

ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT: TOWARDS 2015 ELECTIONS

Ninth Edition

January, 2015

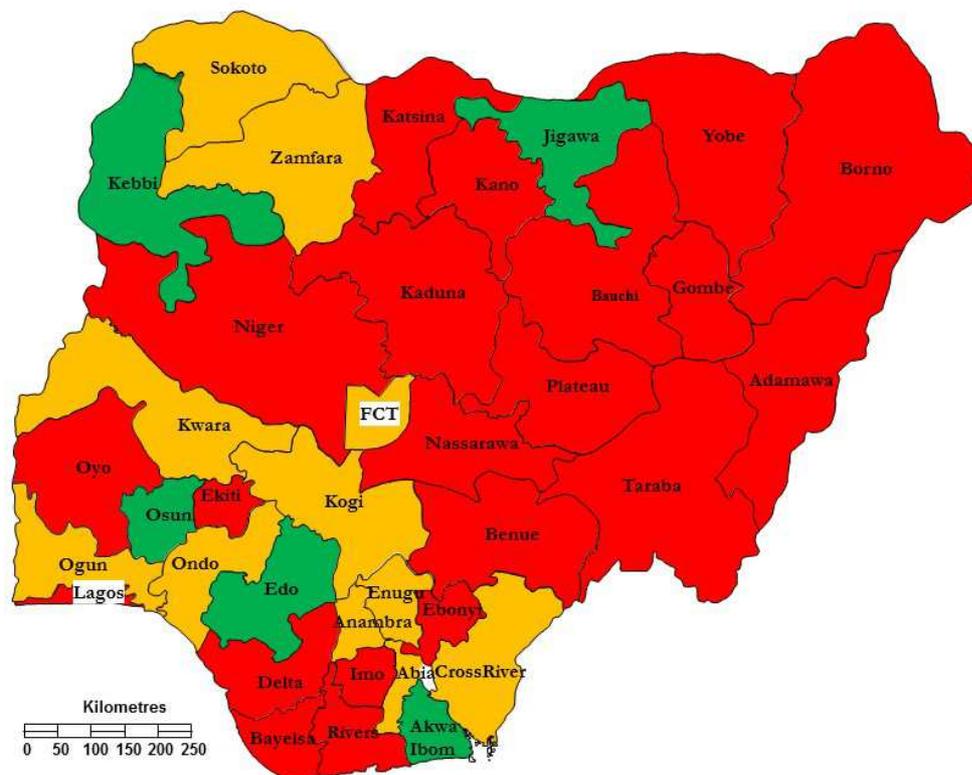


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Background and Political Context

Less than two weeks to the conduct of general elections in Nigeria, the political atmosphere is charged with political activities including incidences of violence, provocative utterances and hate speeches. Since the end of primary elections, there is increasing use of dangerous and hate speeches by politicians in both the conventional and the social media. Examples of these include statements attributed to the Vice President on religion during the PDP Presidential Campaign stop at Jigawa, where he allegedly stated that APC would Christianise Nigeria because their Vice Presidential candidate is Pastor of a big Church with more than 5000 Churches. Earlier, some states governors including Jigawa, Katsina and Kaduna were alleged to have made statements that are capable of inciting violence. The utterances of some political leaders and the manifestation of violence in some parts of the country even before the elections have heightened tension in the country. There are also reports that some Nigerians have begun to relocate to other countries or to other parts of Nigeria as a result of this fear.

In Bauchi State for instance, the PDP presidential campaign convoy was pelted recently and the state governor accused a faction of the Bauchi Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) based in Abuja whose gubernatorial aspirant could not scale through the party primaries held recently. Earlier, in Dass LGA of the state, President Jonathan's campaign billboard was burnt by youths in the community. It is perhaps in reaction to an alleged involvement by the All Progressives Congress (APC) in these activities that a group of youths in support of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party in the state allegedly set ablaze the Bauchi State APC secretariat immediately after the president's visit. There are also lower level public statements and rumours that are hateful and dangerous most of which are hardly reported in the media. PDP had alleged intimidation

of its supported and destruction of its campaign billboards and posters in some states. It is becoming clearer that the activities of politicians and contestants especially in the two major political parties contribute significantly to the risk of electoral violence.

High-profile defections are on the increase. Recently, the APC presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari received Niger State deputy governor, Alhaji Ahmed Musa Ibeto, alongside members of national and state assemblies, and aides to Governor Babangida Aliyu who left the PDP for the APC. The deputy governor had said he defected to APC alongside 200 others, most of whom were serving aides of Governor Aliyu, because of PDP's shoddy handling of their petition on the gubernatorial primary election in the state.

There is also uneasy calm in other parts of the country. In Gombe State, supporters and family members of the former governor, Danjuma Goje were arrested by the police after the governor, Ibrahim Dankwambo was pelted in Kashere, Danjuma Goje's hometown. The police also ransacked the Gombe residence of the state APC gubernatorial aspirant after arresting his close political associates. The defection is not limited to the ruling PDP and the leading opposition APC but they are the major losers and gainers, respectively.

More-so, supporters of the All Progressives Congress were injured in Port-Harcourt when they were shot at while on their way to attend their Presidential candidate's campaign. Just two weeks ago, APC secretariat, Okrika chapter in Rivers State was bombed by unknown persons. Members of the party were quick to protest to the Commissioner of Police in the state to protect them from violent attacks of the opposition.

In Jos, the Plateau State capital, a campaign bus of the President Goodluck Jonathan team was reportedly set ablaze, while another one escaped similar fate in Kachia, Kaduna State. These incidents occurred within a week and the period when the two major political parties taking part in the election began their campaigns. Additionally, the three states under emergency rule i.e. Adamawa, Borno and Yobe continue to mount intense pressure on the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct elections despite security concerns in these states; and doubts persist as to INEC's readiness for the formidable task ahead.

The Abuja Accord signed by leading contenders and political parties was brokered by Chief Emeka Anyaoku, a former Secretary General of the Commonwealth and his counterpart at the United Nations, Kofi Annan in January. Under the Accord, political parties and contestants were bound to run issue-based campaigns at the national, states and local government levels. Parties to the accord pledged "to refrain from campaigns that will involve religious sentiment, ethnic or tribal profiling, both by ourselves and all agents acting in our name; to refrain from making or causing to make in our names or that of our parties any public statement, pronouncement, declaration or speeches that have the capacity to incite any form of violence before, during and after the elections; to forcefully and publicly speak out against provocative utterances and oppose all acts of electoral violence whether perpetuated by our supporters and, or opponents and to commit ourselves and political parties to the monitoring of the adherence of this accord if necessary, by a national peace committee made up of respected statesmen and women, traditional and religious leaders."

Although this was not initially part of the agreement, stakeholders insisted on adding institutions and so, it was also agreed that all the institutions of government, including INEC and security agencies, must act and be seen to act with impartiality.

Preparations for the Elections

In spite of some calls to postpone the February general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is forging ahead with its preparations. The commission has released the breakdown of 119, 973 polling units where the elections will hold nationwide and have deployed 145,000 smart card readers to all the states and the FCT. All Polling Units (PUs) in private compounds, mosques and churches have been relocated – in line with international best practices. INEC has blocked the cloning of Permanent Voter Cards (PVCs) by desperate politicians through the deployment of smart card readers. With the distribution of 145,000 smart card readers, the use of stolen or purchased PVCs is likely to be impossible. The smart card readers will authenticate the holders of PVCs and confirm their finger print and also help to count and record every accreditation done at the PUs. The introduction of smart card readers explains why INEC cannot allow those with temporary voter cards to vote in February.

INEC have commenced the distribution of non-sensitive voting materials and extended the distribution of PVCs to February 8 to ensure that every registered voter secure his or her PVC before the 14th of February. In response to the call for the postponement of the February general elections, the INEC Chairman Prof. Attahiru Jega has told international development partners, Nigerians and the world at large that the election will hold as scheduled on February 14 and 28, 2015. Jega has also met with the Resident Electoral Commissioners (RECs) where it was decided that the polls must go on as scheduled.

The breakdown of the 119,973 polling units announced by the INEC is distributed in the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) as follows: Abia 2,675; Adamawa

2,608; Akwa Ibom 2,980; Anambra 4,608; Bauchi 4,074; Bayelsa 1,804; Benue 3,688; Borno 3,933; Cross River 2,283; Delta 3,624; Ebonyi 1,785; Edo 2,627; Ekiti 2, 195; Enugu 2,958; FCT 562; Gombe 2,218; Imo 3,523; Jigawa 3,527; Kaduna 5,101; Kano 8,074; Katsina 4,901; Kebbi 2,398; Kogi 2,548; Kwara 1,872 Lagos 8,462; Nasarawa 1,495; Niger 3,185; Ogun 3,213; Ondo 3,009; Osun 3,010; Oyo 4,783; Plateau 2,631; Rivers 4,442; Sokoto 3,035; Taraba 1,912; Yobe 1,714; and Zamfara 2,516.

Across board, there are six major threats to security within the next few days to the elections;

- I. Dangerous and hate speeches by politicians, youths and at the lower levels of the states.
- II. Tardiness of INEC in the distribution of PVCs and the conduct of elections.
- III. Intimation and mudslinging.
- IV. Poor management of election – logistics, failure of card readers, real or passive vote rigging.
- V. Crisis of expectation or frustration occasioned by failure to win an election.
- VI. Perceived partisanship of security agencies.

Presence and Activities of Non-State Actors

As the 2015 elections nears, there are strong indications that the activities of non-state actors particularly insurgency by the Boko Haram fighters and counter insurgency measures by youth vigilantes is intensifying. Worst hit is Borno State where there have been violent incursions by Boko Haram fighters leading to the seizure of Baga, the headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force on 3rd January allegedly killing over 2000 people and Monguno on 25th January where scores of people were killed. These attacks signify the control of the northern section of the state by the Islamist fighters

which when added to those parts of the state already captured in the central and southern parts amount to nearly half of Borno state.

There were equally violent attacks on innocent Nigerians by the militants in Geidam, Babbangida and Potiskum (Yobe State) and about 10 villages in Michika LGA (Adamawa State). More frightening is that there have been several daring attacks on Maiduguri the capital of Borno and Damaturu, the capital of Yobe State by the Boko Haram fighters. Though these attempts were repelled by the combined efforts of the military and youth vigilantes with dozens of people killed, the fear and trauma exerted on the people has led to the perception that these events are far from being isolated in their occurrence and serve as only preludes to what is to come in the February 2015 elections.

No less worrisome is the alleged romance between youth vigilantes particularly in Borno State and the APC-led government, thus creating an atmosphere of total hatred for the opposition PDP. Elsewhere, the suicide attacks which occurred in Gombe town at Tashan Dukku (Dukku Motor Park) and the residential area surrounding the state owned university early in January as well as that the attempt in Bauchi Central market further raise the risks of violence in the elections in 2015 in the northeast. These incidents point to the susceptibility of crowded places to violent attacks as may be the situation during election in many polling units. There is little wonder that due to the volatility of the zone, some observer missions for the 2015 election in Nigeria recently announced that they will not be deploying observers to the northeast.

The intermittent violence in southern Kaduna in the North West zone, remained unabated. As the electoral politics heightens, some of the ethno-religious contentions in

the state have continued to simmer. The zone has also been affected by Boko Haram insurgency, especially in Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Sokoto. Zamfara and Katsina have also been experiencing increasing cases of cattle rustling and rural banditry resulting in wanton destruction of lives and property.

With the increasing cases of cattle rustling, especially in Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina states, several community vigilante groups have been established. The Zamfara State government has recruited 4,540 security guards ostensibly in response to the security challenges in the state. In Kano, Kaduna and Katsina with the history of youth militancy, particularly the *yan'daba*, electoral politics is always an opportunity to perpetrate violence on behalf of their principals. The cases of raids and mass killings by bandits in southern Kaduna are also attracting non state security response from the communities. Militant youths called Area boys are major players in electoral politics and security in Sokoto state.

The Kebbi State chapter of the Vigilante Group of Nigeria says it will deploy 12,000 of its members to support the Police and other security agencies during the forthcoming general elections. Malam Sunusi Geza, the state commandant of the group, disclosed that 110 of their members had been trained to ward off disagreements that could work against order at polling units and to ensure adherence to election rules and regulations. Geza added that five “specially trained” personnel would be deployed to each of the 21 local government areas of the state to work closely with the police and other security agencies throughout the period of the election to ensure peaceful conduct of the polls. The organization has procured nine operation vehicles for easy access to remote areas, while working tools like flash lights and uniforms would also be provided to members. In Bayelsa State in South-South Nigeria, former militants are actively supporting candidates seeking election in both the PDP and APC. For example, there are

allegations that immediate past governor of the state, Timipre Sylva, who is contesting the Bayelsa East Senatorial seat with Ben Bruce, is being supported by a popular ex-militant.

Migration and Internal Displacement

Borno State being the epicenter of the insurgency in the northeast currently has about half of its population internally displaced. Most of these IDPs live within the state capital, Maiduguri and without proper registration with either humanitarian/aid agencies or government. While this lack of proper documentation makes these IDPs a source of security concern, recent decision by INEC to conduct elections only officially designated camps follows that a large percentage would not likely vote. The situation is similar in Yola and Gombe states which equally have high caseloads of IDPs. The steps taken by INEC and the national assembly to ensure that IDPs vote is commendable, but the modalities may not be concluded on time for the February elections.

Recent Developments within the State Houses of Assembly

Ekiti State House of Assembly conundrum remains a sore point as the APC and PDP lawmakers maintain their frosty relationship even though some traditional rulers and elders in the state are said to be working out amicable settlement of the crisis that engulfed the House when seven PDP lawmaker suspended the 19 APC lawmakers and had been carrying out legislative activities even when they do not form quorum. A legal suit has been instituted in court by the Hon. Adewale Omirin APC faction which has also commenced parallel sitting in the state capital, Ado Ekiti. The home of the House of Representatives member representing Ekiti South Federal Constituency 1, Dr. Ifeoluwa Abiose Arowosoge, was allegedly attacked by unknown gunmen in the early hours of Friday, January 16, 2015. The lawmaker was quoted as saying "I suspected assassination and the attack is from the ruling PDP. You will recall that they attacked the home of the

Speaker and the homes of other House of Assembly members and other APC party leaders”.

Violent Hotspots/Regional Analysis

Below are the hotspots for violence as we count down to the elections:

In the North East- Borno – All the 27 LGAs, Bauchi – Bauchi municipal, Azare, Tafawa Balewa, Dass Adamawa: Yola, Mubi North, Mubi South, Madagali, Michika, Hong, Gombi, Maiha, Yola North, Girei Gombe: Gombe, Akko Taraba: Jalingo, Wukari, Ibi Yobe: Damaturu, Geidam, Gujba, Gulani, Potiskum, Bursari. The continued bombings, killings and expanding sphere by the insurgents remains the greatest threat ahead the polls. Internally displaced persons are on the increase due to insecurity in the region. The likelihood of infiltration of the IDP camps by the insurgents who would disguise to cause havoc during the elections.

Noting that the North West region is prone to violence, it takes a small trigger for violence to erupt, especially in Kaduna and Kano state. Some of the causes may be historical, while others are largely generated by prevailing political situation. Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Sokoto should be carefully watched in the zone. Following the party congresses Kebbi and Sokoto States are heating up and need to be watched, the complain of mudslinging, intimation, harassment and dangerous public speeches is frightening. In Kaduna, the tension between the PDP and APC is very high and could explode as there are different cases of fracas between the supporters of both parties. Concerned by this unhealthy situation, the Kaduna state Commissioner of Police held a three hours meeting between the two gubernatorial aspirants, Ramalan Yero of PDP and Nasir El-Rufa'i of APC. Kaduna, apart from being a violence prone state, it is a PDP-led state, with a strong presence of the APC; it is also the Vice President's state.

Because of the strategic character of the state to northern Nigerian politics, it is a state that both parties are desperate to take.

There are related issues in Katsina, where Buhari, the APC Presidential candidate hails from and currently under PDP control. The PDP presidential campaign train was pelted during its stop at Katsina. Although the circumstances behind this action and the perpetrators is not clear, it is a reflection of the nature and level of political tension in the state. In Sokoto, the wedge between PDP and APC is widening, and the violent activities of party thugs, called Area Boys are growing. Despite police intervention, there are still growing cases of clashes between the supporters of these parties. In Katsina state, the police reportedly intercepted 850 cutlasses allegedly smuggled in by a political party but the police are yet to provide the name of the party.

Eight supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Kaduna State were feared dead, following a violent clash with supporters of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Kaduna. Supporters of PDP had been alleged to be defacing posters of the presidential candidate of APC, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari and that of its governorship candidate, Mallam Nasir el-Rufai. It was gathered that while some supporters of APC accused the other party of the vandalism, it was hell let loose, as supporters of PDP allegedly swooped on their APC counterparts. In a statement signed by the spokesperson of the el-Rufai campaign organisation, Samuel Aruwan, in Kaduna, the APC confirmed the death of eight of their members, with many others said to have sustained injuries. In reaction, Governor Yero said it was APC supporters who attacked his campaign team at Bakin Ruwa area of Igabi Local Government Area. A statement by the media aide of the governor, Mallam Ahmed Maiyaki, alleged that the thugs were hired by the opposition party to attack the governor's convoy with the sole aim of throwing the state into confusion.

It therefore appears southern Kaduna, Kaduna city, Katsina and Kano city could be major flashpoints. The nature of violence may not necessarily be partisan; it could take different dimension including ethnic or religion, banditry and targeted assassinations. Southern Kaduna has been experiencing ranging spate of banditry and violence with strong possibility of escalating reprisal attacks in other parts of the state.

Ebonyi State remains a tinder-box that must be handled carefully as there have been attacks and counter-attacks. The month of January witnessed violent incidents related to politics and elections in the State. At three different occasions, thugs purported to be Labour Party loyalists have attacked APC and APGA campaign offices. Likewise, thugs allegedly attacked the Labour Party campaign train and burnt their buses. However, it is insinuated that they are being funded by the Governor. In addition, the member representing Ezza South in the State House of Assembly was chased away from his constituency by Labour Party members for not decamping to the party. The crisis was contained by the Police after some people had had machete cuts. The Police command have been warning regularly about the use of youths as thugs, destruction of campaign bill boards, defacing of posters, sewing of uniforms for members of vigilante group and waylaying of campaign train rival parties across the state. There is serious likelihood of violence in Ebonyi in the days before, during and after the February elections.

In Imo State, two persons were killed in what seem like politically motivated murder in Imo state, the victims Mr. Tobias Onyekele (a former Commissioner to the House of Assembly Service Commission and a former Local Government Chairman under Ohakim administration) was murdered at the MRS filling station, Ugwu-Orji along Okigwe Road. Also, Mr. Augustine Nwugo, cash supply officer in the office of the state Accountant General was murdered in his house in Ulakwo in Owerri North, LGA.

States to watch closely for violence in the South West ahead of the 2015 general elections are Lagos, Oyo and Ekiti States. Tension continued to mount in Lagos state, political thugs and hirelings continue to wage proxy war between the two dominant parties in the state viz. APC and PDP. For instance, scores of supporters at an All Progressives Congress rally in the Oworonshoki area of Lagos State on Monday, January 19 allegedly fled as thugs invaded the rally, stabbing two youths in the process. On Thursday, January 22, an All Progressives Congress supporter in the Agege area of Lagos State, Mr. Eyitayo Peters aka Abona, lost his life after being shot in the face. The incident was reportedly caused by a feud between supporters of Mr. Oluyinka Ogundimu of the APC and Mr. Oluniyi Raheem of the Peoples' Democratic Party. Some thugs, said to be loyalists of a political party, attacked youths returning from a campaign rally on Saturday, January 24 killing Jubril Sulaimon and injuring six others among whom are Sunday Marcus and Jide Olorogun. It would also be recalled that the Directorate of State Security on January 7 had accused the APC of trying to hack into INEC database. The service explained that confessions from the number of staff arrested during a raid at the APC Data Centre at 10, Bola Ajibola Street, Ikeja, and the items retrieved from the building on November 20, 2014, showed that the party had elaborate plans to clone the INEC Permanent Voter Cards, corrupt the database and replace same with their own data. APC has vehemently denied these allegations.

Just few days back, hoodlums, suspected to be political thugs, have killed three persons in separate clashes in the Ajegunle and Lagos Island areas of Lagos. While one of the two victims in the Amukoko, Ajegunle area was identified simply as Raimi, the deceased in the Lagos Island incident was identified as Ahmed Igbagbo. The third person had yet to be identified. A woman has been strangled to death by yet-to-be identified persons, who also cut off her private parts. Her corpse was abandoned on Oniyanrin Street in the Mile 12, Ketu area of Lagos State.

The political tension in Ekiti state is profound. Apart from the fact that the political crisis rocking the state House of Assembly which has remained knotty, gunmen on Wednesday, January 21 attacked the Ekiti State secretariat of the All Progressives Congress in Ado-Ekiti and destroyed the flags and posters of the party's candidates. According to a statement issued by the state Publicity Secretary, Taiwo Olatunbosun, the gunmen came in four Hilux vehicles and a car to unleash the mayhem. Furthermore, Special Assistant to Governor Fayose on Public Communications and New Media, Lere Olayinka, announced that four APC thugs had been arrested by the police. "The thugs were arrested with guns, axes, cutlasses and other dangerous weapons while trying to escape through Efon-Alaaye at about 3 am on Sunday, January 25. He gave the names of the suspects as Odebunmi Idowu (from Ilupeju-Ekiti), Aliyu Yusuf (from Ibadan), Oladayo Obikoya (from Ikogosi) and Ogunkuade Oluwatosin (a.k.a Jasper)".

In Oyo State, the potential for conflict is high because of the present strength of four political parties' viz. APC, Accord, Labour (after the defection of ex-governor Alao-Akala into the party) and PDP. Oyo traditionally has history of electoral violence and with the determination of the opposition parties to wrestle power from incumbent Governor Abiola Ajimobi an epic battle of intrigues and political tension is unraveling. Suspected political thugs on Monday, January 19 disrupted the inauguration of the governorship campaign of the Social Democratic Party candidate, Mr. Seyi Makinde at Mapo Hall in Ibadan. The thugs allegedly struck shortly after the candidate read his address and was handed the party's flag. The timely intervention of security operatives that fired teargas at the suspected hired thugs, however, saved the situation, as they were dispersed, though they regrouped later to injure some people and damage vehicles.

Rivers state is heating up in the south south with three high courts bombed in Degema, Isiokpo and Port Harcourt areas of the state. It is amidst rising tension in the state where the two political parties have vowed to wrestle power. The hotspots for violence within the South-South include: Rivers— every local government in the state; Delta— Bomadi and Patani and Bayelsa— Southern Ijaw.

Three persons were feared dead at the PDP rally in Akwa Ibom state, on Saturday January 31, 2015, after the close of the governorship campaign rally held in Etinan Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. It was gathered that some youths who were given money to share among themselves had a disagreement with the sharing formula and a scuffle ensued between the- suspect, Emmanuel Sunday Okon of Ekom Iman and the deceased, Emem Friday Ikpe of Afaha Effiat village. The suspect hit the deceased with an iron rod on the head, but died in the early hours of Sunday.

- **RED: NC – Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau; NE – Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe, NW – Kaduna, Kano and Kastina SS – Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta; SW – Lagos, Ekiti and Oyo SE – Imo, Ebonyi**
- **AMBER: NC Federal Capital Territory, Kogi, and Kwara; NW – Zamfara, Sokoto, SE – Enugu, Abia and Anambra; SS – Cross River; SW – Ogun and Ondo**
- **GREEN: NW- Jigawa and Kebbi, SW – Osun; SE – SS- Edo and Akwa Ibom**

Synthesis of Key Risk Factors

- I. *Hate and inciting speech*: The build up to the 2015 election has witnessed intensive campaigning especially between the ruling Peoples’ Democratic Party

(PDP) and the main opposition, the All Progressives Congress (APC). However, with the intense campaigning has also come intense use of hate and inciting speech. These have featured on campaign ground, traditional and social media. These unguarded statements by politicians can heat up the polity, incite violence and jeopardize the peaceful conduct of the elections;

- II. ***Insurgency:*** Until the situation in the north east is addressed we cannot rule out the possibility of more attacks across the country. In the last three years, all the states in the north east and some parts of North West (Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa) have been attacked by Boko Haram. It is even more likely now that electioneering is fast picking up. Criminal elements and political party thugs can disguise as Boko Haram to perpetuate mayhem on opposition and innocent Nigerians.
- III. ***Militant groups, vigilantes and youth thuggery:*** There is a proliferation of militant groups and vigilantes across the country. The increasing poverty, unemployment and youth exclusion has only exacerbated the problem. Many of these youth are exposed to drug, small and light weapons and are susceptible to manipulation and used as party thugs. Though there have been efforts to regulate or demobilise some of the groups in some states, there is however no guarantee that they will not bounce back during the election when politician will become desperate for their services. The process of demobilisation should therefore be comprehensive, in a way that the young people can be empowered through gainful and sustainable socio-economic activities;
- IV. ***Perceived partisanship of security institutions:*** There are strong cases of alleged partisan control of security institutions in the country. The Federal government

has been seen as being partisan in its use of the Police, Military and the DSS. This could be major threat to security as we get close to elections, the feeling of political repression could be major risk factors.

- V. ***Proliferation of small arms and light weapons:*** The proliferation of arms and increasing activities of armed groups is a major risk factor. With persons from some parts of the country insisting that there will be war if the outcome of the elections are unfavourable to them, the case for mopping up arms across the weapons becomes increasingly imperative;
- VI. ***Fear of Electoral manipulation:*** Vote rigging or perceived rigging will be the major trigger of violence in the gubernatorial and Presidential elections. It was perceived this triggered the 2011 post-election violence. It appears certain that vote rigging or perceived manipulation of the election will trigger violence in some states including Kano, Kaduna and Katsina states.
- VII. ***Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):*** 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. This possibility of exclusion is a major risk factor. The camps might be penetrated by insurgent groups as recruitment grounds. Cases of the radicalisation and use of children and young girls for suicide bombings have already been reported in parts of the north;
- VIII. ***Distribution of Permanent Voters Card (PVCs):*** INEC has tried to address some of the challenges encountered with the distribution of the PVCs. However, the number of PVCs not yet distributed and collected remains quite high. The

inability of electorates to obtain their Permanent Voters Card is a tinder box that could cause violence during the general elections.

- IX. *Postponement of the elections:* Though the elections planned for 14 and 28 February is surrounded by a number of challenges, most of which have been highlighted here, it is believed that any effort to postpone the election would be violently resisted. The international community, local groups and INEC are in agreement on this score.

Recommendations

To mitigate possible violence will require a nuanced understanding of the politics of the region and respond to some of the key concerns of the people.

- I. Efforts to contain the insurgency in the northeast, and stop its spread into other regions and states should be intensified;
- II. The government, NEMA and security agencies should set up rapid response strategy in the event of a crisis, both humanitarian and security, especially around flash point areas;
- III. All political parties and candidates should be encouraged to focus on issue based politics around the election and avoid hate or inciting speech. They should be persuaded to adhere to a peace memorandum, showing their commitment to eschew violence and work peacefully before, during and after the election. In the light of this, there should be effective monitoring to ensure that parties and candidates abide by the Abuja Accord;
- IV. PVC and Continues Voter Registration. The increasing accusation of possible disenfranchisement by opposition political parties could be major threats to the election particularly in Kano state. INEC should respond to this with all

seriousness. All the cases of missing data in voters registered should be addressed through extended continuous voter registration. INEC should ensure all registered voters received their PVC.

- V. The electoral commission should ensure free, fair and credible election. This can be achieved only if INEC commences early preparation for the elections. While it appears INEC failed in carrying out early distribution of PVCs, it is important to provide all the non- essential electoral material to states to avoid logistics hiccups.
- VI. The electoral commission and relevant agencies should engage different stakeholders including youth groups, political parties, security agencies, religious leaders, traditional rulers and women on the need for violence free election.
- VII. Election related stakeholders – including security agencies, INEC, political parties and civil society groups must work together in preparation for the 2015 election and mainstream conflict management in their plans. A quarterly security situation review can be very helpful to INEC, law enforcement agencies and CSOs.
- VIII. The increasing cases of rural banditry and cattle rusting are not getting the required attention. It is very important to understand and deal with this new security challenge before it builds a life of its own. Allowing it to fester could be major risk for national security.
- IX. The cases of violence in the region are partly reflection of the level of small arms. Efforts should be made to reduce the level of small arms in the zone. It may be important to revisit the report of Presidential Committee on Small arms and the Presidential committee on Post Elections violence. These committees have made useful recommendations on how to deal with these issues.

- X. The federal government need to invest in training security agencies on election related security issues. Ensure impartial engagement of security agencies, build interagency collaboration including collaborating with state government instituted security bodies.
- XI. Training of Journalists on Conflict Sensitive Reporting: The manner the media has been reporting and is likely to report political conflicts has implications for violence. A cursory examination of newspapers reveals high levels of sensationalism which if left unchecked could contribute to violence. Media practitioners should be exposed to training on reporting of political conflicts to mitigate risk of their reports becoming triggers for violence.