Election Security Brief 004, 13-03-12

SOKOTO STATE: Election Security Threat Assessment

Key Risk Factors:
- Activities of political thugs popularly called 'area boys' in Sokoto state.
- Perceived bias by security agencies in favour of the ruling party.
- Internal divisions within major political parties, which may weaken their support base and increase the desire to rig.

Key Mitigation Factors:
- Deployment of more security personnel to the state and better coordination among them.
- Sustained media campaign against electoral violence by prominent citizens of the State.
- Training of all Divisional Police Officers in the state on election security management by DFID's J4A programme.

Introduction
General elections are usually a period of charged contest of ideas, followership and campaign funds. Disturbingly, elections have additional attribute in Nigeria - violence. Threats to public peace and security are a clear and present danger during elections in Nigeria, as desperate politicians resort to use of coercive forces within and often outside the framework of the state to gain undue advantage over their opponents. This remains a major concern in the build up to the forthcoming Sokoto State Gubernatorial Elections, scheduled to hold on February 18, 2012. In this threat assessment, the various factors that may engender electoral violence before, during and after the election are examined as well as the mitigating factors.

Brief History of Sokoto State
Sokoto has a history of pre-eminence that predate Nigeria. It was the headquarter of then Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th Century before colonial rule. However, Sokoto as a state was created in 1976 when then North-western State of Nigeria was split into two to create Sokoto and Niger States. Sokoto City has maintained its status as a state capital and the headquarter of Islamic faith in Nigeria, in spite of subsequent states' creation exercises by the military in 1991 and 1996, which led to the creation of Kebbi and Zamfara states out of the old Sokoto State. The State is located at the uppermost part of North-western Nigeria near the confluence of Sokoto and Rima Rivers. It shares borders with two countries - Republic of Benin to the West and the Niger Republic to the North. It also shares borders with Kebbi and Zamfara States.

There are 23 local government areas (LGA) in the State: Binji, Bodinga, Dange Shuni, Gada, Goronyo, Gudu, Gwadabawa, Ilela, Isa, Kebbe, Kware, Rabah, Sabon Birni, Shagari, Silame, Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Tambuwal, Tangaza, Tureta, Wammako, Wurno and Yabo. These local government areas are grouped under three senatorial districts:

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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Senatorial District</th>
<th>Local government Areas in each district</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Binji, Bodinga, Dange Shuni, Gada, Goronyo, Gudu, Gwadabawa, Ilela, Isa, Kebbe, Kware, Rabah, Sabon Birni, Shagari, Silame, Sokoto North, Sokoto South, Tambuwal, Tangaza, Tureta, Wammako, Wurno and Yabo. These local government areas are grouped under three senatorial districts:</td>
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Politics in Sokoto State

The politics of Sokoto State (like other states in Nigeria) revolve around individuals rather than ideologies and political parties. Hence, fight for turf is a regular menu in electoral contestation. The return to civil rule in 1999 saw the All People’s Party (APP), which later became All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP), winning the gubernatorial election in Sokoto, with Attahiru Bafarawa as the governor. He served for two four-year terms and by 2007 when he completed his tenure the ANPP had been weakened by infighting and internal division.

The dispute was largely between Bafarawa and his then deputy, Aliyu Wamakko over who should succeed him. Bafarawa had preferred then Secretary to Sokoto State Government (SSG), Muhammad Dingyadi to Wammako. Interestingly, the fractious battle eventually led to both of them leaving the ANPP to further their political ambitions elsewhere. Bafarawa left to form Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), when it became clear that he stood no chance of clinching the ANPP’s presidential ticket against a towering figure like Muhammadu Buhari, former military Head of State and the party's flag bearer in 2003 presidential election. Wamakko, on his part, left to join forces with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), then a struggling party in the state though in control of the federal government and was presented as their gubernatorial candidate in the April 2007 elections.

Wamakko’s permutations worked as he won the election and was sworn in. However, his political foes were not done with him as they successfully challenged his election at the electoral tribunal, which annulled it and ordered a rerun. He not only won the rerun but also got a fresh term of four years via a Supreme Court ruling, which was later reversed in January 2012. While the fight for 2007 election lasted the Bafarawa and Wammako camps did not spare any weapons in trying to gain advantage including recruiting and armed young people notoriously called Areas boys in the fight. And with that, a seed of discord and violence was sown in the fourth republic politics of Sokoto State.

The forthcoming gubernatorial election has once again resurrected the political fight between Wamakko and Bafarawa. Even though Bafarawa is not a contestant, he had not hidden his interest in ensuring the defeat of Wamakko. In 2011 he joined Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) hoping to cash in on the initial indecision of the party in fielding a candidate for the April 2011 presidential election, but had to return to ANPP when he was disqualified by ACN. A move, many analysts in the state saw as an act of desperation.

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| 1. Sokoto North Senatorial District          | Binji, Gudu, Kware, Sokoto North and Sokoto South, Silame, Tangaza and Wammako |
| 3. Sokoto South Senatorial District         | Bodinga, Dange Shuni, Kebbe, Shagari, Tureta, Tambuwal and Yabo.               |

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As the date of the gubernatorial election draws near, a nagging problem has resurfaced with intensity - the pervasive presence and use of Area Boys to break the rallies of opponents and attack their supporters. In a recent meeting the state’s Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security had with representatives of all political parties, the Sokoto State Commissioner of Police, Baba Adisa Bolanta, warned politicians in the state to desist from equipping the ‘area boys’ with ammunitions, saying they might turn against them in the nearest future. In his words: “You are buying machetes and other dangerous weapons for them (Area Boys) and they will turn into criminals and if they see you during their operations they will kill you too.”

They Area Boys move around the 23 local government areas of the state reportedly in full glare of security agencies, smoking Indian hemp and freely brandishing dangerous weapons, Axes, machetes, cutlasses, bow and arrows, swords and at times guns. Prominent citizens of the state, including the former president of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa’ad Abubakar have spoken out against the menace of the Boys. During a courtesy call by the Acting Governor of the State, Alhaji Lawal Zayyana, The Sultan reportedly told him to ‘as a matter of all urgency tackle the menace of the ... area boys.’ It is becoming clear that the Area Boys constitute a major threat to peaceful conduct of the February 18 election in Sokoto State, which should be dealt with.

**Parties and Candidates in the Gubernatorial Election**

Even though 28 political parties indicated interest in fielding candidates in the Sokoto State gubernatorial election to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), only three are seen by analysts in the state as having the financial and followership muzzle to mount serious challenge for the office.

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<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
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<th>Candidate</th>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)</td>
<td>Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Congress for progressive Change (CPC)</td>
<td>Engineer Abubakar Yabo</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>All Nigeria Peoples Party</td>
<td>Yushau Ahmed Kebbe</td>
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**Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)**

Aliyu Magatakarda Wamakko, the candidate of the PDP, will be counting on his long stay in government as the Deputy Governor to Attahiru Bafarawa between 1999 and 2007, s governor between 2007 and 2012, and the dominance of the PDP in the State since 2007 and at the federal level since 1999. He will however have to contend with opposition from within his party. The party is divided between those who joined with him in 2007 and those who describe themselves as foundation members of the party and have been...
around since 1999. There is also the grumbling of some civil servants who felt they were demoted unjustly because they walked under Bafarawa and those who felt their juniors had been promoted ahead of them since he became the governor. It is feared that aggrieved elements within the PDP, who have formed three factions, might work against him, support the opposition or undermine public peace.

**All Nigeria People’s Party (ANPP)**
The candidate of ANPP is Yushau Ahmed Kebbe, a former banker and businessman. Though his party was in power in the state between 1999 and 2007, internal wrangling denied it the 2007 election and since then it has not really found its bearing. However, with the return of Bafarawa to the party, his alleged huge resource base and support of prominent businessmen in the state, many political analysts in the state argue that the party might have a good outing at the election. Furthermore, Yusha’u Kebbe could count on the structures of the ANPP in 23 local government areas of the state. However, the support of Bafarawa could be a liability to him. Bafarawa is increasingly perceived as a political opportunist who could jump ship at the slightest notice and therefore somebody that should not be taken seriously. There is also discontent around the conduct of ANPP’s gubernatorial primary, which led some members to go to court requesting for an injunction to restrain Kebbe from parading himself as the gubernatorial candidate of the party.

**Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)**
Engineer Abubakar Yabo is the candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). He was a Manager with the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) and well regarded among the people because of his philanthropic disposition, which may count for him. His party is also very popular among the common people and this could be the major asset of the candidate in the election. However CPC is not as financially strong as its opponents and does not seem to have political structures in the 23 local government areas of the state.

**Economy of Sokoto State**
Sokoto is essentially an agricultural state with traditional mode of production predominating and more than 90 percent of the population engaged in subsistence farming. The main crops produced in the State are millet, guinea corn, maize, rice, beans, wheat, cassava, potatoes, groundnut, cotton, sugar cane, and tobacco. Its traditional industries revolve around weaving dyeing and tanning. There are also agro-allied industries on wheat handling and processing, sugar refining, Leather and modern cement production factory. Efforts have made by successive governments in the state to modernize the economy encouraging mechanized farming and construction of dams for irrigation. However, these efforts appear not to have significantly addressed the problem of poverty and unemployment in the state. The 2010 Poverty Profile of Nigeria indicates that Sokoto State has the highest percentage of people leaving below poverty level. According to the report slightly more than 4 out of every 5 persons in the state live below poverty level (81.9%). The consequence is that youth restiveness and violence expressed through activities such as the ‘Area Boy’ syndrome is on the rise and many unscrupulous politicians take advantage of the situation to recruit them for electoral violence by mere promise of meals.

**Synthesis of security threats**
- Resort to the services of thugs to secure electoral advantage over opponents.

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• History of factionalisation in Sokoto State politics whether in the ANPP or PDP and the feeling of exclusion of some contestants and lack of transparency in the conduct of the primary gubernatorial primary;
• High level of poverty and lack of political consciousness of the workings of modern democracy, especially among the uneducated youth. The excruciating economic deprivation of this group may predispose them to offer their services for political violence to politicians desperate to capture power through political fraud;
• Alleged threat of Boko Haram to attack the state, which poses a serious concern to the conduct of a peaceful election;
• The inability of the security forces to arrest and prosecute the area boys because of fear that they are connected to powerful political forces.
• Perceived bias of security agencies in favour of the ruling party.

Threats mitigation factors
• Improved confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission ( INEC) as reasonably impartial in the conduct of the elections with supervision national officials.
• Improved coordination and cooperation among law enforcement and security agencies in providing election security through the work of the Interagency Consultative Committee on Election Security.
• Decision to withdraw police orderlies from elected and other officials during elections thereby preventing egregious misuse.
• Training of all Area Commanders and Divisional Police Officers in the State on election security by the DFID's Justice for All (J4A) through the CLEEN Foundation.

Conclusion and Recommendations
The major threat to the conduct of a violence-free and peaceful election in Sokoto State on February 18, 2012, is the activities of area boys who are easily used by evil-minded politicians to perpetrate electoral violence and fraud. The simmering discontent within leading political parties is another potential threat coupled with the poor socio-economic status of most of the youth and perception of bias among security personnel and the Boko Haram threat. The following steps are therefore recommended to ensure peaceful conduct of the election:
• Security agencies need to demonstrate and make statements that will establish them as neutral and non-partisan in the conduct of the gubernatorial elections. The declaration by the Sokoto State Police Command of its readiness to arrest and prosecute area boys is a reassuring statement that needs to be observed to the letter as to serve as a deterrent;
• Security agencies must learn to adhere to the guidelines developed by the Police Service Commission for police officers on electoral duty by being punctual, professional, effective and impartial in implementation of the law;
• The security services should map potential areas of security threat and organise their officers to respond to such areas rapidly;
• The appeal by prominent personalities to politicians and the youth to shun violence should be sustained, as the Sultan has been doing;
• INEC must be seen to be an impartial umpire in the conduct of the elections. It must continue to work and earn the trust and confidence of the aspirants and the parties in the gubernatorial election. It needs to continue to maintain its practice of transparency.

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