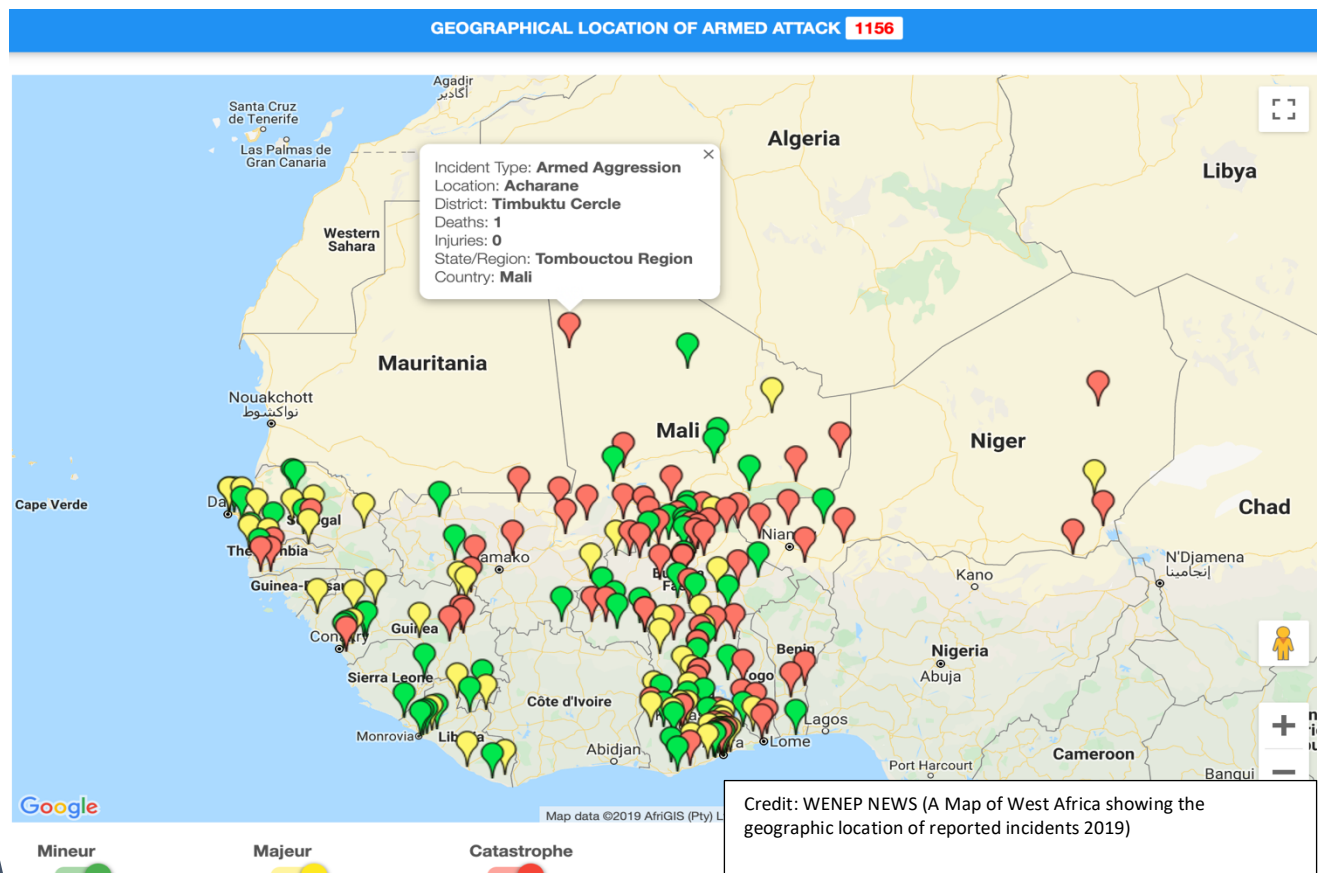




WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING OUTLOOK 2020

Potential Flashpoints and Simmering Conflicts in the Region



WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

JANUARY 2020

Introduction

The peace and security climate of West Africa in 2019 recorded a mix of political, economic and security gains as well as challenges. The presidential and parliamentary elections in Nigeria and Benin respectively were marred by significant recorded incidents of violence arising from disputed policies and processes while the elections in Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Togo were relatively peaceful. The Nigeria and Senegal presidential elections resulted in the re-election of incumbent Presidents Muhammadu Buhari and Macky Sall, respectively. Additionally, Benin, Ghana and Togo conducted peaceful local government elections. Although political transitions are no more a novelty in the aforementioned countries, they are a litmus test for the consolidation or weakening of the democratic systems in West Africa.

At the Economic level, ECOWAS member states adopted “*ECO*” as the name of a single currency for the region in a bid to realise the vision of regional economic integration. It is projected that this arrangement will remove trade and monetary barriers that undermine economic growth in the region. The “*ECO*” is expected to be introduced in 2020, but the timeframe for full implementation will depend on the efforts of each country to meet the threshold of a deficit of less than 3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product; inflation of 10 per cent or under; and debts worth less than 70 per cent of GDP¹.

In terms of security, the region is challenged by the escalating threats of insecurity, especially from violent extremism, organized crime, herder/farmer and other communal conflicts especially in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana and Niger. A significant effort to address regional insecurity is the eight-point resolutions adopted by the Heads of Government during the ECOWAS Summit in Burkina Faso on September 14, 2019. The resolutions aimed at countering violent extremism and redefining priorities to mitigate the spread². Furthermore, a key concern for the region is also the potential southward spread of attacks into coastal States, especially Benin, Ghana and Togo, which could further reinforce terrorists’ foothold in the region. There is also increasing exploitation of ethnic and farmer-herder conflicts by terrorist groups in communities of Nigeria and Mali to perpetrate violence. The Proliferation of small arms and light weapons also continues to create avenues for the facilitation of terrorism and organized crime in the region. There are also threats of rising sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), particularly recorded cases of

¹See: <https://www.africanews.com/2019/12/24/from-cfa-franc-to-eco-inside-the-evolution-of-a-controversial-currency//> (Accessed 09/01/2020).

²Final Communiqué: Extraordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government on Terrorism, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 14th September 2019. Available at: <https://www.ecowas.int/final-communique-of-ecowas-summit-on-terrorism-ouagadougou-14-september-2019/> (Accessed 09/01/2020).

rape in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. This continues to pose a significant threat to the education and socio-economic well-being of women and girls.

Moreover, there are also threats to environmental security which include illegal fishing, logging, illegal mining, and pollution of water bodies. This has heightened competition over limited resources that often flare up community tensions and violence, causing deaths, displacements and forced migration. Also, other human security issues include reported cases of illegal mining, plastic waste and other forms of pollution that have direct consequences on the ecosystem.

The West Africa Outlook Report sheds light on the governance and human security challenges of ECOWAS member States in 2019 and projects the risks of vulnerability and threats that will inform specific early warning monitoring and intervention strategies in 2020.

Benin



Benin has been one of the most stable democracies in West Africa, despite some tension surrounding the legislative elections held on April 28, 2019. The country has records of credible elections which have culminated in peaceful political transitions between 1991 and 2016. The Government currently enjoys an absolute majority in the National Assembly with 83 representatives. However, recent measures including implementation of *Certificat de Conformité*³ and party system reform approved by the National Assembly in 2018, has contributed to the reduction from over 200 identified parties to about 10 State-recognized parties⁴. While this move sought to address a growing proliferation of political parties, opposition parties have expressed concerns about the shrinking of space for political participation, which undermines the principles of multi-party democracy. This has the potential to increase political tensions in the country's next local elections expected to be held in June 2020.

Political Stability Challenges: Disagreements among political parties in the lead up to the legislative elections held on April 28, 2019, resulted in heightened tensions and violence. Key among this was the introduction of the mandatory *certificate of conformity* in February 2019 and changes to the electoral code mandating political parties to pay a candidate filing fee of CFA 250 million (USD450,000) which was rejected by opposition parties based on fee increase being a

³The *Certificate of conformity*: It is the fact of the Decision N ° EL19-001 of the 1st February 2019 of the Constitutional Court of Benin. It is a mandatory requirement issued by the Constitutional Court for political parties to operate and contest elections in Benin.

⁴See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/benin/overview> (Accessed 10/01/2020).

strategy to limit the space for political participation⁵. This resulted in the low voter turnout of 27.12 per cent during the 2019 legislative election compared to 65.88 per cent in the 2015 legislative elections⁶. The sharp decrease in voter turnout with a difference of 38.76 per cent indicates a dwindled public interest in the electoral process. It also suggests mistrust by the voters and opposition parties in the electoral system as could be validated from the 54 related demonstrations recorded across the country in the year⁷. This has contributed to strained state-citizens relations leading to strikes, boycotts and violence. Additional political challenges were reported following the amendment of 47 out of 160 Articles in the Constitution by the National Assembly on November 1, 2019, including the extension of tenure of parliamentarians, creation of vice president position and limitation of the presidential term of office to two terms. While the constitutional amendment has the potential to sanitize the political space, the Government has been accused by the opposition of inadequate broader engagement and consensus with key political stakeholders. This has manifested in continued tensions, protests and violence in the country with the potential to negatively impact the 2021 Presidential elections which commence with electioneering process in 2020.

“Given the degree of uncertainties surrounding the reopening of the border, the risk of continued tension between Benin and Nigeria and the ripple effect on the country’s economy as well as the impact on livelihoods in the year ahead are likely.”

Human Security Challenges: The priority human security concern in Benin is linked to the economy as a result of the closure of the Nigeria-Benin borders by the Nigerian Government. Benin relies largely on the Nigerian market

for its trade as well as the import of Premium Motor Spirit. The shutdown has impacted on its external revenue and economic growth for 2019 and will affect the 2020 economic projections if the borders are not opened. Large and small-scale businesses have stalled as farmers and producers of agro-based products have expressed grievances over their financial losses and livelihoods. Also, the relative economic stability in the country over the years as a result of the strategic importance of Benin’s seaports as a transit route for regional trade with neighbouring countries is threatened. According to the World Bank, an estimated 80 per cent of imports of goods into Benin are destined for Nigeria⁸. Given the degree of uncertainties surrounding the

⁵See WANEP NEWS (Monthly Bulletin, April – June 2019). Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 10/01/2020).

⁶Inter-Parliamentary Union. Benin National Assembly. Historical Archives of Past Elections. Available at: www.archive.ipu.org/parlile-e/reports/2033_E.htm (10/01/2020).

⁷Ibid.

⁸See <https://qz.com/africa/1741064/nigerias-benin-border-closure-is-a-warning-for-afcfta-trade-deal/> (Accessed on 13/01/2020).

reopening of the border, the risk of continued tension between Benin and Nigeria and the ripple effect on the country's economy as well as the impact on livelihoods in the year ahead are likely.

Recommendations

- International Non-Governmental Organisations, Civil Society Organisations and other development partners should intensify advocacy campaigns with the Government, the Parliament, opposition parties and other political interest groups to create the space for multi-stakeholder dialogue that would contribute to inclusive participation in governance to mitigate rising tensions and political violence in the country;
- ECOWAS should support a multilateral negotiation between Nigeria, Benin, Ghana and Togo to develop a joint trade agreement as well as cross border security management as a panacea to address the issues that led to the closure of the Nigerian border.

Burkina Faso



Increased terrorist and armed groups attack in Burkina Faso is a regional and continental security concern. With its geographical position in the Sahel region, and embroiled in activities of a host of terrorist and organized criminal networks, Burkina Faso suffers from the spillover of such criminal activities, particularly from neighbouring Mali and Niger. The consequences of this are evident in increased State and human security fragility that is also impacting on regional security dynamics. The spread of terrorist attacks southwards suggests a potential security threat to neighbouring countries such as Ghana, Benin and Togo.

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Political Stability Challenge: The Burkina Faso presidential election is scheduled to hold in November 2020. As part of election preparedness, the Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) is registering eligible Burkinabè in the diaspora to participate in the elections for the first time. While this is meant to create space for mass political participation, there are concerns about the capacity of the Commission to effectively manage this initiative which could undermine the credibility of the electoral process. Given the spate of attacks in the country, there are fears that violent extremist groups can exploit the security gaps to intensify attacks and violence before and during the election. This is also likely to affect voter turnout, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, aged and physically challenged who would be prevented from exercising their franchise for fear of potential attacks. The sentencing of the military officers and civilians implicated in the coup plot of 2015 is another critical issue

that continues to heighten tension in the country. There is a public perception that the prosecution is fraught with political undertones as a result of their affiliations with key opposition parties and former President Blaise Compaoré. The controversy surrounding the prosecution has contributed to the escalating political tension and public sense of insecurity. Therefore, these dynamics would have serious implications for the 2020 elections.

Human Security Challenges: Humanitarian situation in the country continues to worsen from the increased spate of attacks. The civilian population is the worst casualty, causing more internal displacements. The number of deaths related to terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso increased from 80 in 2016 to more than 1,800 in 2019⁹. More than 25,000 displaced people, particularly women and children have fled the country as refugees in neighbouring countries, while over 560,000 IDPs were recorded¹⁰. Additionally, 1,784 schools closed, depriving over 246,000 children of education¹¹. The increased violence in the country has forced the closure of 71 health centres, while services in 75 others have been impaired, leaving 881,000 people with limited access to healthcare¹². The recurrent attacks also have adverse impacts on women as they are mostly targeted for physical and sexual violence by terrorist groups. In a recent attack, 35 civilians, almost all of them women, were killed in Arbinda in the Soum province in the north of the country¹³. If this trend persists, there is a likelihood of exacerbating violence and public disorder in 2020.

Recommendations

- The Government with support from the G5 Sahel mechanism and ECOWAS should expedite the alignment of existing national counterterrorism strategies to the ECOWAS Priority Action Plan (2020-2024) and allocate adequate resources to mitigate the spread of violent extremism in the country;
- ECOWAS should also expedite plans to deploy a standby force to enhance the Government's capacity to eradicate violent extremism and terrorism in the country.
- To address the rising humanitarian concerns in the country, the relevant ECOWAS and UN Agencies, as well as humanitarian NGOs should develop a well-coordinated approach – in sync with national strategies – to ensure synergy and coherence in delivering humanitarian support to IDPs and refugees.

⁹See <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/01/1054981> (Accessed on 14/01/2020).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹See <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/burkina-faso/> (Accessed on 14/01/2010).

¹²Ibid.

¹³ See <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/mourning-burkina-faso-attack-kills-dozens-191225001927810.html> (Accessed on 15/1/2020)

Côte d'Ivoire



Côte d'Ivoire has been relatively stable politically since the 2010-2011 post-electoral violence. However, current political uncertainties could impact negatively on the conduct of the 2020 presidential election. Recent disputes within the ruling Rally of Houphouëtists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) coalition culminated in the resignation of the Speaker of the Parliament, Guillaume Soro who has also been accused of instigating a coup plot and a warrant for his arrest issued by the Government. Also, inter-party disputes between the ruling RHDP and key opposition parties – the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) led by former President Henri Konan Bédié and the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI), led by former President Laurent Gbagbo make the stake higher for electoral violence in the country. Laurent Gbagbo and the Former Minister of Youth, Charles Blé Goudé were acquitted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in January 2019 but granted conditional release pending appeal proceedings¹⁴. The ICC prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda has until October 15, 2020, to submit the appeal, while the Appeals Chamber has until December 15, 2020 to determine the merits of the appeal¹⁵. Until the completion of these proceedings, former President Gbagbo and Blé Goudé will not be able to join the presidential race in October 2020, even though their political party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (PFI) would be actively involved in the electoral process.

"The continued fragmentations of RHDP and the inter-party disputes could influence the nature and intensity of violence that will manifest in the lead up to October 2020 Presidential elections."

Political Stability Challenges: The continued fragmentations of RHDP and the inter-party disputes could influence the nature and intensity of violence that will manifest in the lead up to October 2020 Presidential elections. Guillaume Soro, former President of the National Assembly as well as Laurent Gbagbo's PFI and Konan Bédié's PDCI are pitching tents to contest against the RHDP. It is also unclear if the incumbent President, Alassane Ouattara will seek a review of the Constitution to extend the tenure for president which could pave the way for him to contest for a third term in office. This has raised diverse public opinion over his commitment to respect the presidential term limit as enshrined in the National Constitution. In a recent public utterance made during a four-day visit to the Hambol region, President Ouattara stated that he does not wish to run in the 2020 elections, but he would not stand back if others of his generation run¹⁶.

¹⁴See: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=pr1427> (Accessed 14/01/2020).

¹⁵ See: <http://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20190917-icc-prosecutor-decision-appeal-only-hope-justice-cote-d-ivoire-victims> (Accessed 10/02/2020)

¹⁶ See <https://www.theafricareport.com/20647/cote-divoire-if-gbagbo-and-bedié-run-then-so-will-i-ouattara/> (Accessed 16/01/2020).

This is fueling tensions and anxieties among political parties and the civilian population. There are also disagreements over electoral reforms and muzzling of opposing voices from opposition parties and civil society groups. Another public security concern is the composition and reforms of the military as the country still grapples with poor integration of former militants into the military and society¹⁷. These factors pose significant threats to the fragile security of the country ahead of the 2020 elections.

Human Security Challenges: Côte d'Ivoire is one of the most dynamic economies in sub-Saharan Africa with an economy expanding by 8 per cent per year since 2011, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world¹⁸. Despite its economic performance, poverty rate grew sharply as compared to data of three decades ago¹⁹. A quarter of the working population is unemployed (estimated at 2.6% in 2018) and poverty remains high at 46.3 per cent²⁰. In addition, the political climate with a potential threat to the peaceful conduct of the 2020 election is already having implications on the economy and lives of Ivorians.

Growing activities of violent extremism in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso constitute a major security concern for Côte d'Ivoire ahead of the elections. This is in addition to the prevalence of armed robberies cases, sexual and gender-based violence and other crimes. Women and girls continue to suffer rape, harassment and other forms of violence. Despite the introduction of several gender security reform programs, the security agencies are still challenged to respond and reduce crime and violence against women. Increased frequency of protests and demonstrations by students and trade union workers also have implications on the country's security.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS/UNOWAS should pursue preventive diplomacy actions through engagement with key political and civil society stakeholders towards building a collaborative action for an inclusive electoral reform, opening the political space for dialogue and credible 2020 presidential election;
- CSOs, NGOs, community radio stations should utilise existing local women social network platforms to intensify education, training and mentorship on preventive measures for sexual violence against women and girls at all levels in the country.

¹⁷ See ISS Report, September 2, 2019. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/another-political-crisis-hovers-over-cote-divoire> (Accessed 16/01/2020).

¹⁸ See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cotedivoire/overview> (Accessed 14/01/2020).

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

The Gambia



Although the Government has embarked on reforms and adopted a National Development Plan in February 2018, the objective to deliver good governance and accountability, social cohesion and resuscitating the fragile economy is been hindered by heightened political polarization and inter-party wrangling in The Gambia. The new administration will require inclusive participation from diverse actors and interest groups, sustained consultations, dialogue and consensus-building to maximise impacts of the planned reforms and development agenda. Another key concern in the ongoing electoral reforms from marble to paper balloting in the 2021 Presidential elections which is coordinated by the Independent Electoral Commission amidst funding and capacity challenges.

Political Stability Challenges: The political climate remains fragile in The Gambia. The ongoing fragmentation of the ruling United Democratic Party (UDP) which led to the withdrawal of President Adama Barrow to form his own party, National People's Party (NPP), remains a source of political tensions ahead of the 2021 elections in the Gambia. The cause of the dispute is primarily based on the pre-election agreement that called for a three-year transitional arrangement led by President Barrow to restore fair democratic processes, re-establish legislative and judicial checks on the authority of the executive branch, and to prepare for a fresh presidential election in 2021. However, political analysts and actors in The Gambia have highlighted that this agreement contravenes Section 63 subsection (1) of the 1997 Constitution, which mandates the Term of Office of an elected President as five years²¹. Invoking the supremacy of the Constitution, President Barrow has justified his mandate to stay for five years as opposed to the three years agreed with the coalition party. This has contributed to the rising political tension in the country. The emergence of "Operation Three Years Jotna (Three Years is Enough)" - a grassroots movement has demanded that President Barrow and the Coalition partners honour the three years coalition agreement made before the elections in December 2016. As a result, a series of protests were organised by members of the movement in 2019. A nationwide protest was planned to hold in December 2019 amid heightened tension and fear of widespread violence. However, Civil Society Organisations and international partners intervened through dialogue with the group and political actors leading to the signing of a peace communiqué. This gain needs to be consolidated and sustained in the year ahead.

There are also ethnic and regional dimensions to the crisis. The issue of ethnicity is deeply entrenched as evident in series of polemic campaign messages by politicians, opinion leaders and

²¹Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, 1997 Reprinted 2002. Chapter VI The Executive. Part 1: The President. Tenure of Office of President Section 63. (Accessed 12/12/2019).

other interest groups on social media during the December 2016 presidential election and has continued in the 2017 and 2018 Parliamentary and Local Government elections, respectively, as well as in another public forum.

In the ongoing Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC) in The Gambia, more than 300 statements from victims, witnesses and perpetrators have been documented and at least 128 witnesses including 18 women have appeared before the Commission²². The work of

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the Commission, coupled with reparations of victims and public interest in the processes would facilitate the healing process, reconciliation and foster social cohesion in the country. However, the intention of the State to prosecute some of the witnesses who professed to have committed heinous crimes, would not only affect the work of the Commission and reconciliation process but also contribute to rising tension in the country. Increased polarization and tensions are manifestations waning public trust in the Government. A national cohesion strategy will be key to firm up the implementation of reforms, reconciliation and enhance the country's budding democracy in 2020 and beyond.

Human Security Challenges: Another significant challenge in The Gambia is the weak economy. It manifests in increased poverty and high prices of goods and services, impacting living conditions of the average Gambian. Youth Unemployment is also a human security challenge. The national unemployment rate hovers around 30 per cent, with a rate of 45 per cent affecting youth between the ages of 15 and 35²³. This contributes to the high youth migration to Europe and other lucrative countries. Over 8,498 Gambians migrated to Europe in 2017. However, some of these young migrants have voluntarily returned. Since 2017, nearly 4,000 Gambian returnees have been assisted to resettle in their communities²⁴. The perception of weak State capacity to respond to the varied socio-economic needs of the youths and citizens has contributed to dwindled trust between State and citizens. The country's tourism sector, which constitutes the biggest foreign exchange earner and accounts for 20 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)²⁵ has been largely affected by the global economic downturn. Ebola outbreak in

²²See <https://fatunetwork.net/128-witnesses-in-10-months-trrc-top-official-says-about-60-of-the-probes-work-has-been-covered/> (Accessed 17/10/2019).

²³See: https://www.wanep.org/wanep/files/2019/Aug/FINAL_2019_Updated_CDA_Report_18_July_2019.pdf (Accessed 12/12/19).

²⁴Ibid

²⁵See: <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Gambia-Travel-Tourism> (Accessed 16/01/2020).

West Africa between 2014 and 2016, and regional security dynamics including surging violent extremism, kidnapping and human trafficking are additional contributory factors to the current economic challenge. This is a recipe for social and heightened urban crimes. Women and girls are also targeted for sexual and gender-based violence within the Greater Banjul Area and Kanifing. The Gambian Police reportedly made some arrests as well as prosecute offenders and accomplices to mitigate the threat.

Recommendations

- The Government should adopt a conflict resolving approach including opening the space for dialogue on key issues affecting the polity and strive to build bipartisan consensus as well as public confidence-building strategies;
- The establishment of a national infrastructure for peace is imperative and desirable in The Gambia. To this end, the Government should prioritize and ensure inclusive processes and actions required to create a national peace and social cohesion commission to strengthen national capacities for dialogue and reconciliation across the country;
- The Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission should be more open and transparent in implementing its mandates, especially concerning the protection of victims and witnesses, reparations for victims and reintegration of perpetrators into the community in line with international best practices on transitional justice and human rights.

Ghana



In Ghana, the Electoral Commission (EC) conducted the District Assembly elections on December 17, 2019, which was acclaimed to be relatively peaceful and credible. The Government's decision to rescind on a previously slated referendum for the determination of the amendment of Clause (3) of Article 55 of the 1992 Constitution²⁶ as a contested political position was widely accepted as a popular decision. However, as the country prepares for the Presidential and Legislative elections in December 2020, there are controversies surrounding voter registration and the EC's decision to spend over 390 million cedis to procure and set up a new Biometric Voter Registration Management System (BVRMS). This has increased distrust in the electoral process by key opposition parties in the lead up to the elections.

²⁶The 1992 Constitution of Ghana prohibits local elections from being political. This means that elections held at the local level are non-political. The referendum seeking to amend Clauses in the Constitution will pave the way for local elections to be political if it gains the required majority votes.

Political Stability Challenges: As the country prepares for its eighth multi-party general election, the pre-election context is becoming politically charged with disagreements among key political parties and sections of civil society over the decision of the EC to compile new voter register and establishment of BVRMS by the EC in an election year. This decision has generated heated debates, especially in the media, and has led to organized demonstrations which heighten tensions and the risk of violence in the country in

“The EC’s decision to compile new voter register in an election year has generated heated debates, especially in the media, and has led to organized demonstrations which heighten tensions and the risk of violence in the country in the lead up to the 2020 elections and beyond.”

the lead up to the 2020 elections and beyond. Before this decision by the EC, the appointment of new Commissioners of the EC in January 2019 by President Nana Adu Donkwa Adufo-Addo, had been opposed by the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC). This has been the basis of the trust deficit with regards to the EC and which is also a potential driver of conflict that could heighten tension and violence ahead of the 2020 elections.

A critical dynamic within the electoral process is that for the first time in the political history of Ghana, an incumbent President, Nana Addo Donkwa Adufo-Addo of the NPP will contest against a former President, John Dramani Mahama of the NDC, who lost the 2016 election. The tensions ahead of the elections are already evident in the current inter-party rancour, counter-accusations, use of hostile language and physical violence.

The activities of vigilante groups associated with political parties and land guards also pose significant threats to Ghana’s democratic stability. On one hand, vigilante groups have often been used by political parties to provide personal security, protect ballot boxes and perpetrate violence against political opponents. On the other, land guards serve as a source of recruitment for vigilantism as well as protection of private properties. While these phenomena are not new to the political space of Ghana, recently reported cases of proliferation, training and indiscriminate use of arms by these groups portend significant threats to the security of the country. Already, this was manifested in the Ayawaso West-Wuogon Constituency Parliamentary Bye-election in January 2019, as well as recent political parties’ primaries for parliamentary candidates and the District Assemblies elections.

Another critical development is the demand for secession of Western Togoland by the Homeland Study Group Foundation (HSGF) in Ho, Volta Region. The HSGF claims their demand is hinged on political history when the Gold Coast (now Ghana) voted to be a unitary state on July 12, 1956,

while the Western Togoland voted to be in a union with Ghana on July 9, 1956, and that the union had not been established²⁷. The group has cited underdevelopment as part of its reason for demanding secession. A police report in May 2019 revealed that the group was engaged in recruiting and training young people to form a militia arm in support of their movement²⁸. While socio-cultural ties among the ethnic groups along the borders of Ghana and Togo is a resilient factor, it could also be exploited by the secessionists to rally support and facilitate the smuggling of arms to pursue their course. The political impasse in neighbouring Togo and porosity of its borders with Ghana along the Volta Region further increase the vulnerabilities for cross-border crimes.

The use and exploitation of social media as a mobilization and propaganda tool for violent communication have also been flagged as a security threat to the country ahead of the 2020 presidential elections. It has become a conduit for the spread of hate speeches, inflammatory political statements and politically motivated fake news. These incite physical violence and mobilizes groups to public disorder.

Human Security Challenges: The concerns around increased criminal violence are further heightened by growing security deterioration in Burkina Faso which borders Ghana. Already, the country is challenged by the influx of migrants fleeing extremist insurgencies in Burkina Faso into border communities in northern Ghana. Available statistics indicate the influx of about 2000 migrants mainly women and children have settled in communities such as Tumu-Navrongo, Wuru, Kwapun, Banu, Pido, Kunchorkor and Basian communities in the Upper West Region²⁹. The influx of migrants into these communities is escalating tension between residents and migrants over competition for limited resources including farmlands, water and food³⁰. Notably, there are other existing threats including chieftaincy and ethnic clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, violent demonstrations, armed robberies, the proliferation of arms, drug trafficking as well as sexual and gender-based violence. These threats further complicate the anticipated risks to the elections. There are additional human security threats from environmental security issues such as illegal fishing, logging, illegal mining, and pollution of water bodies. These existing and emerging threats undermine human security and stability in the country.

Recommendations

²⁷See: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2019/May-6th/volta-group-planned-to-declare-independence-on-may-9-police-explain-arrests.php> (Accessed 16/01/2020).

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹See WANEP NEWS (Weekly Highlights from Ghana, 13-19, May 2019)

³⁰Ibid.

- The Government of Ghana should strengthen multi-lateral cooperation and intelligence sharing through the “Ghana Alliance” - with Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire, Niger and Mali - to counter and mitigate the threats of terrorism and violent extremism in the country;
- National Peace Council, Religious bodies, traditional authorities with the support of CSOs should facilitate inclusive dialogue on the new voter registration process and other threats to the elections to mitigate growing tensions in the country;
- The EC’s information-sharing approach on the rationale for a new voter register and the establishment of the BVRMS should go beyond discussions at the Inter-Party Agreement Committee (IPAC) level to initiating national conversations to determine the way forward to mitigate the public suspicions and mistrust surrounding the electoral process;
- The National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE), CSOs and the media should intensify collaboration and synergies through peace and civic education to improve public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

Guinea



In October 2015, President Alpha Condé was re-elected to a second term in office with 57.85 per cent of the votes in the Presidential election³¹. The Government initiated a National Socio-Economic Development Plan (PNDES) focusing on agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing and natural resource management. This is critical for employment, reduction of poverty and rural development³². However, the issues on the proposed constitutional amendments and growing uncertainties surrounding the incumbent president’s decision to run for another presidential tenure is the main source of growing tensions and violence in the country.

Political Stability Challenges: Since the beginning of 2019, the political context of the country is fraught with local and international anxiety over the Government’s intention to amend the 2010 Constitution which could allow President Alpha Condé to run for a third term. This has been condemned by the main opposition party, the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) as well as some civil society and trade union groups. It

“The proposed constitutional amendments and growing uncertainties surrounding the incumbent president’s decision to run for another presidential tenure is the main source of growing tensions and violence in the country.”

³¹See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guinea/overview> (Accessed 24/02/2020).

³²See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guinea/overview> (Accessed 24/01/2020)

led to political demonstrations led by National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC) - a coalition of political parties and civil society organizations. It led to the death of more than 30 civilians and a police officer, destruction of public and private property across the country³³. The issue of politically motivated ethnic tension is also a key challenge to the stability of Guinea. A key feature of this ethnic alignment stems from the domination of the ruling Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) by the Malinké ethnic group which constitute about 35 per cent of the population, while the opposition party UFDG is aligned to the Peul ethnic group, estimated to comprise 40 per cent of the country's population³⁴. The Peul group have expressed concern over the political domination by the Malinkés as well as discrimination and extrajudicial killing by the security forces

There are also concerns over unresolved reforms of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) as well as the appointment of members of the Constitutional Court by the President. In the lead-up to the legislative elections, the country has experienced a series of violent activities such as physical attacks, hate speeches, ethnic rhetoric and destruction of voter verification lists in some parts of the country. In addition, there are also accusations of biases in media reportage by opposition parties as well as issues of fake news in the social media which incite violence in an already fragile political landscape.

Human Security Challenges: Even though the Government has embarked on rural development initiatives, the country is still grappling with issues of economic hardships, unemployment and poor healthcare systems especially in rural communities. Guinea's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is \$926 per person with an inflation rate of 9.8 per cent in 2018 owing to an increase in fuel prices and electricity billing³⁵. Basic social services such as the availability of clean drinking water and housing are still insufficient for a large segment of the population, which remains a major concern for rural communities. The disparity in the distribution of wealth and the perception of corruption contribute to Trade Unions demand for better conditions of service which often degenerate into demonstrations impacting on public order in the country. Also, there is a gender imbalance in the access to education and agricultural productivity, employment and decision-making opportunities. These factors diminish women's prospects and undermine the country's growth trajectory³⁶.

³³See WANEP NEWS Guinea (Monthly Bulletin).

³⁴See [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2013/491507/EXPO-DEVE_SP\(2013\)491507_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/briefing_note/join/2013/491507/EXPO-DEVE_SP(2013)491507_EN.pdf) (Accessed 24/1/2020)

³⁵ Op. cit. (World Bank)

³⁶ Op. cit. (World Bank).

Recommendations

- ECOWAS, AU, UNOWAS and international partners should intensify preventive diplomacy with Alpha Conde, UFDG and other opposition parties, FNDC, civil society and other trade union actors to widen the space for multiple political dialogues to achieve consensus on the pathway for democratic stability in Guinea;
- Civil Society, religious leaders, and the High Authority of Communication should continue to raise awareness and understanding among citizens on their role in the proposed constitutional reform process and to hold the Governments accountability in the delivery of basic social services as well as strengthening social cohesion in the country;
- The media, CSOs women and youth groups should intensify civic and peace education to strengthen social cohesion in communities in Guinea.

Guinea Bissau



The lingering political imbroglio in Guinea Bissau continues to exacerbate tension in the country. Legislative elections (March 2019) and Presidential elections (November and December 2019) were conducted in a relatively peaceful manner. The outcome of the December 2019 Presidential run-off election was contested in the Supreme Court by Domingos Simoes Pereira, candidate of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) which led a recounting of ballots by independent experts led by ECOWAS to confirm. However, the AU, ECOWAS and the international community remain engaged in Guinea Bissau in efforts to promote political dialogue and democratic consolidation. Furthermore, the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) has been renewed until March 2020 to continue to provide security, assist in consolidating Government's authority and address security challenges in the country.

Political Stability Challenges: Following the completion of verification of run-off presidential election results contested by the PAIGC candidate, Domingos Simoes Pereira, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) has confirmed Umaro Sissoco Embalo of the Movement for a Democratic Alternative G15 (MADEM-G15) the winner with 53.5% of the votes³⁷. With this pronouncement, a new state has been reached in the country's protracted political crisis, even though the dispute remains far from being resolved as the PAIGC has condemned the CNE for lack of transparency and threatened to pursue legal options³⁸. This would continue to create tension in the country as the new Government grapples to settle down in the months ahead.

³⁷See: <https://www.africanews.com/2020/02/05/g-bissau-ex-pm-embalo-wins-poll-round-2//> (Accessed 10/02/2020).

³⁸Ibid

Another critical challenge is the new configuration of the legislature, which has no absolute majority. The results after the March 2019 Legislative elections put the PAIGC in the lead with 47 Members of Parliament (MPs), followed by MADEM-G15 with 27 MPs, Party for Social Renewal (PRS) has 21 MPs, APU has 5, and the United People's Alliance (UM) and the New Democracy

“Social cohesion, consensus-building, as well as inclusivity in governance and decision-making, would facilitate a unique political transition in Guinea-Bissau in 2020 and beyond.”

Party (PND) each have one parliamentarian³⁹. Guinea Bissau operates a semi-presidential system with a President elected by universal suffrage and a Prime Minister representing the parliamentary majority holding most of the executive powers. With an opposition party forming the new government, the appointment of a Prime Minister could result in another long-drawn political impasse. In this regard, consensus-building, as well as inclusivity in governance and decision-making, would facilitate a unique political transition in Guinea-Bissau in 2020 and beyond.

Human Security Challenges: Once commended as a potential model for African development, Guinea Bissau is now one of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world⁴⁰. Poverty is widespread in Guinea Bissau with more than 60% of the population subsisting on less than US\$1.25 a day⁴¹. Unemployment and illiteracy levels also remain high, particularly among females, while maternal and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world. Corruption is deeply rooted and manifests in the political, economic and social spheres of the country. The country has been ranked as the 168th most corrupt country out of 180 according to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2019⁴². Corruption and bribery continue to undermine the fight against illicit drug trafficking and other transnational organised crimes in the country. Furthermore, Guinea-Bissau is faced with challenges of human and drug trafficking, as well as illegal migration. This continues to harm agriculture, as most people find it a lucrative enterprise to the detriment of agro-production⁴³. As a result of this, the country is vulnerable to food insecurity, especially in rural areas in the years ahead.

Recommendations

³⁹Op. cit. (World bank).

⁴⁰See: www.bbc.com (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁴¹See: www.hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-note/GNB.pdf (25/01/2020).

⁴²See <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2019> (Accessed 27/01/2020)

⁴³See https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN.pdf (Accessed 27/01/2020)

- ECOWAS, AU, UNOWAS and international actors should continue to provide technical support and creating the spaces for broader national political dialogue with stakeholders to foster social cohesion and reconciliation in Guinea-Bissau;
- The new Government should consider forming an inclusive government with a national character as well as embark on national reconciliation and social cohesion.

Liberia



Since the election of President George Weah in October 2017, the implementation of the Government's Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD 2018-2023) has been focused on four pillars including empowering Liberians through education, health, youth development and social protection, enabling private sector-led economic growth, supporting a peaceful society and creating an inclusive and accountable public sector. Notwithstanding this, Liberia is still grappling with challenges of security and economic crisis including a backlog of unpaid salaries of civil servants, perceived corruption, human rights violations, political intolerance, intra-party conflicts, gender-based violence and disease outbreaks. As a result, there have been increased protests and demonstrations by concerned citizens demanding better service delivery and economic revitalization of the country.

Political Stability Challenges: Liberia is preparing to hold its senatorial mid-term elections in 2020 for 15 vacant senatorial seats amid cases of public disenchantment over the ruling government. The legislature has passed a bill for a national referendum to reduce the tenure of the President and members of the House of Representatives from six to five years and senators from nine to seven years. The bill also includes the right to dual citizenship for Liberians. However, heightened political tensions emanating from the economic downturn and persistent public protests would undermine the implementation of these activities in 2020.

"Dwindle trust and confidence in the leadership of the country and deepen divisiveness in an already fragile society is a recipe for widespread public disorder and civil disobedience with concerns of insecurity in 2020."

The departure of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in March 2018 exposed economic and security vulnerabilities as well as mounting political tensions in the country. The ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) continues to be challenged by internal political disputes, persistent corruption scandals as well as accusations of violation of human rights and press freedom as well as reports of clamp down and repression of political activists and opinion leaders.

These conditions dwindle trust and confidence in the leadership of the country and deepen divisiveness in an already fragile society. This is a recipe for widespread public disorder and civil disobedience with concerns of insecurity in 2020.

Human Security Challenges: The general socio-economic situation in Liberia remains the lowest in the world⁴⁴. The country is ranked among the world's poorest nations, with the position of 176th out of 189 countries in the Human Development Index (2018)⁴⁵. Poverty is widespread with more than 54 per cent of the population subsisting on less than US\$1.90 a day⁴⁶. Inflation reached 31.3 per cent by August 2019, up from 26.1 per cent the previous year⁴⁷. The demographics constitute of a young population with about 63 per cent being less than 25 years and 32.8 per cent being between 10-24 years. Some of the youth population are ex-combatants who face socio-economic challenges including limited access to employment and stable sources of income⁴⁸. The current political and security challenges in the country have a link with the existing economic tailspin with its attendant effects on the lives and livelihoods security of the people. Liberia also has a recurrent challenge of severe flooding during the rainy season (May-November). Heavy rains and windstorms in the capital Monrovia and surrounding counties washed away roads, destroyed bridges and polluted water sources. According to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), more than 200 fire outbreaks recorded across the country in 2019, resulted in the loss of lives and property damage⁴⁹. In addition, domestic violence, sexual assault and rape are the most commonly reported violent crimes affecting women and children in Liberia. Recent statistics from Liberia's Gender Ministry show that a total of 803 sexual and gender-based violence cases were reported during the first quarter of 2019, with 605 of those cases involving children less than 17 years old⁵⁰.

Recommendations

- The Government should broaden civic space to allow for dialogue on key issues affecting the polity and strive to build consensus and social cohesion in the country;
- The Government should intensify its Anti-corruption drive by strengthening the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the relevant legal frameworks to influence the fight against corruption in the country;

⁴⁴ See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁴⁵ See http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/LBR.pdf (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁴⁶ See <https://data.worldbank.org/country/liberia> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁴⁷ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/liberia/overview> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁴⁸ UNFPA Liberia

⁴⁹ See <https://allafrica.com/stories/202001240269.html> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁵⁰ See <http://www.rfi.fr/en/20190805-How-stop-increasing-rates-violence-against-women-Liberia> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

- CSOs, traditional and religious authorities should intensify engagement with the Government, opposition parties, and other interest groups including the “Council of Patriots” to create a platform for open dialogue and restore public confidence in the security and development of the country;
- Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, international development partners and CSOs should develop initiatives and support existing mechanisms to mitigate rising violence against women in the country.

Mali



Since re-elected in August 2018, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta is in the second year of his final five-year term. The Government stays committed to implementing the 2015 Peace Agreement to ensure stability and establish government presence in the Northern regions. However, growing insecurity from armed groups and terrorists operating in the North and Central regions as well as recurrent ethnic violence pose further challenges to governance and security in the country. The border area with Burkina Faso and Niger will remain a particular hotspot for terrorist attacks in the year 2020. Public protests against foreign forces over a perceived retrogression in countering terrorism pose high risk especially to UN and French personnel and assets during protests, particularly in Bamako, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

Political Stability Challenges: One of the current political stability challenges in Mali is the extension of the Parliament after its mandate expired in December 31st, 2018 and renewed by the Constitutional Court for another six months to June 2019. However, a parliamentary election has been

“The border area with Burkina Faso and Niger will remain a particular hotspot for terrorist attacks in the year 2020.”

scheduled to be conducted in May 2020. In line with this, some political parties and CSOs have threatened to boycott the elections due to the lack of adherence to the provisions of the 2015 Peace Agreement. The agreement provides for greater decentralization, creating special zones and implementing programs to facilitate development in the North. Since the military coup in 2012 and the subsequent occupation and spread of armed groups in Northern and Central Mali, the peace and security landscape has been characterized by increased attacks by terrorist groups against civilians and military forces including UN Peacekeepers, G5 Sahel operatives and the Malian army. The struggling peace process received another setback after ex-separatist groups pulled out of talks in September 2019, suggesting a likely collapse of the process. Another critical security challenge is the process of reintegration of ex-combatants into communities, as the

Government does not have adequate resources to implement the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Programs which is critical to the peace process in Mali.

Human Security Challenges: Increased activities of terrorists and violent extremist groups in the North and Central regions of Mali continues to undermine human security in the country. Between January to November 2019, there have been 114 attacks in Mali, leaving 1,248 dead and 518 casualties⁵¹. As a result, more than 800 schools have been closed, affecting almost 250,000 children, many of whom are in the Central region of Mopti⁵². This has triggered child labour, early marriage and decline in living conditions among affected communities. Additional challenges arise from SGBV, especially in North and Central Mali. Given that most communities are dependent on subsistence farming and artisanal gold mining, the attacks and sectarian violence between the Dogons and the Fulanis have adverse effects on food security and the livelihood of the communities. This eventually has implications for heightened competition for scarce resources, especially food and water which further perpetuating violence in the communities.

Recommendations

- The Government of Mali should intensify multilateral cooperation through G5 Sahel and other ECOWAS countries to promote information and intelligence sharing, border security management, capacity building, and resource mobilization to counter the increasing activities of terrorist and armed criminal networks in the country;
- The Government in collaboration with the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the international community should ensure the provision of technical benchmarks and guarantee the fairness of the DDR process to avoid hindrances to the peace process;
- CSOs, local leaders and faith-based groups should ensure robust engagement with the Government to ensure effective implementation of the peace plan, especially in establishing state authorities in ungoverned areas, enhance inter-community dialogue and social cohesion.

⁵¹See WANEP NEWS Mali (January to November 2019) (Accessed 27/01/2019)

⁵²See: <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Mali%20Situation%20Regional%20Update%20-%20April%20-%20June%202019-.pdf> (Accessed 27/01/2020)

Niger



Niger is preparing to hold Municipal and Regional elections in December 2020 which would be followed by Legislative and Presidential election in 2021. President Mahamadou Issoufou will complete his two-term tenure by 2021 and will pave the way for the election of a new President of the country. The Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) has started preparations for the elections amid political tensions and accusations of government corruption. the insecurity is a key threat to the stability of the country, particularly in the regions bordering Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali, (namely Tillabery, Diffa and Tahoua) where violent extremist groups such as Boko Haram and ISWAP operate. As a result, the Government has declared a State of Emergency in these regions.

Political Stability Challenges: Niger continues to grapple with several political and socio-economic challenges. As the country prepares for multi-tier elections in 2020 and 2021, political wrangling, violations of human rights and press freedom, exclusion and injustice have been reported. Key opposition parties boycotted the electoral reform process claiming political biases in favour of the ruling party. In addition, accusations of limited space for the opposition to participate in the

“Accusations of limited space for the opposition to participate in the National Council of Political Dialogue (Conseil National de dialogue politique - CNDP) have implications on the electoral process ahead of the 2020 and 2021 general election.”

National Council of Political Dialogue (Conseil National de dialogue politique - CNDP) have implications on the electoral process ahead of the 2020 and 2021 general election. Similarly, with recurrent terrorist attacks and state of emergency in the northern parts of the country, the CENI would be challenged to conduct elections in the rural border communities. This would also result in low voter turnout and have further implications for increasing violence that would affect the outcome of the elections across the country.

Human Security Challenges: Between January to November 2019, Niger experienced several attacks and killing of foreign workers, kidnapping for ransoms and drug trafficking mainly in the capital Niamey as well as in Maradi, Tahoua and Diffa. Data from WANEP NEWS revealed 82 terrorist attacks by ISWAP, Boko Haram and AQIM with a total of 261 deaths and 195 injuries mainly in Tillabéri, Maradi, Zinder, Diffa and Dosso⁵³. Between December 2019 and January 2020, terrorists attacked military positions killing a total of 174 military personnel in Tillabéri region

⁵³WANEP NEWS Niger (January – November 2019)

bordering Mali⁵⁴. There was also a total of 56 kidnapped cases of women and young girls within the same period. In terms of security, the primary concern of Nigeriens is the frequency and impact of violent extremist attacks creating a high level of public insecurity.

For many years, Niger has had refugees from Nigeria and Chad totalling over 246,000. Its security challenges have further reinforced the humanitarian challenges with 186,000 displaced persons, primarily in Diffa and Tillabéri and Maradi⁵⁵. The influx of refugees, illegal migrants and asylum seekers hosted in camps at Agadez and other areas also pose security and humanitarian risks, including complex emergencies and competition for scarce resources such as food and clean water in the host communities. Extreme poverty remains very high, at an estimated 41.5% in 2019, affecting more than 9 million people⁵⁶. This also signifies an increase in the number of unemployed youths who are vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region⁵⁷. Drought and desertification remain a major cause of food insecurity⁵⁸. This continues to devastate livelihoods across the country.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS and international partners and the Government should strengthen synergy among the various forces within the G5 Sahel in the fights against violent extremism and terrorism;
- ECOWAS and partners including local CSOs and religious authorities should intensify engagement with the CENI to open the space and bring all election stakeholders together to embark on electoral reforms that enhance inclusive political participation for a peaceful and transparent electoral process in the lead up to the 2020 and 2021 multi-tier elections.

Nigeria



In the first quarter of 2019, President Muhammadu Buhari was re-elected for a second term, while new members of the National Assembly, as well as Governors and State Assembly members in 29 of the country's 36 States, were also elected. The National Peace Committee and many civil society groups campaigned before the polls to prevent a repeat of electoral violence witnessed in 2011 and 2015. However, the 2019 elections recorded cases of inflammatory

⁵⁴Ibid

⁵⁵See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger/overview> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁵⁶Ibid

⁵⁷Source: "New Terrorists Threat as EU stance on migrants trigger disquiet in Niger." Available at: www.theguardian.com (Accessed 23/01/, 2020)

⁵⁸UNDP. Human Development Report, Niger. Available <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update> (Accessed 24/01/2020).

political rhetoric, accusations of intimidations, physical attacks including the killing of INEC officials, destruction of polling stations, ballot papers and other electoral materials in some States in the South-West and South-South regions⁵⁹. The country continues to be faced with a plethora of violence and insecurity such as the deadly campaigns of Boko Haram and the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States of North-East geopolitical zone; the pervasive farmer-herder violence in the North Central zone; armed banditry in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Niger States of North-West zone; militancy in South-South geopolitical zone; and separatist movement of the Independent People of Biafra - IPOB in South-East geo-political zone.

Political Stability Challenges: The conduct of the general elections of 2019 was marred by physical attacks, allegations of intimidation, an accusation of partisanship by security forces, destruction of sensitive and non-sensitive materials of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), reports of illegal voting which affected the conduct of elections in some polling stations in Lagos, Rivers, Kaduna, Zamfara, Delta, Oyo, Yobe, Kogi, Ebony, Ekiti, Plateau, Sokoto, Benue, Borno States, among others. According to SB Moegen Intelligence – which monitors socio-economic and political development in Nigeria, 626 people were killed during the 2019 election cycle, starting with the campaigns in November 2018. To promote future peaceful elections, there is a need for electoral and other legal reforms that would also contribute to the consolidation of democratic structures in the country.

In addition, Amnesty International and other rights-based organisations have raised concerns about the level of impunity and repression of press freedom in Nigeria⁶⁰. References have been made to the repeated arrest and detention of Omoyele Sowore, a journalist and former presidential candidate in the 2019 election on charges of treason, money laundering and “cyberstalking”⁶¹. Following Sowore’s continued detention, there are worrying cases of detention of journalists and outright disappearances of prominent government critics⁶². These incidents would compound growing concerns about the deteriorating security situation, freedom of speech and press rights in the country in the months ahead.

⁵⁹WANEP NEWS Nigeria (Statements from WANEP ESR February 2019).

⁶⁰See: <https://twitter.com/AmnestyNigeria/status/1202998312812589056> (Accessed 13/02/2020).

⁶¹See: <https://qz.com/africa/1763098/nigeria-dss-re-arrests-omoyele-sowore-one-day-after-bail-release/> (Accessed 13/02/2020).

⁶²Ibid

Also, in August 2019, Nigeria closed its land borders with the Republic of Benin, restricting import and export with neighbouring countries primarily to curb smuggling of agro-products such as rice, tomatoes and poultry which impedes its local market and revenue. Countries adversely affected by the ban, especially Benin, Ghana, Niger and Cameroon regard this move as a unilateral decision, with implications for regional integration. This has strained diplomatic relations between Nigeria and affected States, particularly in the area of commerce. It has also been criticized as inimical to the realisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) launched by Heads of State and Government at the 12th African Union Extraordinary Summit of 2019 in Niamey.

“The recurrent deaths, internal displacement, and destructive character of insurgent groups continue to increase fragility and human security in the country.”

Human Security Challenges: The recurrent deaths, internal displacement, and destructive character of insurgent groups continue to increase fragility and human security in the country. Boko Haram has in the last nine years of insurgency in North-East Nigeria been responsible for 27,000 deaths and displacement of over two million people mostly women and children⁶³. According to a report by the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 207 child soldiers between 10-17 years linked with Boko Haram, were rescued and handed over by the Nigerian Army for rehabilitation and reintegration⁶⁴. Between January and December 2019, Nigeria recorded 448 cases of kidnapping across the 36 States⁶⁵. In the same period, a total of 1,204 armed attacks including banditry, communal clashes, cult violence were reported with a death toll of over 2,894 people in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Niger States⁶⁶. In addition, more than 5,526 people have been killed⁶⁷ in over 1000 communities in Zamfara⁶⁸ and Katsina⁶⁹ States alone in the last five years. Recent data from WANEP NEWS also show that a total of 76 incidents related to farmer-herder conflicts with 242 deaths were reported – the lowest number of attacks recorded within the last two years⁷⁰. This reduction in attacks could be attributed to robust joint security operations in place as well as efforts by some State Governments to enact laws to regulate transhumance route and activities.

⁶³WANEP Thematic Report, *Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Exploring New Frontiers in West Africa?* July 2019. Available at: www.wanep.org (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁴See www.allafrica.com/stories/201807100022.html (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁵WANEP NEWS Nigeria (July – September 2019). www.wanep.org (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁶See: WANEP NEWS (www.wanep.org/news/) (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁷See <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/zamfara-currently-has-30000-idps-speaker.html> (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁸See <https://www.thecable.ng/yari-in-five-years-bandits-have-killed-over-3000-in-zamfara> (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁶⁹See <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/09/18/ending-banditry-kidnapping-in-katsina-through-dialogue/> (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁷⁰See WANEP NEWS Nigeria (January – December 2020). www.wanep.org (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

Persistent demonstrations and strike actions relating to non-payment of salaries, poor welfare schemes for workers were also prevalent in 2019.

Another issue of concern is the controversy around Government approval and implementation of the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlements in May – June 2019. The RUGA settlement is to curb open grazing that continues to cause recurring conflicts between farmers and nomadic herders in the country. It would provide designated land to animal farmers in some pilot States including Sokoto, Adamawa, Nasarawa, Kaduna, Kogi, Taraba, Plateau, Katsina, Kebbi, Zamfara and Niger. However, the Benue and Edo State Governments and other Southern and Middle belt socio-political groups have opposed the plan resulting in recurrent public demonstrations and protests. The omnibus effects of this manifest in a trust deficit between the citizens and the State. Given this, the risk of institutional fragility and waning social cohesion is high, with significant consequences on security and livelihood of the people.

Additionally, the vulnerability of women and children in a conflict situation is a critical human security concern in Nigeria. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) 22,000 people, mostly women and children, have been reported as missing in related terrorist attacks in Nigeria⁷¹. Cases of female suicide bombing constitute a threat in the North-eastern region of the country. Between January and December 2019, 83 incidents of female suicide attacks on civilian and security positions in the Northeast were reported⁷². The proliferation of arms, illegal migration, kidnapping for ransom, human trafficking and drug abuse among the youth also continue to heighten human insecurity in the country. Equally, health and environmental risks arising from floods, droughts and outbreaks of diseases such as Cholera and Lassa Fever are recurrent issues likely to continue to impact populations at community and state levels.

Recommendations

- The Federal and State Governments should realign its counter-terrorism approach and ensure synergy in the implementation of the ECOWAS Priority Action Plan (2020-2024)⁷³ on eradicating terrorism and violent extremism in the region. There is also the need to create space for robust engagement with CSOs to ensure effective implementation of the action plan, especially in the area of enhancing community resilience;

⁷¹See <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/nigeria-22000-people-registered-missing-after-decade-war-icrcs-highest-caseload-world> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁷²WANEP Nigeria NEWS December 2019.

⁷³Op. cit. Final Communiqué ECOWAS Summit, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on September 14, 2019.

- In the interest of regional integration, the Government should reconsider re-opening its land borders with Benin and Niger, while intensifying bilateral or multilateral initiatives to improve border security including joint border patrols involving police, customs, immigration, navy and state security services. In addition, the three countries should implement the agreed commitment to establish a committee to advance regional trade;
- Specific steps should also be taken by the Federal and State Governments to find a common ground and build consensus around the implementation of RUGA as well as consciously integrate the interests of pastoralists, farmers and other land users in the plan for sustained local ownership;
- The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) with support from local community watch groups and State Governments in the North-West region should strengthen community policing to combat emerging security threats that could trigger violence including tracking and regulating local production of weapons in the country.

Senegal



Since its independence in 1960, Senegal has experienced the smooth transfer of power and inclusive political participation that have contributed to the relative political stability of the country. In the Presidential election of February 24, 2019, the voter turnout was above 66 per cent and President Macky Sall was elected for a second term with 58.27 per cent of the votes. His current tenure of office will last for five years following the 2016 referendum that led to the constitutional adjustment of the President's term of office from seven to five years. Even though Senegal has no record of terrorist attack, activism by terrorist groups operating along the border with Mali and the higher number of radicals entering the country are factors that risk fueling instability⁷⁴.

Political Stability Challenges: The credible and peaceful outcome of the February 2019 Presidential election has contributed to the stability of democratic governance in Senegal. However, there are still concerns about the decisions of the court to disqualify key opposition party candidates Karim Wade and the former Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, from contesting the election based on their convictions of corruption. This is contributing to heightening post-election tension in the country. Additional concerns stem from the postponements of local elections from June to December 2019, and subsequently to the end of 2020. This has aroused citizen suspicion

⁷⁴See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/senegal/overview> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

that the President is influencing the process to enable his Party, the Alliance for the Republic–Yaakaar (APR) gain advantage for the local elections.

Although Senegal has not experienced violent extremism, it remains vulnerable due to porous borders and threats from violent extremist groups in the region. Senegal contributes to the UN peacekeeping initiative in Mali (MINUSMA) and is therefore considered a legitimate target by terrorist groups including Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and their associated groups operating in the region⁷⁵. This raises further concerns on the need for bilateral and multilateral arrangements with States in the region to ensure implementation of national and regional preventive strategies against threats of terrorism and other transnational organised crimes.

Human Security Challenges: The growing incidents of armed attacks and robberies, especially in the southern province of Casamance and the threat of infiltration of violent extremists from neighbouring countries constitute a major security concern for Senegal in 2020 and beyond. High youth unemployment has led to increased

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reported cases of illegal migration with socio-economic implications to the development of the State. The frequency of protests and demonstrations by students and trade union workers have also increased. Recurrent demonstrations have led to the destruction of property, which sometimes impedes economic activities. Sexual and gender-based violence impact on women and girls in Senegal. Recorded cases of Female Genital Mutilation and early child marriage are preponderant in rural communities. According to the UN Women Database, 31 per cent of women aged 20-24 years were forced into marriage before age 18, while 23 per cent of women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM in Senegal⁷⁶. Despite the several gender security reform programs introduced, the Police Force is still challenged to respond and reduce SGBV on women.

Recommendations

- The Government should intensify engagement with political actors, CSOs, religious and traditional leaders to facilitate political dialogue and national conversations to address

⁷⁵See: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/senegal/terrorism> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁷⁶See www.evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/Africa/niger#1 (Accessed on 28/01/2020).

post-election disputes ahead of the 2020 Local election as well as 2022 Legislative elections;

- Local NGOs and CSOs should strengthen public education and awareness creation on tolerance and non-violence ahead of the local elections expected to be held in 2020;
- The Government, through the security operatives and religious leaders, should strengthen community peace infrastructure along border communities to identify security threats from violent extremist groups.

Sierra Leone



Almost two years after being sworn into office on April 4, 2018, President Brigadier (Rtd.) Julius Maada Bio and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) led Government has aligned the 'New Direction' campaign manifesto with the country's medium-term National Development Plan (2019-2023).

However, there are concerns of recurrent socio-political tension in the country that could undermine social cohesion necessary for stability and development. There are also concerns about rising unemployment, sexual and gender-based violence, especially rape and other forms of cruelty against children in the country.

Political Stability Challenges: The political climate in Sierra Leone is a mixed bag of occurrences. The post-election environment continues to be challenged by increased Incidents of politically motivated violence largely due to the political intolerance between the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) and the main opposition All Peoples' Congress (APC) especially over the

Commissions of Inquiry (COI) probing the former administration on corruption allegations. The COI findings would be documented in a Government White paper for cabinet and parliamentary action. The APC accuses the Government of political "witch-hunting" and repeated constitutional violations including the unseating by Court order of ten elected APC Members of Parliament in May 2019. There have been recorded cases of riots and attacks on political opponents during recent bye-elections in Constituency 110 of Freetown in August 2019 and Ward 196 in Tonko Limba Chiefdom, Kambia District in September 2018 and March 2019, respectively. The release of the final COI White paper could stimulate negative responses from the opposition party and other interest groups that will heighten political tension in 2020.

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The voting patterns in elections also suggest ethno-political divisions in the country. This is evident in the 2018 general elections in which the APC recorded more votes in the North-West regions while the ruling SLPP in the South-East of the country. The outcome produced a parliament where none of the major parties have an absolute majority which provides opportunity for consensus-building and inclusivity in governance and decision making. However, the polarisation of the country along ethnic and political lines undermines consensus in the legislature. In as much as the responsibility to reunite the country lies mainly on the shoulders of the Government, a space for dialogue with opposition parties and other stakeholders is imperative to rekindle hope and confidence of every Sierra Leonean in the governance and democratic structure of the country in 2020 and beyond.

Human Security Challenges: Sierra Leone has recently been under the spotlight due to reports of sexual and gender-based violence of women and girls. In the first half of 2019, more than 1,966 cases of sexual assaults against women and girls were recorded across the country⁷⁷, comprising varied physical abuses, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and stigmatization which affects education and health security of women and girls in communities⁷⁸. The trend emerging in sexual violence cases, particularly rape against children is that a number of the victims end up in prostitution. The perpetrators of sexual violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone are traced to members of their families, teachers and elderly men in their communities⁷⁹. This triggered the amendment of the Sexual Offences Act (2012) to include new provisions such as life imprisonment for the rape of a child, the establishment of sexual offenders register and law against solicitation by a person of authority. Additionally, the Office of the First Lady, women and youth groups have embarked on campaigns and protests against the increased spate of sexual exploitation and violence against women and children in the country.

Recommendations

- The Political Party Registration Commission (PPRC) should adopt a conflict resolving architecture that allows for proper deliberation on key issues affecting the polity and strive to build bipartisan consensus;
- The UN and development partners should partner with CSOs and the Inter-Religious Council to intensify engagement with the Government and opposition parties to create a

⁷⁷Rainbow Initiative, www.facebook.com/rainbowinitiative (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁷⁸*The Calabash*, '21% of Prostitutes in Freetown are Children'. Available at: <https://thecalabashnewspaper.com/sierra-leone-news-21-of-prostitutes-in-freetown-are-children-news-report-says/> (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

⁷⁹*The Calabash*, '21% of Prostitutes in Freetown are Children'. Available at: <https://thecalabashnewspaper.com/sierra-leone-news-21-of-prostitutes-in-freetown-are-children-news-report-says/> (Accessed on 22/01/2020).

space for political dialogue that would contribute to mitigating rising tension and political violence in the country;

- The creation of a national infrastructure for peace is imperative and desirable. The Government should ensure speedy and inclusive processes and actions require to establish an independent peace and national cohesion commission to strengthen national capacities for dialogue and reconciliation across the country.

Togo



Preparations for Presidential elections on February 22, 2020, is underway with voter registration completed and other key electoral events in progress. A total of seven candidates are contesting the Presidential elections which include the incumbent President Faure Gnassingbe. Before this, the country held its Legislative and Municipal elections in December 2018 and June 2019, respectively. Opposition parties accused the ruling party and electoral commission of irregularities and lack of level playing field for all political parties in the electoral process. As a result of this, the elections were replete with persistent demonstrations and protests by opposition parties and sections of the populations, which led to the arrest and detention of political opinion leaders and actors. The interplay of these events has implications for the peaceful conduct of the presidential elections in February 2020.

Political Stability Challenges: Continued disagreement and political stalemate between the Government and opposition parties over constitutional and electoral reforms in Togo is a worrying concern for the democracy in the country. Despite the concerns raised by the opposition, the Commission Électorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI) conducted the Municipal elections on June 30, 2019. Unlike the boycott of the Legislative elections in December 2018, the opposition participated in the Municipal elections and won 595 seats against 895 by the ruling Party, Union pour la République (UNIR) Government⁸⁰. In the lead up to the Presidential election, opposition parties have expressed their dissatisfaction on the certification of ballot papers, the publication of electoral results by polling stations as well as the final certification of the results of the general election by the Electoral Commission. Although there has been a recent amendment in some Articles of the 1992 Constitution, especially Article 59⁸¹, which restores the presidential term limit to five years, a sticky point between the Government and the opposition is the non-retrospective nature of the law. This means that the incumbent President Gnassingbé

⁸⁰See <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-48895390> (Accessed 21/01/2020).

⁸¹Article 59 of the 1992 Constitution of Togo stipulates that “the President of the Republic shall be elected by a Universal Suffrage in two rounds for a term of five years renewable once. An amendment of this provision may only be made by a referendum”.

is legally permitted to run for another two terms till 2030 if he is re-elected. The opposition disagreement with this provision foreshadows pre or post-election violence in the country.

Human Security Challenges: The main human security challenge in Togo is the ongoing political crisis which is reflected in the United Nations Human Development ranking of 165 out of 189 countries in the world (2018)⁸². Poverty also remains widespread, especially in rural areas where 69% of households were living below the poverty line⁸³. Economic vulnerability is high among women because they have fewer

“With the increasing activities of violent extremist groups in West Africa, an outbreak of violence in Togo would serve as a potential avenue for recruitment and the spread of insurgency in the region.”

opportunities and are under-represented at high levels of decision making⁸⁴. In addition, female-headed households experience higher rates of poverty than male-headed households—57.5 per cent against 55 per cent⁸⁵. Togo’s economic growth picked up in 2018 to 4.9% (2.3% per capita) after slowing down in 2017, as a result of recurrent political tension and a sharp fiscal contraction⁸⁶. This economic recovery was driven largely by the rebound in public investment and robust growth in the services sector⁸⁷. While the business climate has improved, more still needs to be done to build on the gains made.

The protracted political crisis and growing insecurity in Togo continue to have repercussions on regional security. Neighbouring states, such as Ghana and Benin witnessed an influx of migrants and political asylum seekers. With the increasing activities of violent extremist groups in West Africa, an outbreak of violence in Togo would serve as a potential avenue for recruitment and the spread of insurgency in the region.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS and UNOWAS should intensify engagement with the ruling party, key political parties, CSOs (G7), religious leaders and other stakeholders in dialogue before, during and after the elections as a strategy to prevent political actors from influencing or mobilizing support for violence across the country;

⁸²See http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁸³See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/overview> (Accessed 27/01/2020).

⁸⁴Ibid

⁸⁵Ibid

⁸⁶Ibid

⁸⁷Ibid

- CSOs and media should intensify efforts on voter education and peace messaging to raise public awareness on the voting process, non-violence and peaceful actions throughout the electoral cycle;
- The media should intensify collaboration with CSOs to engage citizens through peace and civic education to enhance social cohesion and community resilience, especially in countering hate speeches, fake news and inciting of violence against individuals, groups and the State.