

Special Bulletin – Security in Advance of Elections 2015, Nigeria

A general election will be held in Nigeria on the 14 February 2015, with the incumbent president, President Goodluck Jonathan running to retain his seat, representing the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari will run for the All Progressive Congress (APC); a party which in 2014 was formed after the consolidation of the largest opposition parties. Many political analysts are suggesting that these elections will be the most open and competitive in Nigeria since 1999, a positive assessment of a country, many may suggest, that is still going through a transition to a democratic political system. However, others look on these elections with trepidation, especially given the growing level of insecurity throughout Nigeria and escalated violence during previous elections. A winner takes all perspective for either the North or the South may also aid in igniting regional tensions during this process.

Election Practicalities

The main two parties fighting for election are the PDP (incumbent Government) and the APC (opposition). To win a party has to win in a majority of states, and has to have a 25% minimum in at least two thirds of remaining states. Should no party achieve these results, a run-off will be conducted. As the law stands, this process has to be conducted within a week of the elections. A number of Political Analysts are saying that a run off is highly likely given that the PDP may not get the 25% vote in two thirds of the states even if they win in the majority of states. If a run off was to occur it would be a historic first in Nigeria, a process which may produce an increased risk of political violence.

Security Challenges enhanced by the Elections

The ongoing security challenges in Nigeria have been a cause of concern for many associated with or monitoring the elections of 2015. Many focus on the North, and more specifically in the North East, where the insurgency has been highlighted as a possible inhibiting factor to the elections. In theory this may not be the case, as the law provides the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) with the authority to declare a Forced Majeure on the elections, resulting in the possibility of a cancellation of the elections in the three states under Emergency Rule, if the security authorities say the security situation is such that a peaceful and safe electoral environment cannot be provided. If this was to happen, it would be perceived to be a huge triumph for Boko Haram who vehemently oppose the democratic electoral process. In addition, it has been argued that this could help the incumbent President, given that it is suggested he would not get a 25% minimum

Example of Potential Propaganda

Reports in late 2014 suggested that the National Security Advisor to Nigeria stated that Al Qaeda had provided funding to Boko Haram to purchase arms and weapons in an effort to orchestrate an attack on the elections process. It was purported that this was motivated to ensure the North emerges as winners. However, given Boko Haram statements, made via the Shekau figure, it is difficult to see how they would want to have anything to do with the democratic process. Furthermore, it would appear that Boko Haram largely disagree with the majority of the Muslim North, condemning their way of life, and by proclaiming that many of the Muslims who participate in the political process are not true Muslims; clearly evidenced in recent videos where Shekau threatened the Emir of Kano. As a result, interpretations of such claims are likely to be incorrect, albeit certain elements of the story may have some element of truth.

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vote in these three states. Although the INEC say they are preparing for elections in all states, the question emerges as to whether a safe election environment can be provided in urban and rural areas of the States of Emergency; recent attacks in these three states would present compelling evidence that it cannot. Furthermore, incidents in Kano, Jos, Gombe and Bauchi, may provide further evidence that the military may not be able to provide safe election environments even outside of the SOE.

2007, 2011 and current Election Periods

The 2007 and 2011 elections in Nigeria were marred with violence, witnessing the first display of terrorist style attacks on polling stations. Much of the violence was concentrated around the primaries, a pattern not consistent with this year's primaries.

Results to date for these elections have shown less violence than prior years. However, since 2011 there has been a militarisation of many states in Nigeria, with the military providing security in 28 of the 36 states. Given that the military are stretched both in the North of Nigeria and other states, it would be plausible to propose that providing security during the election process will stretch an already stretched resource, resulting in the potential for increased violence.

Who benefits from the ongoing state of violence and insecurity?

While it would appear at first glance that the opposition benefit from the current insecurity in the North of Nigeria and elsewhere, this is not as clear cut as one could believe. For example, already allegations have emerged that the APC and Northern Muslim leaders are supporting Boko Haram, and related violence financially, ideologically and strategically and that they are using Boko Haram and the current insecurity to tarnish the President and the administration's reputation. Such allegations if believed could help to further polarise the North South divide. This political wrangling at play is not one sided. The opposition are likely to use the ongoing insecurity in the North to highlight a number of misgivings that people should have with the incumbent government, for example, allegations about the government's inability to contain the insurgency, their lack of political will, the increased level of allegations of corruption against the military, the kidnap of the Chibok girls, etc. which all assist in presenting a narrative of Nigeria as a failed state. From this perspective neither side truly benefit the ongoing insecurity, and with other growing issues, such as the decrease in oil prices, increased rhetoric about the growing North South divide, etc. the game playing is likely to continue but to neither's advantage. Some analysts have suggested that the only group that will benefit from the ongoing security is Boko Haram themselves and that they are contributing to this narrative of insecurity to ensure the elections do not take place. However, given that Boko Haram have largely been active in

Potential Security Related Incidents during the Election Process

Increased Communal Violence

Direct Politically Related Violence

Increased Insurgency related incidents, IEDs, high profile targeted incidents

Small scale, but fear inducing, explosions

Mob related violence

Political Assassinations and/or high profile targeting

Kidnapping of high profile political individuals and/or their families

Armed Robbery to secure funding.

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the North, they too may not have an absolute impact on the elections either. Smaller groups and other factors also have the potential to impact the elections in part, and as a result may benefit from localised conflict and political violence.

Election Rhetoric

When one speaks of the General Elections in 2015, a number of allegations and theories are often debated as to whether they can be free or fair. A key theory with regard to the ongoing insecurity is that the President and administration have no political will to stop the insurgency as it is contained largely to three states; three states which did not vote for the current President in 2011, and in which it is unlikely he will secure a 25% minimum.

Another key issue that has emerged regarding these elections relate to Displaced People (DP), many of whom have been displaced due to the insurgency in the North, and also due to communal tensions in the Middle Belt. Similar arguments have been represented in respect to prisoners in custody and their right to vote. The law states that voters can only vote in the area where they were registered. Given that many have been displaced internally and others externally to Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, it has been suggest that over a million people may not get to vote. Interestingly, the majority of displaced people are dispersed across neighbouring villages, towns and states, rather than in camps, as in the case in other countries, making it more difficult to arrange. The voter registration list has to be submitted a month before the elections, making changes now very difficult.

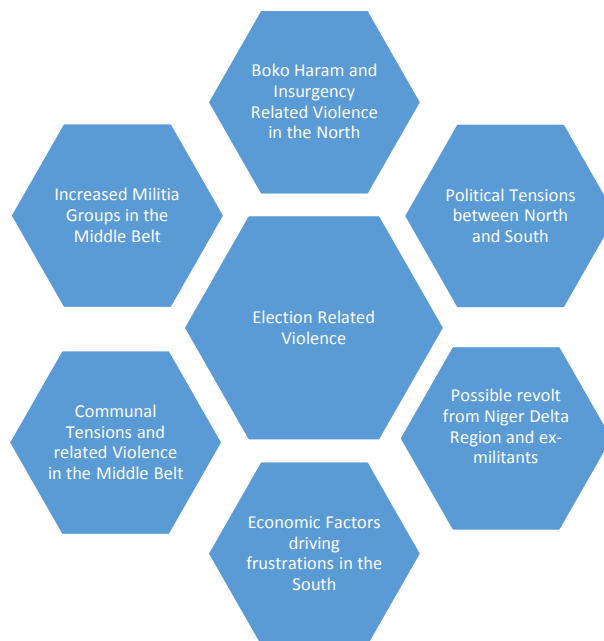
In addition, it has been stated that many people are experiencing a lack of trust in the politicians, but also in the INEC, resulting in disenfranchisement amongst many citizens. Many express concerns about the behaviour of security forces during the election process, given 2007 and 2011 elections. Furthermore, concerns have been raised in regard to the voter registration system. INEC have stated that there was approximately 870,000 cases of double registration in 2011, but have noted that they have taken steps to stop this, this time, alongside reducing the capacity to use stolen ballot sheets etc. Citizens are also concerned with patterns of behaviors in previous elections, in Nigeria 'the winner takes all' narrative is clearly evident, resulting in the election process having the potential of looking more like a war than a democratic process.

Although much has been mentioned in respect of the risk from the North, Boko Haram and the Northern insurgency are not the only potential violent actors that may jeopardise the election process. The presence of non-state actors, militia and armed cults may orchestrate violent incidents to ensure desired results are achieved in certain areas. Since 2011, the Middle Belt has seen an increase in militia, while, the ex-militants of the Niger Delta region have been identified as potential violent actors if they believe their interests are not being provided for by the next President.

While the insurgency in the North has been highlighted as the key driver of anger, frustration and concern, with regard to potential violence during the elections, others suggest that the attitude of politicians, in general is also a driver. It is said that citizens see them as complacent, and have limited trust in them, either the incumbent government or the opposition. Corruption is also a current driver of anger and related tensions, be it in the government, military and/or business community.

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Sources of potential violence in the run up, during and after the elections?



What will this mean for working and traveling within Nigeria during this time?

Working and travelling in Nigeria will remain feasible during the run up to, during and after the elections. However, specific security plans should be put in place, as risks will increase, and will differ considerably depending on the location visited. SAR Consultancy advises people to be aware that the risk of high profile incidents is likely to increase where large public gatherings take place; these locations may be best avoided during this time. With respect to those travelling to the North, it is advised that they be mindful of increased risk in regard to the elections, and also the ongoing insecurity. SAR Consultancy would advise that all those intending to travel to the North East should examine the necessity of such trips at this time and recommends travel only where it is absolutely necessary. Where travel is required, detailed security plans should be put in place prior to travel.

When will the increased risk associated with the Elections reduce or diminish?

Given previous patterns and trends of 2007 and 2011 elections, the risk of security related incidents is likely to remain high for a period after the elections. In addition, due to the increased chance of a Run Off, the risk of political violence is likely to remain for some time afterwards. The residual risk could be present for some time after the voting has finished and the counts been made, validated and individuals are sworn in.

What may Nigeria look like after the Elections and after the risk has passed?

- Continued insurgency related violence in the North
- Potential disruption in Niger Delta if ex-militants feel disenfranchised by the result; disruption to flow of oil North likely
- Communal Tensions in the Middle Belt
- National Budget severely reduced, as oil prices plummet, whoever is in power.

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