Unfortunately, internal struggles continue to worsen, even prompting internal debate about whether the country already qualifies W instability is rooted in a vital shortcoming: After 63 years of independence, the county still struggles to cultivate a national identity rooted in basic freedoms and dignity for its people.

per ennial upheavals, as in the shocking attack during the Christmas weekend, when armed individuals invaded communities in Plateau State in the Middle Belt, killing an estimated 200 villagers and forcing tens of thousands to flee. Such attacks have plagued Plateau State for more than 20 years.

I visited the city of Jos in Plateau State the week of December 18. Having grown up there -- though my family is from southern Nigeria -- I consider myself and it was wonderful to see people in good spirits, preparing for the Christmas holiday. So, it is doubly difficult for me to think of how that joy was shattered when those communities were attacked.

It is important to understand the nature of the violence in Nigeria and its causes, which extend beyond the religious or ethnic overtones that to spur that animosity. In actuality, religious and ethnic violence is a symptom, and the hate speech and conspiracy theories that often drive it are throwing fuel on a fire long over what essentially are failures of governance.

Nigerian civil society groups that have documented violence in the country reported

Polls show that a majority of Nigerians value diverse communities, identify equally with their ethnicity and nationality, and believe there is more that unites Nigerians as one people than divides them. An Africa Polling Institute survey, the <u>Nigeria Social Cohesion Survey 2022</u>, for example, found that, while divisions among Nigerians were growing, 71 percent are still

despite tensions and dysfunctions, suggest that it is not concepts of unity and comity across ethnic and religious groups that Nigerians oppose but rather the structural sources of the poverty, inequality, violence, corruption, and impunity that affect their daily lives.

Certainly some data such as that from the non-denominational global network Open Doors, appears to indicate that

population, increased under the previous administration of President Buhari. But we also know that violence overall has increased over time, from the notorious days when the militant group Boko Haram was committing widespread

due to competition over land, such as the conflicts between farmers and herders, and that, in turn, is due in part to desertification slowly eating away at anable land. Open Doors, for example, noted in The rise of Islamic militancy occurs against the backdrop of climate

change, environmental degradation and population growth, pushing Fulani herdsmen, whose origins are pastoral and Islamic, and their cattle southwards.