



Security Threat Assessment : Towards 2015 Elections

Key Risk Factors:

- Arms proliferation and increasing activities of armed groups and militias
- Inter/intra party conflicts and tension caused by defections between the two major parties
- Contention over zoning of candidates
- Cattle rustling and conflict between farmers and herdsmen
- Perceptions that there is no level playing ground due to the hijack of the electoral process
- Massive displacement of people from Northeast and their possible disenfranchised in 2015.

Key Mitigating Factors:

- Regular security situation review by election related stakeholders
- Reversing the entrenched culture of impunity through the prosecution of perpetrators of violence
- Strengthen public safety mechanisms in the country
- More options for dialogue, disarmament and dislodgement of insurgents
- Rapid response to humanitarian crisis in the northeast
- Reduction of the level of small arms in the country.

Political Context

With the release of the timetable for the 2015 general elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the stage is now set for a year of pulsating politicking. Like the last quarter, the country has continued to witness defection and counter defection from the two major parties, PDP and APC. This has changed the internal dynamics of the two parties and could have serious implications for the character of elections across the country. The altercation between the parties about which of them is behind the *Boko Haram* insurgency also raises tensions and could impact on the elections if not checked. Two main factors - ethnicity and religion- are likely to continue defining party politics in the run up to elections in the coming months. The potency of these two factors may however become neutralized in some areas by money politics which appears to have an overriding effect on the choice of candidates by both the electorate and political elite.

The security situation has been dominated by the cases of cattle rustling, banditry, assassinations, ritual killings, political skirmishes and rape. Two different cases of violence in March 2014 killed over 200 people Katsina and Kaduna state alone. The violent confrontations between farmers and herdsmen, as well as overnight attacks against defenseless communities in some North central states by suspected Fulani marauders, pose serious threats to national security. This situation is seen by many communities as a reflection of the failure of the Nigerian state to protect its citizen, in the face of its displacement by non-state actors in terms of the control of the instruments of coercion. The inability of the security agencies to arrest or prosecute persons and groups responsible for the spate of violence and insecurity has accounted for an entrenched culture of impunity.

Preparations for the Elections

Political parties and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) are at different levels of preparedness for the 2015 elections. Historically, Presidential and Gubernatorial elections attract more popular attention, but in the last few months indications are that Senatorial election will also become a major issue, particularly because most Governors whose tenure are ending are likely to run for senatorial seat. The political environment is therefore being defined by contentions over presidential election, gubernatorial candidates and senatorial candidates across the major political parties.

Series of political activities such as membership registration, ward congresses and rallies are being carried out by political parties in some states to galvanise action and strengthen membership base. Although there were no major incidences, some minor skirmishes were experienced at different locations. With gubernatorial elections coming up in Ekiti and Osun States in June and August 2014 respectively, INEC has taken steps to update the voters register by conducting Continuous Voters Registration (CVR) and distributing Permanent Voters Cards (PVC) in those states. It has also opened a Voters Verification Platform for those who have registered to vote in the two states' and promises to replicate these steps across the country in coming months.

Gender Dimension

A combination of cultural practices, religion and long history of political exclusion has continued to keep women out of active political participation. Although women candidates have increased in the last 10 years, the number of those who get nominated and eventually elected are still low across the country. There are however indications that more women will be contesting in the next elections; though the level of impact they can make is subject to the support they can get from the two major parties. Only a few women are currently holding leadership positions even in the political parties. As the run towards the 2015 election continues, more of female candidates are expected to emerge at all levels.

Presence and Activities of Non-State Actors

The emergence and activities of non-state actors as it relates to challenging state control over the control of the instrument of coercion is evident in the spate of violence witnessed in the North Central zone for example. This is obvious with the Ombatse phenomenon in Nasarawa State, as well as cattle theft, banditry and other forms of criminality, which include armed robbery and overnight attacks.

There are several other non-state actors involved in security activities across the country. For instance, with the increasing cases of cattle rustling, especially in Zamfara, Kaduna and Sokoto states, several community vigilante groups have been established. Sokoto, a hitherto quiet state has in the last eight years been experiencing rising spectre of political violence due to the growing notoriety of Area Boys (a militant youth group in Sokoto).

More generally, the youth bulge in all the states continues to remain ready-made reservoir of vibrant energy for recruitment by non-state actors and politicians in turn. Another threat to security in the North East zone may likely come from the Civilian JTF (CJTF) in Borno currently hailed for their gallant counter terrorism efforts in the state. The CJTF are currently heavily armed with machetes, knives, daggers etc. to fight insurgency but it is reasonable to assume also that some of the heavy weapons acquired from encounters with Boko Haram may remain in their circulation which could be readily used for intimidation during the forthcoming elections.

Migration and Internal Displacement

Due to Nigeria's porous borders, some persons from neighbouring countries such as Benin Republic, Togo, Ghana, Chad, Niger and Cameroon have been known to enter Nigerian territory illegally. These immigrants are sometimes involved in trans-border crimes such as smuggling of food items, vehicles and even small arms. These smuggled arms and ammunitions are sometimes bought by politicians to arm their thugs.

The North East continues to suffer massive population movement at a scale never witnessed before principally arising from Boko Haram insurgency. The three states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe that are presently under emergency rule have recorded millions of internally displaced persons. This excludes those that have qualified as refugees across Nigeria's international borders. Scores of settlements have even been attacked several times such that their populations have now been decimated leading to grave humanitarian crisis for the people

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living in these communities. The fear expressed by INEC about the possibility of holding elections in the three states under emergency rule should therefore not be taken lightly. Whatever political interpretations INEC's fear might take, many people in the states are already traumatized to the extent that their willingness to participate even if elections would hold remains to be seen. This is more so given the perception in many communities about neglect by government in their times of need when these communities were ravaged by the insurgents.

Violent Hot Spots

We categorized the states according to the perceived level of threat using traffic light signals (green, amber and red); green indicating stability/lowest threat states and red indicating the highest threat level/ most volatile states. The measures used for the categorization include history of violence, degree of control by incumbent and relationship with the federal government, stability of internal state party politics, existence of terrorist/militant activity, state of emergency or communal/religious conflict, bid for second term by incumbent governor, zoning arrangement, jostle for federal and state legislative positions etc. Most states fit into various categories based on comparison within their region and not on the scale of risks nationally.

- **RED:** NC – Nasarawa, Plateau, Benue; NE – Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Taraba; NW – Kaduna, Zamfara; SS – Rivers; SE – Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo; SW – Ekiti and Osun
- **AMBER:** NC – Kogi, Niger; NE – Bauchi, Gombe; NW – Katsina, Sokoto and Kano; SE – Abia and Anambra; SS – Delta and Akwa Ibom; (None for SW though Ekiti and Osun are oscillating between Red and Amber)
- **GREEN:** NC – Kwara and FCT; NW – Jigawa, Kebbi; SS – Edo, Cross River and Bayelsa; SW – Lagos, Ondo, Ogun and Oyo; (None for NE and SE)

Regional Analysis

North Central: Persisting communal /religious clashes and more recent violent confrontations between farmers and herdsmen, as well as overnight attacks against defenseless communities in Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau make them high risk states. The Ombatse phenomenon in Nasarawa State makes it very volatile. Communal and religious also make Kogi and Niger risk states but not to the degree in Benue and Plateau. The political crisis in Kwara is mostly contained within the Sarakis, though deep it does not portend any immediate security challenge.

North East: Persisting insurgency activities and state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe put them in the red. The number of internally displaced persons, presence arms and political contestation within these states are also worrisome. Political contestation around the governorship in Taraba puts it in this category also. Political alignments and realignments within the PDP and APC make Gombe and Bauchi states to keenly observe.

North West: The defections across the two major parties have produced huge internal contradictions, it will take a little trigger for the bubble to burst. In Kano, there an increasing tension between Shekarau group and the old PDP in the state. In Sokoto, the tension between the group loyal to the Governor Wamako and those of PDP, particularly Senator Ahmed Maccido and former Governor Bafarawa can easily escalate. Zamfara and Katsina have also been experiencing increasing cases of cattle rustling resulting in wanton destruction of lives and property. These internal contradictions coupled with historical grievances between the opposing forces

now in the same party could degenerate into violence. The threat level now are therefore highest in Zamfara and Kaduna, high in Kano, Kastina and Sokoto and lowest in Jigawa and Kebbi.

South East: Enugu and Ebonyi are both PDP states but contestation over zoning to senatorial district and fights as to who succeeds the exiting governors makes them very high risk states within their context. Defecting of the Imo governor to APC and efforts by candidates from other senatorial districts and parties to unseat him puts Imo in the red too. Growing contestation over zoning arrangements for the governorship position in Abia State makes it a state to watch. Though there is no gubernatorial election in Anambra in 2015, contestation by serving senators and new-comers will make the election one to also watch.

South South: The ongoing crisis in Rivers State keeps it in the red. Inter and intra party tension and succession contestation amongst zoning arrangements make Delta and Akwa Ibom states. Edo is not up for gubernatorial election and the senatorial elections may not throw up significant security threats. There are intra party tensions in Bayelsa and Cross River but these are not likely to spill over.

South West: Osun and Ekiti States are oscillate between amber and red because of their forthcoming gubernatorial elections. Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, and Oyo are green now due to low level political activities but this will likely change to amber a couple of months from now when APC congress and conventions may have been held and INEC distributes PVC and conducts CVR. The closer we are to the candidate nomination process and campaigns the more unpredictable the political scenario becomes and likelihood of election related violence

Synthesis of Key Risk Factors

1. The proliferation of arms and increasing activities of armed groups is a major risk factor. In less than three weeks over 300 people have been killed and thousands of people displaced. There are two dimensions of risks in this regard – first some of killings can easily be manipulatively attributed to some historical conflicts and therefore justify reprisals. Second some of these armed groups are potential army for electoral violence.
2. Inter and intra party conflicts: the defection and counter defection between the two major parties have generated a huge political tension. As political activities picks up within the year, we may begin to experience some violent engagements within and between the political parties.
3. Contention over candidates including zoning of presidential or gubernatorial candidates. Like what happened in 2011, if the ruling elite don't manage the situation properly, it could escalate into a huge national crisis. Similar situation are also emerging at the state level – senatorial districts for governorship and senatorial positions.
4. Cattle rustling and conflicts between farmers and herdsmen: In the last few months over 300 people have been killed in different incidences spread across these state. It has become more like an organised crime, involving sophisticated weapon.
5. Perceptions that there is no level playing ground for people due to the hijack of the electoral process by 'god fathers';
6. The presence of militia groups provokes apprehension as they could be used by powerful politicians;
7. Massive displacement of people on a scale never witnessed before has led to a humanitarian crisis in the North East region and most of these people might be disenfranchised in 2015.

Mitigating Factors and Recommendations

1. Election related stakeholders – including security agencies, INEC, political parties and civil society groups must commence preparation for the 2015 election and mainstream conflict management in their plans. A quarterly security situation review can be very helpful for INEC, law enforcement agencies and CSOs.

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2. Reversing the entrenched culture of impunity through the prosecution of perpetrators of violence by the police and the judiciary;
3. Public safety mechanisms across the country should be strengthened so as to assuage fears over the likelihood of violence before, during and after the elections;
4. More options for dialogue and disarmament of insurgents failing which dislodgement of their camps in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States should continue to be vigorously pursued;
5. Rapid response to the humanitarian crisis in the northeast is urgently required;
6. Efforts should be made to reduce the level of small arms in the country. The report of Presidential Committee on Small arms and the Presidential committee on Post Elections violence made useful recommendations on how to deal with these issues;
7. Urgent attempt should be made to understand the political economy and dynamics of cattle rustling in the zone. The situation is not simply about military action, it is also about having a better understanding of the situation so that a better response mechanism can be developed.

Map of Threats Assessment by States

