, including vigilante alignment and displacement, even in periods of moderate objective threat. The study recommends that the Plateau State Government alongside North Central Development Commission should institutionalise a mandatory Conflict-Sensitive Reporting Protocol for all media houses covering Plateau State. Study also calls for establishment of a formal Media–Security Early Warning and Response Interface within the state's security architecture to disrupt the causal pathway between irresponsible narration and community-level security deterioration.

Keywords: Conflict Framing, Framing Theory, Media Reportage, Peace Journalism, Security Outcomes

Introduction

Globally, the media has long been recognised as possessing a dual capacity as an instrument for conflict de-escalation and peacebuilding, or it can function as an accelerant that deepens divisions and triggers further violence. This duality has become particularly pronounced in the twenty-first century, where the rapid proliferation of digital platforms, the 24-hour news cycle on media platforms of Televisions, Radio, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. The competitive pressures of modern journalism have fundamentally altered how violent events are reported, framed, and consumed by audiences across geographic and cultural boundaries.

* Corresponding author: **ASHIRU Baba Mohammed**
Department of Security and Strategic Studies, Nasarawa State University, Keffi, Nigeria.

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Media and conflict literature has established several foundational insights that inform contemporary understanding of relationship. Media framing theory posits that the way in which information is presented, the selection of certain facts, the emphasis on particular angles, the use of specific language profoundly shapes audience interpretation and subsequent behaviour. In conflict settings, framing choices are never neutral. The decision to label an incident as a clash rather than a massacre, to identify perpetrators by ethnicity or religion, or to highlight casualty figures from one side disproportionately all carry significant consequences for how communities perceive threat, assign blame, and mobilise in response.

The normative framework of peace journalism argues that conventional war journalism, with its emphasis on violence, elite sources, and zero-sum framing, actively perpetuates and escalates conflicts. While peace journalism, by contrast, advocates for reporting that reveals the structural and cultural roots of violence, humanises all parties, and highlights non-violent responses and peacebuilding initiatives. The distinction between these two paradigms is not merely academic; it has profound implications for whether media coverage contributes to conflict resolution or conflict intensification. The 1994 Rwandan genocide provides the most extreme example of how media can be weaponised to incite violence (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014), former Yugoslavia (Kurspahić, 2003), Kenya during the 2007-2008 post-election violence (Somerville, 2011), and in Ethiopia (Deresse, 2023). These cases collectively demonstrate that media does not merely reflect conflict realities but actively constructs them, and that the narratives propagated through news coverage can either dampen or amplify the dynamics that lead to violence. A consistent finding across these studies is that African media systems, which often operate within environments of ethnic pluralism, weak regulatory frameworks, and political instrumentalisation, face unique challenges in maintaining professional standards during periods of crisis (Okorie et al., 2023).

Nigeria, as Africa's most populous nation and one of the largest media markets in the world, presents a particularly complex and instructive case. The country's media landscape has undergone dramatic transformation since the transition to civilian rule in 1999, with the proliferation of newspapers, broadcast stations, and digital platforms creating an intensely competitive information environment. The pressures of this competition, combined with the absence of robust ethical guidelines for conflict reporting, have produced a pattern of coverage characterised as sensationalist, ethnically inflected, and prone to amplifying rather than mitigating tensions (Uwalaka, 2019; Aja et al., 2022).

The profound impact of media framing on conflict has been empirically confirmed that newspaper coverage of the Plateau State conflict between 2010 and 2012 was influenced more by ethnicity than by the ethics of the journalism profession (Dewan, 2018). With journalists employing discursive strategies such as propaganda, exaggeration, litotes, and negative stereotyping that led to the intensification of the conflict

(Dewan, 2018). Similarly, Aja et al. (2022) found that coverage of herder-farmer clashes in Plateau State by three major national newspapers was highly negative and dominated by a criminality frame, leading to conclusion that journalists are yet to imbibe the principles of peace journalism. A content analysis of framing in Jos, Plateau State, revealed that two prominent national newspapers primarily framed their coverage of conflicts through a religious lens, often emphasising negative tones of violence (NPSA, 2024)

The framing of media coverage on violent conflicts specifically sensationalisation, emotional language, and unverified casualty figures correlates with either increased community mobilisation for self-defence or heightened inter-communal suspicion. Aja et al. (2022) documented the dominance of criminality frames, Madobi (2025) identified emotionally charged language such as 'genocide' and 'horror' and documented casualty figure discrepancies ranging from 17 to over 50, while Dewan (2018) opined that journalists' discursive strategies led to the amplification of issues in some instances and de-emphasis in others, either to aggravate or downplay the conflict. What has not been established is whether audiences exposed to such framing respond with community self-defence mobilisation a phenomenon well-documented anecdotally in Plateau State or with increased suspicion that undermines inter-communal cooperation.

The impact of repeated media coverage of past massacres on security behaviours, including avoidance of certain areas, arms proliferation, displacement decisions, and support for vigilante groups. This reveals that Plateau State has experienced multiple catastrophic massacres2001 (approximately 1,000 deaths), 2004 (approximately 700 deaths in Yelwa), 2008 (approximately 700 deaths), 2010 (over 1,000 deaths), and the 2023 Christmas Eve attacks (approximately 200 deaths) (Nwosu & Nwokolo, 2024). Media coverage of new violent episodes frequently references these past tragedies, a phenomenon that Kpilaakaa (2025) terms the weaponisation of historical memories. This tends to arms acquisition, displacement, vigilante support and documented as security responses in Plateau State without any systematic empirical linkage to media coverage patterns. This background notes that young people drift into vigilante formations, informal security roles, or illicit economies including cattle rustling, arms brokerage, and illegal mining (Olayiwola, 2024), and that communities are increasingly resorting to vigilante groups and calls for civilian armament (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2026).

Plateau State was selected as the domain of this study because it represents one of Nigeria’s most persistent, lethal, and media-visible theatres of communal violence since 1999, making it an ideal laboratory for examining the impact of media reportage on security outcomes. With over 420 communities attacked across 13 local government areas and approximately 11,749 confirmed deaths between 2001 and 2026. Plateau embodies the structural and proximate conditions that make media narratives particularly consequential. Importantly, the state has attracted intense media coverage, with documented patterns of sensational framing,

politicisation, lexical bias, and inconsistent casualty reporting factors that, in fragile environments, may influence public perception, mobilisation, reprisal dynamics, displacement decisions, and security deployments. While prior studies have identified problematic reporting trends, there remains limited empirical testing of the causal pathways linking media framing, repetition of past massacres, coverage intensity, and cross-state amplification to measurable security outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Plateau State has the best tourism climate in Nigeria having hosted expatriates way back in the 70s. However, the State has endured cycles of violent conflicts for decades, resulting in thousands of deaths, widespread displacement, and deep inter-communal mistrust. While considerable attention has been given to the root causes of these conflicts such as land disputes, political marginalization, and resource competition the role of media reportage as an intervening variable in shaping security outcomes remains critically underexplored. The media does not merely report events; it frames narratives, selects language, repeats traumatic histories, and determines the intensity of coverage, all of which can influence public perception, community behaviour, and even the operational responses of security agencies. Yet, in Plateau State, there is no systematic empirical assessment of how sensationalised framing, emotional language, or unverified casualty figures might inadvertently trigger community mobilisation for self-defence or deepen inter-communal suspicion.

This study therefore addresses the urgent gap by systematically examining how media framing, repetition of past massacres, coverage intensity, and cross-state reporting influence security dynamics in and beyond Plateau State, with the aim of generating evidence-based recommendations for conflict-sensitive journalism and security sector response. The significance of this study could be of benefits to the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA), Ministry of Communication, National Orientation Agency, Plateau State Government, Religious and Humanitarian Bodies, North Central Development Commission (NCDC). This study will hold profound significance for multiple stakeholders, including media practitioners, security agencies, policymakers, conflict resolution scholars, civil society organisations, host communities, and the general public. The expected findings will generate evidence-based insights that can reshape how conflicts are reported, managed, and responded to in Nigeria's most volatile regions. Media houses can also use the findings to develop internal ethical codes for reporting violent conflicts, particularly in Plateau State and similar contexts across Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions

i. How does framing of media coverage on violent conflicts influence Security in Plateau State?
ii. What impact does repeated media coverage of past massacres have on security in Plateau State?

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study examines impact of media reportage of violent conflicts on security in Plateau State. While specific objectives;

i. Examine how framing of media coverage on violent conflicts influence security in Plateau State
ii. Investigate impact of repeated media coverage of past massacres on security in Plateau State.

Literature Review

Concept of Media Reportage

Framing of Media Coverage

There is no gainsaying that elite actors have exploited fear, violence, and marginalization to mobilise support along ethnic and religious lines (Kpilaakaa, 2025), but whether media framing amplifies or mediates this elite manipulation remains untested. Most recently, a 2025 analysis of online Nigerian news media found that the Fulani herders were consistently presented as perpetrators through primes of Warlike, Nomad Savage and Invaders, while farmers were uniformly cast as victims, a stereotyping that primes audiences to perceive and evaluate the roles and motivations of non-state actors in ways that deepen inter-communal enmity (Famwang, 2024).

A particularly striking finding of this literature is the role of language not merely as a descriptor but as an operational factor in security dynamics. The National Coordinator of Nigeria's National Counter Terrorism Centre has argued that terminology is not merely a communication issue it is an operational one, warning that stereotyping and ethnic profiling within media discourse can undermine intelligence gathering, weaken cooperation between communities and security agencies, and ultimately hinder national and regional security objectives (The Will News, 2025). This insight has profound implications for understanding how media reportage may influence security outcomes in Plateau State, where the stakes of misrepresentation are measured in human lives.

Security

The attack on Angwan Rukuba on Palm Sunday 2026 is both a security crisis and an information crisis. The two are inseparable. The narratives mapped in this analysis are already circulating at scale and have already contributed to at least two additional deaths through reprisal violence. The journalists, civil society

organisations, community leaders, and institutions who shape the information environment around this attack in the next days and weeks are not bystanders to the conflict. They are participants in determining whether it escalates or de-escalates (Ikpa, 2026)

Empirical Review

Framing of Media Coverage on violent conflicts and Security

Dubawa (2026) examined misinformation analysis on 2026 Jos Palm Sunday attack and assess their potential to fuel inter-communal suspicion and reprisal violence in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria. The study employed a qualitative mapping of four major misinformation narratives (casualty inflation, religious attribution, state-actor conspiracy, call for retaliation) supported by a documentary analysis of social media posts, WhatsApp messages, and national media reports. Result from the study showed that within hours of the attack, unverified casualty figures of over 50 killed and emotionally charged, polarised framing circulated widely. These narratives directly triggered reprisal attacks along the Jos-Bauchi highway, leading to additional deaths. The analysis shows that sensationalised reporting and unverified figures can incite collective outrage, deepen inter-communal suspicion, and sabotage conflict-resolution efforts.

Rosemary et al. (2025) investigated how Plateau State media frame children affected by ethno-religious and resource-based conflicts, and the implications for public perception and policy. The study leveraged on qualitative content analysis of local and national media reports that cover children living in conflict zones. The study applied framing theory to categorise the dominant narrative frames. Results that emanated from the study submitted that children are predominantly framed either as passive victims or as sensationalised figures linked to extreme violence. Their long-term needs are generally underreported, leading to short-term humanitarian responses rather than sustained support. This selective framing can discourage community mobilisation for collective protection and instead foster apathy, while leaving unaddressed grievances can heighten inter-communal suspicion.

Aja et al. (2022) interrogated how newspaper Coverage of Herder-Farmer Clashes in Plateau State during a period of intense violence and to assess the prevalence of peace-oriented versus war-oriented frames. The study engaged mixed method research design and content analysis of three national newspapers; *The Sun, The Guardian, and Punch* from March 2018 to January 2019, focusing on headline tone, attributions of blame, and use of conflict-sensitive language. Result from the study opine that coverage within this period was overwhelmingly negative and dominated by a criminality frame, which labelled herders as aggressors without contextualising the conflict's root causes. This framing contributed to heightened inter-communal

suspicion and motivated communities to form self-defence groups rather than seek dialogue. The study concludes that journalists have not yet internalised peace-journalism principles.

Madobi (2025) empirically examined the Plateau tragedy and the perils of polarised media narratives in Plateau State with a focus on sensationalism, inconsistent casualty figures, and political exploitation. The study employed media review of 50+ stories published between 9 and 16 April 2025, coded for tone (negative/balanced), use of emotional language, and consistency of reported casualty numbers. Findings showed that 45% of reports carried a distinctly negative tone, with headlines using words like "genocide" and "horror." Reported casualty figures varied between 17 and 50, often without verification. Such framing fuelled public fear, eroded trust in security institutions, and increased calls for community self-defence. The study documents a direct link between sensationalist reporting and community mobilisation against perceived ethnic or religious groups.

Dewan (2022) interrogated the influence of political and ethnic framing as conflict catalyst in Jos Plateau, North-Central Nigeria. The methodology employed by the study was **m**ixed-method design combining a critical discourse analysis of newspaper reports with 20 in-depth interviews with journalists, community leaders, and conflict victims. The findings of the study established that media reports frequently emphasised ethnic and religious identities, used inflammatory language, and printed unverified casualty figures. This framing heightened inter-communal suspicion and directly contributed to the formation of ethnically-aligned self-defence militias. The study introduces the concept of violent entrepreneurs who exploit polarised media narratives to mobilise communities for retaliation, worsening the security crisis.

Ugwueze and Onuoha (2025) assessed Internal displacement and the framing of insurgency as a predicate analysis of media reporting on Boko Haram in Nigeria. The study sets out to investigate whether the "urgency" frame in media reporting on insurgency correlates with internal displacement levels, rather than actual violence levels. The study employed discourse-analytical predicate analysis of Twitter/X posts from Nigerian newspapers (2011–2019) combined with displacement and violence data. The study explicitly compares the effect of urgency framing versus objective violence levels. Results from the study revealed the levels of urgency in media reporting (e.g., "impending massacre," "crisis spiralling") correlate more strongly with internal displacement rates than do actual fatality figures. In Plateau State, such urgency framing accelerated displacement decisions and created conditions that fostered community self-defence organising. The study argues that sensationalist coverage can trigger pre-emptive flight and inter-communal suspicion, even when objective risks remain moderate.

Repeated media coverage of past massacres and security in plateau state

Dubawa (2026) assessed the effects of repeated, often exaggerated, media coverage of the 2026 Palm Sunday attack on community responses, including displacement, arms acquisition, and vigilante formation. In Jos North LGA, Plateau State. The study employed narrative analysis of online misinformation and media reports, supplemented by a field assessment of community reactions and security force statements. Findings showed that repeated, conflicting reports of the death toll (27–50+ vs. official 28) amplified fear and outrage. This coverage directly contributed to reprisal killings, the decision of several communities to evacuate, and public calls for civilians to arm themselves. The study notes that communities exposed to repetitive, unverified coverage were more likely to support vigilante groups and to avoid previously contested areas.

Dewan (2022) analysed public perception of radio coverage of herder-farmer conflict and its influence on security behaviours (choice of radio as an information source, avoidance patterns in Taraba State, Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey of 384 respondents, with data collected through questionnaires and analysed using SPSS on frequencies, percentages, and chi-square tests. Result showed that majority of respondents (62.5%) believed that radio coverage exacerbated insecurity by repeatedly broadcasting past attacks, leading to avoidance of certain areas and support for home-grown vigilante groups. The study confirms a statistically significant relationship between repeated exposure to conflict news and decisions to relocate or arm oneself. Although the study was conducted in Taraba, its findings are directly transferable to Plateau State, which shares the same conflict ecosystem.

Theoretical Framework

Framing theory

This study is anchored in Entman‘s (1993) Framing Theory as its primary theoretical lens. Framing theory provides the most coherent explanatory mechanism for understanding how media reportage of violent conflicts in Plateau State influences security outcomes. The origins of framing theory trace to Goffman’s (1974) seminal work, argued that individuals interpret social reality through schemata of interpretation that enable them to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large (Goffman, 1974). These interpretive frames allow people to answer the question, What is it that is going on here? The implication for media studies is profound by selecting certain facts, emphasizing particular angles, and employing specific linguistic choices, media organisations construct frames that guide audience interpretation in predictable directions.

Entman recognised that frames perform four primary functions in any communication about conflict. The first is problem definition, in which media specify what the issue is and who is affected. The second is causal attribution, in which media identify the forces or actors responsible for the problem. The third is moral

evaluation, in which media implicitly or explicitly judge the actions of those involved. The fourth is treatment recommendation, in which media suggest or imply what should be done about the situation. The relevance of this framework to reporting of violent conflict in Plateau State is immediate and compelling. When a media report defines an attack as a religious problem (problem definition), attributes causation to a specific ethnic group (causal attribution), evaluates those actions as genocidal (moral evaluation), and implies that vigilante mobilisation is the appropriate response (treatment recommendation), the frame is not merely describing reality it is actively shaping how audiences will interpret and respond to that reality.

Empirical studies have confirmed that Nigerian newspapers covering Plateau conflicts employ precisely the framing techniques this objective interrogates. Aja et al. (2022) found that coverage was dominated by a criminality frame and concluded that journalists are yet to imbibe the principles of peace journalism (Aja et al., 2022). NPSA (2024) documented the negative tones of violence that characterised coverage of Jos crises (NPSA, 2024). These studies establish the independent variable (problematic framing) but do not establish the dependent variable (security outcomes) or the causal link between them. Objective One directly addresses this gap.

Framing theory predicts that repetition of massacre frames reinforces threat perception and scripts defensive behavioural responses. When audiences are repeatedly reminded that members of their community have been killed in past massacres, the cognitive availability of those events primes them to anticipate future victimisation. This heightened perceived vulnerability directly influences displacement decisions households may flee areas where past massacres have occurred and support for vigilante groups, which are framed as necessary for survival in the absence of effective state security. The mechanism is analogous to what media effects researchers term cultivation theory, but framing theory specifies the process more precisely.

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research design while making use of secondary data generated via journal publications, internet, library, and other documented materials relevant to the study; impact of media reportage of violent conflicts on security in Plateau State using content analysis of publicly available archive documents. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning media reportage of violent conflicts on security in Plateau State. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study confirm that media framing of violent conflicts in Plateau State significantly shapes security outcomes, directly answering the first research question. Specifically, the analysis establishes that

sensationalised framing, emotionally charged language, and unverified casualty figures consistently correlate with two observable security consequences: community mobilisation for self-defence and heightened inter-communal suspicion. These findings align strongly with Dubawa (2026), which demonstrated that within hours of the 2026 Palm Sunday attack, unverified casualty figures and polarised framing circulated widely, directly triggering reprisal attacks along the Jos-Bauchi highway and resulting in additional deaths. Similarly, Madobi (2025) documented that 45% of media reports on Plateau violence carried distinctly negative tones, deploying emotionally loaded terms such as "genocide" and "horror," which fuelled public fear, eroded institutional trust, and intensified calls for community self-defence. Dewan (2022) further established that ethnic and religious framing, combined with inflammatory language, contributed directly to the formation of ethnically aligned self-defence militias what the study terms "violent entrepreneurs" exploiting polarised narratives. Ugwueze and Onuoha (2025) added a particularly instructive dimension, demonstrating that urgency framing correlates more strongly with displacement decisions than actual fatality figures, confirming that perceived threat constructed through media language can trigger security responses independent of objective violence levels.

This study also establishes that communities repeatedly exposed to media coverage referencing historical massacres the 2001, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2023, and 2026 episodes exhibit measurable behavioural responses including avoidance of contested areas, support for vigilante formations, arms acquisition, and displacement decisions, even in periods of moderate objective threat. This finding resonates strongly with Dubawa (2026), which found that communities exposed to repetitive, conflicting reports of death tolls were more likely to evacuate, call for civilian armament, and align with vigilante groups. Dewan (2022) which demonstrated significant relationship between repeated exposure to conflict news and decisions to relocate or arm, with indicating that radio coverage of past attacks led to area avoidance and vigilante support. This is also consistent with Kpilaakaa's (2025) conceptualisation of the weaponisation of historical memories, wherein media references to prior massacres prime communities to anticipate future victimisation and adopt pre-emptive defensive postures. Rosemary et al. (2025) additionally found that selective and sensationalised framing of conflict victims leaves unaddressed grievances that heighten inter-communal suspicion over time, reinforcing a cycle in which repeated historical references deepen mistrust and weaken the social cohesion necessary for conflict resolution. Taken all these together, these findings establish that media repetition of past massacres is not a neutral act of historical documentation but an active variable in Plateau State's security ecosystem, one that shapes community threat perception, resource allocation toward self-protection, and the gradual normalisation of vigilante structures as legitimate security alternatives

Conclusion

This study concludes that media framing of violent conflicts in Plateau State is not a peripheral communication concern but a substantive security variable with measurable consequences for community behaviour and inter-communal relations. The evidence establishes that sensationalised reportage, emotionally charged language, unverified casualty figures, and ethnically inflected framing consistently correlate with heightened inter-communal suspicion, community mobilisation for self-defence, and the erosion of institutional trust in security agencies. The media does not merely reflect the conflict environment in Plateau State; it actively constructs threat perceptions that translate into observable security responses, including vigilante formation, displacement, and retaliatory violence. The normative gap between prevailing war journalism practices and peace journalism principles remains wide, and its consequences are measured not in column inches but in human lives. Plateau State's conflict ecosystem therefore demands a fundamentally different standard of reporting, one that prioritises verification, contextualisation, and conflict sensitivity over speed, sensation, and audience provocation.

The study further concludes that repeated media coverage of historical massacres constitutes an independent security risk, operating through the cognitive mechanism of threat priming to elevate community vulnerability perceptions beyond levels justified by immediate conditions. When audiences are continuously reminded of past atrocities through unverified, emotionally amplified narratives, pre-emptive security behavioursarea avoidance, arms acquisition, displacement, and vigilante alignmentbecome normalised survival responses rather than exceptional reactions. This cycle of media-reinforced fear and defensive mobilisation ultimately weakens the social cohesion, inter-communal cooperation, and community-security agency trust that are foundational to sustainable peace. Consequently, addressing Plateau State's security crisis requires not only conventional security interventions but deliberate, evidence-based reform of media practice, regulatory oversight, and conflict-sensitive journalism standards across all platforms covering the region.

Recommendations

i. The Platea State Government in conjunction with the North Central Development Commission should institutionalise a Conflict-Sensitive Media Protocol for Plateau State. and such should be developed and enforced for all media houses operating within or reporting on Plateau State. This protocol jointly coordinated by the Nigerian Press Council, National Broadcasting Commission, security agencies, and media proprietors. It should include compulsory pre-publication verification of casualty figures, prohibition of ethnically inflammatory descriptors unless officially confirmed, structured headline guidelines to reduce alarmist framing, and real-time fact-check integration during breaking incidents. Additionally, periodic training and certification in peace journalism should be required for journalists

covering conflict beats. By recalibrating how violent events are framed and verified, thus reducing the security externalities associated with sensationalised media coverage.

ii. Establish a Media–Security Early Warning and Response Interface. Given the demonstrated impact of repeated massacre narratives and high-intensity coverage on displacement, vigilante mobilisation, and reprisal dynamics, a formal Media–Security Coordination Desk should be created within Plateau State's security architecture. This platform would facilitate structured information exchange between security agencies and media editors during crises, enabling timely clarification of casualty figures, contextual briefings to prevent historical weaponisation of past massacres, and rapid correction of misinformation before it escalates into security incidents. The desk should also monitor narrative intensity and repetition patterns that may heighten public anxiety, activating calibrated public communication strategies to stabilise threat perception.

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