

WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING & EARLY RESPONSE NETWORK

WARN

Policy Brief

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**Ahead Of Nigeria's 2019 General Elections:
Dynamics, Vulnerability And Resilience**



**WEST AFRICA NETWORK
FOR PEACEBUILDING**

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

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Ahead Of Nigeria's 2019 General Elections: Dynamics, Vulnerability And Resilience

I. INTRODUCTION

As Nigeria prepares for the Presidential, Gubernatorial and Legislative elections of February 16 and March 2, 2019, public opinions and interests are divided along political and ethnic interests exacerbated by the social media as well as opinion leaders and political actors. With the official commencement of campaigns from November 18, 2018¹, the ruling and opposition political parties have increased their propaganda messages in the mass and social media as they seek election or re-election into various political positions at the Federal and State levels. The elections will mark the sixth multi-party elections in Nigeria since the end of military rule in 1999. The previous elections in 2015 were significant for the democratic stability in Nigeria as the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) lost the presidential elections to the opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), thus ending 16 years of PDP leadership at the Federal level. Even though national and international elections experts and observers described the elections as credible, there were allegations of fraud and violent incidents. From available reports, a total of 60 incidents, resulting in 58 deaths across various States in the pre, during and post elections period were recorded². These were mainly inter-party clashes and attacks, often involving the snatching of ballot boxes and essential materials³.



Ahead of the 2019 elections, there are already concerns regarding election security and consolidation of the democratic structure in Nigeria. Recent reports generated by WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) suggest underlying issues of inter and intra-party tensions, mudslinging, politically motivated violence and reoccurrences of carpet crossing of prominent politicians.

Added to this socio-political landscape is the existing level of insecurity caused by the activities of Boko Haram and other extremist groups, herder-farmer conflicts, armed

¹<https://www.thecable.ng/no-campaign-till-nov-18-incc-warns-presidential-candidates>

²See: APN Briefing Note, No. 1, June 2015 (Retrieved at www.ssrc.org on September 10, 2018)

³Ibid

West Africa Early Warning & EARLY RESPONSE Network (WARN)

The West Africa Early Warning Network (WARN) is an integral part of the West Africa Preventive Peacebuilding Program co-ordinated by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Through its WARN Program, WANEP is setting the stage for a civil society-based early warning and response network in Africa with emphasis on human security.

WARN covers the entire Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region.

Since 2002, WANEP entered into an agreement with ECOWAS through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the framework of capacity building in Conflict Prevention. One of the goals of

this agreement is to interface WARN with the ECOWAS Early Warning Systems to optimize early warning conflict prevention in West Africa. In view of this development, WANEP has been operating a liaison office located at the ECOWAS Secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria since April 2003.

In recognition of the role and achievements of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in West Africa, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations at its substantive session of 2006 granted WANEP Special Consultative Status to the UN. WANEP is therefore mandated to designate official representatives to the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Vienna to further its advocacy and outreach strategies for peace and human security.

banditry, kidnapping, separatists agitations, ethno-religious crisis, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), youth bulge, economic downturns and widespread corruption, which constitute a high risk to election security across the country. The consequences of this threat especially on the stability of political and social structures, including the weak economy, will present huge challenges for peaceful political transition and human security before and after the 2019 elections. As posited by Researcher, Laurent Fourchard, election security cannot be guaranteed in an environment characterized by “increasing wave of violence and criminality, the involvement of local groups in political conflicts and a more general framework of a possible decline of state law enforcement agencies⁴...”.

This policy brief analyses the prevailing conflict risk factors, vulnerabilities and resilience that could influence the outcome of the 2019 general elections and recommendations for various actors towards a credible election that consolidates peace and democracy in Nigeria.

II. PREVAILING POLITICAL CLIMATE

The 2019 general election is crucial to peace, security and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The incumbent, President Mohammedu Buhari is seeking another four year term in office amidst insecurities from the protracted extremist actions of Boko Haram and other splinter groups, the pervasive herder-farmer conflicts especially across the North West and Central axis which reinforces socio-economic crises, organised crimes and armed attacks. While the government may have succeeded in recapturing the local governments originally secured by the insurgents, the bombing and attacks on innocent citizens and the military remain unabated

Beyond the manifestations of insecurity, other emerging dynamics ahead of the 2019 elections include:

a. Amendments to the Electoral Act

The amended section 25 of the Electoral Act (2010) by the House of Representative, substituting it with a new section 25 (1), to change the sequence of the 2019 general

elections⁵, proposed that the National Assembly and gubernatorial election will be conducted before the Presidential election. The National Assembly adopted the amended Electoral Act on February 14, 2018⁶. The change in election procedure has been described as a possible determinant of which political party significantly influences the outcome of subsequent presidential polls based on its victory in the State and local levels election. The Act still awaits the assent of President Muhammadu Buhari as an Amendment Bill. However the President has declined approval of the bill pointing out “drafting issues” on some sections bothering on electoral procedures, which the Senate, House Committees and officials of INEC had jointly revised⁷. Public concerns from media reports highlight the risks of abuse and exploitation to ethical procedures without clarity and understanding of the Electoral Act by political stakeholders.



Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, Chairman, INEC showing a specimen of Ballot Paper. Photo Credit: www.dailypost.ng

b. The increased number of registered voters and political participation

INEC announced it has registered 23 new political parties, thus making a total number of 91 political parties eligible to participate in the 2019 general elections⁸. The extension of the nationwide Continuous Voters' Registration (CVR) exercise officially closed on August 31, 2018, although the collection of the Permanent Voter's Card (PVC) continues until one week to the 2019 Presidential election. According to INEC, a total number of 14,551,482 million new voters were registered between April 27, 2017 and August 31, 2018, accounting for a cumulative total of 84,271,932 million eligible voters⁹. The increase in the number of

⁴Fourchard, Laurent. “A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilante in South- Western Nigeria.” Africa, Cambridge University Press, 78, no. 1: 16-40, 2008

⁵<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/258603-rowdy-session-as-senate-joins-house-in-adopting-change-in-election-timetable.html>

⁶Ibid.

⁷<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/10/buhari-will-give-assent-to-electoral-act-amendment-bill-rep-dukku/>

⁸<http://www.africanews.com/2018/08/15/nigeria-s-2019-polls-will-have-91-parties-over-12m-new-voters/>

⁹<https://punchng.com/84-2-million-registered-to-vote-in-2019-says-inec/>

registered voters implies an increased logistics for INEC and a wider level of political interest and consciousness by the Nigerian electorate in the 2019 elections. This adds pressure to the preparation and conduct of the elections by the Commission as well as the need for collective transparency to ensure prevention or mitigation of actions capable of increasing the risk of violence during and after the elections.

c. Election security

The relatively peaceful elections and political transition in 2015 have elicited public discussions with high expectations on INEC and security agencies to conduct a credible electoral process. In the findings of a recent risk assessment study in Nigeria conducted by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) as well as a baseline assessment by WANEP, there are indications of a high risk of political violence in Kaduna, Ekiti, Rivers and Kano¹⁰, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Lagos, Benue, Kwara, Plateau, Sokoto and Adamawa States¹¹.

With the increasing deadly campaigns of Boko Haram in the North-East zone (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States), the pervasive farmer-herder violence in the North Central, armed banditry in the North-West (mainly Zamfara), militancy in the Niger Delta, separatist movement of the Independent People of Biafra- IPOB (South-East) and other forms of organised armed attacks, the country's security situation remains fragile. The recent interception of weapons at various locations in the country is also worrisome, especially the risks associated with armed attacks within an electoral cycle. This has implications for voter apathy for fear of plausible armed attacks during the elections, particularly in the North-east region of the country.

Political analysts have argued that election security management has extensively been focused on securing election materials to the neglect of human security. This could largely be attributed to over centralisation of election planning and coordination among security operatives around elections¹². A wholistic approach will require the engagement of Civil Society Organisations and other

relevant non-state actors in the planning and implementation of election security which will enhance security sector accountability and credibility of the electoral process.

d. Intra and inter party disputes, and political wrangling:

The quest for political power ahead of the 2019 elections has resulted in the intensification of political parties' formation of party alliances, factionalization within parties and subsequent defections of aggrieved members to other political platforms. The most remarkable case was witnessed in the two chambers of the National Assembly involving defection of over 50 law makers, including the Senate President, from the ruling party, All Progressive Congress to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)¹³.

The ripple effect was felt in many States' Houses of Assembly with Benue, Kwara and Sokoto State Governors and their political loyalists defecting to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP)¹⁴. There was also defection of the Senate Minority Leader, Godswill Akpabio of Akwa-Ibom State and ex-Governor of Delta State, Emmanuel Uduaghan to the APC. Less than three months to the 2019 elections, defections especially among PDP and APC members continues unabated.

Given the political antecedents, defections have always revolved around the pursuance of political ambitions, absence of internal democracy, party feuds, injustice and unresolved grievances among party executives. Furthermore, criticisms and internal divisions had trailed the adoption of indirect primaries as a mode of selection of candidates for the 2019 elections at various State levels as against the generally accepted 'Direct Primaries'. While some States adopted the 'direct mode' of nomination, others rejected the option of indirect nomination as approved by their State leaders with threats to boycott the election. This dissatisfaction generated series of public demonstrations 'pre-primary elections', resulting in the destruction of properties in some States.

The recently concluded political parties' primaries to select flag bearers for respective political offices ahead of the

¹⁰See: <https://guardian.ng/news/united-states-agency-predicts-electoral-violence-in-nigeria-before-2019-elections/>

¹¹Baseline assessment by WANEP as part of the implementation of the Election Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation (EMAM) for Nigeria Baseline Assessment by WANEP: 'Hotspot and Influence Mapping in Nigeria's 2019 Election

¹²See: Partners West Africa, Nigeria Accountability Brief (Retrieved at www.partnersnigeria.org on September 10, 2018)

¹³<https://punchng.com/why-politicians-are-not-worth-dying-for/>

¹⁴<https://punchng.com/anxiety-as-defection-gale-hits-state-assemblies/>

2019 General Elections were largely marred by violence and public demonstrations over issues of irregularities, intimidation, violations of electoral guidelines, disenfranchisement of delegates and imposition of candidates. While some States successfully conducted primary elections amid allegations and demonstrations, the INEC barred the APC from presenting candidates for the Governorship, National/State Assembly elections in Zamfara State¹⁵ on the basis that primary elections were not held within the stipulated time frame. The challenge encountered by the APC in conducting primary elections in the State reveals levels of deepening internal crisis.

Data generated from WANEP NEWS revealed high levels of intra-party electoral violence that allegedly resulted in the death of three people in Bauchi, Ebonyi¹⁶ and Lagos States¹⁷ with over 35 people injured in Taraba, Imo, Bauchi, Ebonyi, Lagos and Niger States¹⁸ during the APC party primaries in the respective States. The PDP recorded several public demonstrations from aggrieved party members in Benue, Kano¹⁹ and Cross River States. 10 people were however reported injured with 20 vehicles damaged during the PDP primaries in Benue State²⁰.

Additionally, the existing friction between political parties, especially APC and PDP hinged on supremacy tussle for political control across the 36 States. Political intimidation, confrontations and accusations associated with electoral contests is likely to intensify voters' apathy and can lead to a deadlock in the political process. A reflection on the aforementioned inter-party rivalry was witnessed in the Governorship election held in Ekiti and Osun States, where observers and the media highlighted electoral irregularities, harassment and interference by inappropriate persons²¹ in the respective elections.

Based on political antecedent, there is need for redoubled effort by Election Management Bodies (EMBs) and other relevant actors in the country to ensure that there is public transparency and accountability media strategy to prevent manipulations of public sentiments by political actors.

As elections draw near, political coalitions and mergers are usually a common trend. The simmering internal crisis within the ruling APC at both Federal and State levels had led to a splinter faction - 'Reformed-APC' (RAPC), while the Coalition of United Political Parties - an alliance of 39 political parties including, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Social Democratic Party and Labour Party²² was formed with an understanding signed in July 9, 2018 to field a single presidential candidate in 2019 to challenge the incumbent President²³.

e. The Implications of the detention of the leader of Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) to peaceful elections

The continued detention of the Spiritual leader of Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), Sheikh Ibraheem El-Zakzaky remains a threat to the peaceful conduct of the elections in the North Central and North West regions of the country. Despite the Federal High Court decision to grant him bail, no action has been taken to actualise that. Instead, President Mohammadu Buhari was quoted in his opening remarks at the 2018 Annual General Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association that the 'nation's security cannot be sacrificed on the altar of individual rights and rule of law'²⁴.

The Human Rights Lawyer and Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Femi Falana SAN in his letter to the Federal Government, challenged the Presidency to stop what he termed a disobedience to court orders that characterized the current administration²⁵. The lawyer further reiterated the need to allow the courts determine what constitutes national security threats²⁶. The clash between members of the IMN and security operatives on 27th and 29th October 2018, according to Amnesty International (AI) led to the killing of 45 IMN members with 122 injured in Abuja-FCT²⁷, although the Nigerian Police has rejected the claims of the use of excessive force on IMN members and figures of fatality. The continuous protest by IMN has the capacity to heighten tensions, create chaos, violence and public

¹⁵<https://punchng.com/zamfara-apc-to-inec-well-present-candidates-for-2019-election/>

¹⁶<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/south-east/288457-one-killed-many-injured-as-rival-ebonyi-apc-factions-clash.html>

¹⁷<https://punchng.com/apc-primary-cpc-erupts-in-riot-after-one-person-was-killed/>

¹⁸<https://punchng.com/niger-taraba-imo-bauchi-apc-primaries-engulfed-in-violence/>

¹⁹<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/nwest/288521-pdp-aspirants-protest-imposition-of-candidates-in-kano.html>

²⁰<https://punchng.com/violent-confrontations-gunshots-greet-benue-pdp-senatorial-primaries/>

²¹<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/286920-just-in-osunrerun-us-eu-uk-observers-speak-on-governorship-election-rerun.html>

²²<https://punchng.com/why-politicians-are-not-worth-dying-for/>

²³ibid.

²⁴<https://www.naijanews.com/2018/08/28/buhari-must-face-the-full-wrath-of-law-for-his-comment-on-individual-rights-and-rule-of-law-pdp-says/>

²⁵<http://dailypost.ng/2018/08/16/falana-writes-osinbajo-continued-detention-dasuki-el-zakzaky-others/>

²⁶<http://dailypost.ng/2018/08/30/let-courts-decide-national-security-threat-falana-charges-buhari/>

²⁷<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/amnesty-security-used-excessive-forces-on-shiite-protesters.html>

disorder, which may affect the elections calendar if not properly managed.

f. Corruption

Nigeria has been ranked as the 148th most corrupt country out of 180 according to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2017²⁸. Statistics generated by the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), indicated that Nigeria is the second most corrupt country out of 15 countries in West Africa, laying claims to perceived political corruption, nepotism, favouritism and bribery as responsible for the setback in its fight against corruption²⁹. The Government of Nigeria and the United Nations have also identified corruption as one of the major threats to the country. The anti-corruption strides of the Government have recorded moderate achievements, although critics are of the view that the President's allies are spared from prosecution while his opponents face prosecution from the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The anti-corruption measures were amplified by the whistleblower policy, which adopted a citizen reward scheme of between 2.5 to 5% of money recovered³⁰. Notwithstanding the improved anti-corruption efforts that recovered huge sums of stolen money, corruption continues to dominate the socio-political and economic landscape of the country. For example, cases of alleged vote-buying and cash inducement in Ekiti and Osun State gubernatorial election are major obstacles to the conduct of free, fair and credible election in Nigeria. The desperation of politicians to win elections at all cost and by all available means are already manifesting in the lead-up to the 2019 elections. A lot more has to be done to strengthen institutions and public education in the fight against corruption at all levels.

g. Socio-economic environment and its effects on the elections

The general socio-economic situation in Nigeria remains the lowest in the world. The country ranks among the world's poorest nations, with position of 157th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (2017)³¹. Poverty is widespread with more than 60% of the population subsisting on less than US\$1.25 a day;

unemployment and illiteracy levels remain high, particularly among females, while maternal and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world³². The current security challenges have a bearing on the economy of the country. Apart from the loss of lives and mass displacements, the Federal Government reported revenue losses of about \$14 billion (₦5.04 trillion) annually to the conflicts³³. As political parties and aspirants canvass for the support of the electorate, the issues of the economy, youth unemployment and other social concerns will be key to the decisions of the electorate.

h. Ethnicity and the implications on the elections

Given the nature of Nigerian politics, the politicization of ethnic and regional differences among the population is commonplace. Ethnic considerations continue to dominate the Nigerian political landscape with Nigerians voting along ethnic or zonal (regional) lines as witnessed in the 2015 Presidential election. The magnitude of defections witnessed in the Northern zone in 2018 further reflects a major intra-ethnic divide that may likely affect the results of the major political parties (PDP and APC) in the North compared to 2015. Since zoning arrangement has been entrenched in Nigeria's political system, failure to adhere to this mandate will lead to frictions, and even the defeat of politicians. The PDP zoned the office of the President to the Northern part of the country, with the view that only a Northern candidate can effectively challenge or defeat the incumbent³⁴. This is not farfetched in the words of Senator Shehu Sani (APC Kaduna State) 'that a candidate's geopolitical identity plays a major role in his chances of winning the election'³⁵. The emergence of Atiku Abubakar as the flag bearer of the PDP (a northerner and of Fulani extraction) brings a new dimension and intrigue into the electioneering landscape as against the 2015 where the northern vs southern dichotomy played out differently

i. Gender concerns around security and the elections

Nigeria remains weak in gender representation in politics, as less than 6% of Nigeria's lawmakers are female, one of

²⁸See http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2017/results

²⁹<https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/corruption-worse-under-buhari-according-to-transparency-index-id8021374.html>

³⁰<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/03/fgll-protect-reward-whistleblowers-minister/>

³¹See: UNDP HDI Statistical Data 2018 – www.hdr.undp.org (Accessed September 18, 2018).

³²See: www.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/countryinfo.html (Accessed September 18, 2018)

³³Source: www.ripplesnigeria.com (Accessed June 19, 2018)

³⁴<https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/6-factors-which-will-rule-2019-elections.html>

³⁵ibid.



INEC's Gender Desk Officers from 36 States and the FCT trained on gender and women's participation in the electoral process (March 19-24, 2018).
Credit: www.inecnigeria.org

the lowest proportions in Africa³⁶, despite their huge voting population. This contradicts the 35% Affirmative Action for women representation at all governance processes as provided for in the National Gender Policy (2006). Despite all political parties reflecting 35% Affirmative Action in their party manifestos, implementation is lacking. An assessment of past and current administration shows that Nigeria still struggles to actualize at least 30% female representation in governance at all level. Currently, there are 469 legislators in the National Assembly: 109 and 360 in the Senate and House of Representatives respectively. Out of this, only 7 females are in the Senate and 22 females are in the House of Representatives. Thus, female lawmakers constitute 6.2% while male legislators, 93.8%. Also, at the State House of Assembly level, there are 51 women out of 990 members, representing 5.2% of the total membership³⁷. Of the 36 States across the country, five States have women occupying their deputy governorship offices, which include; Osun, Ogun, Lagos, Rivers and Enugu States³⁸.

The challenges to women participation in politics still revolves around culture and tradition, although there has been an increased momentum by women and women interest groups to mobilize and support a pool of women who have shown interest to take up leadership positions as well as campaigning for the adoption of gender quotas in

j. Role of the Traditional and Social Media in the elections

Neutrality and independence of the media in its reportage is critical, considering the uncertainty in the political landscape ahead of the 2019 elections. Sensational

reporting with evidence of hate messages, bellicose and inflammatory languages by politicians and their supporters are prevalent, thus laying emphasis on the need for regulatory measures. In the case of Ekiti State Governorship election held on July 14, 2018, the alleged declaration of falsified election results by the former State Governor, Ayodele Fayose led to the shutdown of the Ekiti State Broadcasting Corporation (EBS) by the National Broadcasting Commission³⁹. The pivotal role of the media in the dissemination of conflict sensitive information before, during and after the elections is crucial in facilitating peaceful coexistence in the country beyond the 2019 General Elections.

III Resilient and Mitigating Factors

a. Actions of Civil Society Organisations

In the quest for credible and peaceful elections, multi-level actions by relevant stakeholders, INEC, Civil Society organizations, media, State and Federal Government Agencies have continued to raise public awareness and understanding of the electoral processes, especially the collection of voters' identity card and strategies to ensure credible elections that consolidate Nigeria's democracy. Civil Society Organisations remain vibrant and committed to support credible elections across the six geo political zones of the country. Their contribution is key in deepening public enlightenment and participation in the electoral process. Their collective strategy of action to link early warning with response will strongly influence how identified risks are mitigated before, during and after the elections.



WANEP, ECOWAS, AU and INEC launch Electoral Violence Monitoring, Analysis and Mitigation (EMAM) project aimed at ensuring peaceful elections in Nigeria (31/10/18). Credit: www.wanep.org

³⁶<http://africanarguments.org/2018/03/26/nigeria-elections-2019-politics-and-prospects/>

³⁷<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/274577-fact-sheet-women-poorly-represented-in-nigerias-19-years-of-democratic-rule-cdd.html>

³⁸<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/10/womans-examines-womens-role-deputy-governors/>

³⁹<http://saharareporters.com/2018/07/14/breaking-nbc-shuts-down-ekiti-tv-radio-declaring-unauthorised-pro-pdp-results>

b. The role of the National Peace Committee

The United Nations has reiterated the need to reactivate the National Peace Committee that led to the signing of the Abuja Peace Accord by all Presidential candidates and ensured a relatively peaceful electoral process in Nigeria in 2015. Through the Peace Accord, the candidates committed to 'take proactive measures to prevent electoral violence before, during and after the election'⁴⁰. Revisiting the Peace Accord ahead of the 2019 General Elections, Presidential candidates signed a renewed Accord on December 11 and 12, 2018 that commits them to free, fair and credible elections⁴¹.



L-R: Princess (Dame) Priscilla Kuye, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah, Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, President Muhammadu Buhari, General Abdulsalam Abubakar, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, Archbishop Nicholas Okoh. Credit: www.dailypost.ng



L-R: former Head of State, Gen. Abdulsalam Abubakar (Rtd.), PDP presidential candidate, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, PDP's Chairman Prince Uche Secondus, PDP's Vice Presidential Aspirant, Peter Obi. Credit: www.dailypost.ng

c. Youth participation in elections:

The importance of youth involvement in politics has taken a new dimension in Nigeria with the campaign hashtag “#NotTooYoungToRun”, culminating in the Not-Too-Young-To-Run bill signed into law by President Muhammadu Buhari on 31st May 2018. The new law altered sections of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution bothering on age qualification for elective offices in Nigeria reflected as follows: Presidents from 40 to 30 years old; House of Representatives membership from 30 to 25 years and State House of Assembly from 30 to 25 years old. The age limits for Senators and State Governors were not reduced as proposed by the sponsors of the bill⁴². However, this landmark approval by the Government (both opposition and governing parties) further opens up the political space for youths to seek elective positions to make an impact in the transformation of the nation. This is an indication of political willingness to promote young people's active participation in politics and decision-making processes in the country. Despite this opportunity, analysis from political commentators suggests that it is open to manipulation by politicians who may sabotage the law by compromising young people with money and other benefits to limit their political participation. As observed by Senator Saidu Dansadau, the National Chairman of the National Rescue Movement political party, “the biggest challenge facing youth involvement in politics is 'lack of financial wherewithal for political consultations and campaigns’”⁴³. Discussions at the Federal and State levels on the reduction of fees for expression of interest and nomination forms for youths into elective positions garnered public support, thus charting a pathway to the implementation of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run law across political parties in elections.

IV. SCENARIOS

In view of the foregoing analysis, this policy brief envisages the following scenarios emerging ahead of the 2019 elections.

a. Best Case Scenario

The 2019 General Elections are conducted as scheduled with massive voter turn out. Security situation in the North

⁴⁰<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/07/2019-polls-un-to-activate-nigeria-peace-committee/>

⁴¹<https://www.channelstv.com/2018/12/12/breaking-atiku-ezekwesili-finally-sign-peace-accord/>

⁴²<https://election.org.ng/nigeria/leveraging-not-too-young-to-run-law/>

⁴³<http://www.nan.ng/news/money-politics-responsible-for-nigerias-socio-economic-challenges-nrm/>

East, Central and West regions improves amid fears of voter apathy, particularly in the three Northern regions of the country. The performance level of INEC in the lead up to the election as well as during the election reinforces citizen's confidence in the results and outcome. Local and international observer groups are confident of the electoral process despite low intensity party disputes. Observation reports indicate limited cases of irregularities and intimidation. **(less likely)**

b. Most Probable Case Scenario

The election is marred by violence and cases of vote-buying, hijack of ballot boxes and intimidation at the Presidential election. The election did not hold in some polling units, especially in the North east due to security concerns and in other regions, late arrival and/or inadequate election materials affects the voting process. As a result, violent demonstrations ensue in some polling stations. INEC is accused of negligence and there are calls for cancellation of results in some States. The result is vehemently with INEC accused of result manipulation leading to tension ahead of the Gubernatorial and State Assembly Elections. **(likely)**

c. Worst Case Scenario

The elections are held amid widespread allegations of vote rigging, disgruntled and aggrieved political parties and supporters. Despite these allegations, INEC continues with the declarations of the results and requests parties to seek redress at the Election Petition Tribunals if unsatisfied with results. This heightened political tensions and consequent breakdown of law and order resulting in widespread violence among party faithfuls and along parochial lines. The elections following that of presidential is jeopardized as a segment of the society calls for the declaration of a State of Emergency while the international community cautions the Nigerian Government against violation of human rights. **(likely)**

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

ECOWAS/AU/UN and the rest of The International Community:

- The 2015 elections National Peace Committee led by the former Head of State, General Abdulsalami Abubakar should be strengthened and supported by

AU, ECOWAS and UNOWAS to engage key political parties and actors in dialogue before, during and after the elections as a strategy to prevent political actors from influencing or mobilising support for violence across the country;

- ECOWAS/AU/UN and other international agencies should provide technical assistance on election security and election dispute management to INEC and security agencies to enhance functional election security coordination mechanism in the country;
- ECOWAS/AU/UN should intensify preventive diplomacy actions with the leadership of the ruling party and the key opposition to ensure they remain committed to the Peace Accord signed in December 2018 to promote peaceful and credible elections;
- Coordination among the various international interlocutors should be strengthened to ensure synergy of purpose.

Political Parties

- Political parties must respect and adhere to the rules of the election including respect for the independence of INEC and the Abuja Peace Accord signed in 2018 as they have all committed to ensuring peaceful elections in the country;
- Political parties at National and State level should contribute to joint public awareness campaign for peaceful elections across the country to their memberships and supporters with the objective to eschew violence throughout the elections cycle;
- Political parties' leadership should make conscious effort to enhance women's participation.

The Security and Judiciary:

- The leadership of various security agencies should be more proactive and non-partisan in the discharge of their duties. Militarisation of elections as reported in the Ekiti State elections should be discouraged;
- The security operatives should work in close collaboration with CSOs that have expertise in Early Warning to improve the analysis and intelligence gathering mechanisms for the prevention or mitigation of electoral violence across the country;
- There is need for Election tribunals and courts to expedite timely judgements of election related offences to forestall possible violence that could emanate from delays by political interest groups of aggrieved party supporters.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC):

- INEC should organise regular engagement with the political parties through the INEC Political Party Stakeholders forum to ensure equal understanding and confidence of all parties of a level playing field in the electoral process, especially in the application of the election laws and regulations as enshrined in the National Constitution, the Electoral Act, and Political Parties' Code of Conduct;
- INEC through its Public Relations unit should maintain constant enlightenment and communication with the electorate to foster public confidence and trust in the electoral process;
- INEC should work with relevant CSOs to sustain voter education at all levels in order to discourage violence and actions that can threaten the peaceful conduct of the elections;

The Civil Society Organisations and the Media:

- Civil Society Organisations in collaboration with the media and INEC should facilitate dialogue processes between the leadership of political parties on tolerance and non-violence in line with the political parties code of conduct as well as the 'Abuja Peace Accord' of 2018.
- WANEP and other CSOs with expertise in Early Warning should ensure effective monitoring and reporting of election violence and response as well as intensify public education on non-violence in the 2019 election;

- The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should intensify efforts to regulate media institutions to prevent broadcast of hate speeches capable of destabilizing the polity;
- The CSOs and media should intensify efforts on voter education and raising public awareness to encourage citizens to refrain from violence and remain committed to peaceful actions throughout the electoral cycle;

VI. Conclusion

Nigeria's political landscape offers opportunity for multi-party competition. This means there are diverse alternatives for the electorate and an opportunity to consolidate democracy in the country. However, this poses a challenge for INEC in the management and conduct of elections in a country faced with diverse security and socio political issues. It is therefore imperative that a concerted approach involving state and non state actors is encouraged as an electoral dispute management architecture to respond to emerged threats that will mar the 2019 elections in Nigeria.

This is critical in building trust for the electoral processes and reducing voter apathy across the country. it will also contribute to the consolidation of Nigeria democracy and its role in peace and security in West Africa.

INEC Timetable and Schedule of Activities for 2019 General Election⁴⁴

DATE	ACTIVITIES
April 27, 2017 to August 31, 2018	Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) from during which some 14.5 million new voters were registered in addition to about 70 million voters registered before the 2015 General Elections
August 17 and August 24, 2018	Collection of nomination forms for national and state elections by political parties
September 3 - September 10, 2018	Collection of forms for FCT elections
August 18 - October 7, 2018	Party primaries for the Presidential, Governorship, Federal and State Elections would begin on
October 10 - 18, 2018	Submission of list of candidates and the dates and their personal particulars for presidential and National Assembly elections
October 22 - November 2, 2018	Submission of list of candidates and the dates and their personal particulars for governorship and state assembly elections
October 25, 2018	INEC will publish the personal particulars of national election candidates and those of the state candidates on November 9
November 6 - November 12, 2018	Nationwide display of voters register for each polling unit for one week for claims and objections
November 9, 2018	INEC will publish the personal particulars of state election candidates
November 17, 2018	last date for the withdrawal or replacement of candidates for president and National Assembly elections
November 18	Campaign for Presidential and National Assembly elections
December 1, 2018	Campaign for Governorship and State Assembly elections
December 3, 2018	last date for submission of nomination forms by political parties for presidential and National Assembly Elections
December 17, 2018	last date for submission of nomination forms by political parties for state elections
December 1, 2018	last date for the withdrawal or replacement of candidates for president and National Assembly elections
January 2, 2019	notice of the polls
January 7, 2019	Publish official register of voters for the election
February 16, 2019	Presidential and National Assembly elections

⁴⁴Briefing on the 2019 Elections with Commissioner Political Affairs, Peace & Security, ECOWAS Commission

NIGERIA

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