



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

Drawing on more than two hundred interviews conducted in March and April 2018 in eight states and the Federal Capital Territory, this Special Report identifies the emerging and shifting risks of election violence for Nigeria's 2019 elections and provides recommendations for Nigerian authorities and international donors supporting the electoral process to help mitigate these risks. Research for this report was supported by the Middle East and Africa Center and the Center for Applied Conflict Transformation at the United States Institute of Peace, and by the Centre for Democracy and Development, the CLEEN Foundation, the Fund for Peace, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute.

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Nigeria's 2019 Elections: Change, Continuity, and the Risks to Peace

Summary

- In 2019, Nigeria will hold national elections for the first time since a historic, peaceful, democratic transition of power to the opposition in 2015, when incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party conceded defeat to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC).
- Buhari is standing for a second term, but nominations for other positions within the APC are expected to be highly contested. This could lead to the fragmentation of the party, defections to other parties, and violence.
- Social and economic inequalities, ethnic and religious divisions, and structural weaknesses, such as corruption and weak state capacity, remain prevalent across Nigeria and contribute to the risks of electoral violence.
- Other important factors contributing to the risks of electoral violence have evolved since 2015, including changing forms of insecurity and the prominence of disputes within, rather than between, the political parties. Grievances or violence arising from recent local government elections may also have significant consequences for national elections.
- Public confidence in Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is mixed. Although INEC was applauded for organizing broadly credible elections in 2015, some respondents expressed concerns that the commission's progress may not be sustained in 2019.
- More assertive communications by INEC, transparent results management, staffing reforms, earlier and more consistent police preparations, improved internal democracy within political parties, and the creation of a specialized election offenses commission would likely alleviate some risks of violence in the 2019 election cycle.
- Successful state-level initiatives—such as efforts in Plateau State to tamp down on religious intolerance and an initiative in Kano State to improve the quality of election coverage by the media—could be considered for adaptation in other states.

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- The United States and other international supporters of Nigeria’s electoral process should augment their diplomatic efforts to preempt electoral violence in the run-up to the 2019 elections.
- During the campaign, voting, and results phases of the election, regional and continental leaders should be prepared to mediate disputes and to work toward peaceful acceptance of the election’s outcomes.

Introduction

Nigeria’s next keenly anticipated national elections are scheduled for February and March 2019 and will be the sixth vote since the reintroduction of democracy in 1999. The 2019 polls follow Nigeria’s first peaceful transition of power to the opposition in 2015, when incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) conceded defeat to Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

On April 9, 2018, President Buhari announced he would run for a second term. At least eighteen candidates, including Buhari, declared their intention to run for president.¹ In most states, gubernatorial and state legislative elections will be held two weeks after the presidential and national parliamentary polls.²

To varying degrees, every election in Nigeria’s modern history has experienced violence.³ In Nigeria, all of the elements of Timothy Sisk’s expansive definition of electoral-related violence have occurred:

acts or threats of coercion, intimidation, or physical harm perpetrated to affect an electoral process or that arise in the context of electoral competition. When perpetrated to affect an electoral process, violence may be employed to influence the *process* of elections—such as efforts to delay, disrupt, or derail a poll—and to influence the *outcomes*: the determining of winners in competitive races for political office.⁴

Nigeria’s history of electoral violence is, for many, an unfortunately accepted fact of life, and cannot be viewed in isolation from the many social and economic inequalities, ethnic and religious divisions, and structural weaknesses such as corruption and weak state capacity. While many conventional risks of election violence endure, including the willingness (or not) of candidates to accept the results, the use and abuse of state power to unfairly favor incumbents, and the ease with which young people can be mobilized toward violence, a simplistic narrative that violence is ever present and inevitable obscures important contextual changes in Nigeria since 2015. These changes, documented in this report, demonstrate the need to disaggregate electoral violence’s causes and contributing factors if such acts are to be properly understood, contextualized, and mitigated.

Despite the risks, serious violence in 2019 is not inevitable, even if that possibility seems great. The Nigerians interviewed in the course of this research have a keen sense of what is necessary for peace, whom they hold most responsible for violence, and what can be done to confront and deter those who seek to perpetrate violence. As one person interviewed for this report remarked, “there is no magician necessary” to ensure elections are largely peaceful. Many others argued for preventive action to be more locally grounded. “The best party...to engage for nonviolence [is] always the local people because they have the most to lose,” argued one interviewee from Rivers State.

This report is informed by semi-structured and group discussions in March and April 2018 with more than two hundred respondents, including election administrators, political party representatives, security officials, civil society and youth groups, the media, traditional and religious leaders, prominent community figures, business people, academics, and members

of militias and cults. Respondents included voters, candidates, and elected officials, and while not statistically representative of all of Nigeria, they were selected to give the views of a broad cross section of society. Interviews took place in the federal capital, Abuja, as well as in Adamawa, Anambra, Ekiti, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, Plateau, and Rivers states. States where research was conducted were selected for geographic distribution and various combinations of twelve other criteria, including political competitiveness; a history (or absence) of electoral violence; significant socioeconomic, religious, and ethnic diversity; militant activity; and population size.

Three of the eight states surveyed had recently held or planned to hold local government elections, and a fourth, Plateau, had planned local elections for 2018 that were postponed at short notice.⁵ Although constitutionally the administration of local government elections is the responsibility of the state independent electoral commissions, rather than the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the conduct of these elections may, in some cases, increase the prospects for election violence in the general elections.⁶ If confidence in Nigeria's democratic character is to be sustained and strengthened more systematically, local elections need to be taken into account in planning for risk mitigation in the national electoral cycle.

Across the states surveyed, as well as across socioeconomic classes and political persuasions, opinions about Nigeria's key electoral actors are strikingly common, reflecting a broader narrative of mistrust and uncertain confidence in state institutions. Of all the state's institutions, most respondents felt that peaceful elections in 2019 are contingent on the performance of Nigeria's INEC. Given the relative success of the 2015 elections, they felt that INEC ought to be able to deliver credible elections again in 2019. They feared, however, that any regression from the level of performance achieved in 2015 could lead to violence because some would view the failings not as a result of incompetence but as deliberate attempts to frustrate the will of the voters.

Yet, while the potential for election violence exists, there are signs of hope. Some states have developed successful election conflict-mitigation practices. In the short amount of time remaining, INEC and the police should undertake a number of key reforms. The United States, along with other international supporters of the electoral process, should also intensify their efforts to reinforce the work of these key Nigerian institutions.

Beyond institutional support, rather than apply a conventional approach to electoral violence mitigation, donor programming should adapt to Nigeria's current context, political shifts, and opportunities, and be sufficiently flexible to respond to the risks distinct in each of Nigeria's states. In advance of the election, international diplomatic efforts to preempt electoral violence need to be intensified. Regional and international actors should convey their expectations that political parties effectively address their internal disputes, and be ready to put on notice politicians responsible for escalating these disputes. During the campaign and polling, regional and continental leaders should be encouraged and supported to assist in the mediation of disputes, and peaceful acceptance of the electoral process.

Opinions about Nigeria's key electoral actors are strikingly common, reflecting a broader narrative of mistrust and uncertain confidence in state institutions.

Changes since the 2015 Elections

Important shifts in Nigeria's political and security context have occurred since the 2015 elections, presenting both evolving, and new, risks to the 2019 elections. USIP's research identified seven significant shifts that cut across the country. Each bear significance in the states in which research was conducted, although the prominence of each shift varies from state to state.

Changing narratives of security and insecurity. Particularly prominent in Nigeria's northern and central, middle-belt states, the prominence of the so-called pastoralist-farmer conflicts has shaped perceptions that large parts of the country are insecure.⁷ Many respondents—including those from areas not directly affected by pastoralist-farmer conflicts, such as the south and southwest—felt that the incumbent APC government is either ineffective or complicit in the violence.

As one respondent noted, “The country is enmeshed in violence to which the state doesn't seem to have an answer.” As a result, some respondents suggest there may be significant mobilization against the APC in 2019, fueled in part by perceptions of insecurity. Because these conflicts raise divisive questions of ethnic and religious identity, with “pastoralists” usually identified as northern Muslims, and “farmers” seen as southern or middle-belt Christians, the 2019 election may see intercommunal tensions arise in response.

At the same time, the government's record in diminishing the Boko Haram insurgency in the country's northeast has altered expectations of insecurity in that region, even as attacks periodically continue. Paradoxically, diminished insurgent violence may lead to more open political competition, and consequently party-based political violence becoming more common than before.

Perceptions that the electorate is disappointed in the national government, with unmet expectations of “change.” The first-ever peaceful transition of power in 2015 raised expectations for government performance. Many Nigerians feel their hopes have not been met. Some respondents suggest the electorate is sufficiently disappointed that voter apathy will be greater in 2019 than in 2015, with the unifying narrative of change that helped elect the APC in 2015 much less compelling as a factor in mobilizing the electorate, and perceptions that another defeat of the presidential incumbent is less likely to happen in 2019.

Disappointment with the APC that leads to lower voter turnout could have implications for a rise in electoral violence in two possible ways: fearing lower turnout in ruling party strongholds, some posited that violence could be used in opposition areas to deter relatively better turnout. Alternatively, some felt that intimidation tactics to shore up the vote could be used to coerce otherwise reluctant voters to participate.

Perceptions that the electorate is now more politically conscious, with higher expectations for the INEC. In 2015, with incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan peacefully conceding defeat and expectations of widespread violence going largely unrealized, INEC was viewed as having organized a successful, credible election. Its achievement then set the bar reasonably high for the 2019 election cycle. Many respondents expressed the idea that INEC should at least match the standards it set in 2015, and any regression could set the stage for violence.

Citing alleged irregularities in the use of the national voter register in recent local government elections in Kano State, some respondents felt that INEC had already damaged its credibility by not adequately addressing the controversy. Further, now that the electorate had seen that change through the ballot box was possible, disappointment in the current government was also seen as a motivation for some citizens to participate more actively in the electoral process and, consequently, to offer a competing explanation for trajectories of voter turnout.

A shift in the nature of political disputes, from interparty tensions to intraparty conflict. Divisions within both the APC and the PDP were largely seen as being more consequential now than the historic interparty disputes that characterized the run-up to the 2015 elections. Particularly in the ruling APC, the inability of the party to consolidate its internal party structure and effectively resolve internal rivalries is expected, in many states, to potentially lead to violence, with party primaries and nomination processes particularly vulnerable to disruption. Nigeria has long been plagued by weak political parties, and intraparty conflict is not new, so this trend may represent a reversion to, or intensification of, pre-2015 norms.

A diminished North-South divide, as expressed through competition for the presidency. The 2015 presidential elections saw a Christian from southern Nigeria face a Muslim from northern Nigeria, exacerbating contests over identity, ethnicity, religion, and regionalism. In 2019, it is expected that the most competitive presidential candidates will hail exclusively from northern Nigeria. Some respondents feel this will reduce the prospects of intercommunal tensions across the country, making it more difficult to appeal to base claims of identity as a determinant of political choice in the presidential election.

The increased use and significance of social media. In most of the surveyed states, respondents commented on the increased use of social media, particularly among younger Nigerians. Social media has democratized access to information in Nigeria. It has played a useful civic education role in combatting major challenges, such as in response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak. But social media has also changed the feedback loop for information available to citizens, bringing news of events in distant states to other parts of the country more quickly than conventional media. Some of this reporting has been misinformed, or was outright false, and therefore risks opening the door to intolerant responses.⁸

The growing prominence of local government elections. As shown in map 1, fifteen states have or are scheduled to conduct local government elections in 2018 or 2019. While Nigeria's constitution gives responsibility for local elections to the state independent electoral commissions, not the INEC, for some respondents there is confusion about the differing roles and obligations of these election management bodies.⁹

Further, although local elections have been historically and widely dismissed as electoral charades, perceptions of irregularity affect, in some cases, the prospects for violence in the national elections.¹⁰ While violence in local government elections does not automatically equate to violence in national elections, the relatively little attention local elections have received from national authorities and international donors means they have not always been considered in planning for mitigating violence in the national elections.

Many respondents argued that local government elections are now more significant and more contentious, for several reasons. First, they are seen as a testing ground for nascent politicians. Second, they may allow a ruling governor to either consolidate power in his state or attempt to forcibly resolve intraparty disputes. Third, since the threshold for winning local government seats is much lower than national, statewide, or state assembly positions, these elections present a meaningful opportunity for minority ethnic groups to more readily access political power. Therefore, new or reinforced grievances arising from recently conducted local elections ought to be assessed, if the genesis of political violence is to be understood and confidence in Nigeria's democratic character sustained and strengthened.

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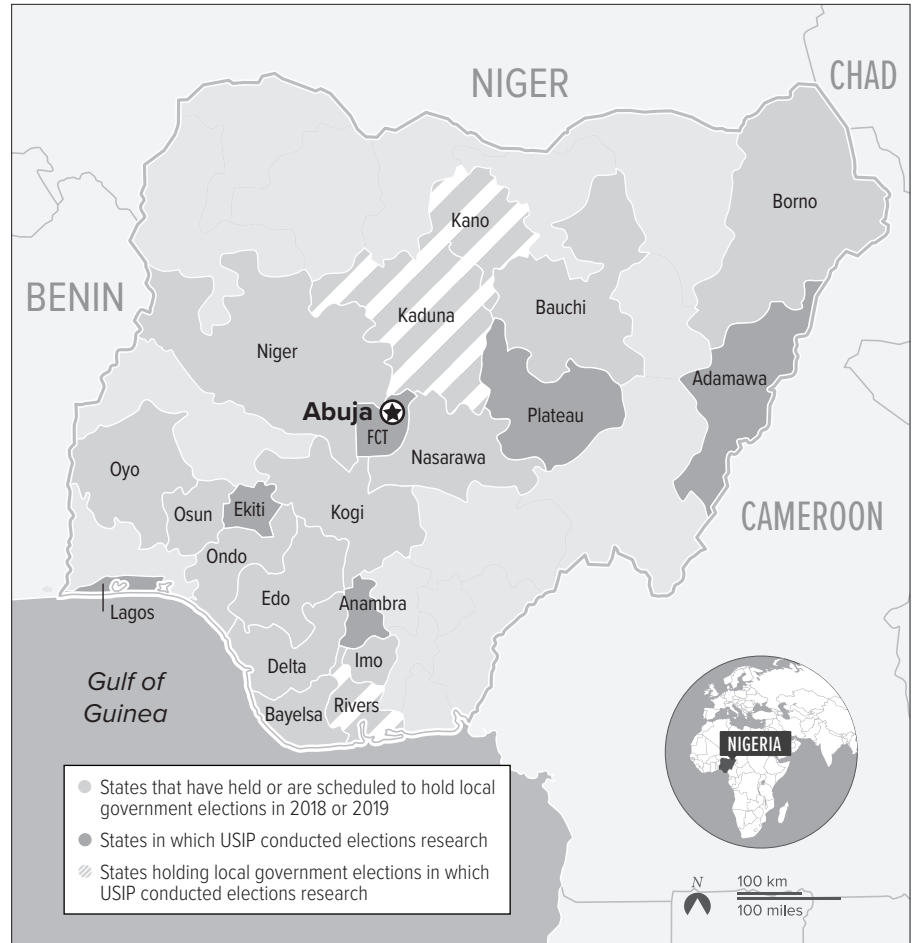
Perceptions of Key Institutions

Across the country, respondents voiced strikingly similar concerns about the key institutions that administer and support Nigeria's electoral process, most notably the INEC and the Nigerian police. The views expressed reflect broader narratives of mistrust and uncertain confidence in state institutions. But they also clearly indicate the areas where these institutions, as well as Nigeria's political parties, need to make progress if voter confidence in the 2019 electoral process is to be improved.

Independent National Electoral Commission

Many respondents felt that the prospect of peaceful elections in 2019 is critically dependent on INEC's performance. After a checkered history of election management, the 2015 INEC

Map 1 Nigeria's Election Landscape



Source: Diego Benitez/USIP. Adapted from artwork by tarras79/iStock.

was widely commended for organizing credible elections that marked a positive change from Nigeria's electoral experience.

As one respondent from Kaduna argued, "INEC has been able to change perceptions of Nigerians about the conduct of credible elections." Said another, from Adamawa, "We have confidence in INEC because they did [well] last time." However, for many respondents, acclaim for past performance only buys today's INEC so much credit, and it is widely felt that INEC needs to technically and institutionally exceed its 2015 achievements in 2019. Respondents' expectations include INEC delivering a credible voter registration exercise; improving the process of verifying the identity of voters at the polls; managing the tabulation and results process in a timely and transparent manner; and, crucially, demonstrating and projecting the commission's independence and neutrality.

Many respondents directly linked INEC's conduct to the risks of electoral violence. As one person explained, "If INEC conducts faulty elections or declares the wrong result, it would spark violence. Most of the cases of electoral violence are linked to people's dissatisfaction with the declaration of the wrong result by INEC."

Other respondents argued that even if INEC was building from a strong foundation, public confidence in the commission was tempered by the inconclusive elections held in some states in subsequent years; concerns over the credibility of certain regional election commissioners and the senior INEC officials in individual states; doubts over the quality of other election

staff, particularly locally recruited ad hoc personnel, who in some cases were inadequately vetted for neutrality and political affiliations; and deficiencies in the voter registration process.¹¹

Respondents throughout the country cited widely circulated pictures from Kano State, purporting to show children voting in the recent local government elections, as evidence that the national voter registry is not credible. Despite a formal investigation, INEC's response to the controversy was widely felt to be lackluster. Its limited public relations response has damaged confidence in the voter registry, and in the credibility of INEC more broadly.

With the registration of new voters ongoing, some regard the process as lacking impartiality, citing concerns over the limited number of voter registration sites and perceptions that in some areas registration staff favor those thought to be supporters of the ruling party, and noting lengthy delays in the collection of voter cards.

The credibility of the register is linked to risks of election violence in several ways. First, concerns were expressed that those citizens who were unable to register, for whatever reason, may forcibly act to prevent registered voters from voting. Second, perceptions of who is a legitimate resident of an area may lead to tensions, even if a voter holds a genuine registration for the local area. Others pointed to deficiencies in INEC's communications and public relations, despite advances in its technology. As one respondent noted, "How many Nigerians are conversant with the card reader [used to confirm whether a voter's card is genuine]? I have not seen INEC explain it to most people. Yes, it mostly worked last time, but how do we know it will be used this time, that the batteries will work?" Said another, "INEC should not introduce any new technology less than six months in advance. There is not enough time to explain it to the people."

What might be an acceptable public relations strategy in some parts of the country might have drawbacks elsewhere. As some respondents in Rivers State noted, INEC's "protect your vote" slogan was problematic in that state because some youth equate the word "protection" with violence.

Respondents also expressed concerns over plans for the management of results, how timely and transparent they would be, and what would happen if the results-management technology failed. If mishandled or opaque, the release of election results could lead to violence. But as a respondent from Anambra explained, transparency could mitigate much of this risk. He explained, "The initial fears we had about INEC colluding with the ruling party to rig the elections was allayed when the results for the governorship election [in 2017] was announced and pasted on the wall for people to see." Interviews with INEC suggested confidence in the systems the commission has developed and intends to implement; but this good technical work may be of limited value if it is not widely known, understood, or trusted by the electorate.

Police and security agencies

Nigeria's many federal security agencies include the police service, the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, the Department of State Services intelligence agency, and the army, navy, and air force. In addition, some states have established their own auxiliary agencies. Of these, the police—through the inspector general of police—is officially the lead agency for election security.

To effect coordination of security agencies during elections, in 2010 the Inter-agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) was established at the federal level, with state-level ICCES bodies in each of the thirty-six states.¹² The ICCES brings together the INEC, the police, and other security agencies, and is the primary forum for election security planning.

However, while the formal structures for responding to conflict exist, in many states there are concerns that security agencies are not doing enough to work together. As one

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respondent from Plateau observed, “Due to insincerity, ego, and interest, each [security] institution protects its own turf. There is unwillingness amongst agencies to recognize the relative strengths of other agencies. This constitutes a real risk to their capacity to coordinate.”

With specific regard to ICCES, some respondents in Abuja reported concerns that the level of representation—from such agencies as the office of the national security advisor—was now less senior than it had been in the past, potentially affecting the committee’s decision-making authority.

At the state level, a variety of practices were observed. In some states, ICCES meetings have already begun detailed election security planning, whereas elsewhere the process is far less advanced, with some state commissioners of police reporting that it is “too early” to plan for the 2019 vote. While INEC’s state offices generally report good cooperation with the police, it seems apparent that there are still gaps, and that in some areas planning will be left to the last minute, potentially compromising the quality of implementation.

More broadly, given their experience of poor performance by the police, in many of the states surveyed, respondents question the neutrality and professionalism of the police. Some question the police’s leadership. For example, the recent controversy over killings in Benue State has raised questions about the competence of the current inspector general, who apparently disregarded President Buhari’s orders to address the violence in the state.¹³ Many respondents perceive the police as a willing tool of the ruling APC and point to a long history of police corruption and co-option, including the use of force in favor of an individual political party or politician for pay.

Given the prominence of security and insecurity in Nigeria, however, there is a risk of oversecuritization of the coming elections, where stability and security become all-important, to the detriment of political freedoms. As much as it is necessary to address the technical and logistical deficiencies of the police, ICCES, and other security actors, it is also important that this not be done at the expense of a holistic agenda of police and security agency reform.¹⁴

Political parties

As the contesting political actors, Nigeria’s many political parties are central to the prospects of future electoral and political violence. As noted earlier, at present there appear to be greater risks of intraparty conflict than the interparty tensions that characterized the 2015 elections. Political party primary and nomination processes may therefore be particularly contested. Violence has, in fact, already occurred during the primary season (for example, in Ekiti State, during primaries held in June 2018).¹⁵

Many respondents are concerned about parties, and particularly the ruling APC, ineffectively resolving internal rivalries and contests, potentially leaving the parties open to fragmentation, defections to other parties, and violence as both candidates and party officials struggle for positions.

There is much uncertainty about how these disputes will be resolved. One respondent from Adamawa State noted that parties were “supposed to have resolved these conflicts much earlier than now.” And while the APC has initiated several reconciliation efforts, both party members and other Nigerians are not optimistic that these processes will succeed. As one respondent from Lagos observed, “There are no major conflict resolution mechanisms amongst political parties. Reconciliatory committees exist in the parties, but they are hardly able to reconcile aggrieved members.”

Others pointed to a limited culture of internal party democracy as being a destabilizing factor, exacerbated by the rematch of old allies and adversaries across the country. For example, the current governor of Kano State, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, and his predecessor as governor, current senator Rabiu Kwankwaso—both members of the APC, and once allies—

have been unable to improve their poor relationship. Both men have gone to great lengths to influence party structures in their favor.

Although INEC has the responsibility to monitor party primaries and may impose sanctions on parties that violate regulations, in practice INEC is sensitive to involvement in internal party processes, which often lack transparency. This means many disputes end up as protracted legal battles. Since the primary responsibility of INEC is to organize the election, its role as a political party regulator may be an undue burden. Although it is too late for 2019, future consideration should be given to creating a separate, empowered body for political party regulation.

The Inter-Party Advisory Council (IPAC), supported by INEC, is the standing mechanism to resolve interparty disputes and to implement the political parties' code of conduct. However, IPAC is widely seen as a collection of smaller, minor parties. Several IPAC state chairpersons noted that the council's ability to resolve disputes was limited because the APC rarely participated. As the biggest, best-funded party, the ruling party has a special responsibility to make interparty mechanisms work; IPAC's effectiveness would increase if the APC was more willing to participate.

States at Risk

In addition to the broad trends and shifts identified earlier in the report, the eight state profiles that follow illustrate the distinct combination of risks faced in different parts of Nigeria across the country's various political zones. While not intended to be exhaustive, these profiles demonstrate the diversity of challenges across the country. They clearly show the limitations of pursuing a single strategy to mitigate electoral violence and argue for adaptation, and innovation, on a state-by-state basis.

Adamawa State: From insurgency to pastoralist-farmer insecurity and party conflict

Adamawa State, in northeast Nigeria, was seriously affected by the Boko Haram insurgency from 2012 onwards. Because the insurgency was ongoing during the 2015 elections, voting for citizens in the state's hardest hit local government areas (LGAs) was held in the state capital, Yola, more than 125 miles (200 kilometers) away.¹⁶ This limited the credibility and inclusiveness of the elections.

While Boko Haram remains particularly active in neighboring Borno State, most respondents felt the security situation in Adamawa to be much improved, although attacks continue to occur in parts of Adamawa.¹⁷ INEC expects to be able to organize elections throughout the state, including in the LGAs excluded in 2015.

The military response to Boko Haram helped unify Adamawans behind the government's authority. But, in 2018, most respondents identified a more pressing narrative of insecurity for the state: pastoralist-farmer clashes. As an INEC representative explained, pastoralist-farmer conflicts "are an old thing, but are [occurring] more at this time."

Adamawa is one of Nigeria's most ethnically and religiously diverse states. Because of this diversity, respondents expressed concern that pastoralist-farmer conflicts could particularly escalate along religious lines, as it is widely perceived that Muslim pastoralists are targeting Christian farming communities. Furthermore, there is a risk that the clashes could be used by politicians for partisan objectives.

As one respondent explained, "These clashes have opened up the fault lines. Given the intensity of the conflict, it is quite likely politicians will use it [for their own gain]." Said another, "People [could] hijack [pastoralist-farmer clashes] as a tool against the

government.” Some respondents were concerned that, as a result, certain areas of the state could again see limited participation in the elections.

Several respondents identified former vice president Atiku Abubakar, who hails from Adamawa, as an important factor in the prospects for electoral violence. In 2017, Atiku, who is rumored to be considering a run for president, left the APC, a party he helped form, for the PDP.¹⁸ Some believe that although Atiku is unlikely to win the presidency, he will be competitive in the presidential vote in his home state (and make Adamawa electorally competitive at the national level). As the state’s wealthiest man, Atiku is expected to dispense his largesse to further his political aims, and some fear that could potentially incentivize violence. Explaining the appeal of Atiku’s money, one observer noted, “We see it as violence, they [thugs] see it as business.”

Even if he does not run for president, Atiku, who is seventy-one years old, is seen as maintaining considerable influence in his former party, the APC. As one respondent suggested, “Atiku is expected to play on both sides. This is the last opportunity he has [because of his age].” Said another respondent, “Atiku still has a way to influence the APC. Now he is trying to get [hold of the] machinery of the PDP.” In this scenario, explained another, “supporters of Atiku may remain in APC and cause chaos to ensure they spoil the [APC’s chances].”

Adamawa also faces intraparty intrigues, particularly within the APC, that some fear could turn violent. The incumbent governor, Bindo Umaru Jibrilla, is expected to face a stiff nomination challenge from the camp of former governor Murtala Nyako, whose personal political ambitions ended with his impeachment in 2014.

Anambra State: Insurgency underground?

Anambra, in southeast Nigeria, is a so-called “off-cycle” state, where gubernatorial elections are held out of sequence with the general elections.¹⁹ Consequently, since 2006, the governor’s term has not corresponded to that of the federal president or legislature. As the only state where three political parties are competitive, Anambra is politically unique in Nigeria: the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), in power since 2007; the PDP, now led by former APGA governor Peter Obi; and the ruling party in the country, the APC.

The off-cycle gubernatorial elections were held in November 2017 and won by APGA. These elections were considered peaceful and well administered by INEC, despite the threat from the secessionist Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) group, which threatened to disrupt the election and demanded citizens boycott the polls.²⁰ Voter turnout was low.

Some feel that the federal government’s heavy military and police deployment intimidated voters and contributed to poor turnout. One respondent stated that the military operation “Python Dance was not the main threat. The partisan nature of the police was our fear. The federal government wanted to use the police to impose the APC in our state as a way of deepening its marginalization of the Igbo and the southeast in general.”

Despite the peaceful conduct of the 2017 elections, uncertainty remains ahead of 2019, notably with respect to IPOB. As another respondent explained, “That IPOB did not disrupt the gubernatorial election does not mean it will not disrupt the 2019 elections. The group is unpredictable.” Many respondents expressed concern that IPOB’s grievances remain unaddressed. They fear that on the bigger stage of the national elections, when IPOB’s agenda would have greater visibility outside the southeast region, the group might violently relaunch itself against the Nigerian state.

Because Anambra is a three-party state, concerns about the APC using federal institutions to unfairly intervene in the state remain acute. An example of this came in November 2017, when the APGA state governor claimed his police detail was temporarily withdrawn.²¹ The governor expressed concern that the withdrawal of his protection was an example of

the politicization of the police. Some respondents argued that the federal government was trying to send a warning to the people of Anambra. The police, for its part, has maintained that the governor's concerns were unfounded, claiming that two officers were called to a meeting, while the bulk of the protective detail remained in place.²²

Anambra has a number of major "godfathers"—prominent, wealthy individuals who shape the politics of the state and are sharply divided along party lines, which creates the conditions for violence. There are concerns that the influence of the state's godfathers is increasing in 2019 as the cost of election campaigns rise, making access to political finance even more important, and raising the stakes. The influence of godfathers is often amplified by their involvement in economic and sociocultural associations, which might otherwise be platforms that could counter those who seek to perpetrate or fuel violence.

But Anambra's greater resilience to electoral violence is perhaps a result of the influence of religious institutions. In particular, archbishops of the Anglican and Catholic churches are extremely influential and can turn the fortunes of candidates. As one respondent observed, "The Church will play a major role in determining the candidate people will vote for in 2019." Perhaps more so than in other states, the political role of the churches in Anambra has the capacity to weaken forces—such as the godfathers—that threaten the conduct of peaceful elections in 2019.

Ekiti State: Off-cycle elections setting the stage for future grievances

Like Anambra, Ekiti, in the country's southwest, is an off-cycle state. This resulted from a court decision to invalidate the results of the 2007 gubernatorial election—in part, due to violence—and order a new vote. Consequently, the governor's term no longer corresponds to that of the federal president or legislature, and gubernatorial elections were held in July 2018. Past gubernatorial elections have been contentious, and no incumbent governor has ever won reelection. In 2018, the PDP incumbent governor was ineligible to stand again, leaving the race wide open. For some, Ekiti is a bellwether for 2019. As one respondent explained, "If Ekiti is free and fair and APC wins, it will be a signal Buhari will have the upper hand in 2019. If PDP wins, nobody is sure of 2019." While the APC did ultimately win the vote, it was by a narrow margin.

No governor has come from the state's southern senatorial district since Ekiti was created in 1996. Many respondents argued that the gubernatorial elections might be susceptible to violence if the principle of "zoning"—the informal arrangement where political positions rotate between different parts of the state—was not respected in 2018. Traditional leaders in the state went as far as to warn they would mobilize their communities against the political class were candidates from outside the south chosen.²³

While the PDP ultimately chose a candidate from the southern part of the state, the APC did not, and in both parties intraparty conflicts were prominent. The APC had thirty-three contestants for governor, including three who held important federal or national party positions, and during the party primaries, there was some violence.²⁴ How the parties will resolve the rivalries in the aftermath of the gubernatorial elections may determine whether the national elections will be a forum for old scores to be settled. As one respondent predicted, "After the primaries, losers will align."

In common with other off-cycle states, there are concerns about the potential outside role of federal security agencies during the gubernatorial elections. The 2014 gubernatorial election witnessed the heavy deployment of soldiers and police throughout Ekiti, and there is the perception that an overmilitarization of the elections could favor the APC to the detriment of the PDP. Comparably sized deployments of federal forces occurred in 2018. Given the election's outcome was a win for the APC, this perception has only been bolstered.

Anambra has a number of major "godfathers"—prominent, wealthy individuals who shape the politics of the state and are sharply divided along party lines.

Kaduna State: Diminished political convergence, eroded sources of resilience

Kaduna, in northern Nigeria, is a state with a stark history of religious and ethnic divisions. It was badly hit by electoral violence in 2011, and the long shadow cast by this history remains relevant today.²⁵ To some respondents, the cost of violence in 2011 was so high that it is likely to deter future violence. For others, having happened before, future electoral violence is always a possibility. Still others noted that, in 2014, people were worried about violence that did not come to pass during the 2015 elections, therefore expectations in 2018 about violence in the 2019 elections might be similarly unfounded.

However, the historic political convergence across ethnic and religious divides that brought the APC to power in 2015 has fractured, in part because of the governing style of the incumbent governor, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai. El-Rufai has fired teachers, “stripped some traditional leaders of [their] duties,” and, according to some respondents, diminished the role of religious leaders. While some respondents conceded that some of El Rufai’s policies were desirable reforms, they argued that the approach taken in implementation was not well communicated, not consultative, nor “compassionate,” and grievances had been unnecessarily caused. As one respondent put it, “So many toes have been stepped on [by the governor]...teachers, civil servants...”

As a result, El-Rufai is regarded as a divisive figure. His approach has contributed to intra-party conflicts within the APC, which in Kaduna has three factions. In response to these disputes, El-Rufai has been combative. The offices of one faction were demolished on the orders of the governor, and the dispute, according to some within the party, is “irreconcilable.”²⁶

At the time of the research for this report, preparations for the May 12, 2018, local government elections were underway in Kaduna. Some violence was reported during these elections, which were the first in Nigeria to use electronic voting machines.²⁷ For some respondents, electronic voting machines are another example of El-Rufai modernizing Kaduna; others were skeptical of the new technology. Ultimately, the APC won only twelve out of twenty-two LGAs.²⁸ Notwithstanding the cancellation of elections in the Jaba and Kaura LGAs due to reports of violence, the overall balanced outcome of these elections—far from the sweep many Nigerians associate with local government elections—is an indication the vote was, unusually for local elections, credible. Both the introduction of new technology and El-Rufai’s willingness to allow political competition may have contributed to this positive development.²⁹

Respondents were divided on the significance of Kaduna’s local elections for the general elections in 2019. Some argued that the vote was not consequential, and therefore there would be no violence in the general elections. Others argued that the local elections were important, and while there might be violence, it would have a limited effect on the general elections. A third group argued that any violence during local government elections would have negative implications for the general elections. Some respondents noted that political “thuggery” had started earlier, relative to the 2015 elections, and speculated that the local elections might have contributed to this development.

Kano State: Old allies, current rivals, and the shadow of the local elections

Kano, northern Nigeria’s most populous state, is second only to Lagos State in population, but exceeds Lagos in the number of registered voters. A center of northern politics for decades, Kano is considered to influence the electoral prospects in other northern states, making the state even more highly prized.

All of the respondents in Kano identified two men—once allies, but now adversaries—as being key to the prospects of electoral violence in the state. Rabiun Kwankwaso, when governor of the state, defected from the PDP to the APC, providing a major boon to the nascent

Kano's Voluntary Media Self-Regulation

During the February 2018 local government elections in Kano, the state's competitive private and public radio stations decided, on their own initiative, and for the first time, to pool their resources and to work together to broaden their overall geographic coverage.

This informal reporting consortium plan was initially motivated by commercial reasons. With only a handful of vehicles, a single station might struggle to send reporters to more than a few locations. By working with other stations, transport could be shared, expanding the media's overall reach, increasing the comprehensiveness of coverage, and attracting greater advertising revenue. Cooperation was eased by the use of Hausa as the state's lingua franca.

Media managers reported an unintended effect of this informal reporting consortium: the quality and accuracy of coverage had improved. In previous elections, a single journalist from one station might have been alone at a campaign event, with editors unable to independently verify the accuracy of the filed story. Now, aware that peers were present at the same event, editors described their journalists as feeling a greater responsibility to ensure their reporting of events would stand up to scrutiny and that journalistic ethics were better respected. According to station managers, the incidence of any potentially intolerant or inflammatory reporting was reduced. Because of its perceived success during the 2018 local elections, at least some of Kano's stations plan to replicate the model in 2019.

party. His successor as governor, Kwankwaso's former deputy, APC incumbent Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, is standing for a second term as governor.

The two men have fallen out, and internal party mechanisms to resolve the conflict have so far failed to bridge the divide. Relations have deteriorated so badly that Kwankwaso, now a sitting senator, has been unable to hold public events in the state. (A visit in January was called off after the police advised Kwankwaso not to visit Kano.³⁰) As one respondent surmised, "Ganduje believes that since he is the governor, he should be allowed to run the state without interference, while Kwankwaso believes that he was the one who made Ganduje the governor." Another explained, "Kwankwaso and his supporters are thinking of moving to another party. If they do this, it will change the dynamics of the contest in Kano, from intraparty to interparty. And it will make the division clearer and sharper, and the chances of violence will become higher."

There is widespread pessimism about the prospects for reconciliation, and many respondents argued that electoral violence in 2019 is likely to arise in the governorship race. As one respondent bemoaned, "The only way out of conflict in political parties is internal democracy, and we don't uphold that." Added another, "There were many attempts by reputable people in Kano to reconcile Kwankwaso and Ganduje. They failed." Said yet another interviewee, "The problem isn't a lack of prescriptions, it's the implementation of them."

As in other states, young people are often seen as both the perpetrators and victims of electoral violence, but politicians are viewed as orchestrating the violence. Several respondents pointed out that impunity was the root cause of the promotion of violence: "We know," said one, "that there would be no consequence [for politicians who promote violence]."

In the course of this research, controversies in Kano's local government elections in February 2018 were frequently mentioned by respondents in other states. Pictures, commonly circulated by mass and social media, showed apparently underage persons casting votes. As a result, many respondents—and many Nigerians—have questioned the integrity of the INEC voter registry, which serves as the official roll for the elections. In response to the controversy, the INEC chairman ordered an investigation to determine whether these allegations could be substantiated.³¹ The investigation found that the register was not used in most polling places, allowing INEC to conclude "that if underaged voting occurred in the election, it was not due to any presence of underaged registrants on the register of voters."³²

When announcing the outcome of the investigation, the INEC chairman reiterated he was "convinced that we now have a dependable register." However, respondents were far more skeptical, seeing the voting irregularities as evidence of a continued pattern of weak

Young people are often seen as both the perpetrators and victims of electoral violence, but politicians are viewed as orchestrating the violence.

electoral safeguards. Some respondents saw Kano's local elections as foreshadowing what could happen in the 2019 polls. Respondents' perceptions have not been helped by INEC and Kano's State Independent Electoral Commission each implying the other was at fault. Even more worryingly, INEC's efforts to publicly defend the integrity of the registry do not appear to have gotten through to many citizens. Outside of Kano, many remain unconvinced that the voter registry is as clean as INEC claims.

Lagos State: Nigeria's apathetic electoral heavyweight

The coastal state of Lagos is dominated by the eponymously named city, Nigeria's most populous and a center of economic power and influence. Historically, Lagos has been ruled by a party in opposition to the president, but since 2015 the state has been aligned with the ruling APC. In 2013, Bola Ahmed Tinubu's Action Congress merged with Muhammadu Buhari's Congress for Progressive Change to form the APC, eventually helping Buhari win the presidency. Tinubu, who had also served as governor for eight years, remains dominant in Lagosian politics.

Yet despite Tinubu's influence and the APC's current dominance in the state, intraparty rivalries are challenging the APC's ability to manage party disputes. Much of the ability to resolve crises and to manage aggrieved party members is attributed to Tinubu. As one respondent put it, "Most intraparty disputes are resolved in Tinubu's parlor."

Several factions have emerged within the Lagos APC. Faoud Oki, a strong supporter of Tinubu, was suspended by the party for forming a faction, known as the Broom United Movement. As a result, Broom United supporters may not support incumbent governor Akinwunmi Ambode, even if he is endorsed by Tinubu. Respondents were mixed in their views as to whether this intraparty jockeying could turn violent. As one respondent explained, the "post-[party] primaries season will indicate if violence is brewing."

Local government elections in 2017 also aggrieved political aspirants within the APC. Several were killed and injured in related violence.³³ The law regulating the 2017 elections was hurriedly changed the same week as polling day.³⁴ There were several allegations of candidates for councilor—the lowest elected local council position—being imposed on areas by the party hierarchy, overriding the democratically selected candidate.³⁵ There were also accusations of results being falsified.³⁶

Because Nigerians from all over the country have made their home in Lagos, political tensions also manifest along questions of places of origin. Some respondents referenced the infamous 2015 statement attributed to a senior traditional leader, the Oba (ruler) of Lagos, in which he called on the Igbo community to support the APC candidate or die in the Lagos lagoon. In 2015, non-indigenes of the state won more political positions than ever before, leading some respondents to question whether indigenes would view non-indigenes as an even greater political threat in 2019.

However, as one respondent observed, just "because there was no violence in 2015 doesn't mean there wasn't provocation. Most people did not react to the Oba's statement because their means of livelihood would have been in jeopardy." Residing in the economic center of Nigeria, many Lagosians are more interested in making money than politics. As one respondent noted, "More Lagosians voted for Big Brother [a popular television show] than in the last elections. The desire to protect economic interests is a disincentive for violence."

Some respondents argued that voter apathy contributed to a lower risk of electoral violence. Others felt there was a relationship between apathy and the use of social media. Said one respondent, "Violence is diminishing because the people now direct their combustible energies into the social media space to ventilate their grievances." Said another, "So many young people will not vote because they are only politicians on social media."

"Violence is diminishing because the people now direct their combustible energies into the social media space to ventilate their grievances."

Plateau State: Postponed local elections damage trust in state institutions

Though the middle-belt state of Plateau has a long history of violent intercommunal conflict, great ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, and susceptibility to violence in neighboring states spilling over, the state has not usually witnessed conflict linked to the conduct of INEC-managed national elections. Although concerns persist in Plateau (as elsewhere in the country) that its poor economy and pervasive communal conflicts remain insufficiently addressed, local government elections have historically presented greater risks for violence. The delay of planned local elections in 2018 hurt public confidence in the state authorities, particularly the Plateau State Independent Electoral Commission (PLASIEC).

Plateau State has witnessed election-related violence on three occasions, all centered on the Jos North LGA. In 2002, violence occurred in Eto Baba during the PDP's ward congress for Jos North; in 2008, violence erupted in Jos North after local government elections; and, as in other northern areas of the country, Plateau suffered postelection violence in 2011 after Goodluck Jonathan was declared winner of the presidential elections.³⁷

Local government elections were scheduled to take place in Plateau in February 2018. Acting on the advice of the state government, PLASIEC indefinitely postponed the elections at the last minute for unspecified reasons of security.³⁸ Such action was seen as a pretext for the state government to avoid putting in place local democratic structures.

Attacks attributed to pastoralists in the Bassa and Bokkos LGAs have aggravated tensions along ethnic and religious lines. Respondents outside the government perceive that neither the federal nor state governments are taking steps to address these security challenges. In 2015, citizens displaced from the Barkin Ladi and Riyom LGAs who attempted to return to their places of registration to vote were forcibly prevented from doing so by those now occupying those areas. There are fears that this may recur in 2019.

In the run-up to the 2015 elections, some members of the PDP defected to the APC, or supported the APC candidate in preference to the PDP's nominee. This contributed to the APC's victory in the state. However, since 2016, many defectors returned to the fold of the PDP, unhappy at the lack of opportunity to serve in the APC government. As a consequence of this realignment, interparty competition between the APC and PDP is expected to be more intense than in 2015, even if the PDP is a much weaker party now. As one respondent exclaimed, "In Nigeria, politics is not viability, it is sentiment."

Since the government claimed it had restored peace to the state, many were surprised that the same government invoked security as a pretext for not allowing the local government elections to proceed in early 2018. When President Buhari visited Plateau in June 2018, he was informed that the state was largely peaceful because of the state government's efforts. This raised questions as to why it was safe enough for the president to come but not safe enough for elections to be held. This politicization of security might further strain citizen-state relations, since the same agencies manage security for both local and national elections; citizens, aware of the contradictions, have had their confidence in the security agencies, and in PLASIEC, compromised.

There are concerns the electoral process in Plateau may be affected by an influx of people from neighboring states, particularly Bauchi. Several respondents reported that young men from Tilden Fulani, in Bauchi State, had come to register in the Jos North LGA to vote in the local government elections, as well as in the forthcoming elections in 2019. With the presumption that votes will be cast along religious lines, some Christians believe the influx is intended to reinforce the demographics in favor of Muslims. Because the registration of individual voters is mostly unobserved, the main manifestation of registration-motivated violence may not occur until polling begins, when those who consider themselves indigenes of the state may object to the participation of those waiting to vote whom they consider outsiders.

Plateau's Informal Sources of Resilience

In addition to efforts by state institutions, the role of religious leaders in educating and sensitizing their followers on the electoral process in Plateau State has strengthened since the 2015 elections. These informal structures for conflict management and peacebuilding are popularly supported and legitimate as a result of their record of successfully mediating past intercommunal conflicts.

The state chairmen of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and Jama'atul Nasril Islam, together with archbishops of the Anglican and Catholic churches, have quickly responded to the use of offensive rhetoric and hate speech and have prevented the escalation of disputes.

In the run-up to the 2019 elections, the Irshad unit of Jama'atul Nasril Islam—which was created to review the drafts of sermons before they are preached in the mosque during Friday prayers—plans to monitor the activities of political parties and politicians in order to assess whether they are creating the conditions for violence. The Council of Ulama, which consists of Plateau's senior Muslim leaders, can sanction persons who resort to intolerant speech, including the clergy.

Similarly, CAN monitors intolerant speech by the clergy. As an interdenominational entity, CAN is mandated to report clergy engaging in hate speech or incitement to the respective church leaders. The head of the church concerned may then sanction offenders from that denomination.

As the party leader in the state, the governor influences delegate selection for the party primaries. Members of the National Assembly risk deselection if the governor supports alternative nominees through the delegate selection process. There is a risk of conflict as current members of the National Assembly, concerned at their fate, act to attempt to secure their renomination or to express grievance at their failure to be reelected.

Rivers State: Rematching old rivals, while militarizing the state

Rivers State, in the country's far south, is best known for its oil wealth. Previous election cycles in Rivers have been closely contested and marred by violence, especially during gubernatorial and local elections. In 2015, Rivers saw the most election violence fatalities of any state, largely due to increasing competition between the ruling PDP and the APC, which ruled the state previously.

The state is affected by the zero-sum relationship of the APC and PDP nationally, and the personal rivalry between Ezenwo Nyesom Wike of the PDP, who defeated then governor Rotimi Amaechi of the APC in 2015. Amaechi had left the PDP in 2013 while governor. Now the federal transport minister and chair of President Buhari's reelection campaign, Amaechi is strongly motivated to win back the governorship and to demonstrate to the federal APC that he can carry the state. Divisions were exacerbated during the gubernatorial race in 2015. The personal rivalry has continued with combative media rhetoric and a violent altercation in November 2017, when Amaechi visited Rivers State. As one respondent described, Rivers "is just a rematch of the federal level on a smaller scale but will likely be much more violent than anything that happens in Abuja."

There are also perceptions that the current "zoning" and nomination system is biased toward candidates from larger communities or ethnic groups, marginalizing rural communities. In the Ogoniland territory, for instance, some are aggrieved that there has not been a governor from that part of the state in recent memory and feel the area's political splits could be exacerbated along ethnic lines during this election.

Riverine and rural communities are particularly vulnerable to violence due to porous borders and a limited policing presence. Most security agencies do not have the resources to patrol the water, and those that do are sometimes paid by politicians to "look the other way," as one respondent described. As these communities are difficult to reach, there are concerns that they will not be sufficiently informed or sensitized ahead of elections.

During the 2015 elections, politicians coopted security forces and hired cult groups to create chaos and propagate violence in Rivers. The main triggers of violence included vote

buying by politicians and parties, vote rigging, ballot box snatching, and blocking roads to prevent people from accessing polling stations. Politicians also orchestrated the destruction of property, and the harassment, kidnapping, and assassination of citizens.

In March 2018, Wike created a new Neighborhood Watch, which some respondents worried would allow the ruling party to arm people ahead of the elections in an official state militia to potentially counter the federal security agencies. However, given the limited trust in the existing security forces, many trust the Neighborhood Watch groups as they are made up of local residents, including marginalized youth. To date, the Neighborhood Watch is not fully active, but as the federal security presence is expected to increase in Rivers ahead of elections, some are concerned that the use of excessive force by government personnel could lead to retaliation and counterattacks from communities, and from the new force.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Many Nigerians are inured to electoral violence. In that respect, the 2019 election may be no different, especially because, regrettably, electoral violence has already occurred. Nigeria's 2015 elections were widely heralded as a success, in part because violence was relatively contained. But the approach to confronting electoral violence in Nigeria has changed little in recent years, despite significant shifts in the political and security context. And where there is continuity in the risks, not enough has been done to mitigate these challenges. A successful approach to mitigating election violence will require a more effective response by existing institutions, particularly INEC, the police, and the security agencies, and greater innovation in reply to these contextual shifts.

Because for many respondents the steps needed to mitigate election violence were obvious and apparent, any failure to take the necessary action was regarded as willful, and largely the fault of political parties and politicians. Both parties and politicians need to do more to demonstrate the necessary political will and leadership to mitigate violence.

Though the risks of violence are high, the picture varies considerably across the country. Examples of innovation in violence mitigation that have proven successful demonstrate there is nothing inevitable about electoral violence. Both Nigerian actors and their international partners should consider what can be done in the context of each state in order to address the prevailing risks. The examples of violence mitigation from Plateau and Kano—efforts that have emerged from and are grounded in local context—should also be supported, encouraged, and considered for adaptation by other states. These local approaches should be pursued in addition to the broader steps that the federal and state governments, the police, INEC, and the political parties can take to improve efforts to mitigate the risks of electoral violence.

More broadly, for electoral democracy in Nigeria to be strengthened, more than independent, trusted, and competent institutions will be required. Local democracy—as experienced through local government elections—also requires attention. While such elections will always have their own limitations, better-administered and more democratic processes could allow for greater political inclusion to be achieved, and local political grievances to be better addressed. Confidence in electoral democracy is not a one-off achievement; it requires sustaining and strengthening the quality of elections, at all levels.

In addition to supporting Nigeria's institutions, there is a clear need for intensified international diplomacy to preempt and mitigate electoral violence and related political disputes. Regional organizations, including the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union, as well as the United States and other international supporters of the electoral process, should coordinate their approach to mitigation sufficiently in advance of the elections. In the near term, such efforts should convey expectations for political parties to effectively address their internal divisions. International supporters should also advocate for

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intensified election security planning and prioritize a holistic agenda of police and security agency reform, in which election security is one dimension. Regional and continental leaders should be encouraged, supported, and ready to mediate disputes and to work toward peaceful acceptance of the electoral process, both during the campaign, polling, and results announcement phases of the process.

While there is limited time before the 2019 polls, there are still a number of important actions key Nigerian institutions—the federal government and National Assembly, INEC, police and security agencies, and political parties—can take to improve the electoral environment:

Federal government and the National Assembly

- To improve the standard of election administration nationwide and reduce duplication, the federal government should consider reintroducing the constitutional amendment to abolish state independent electoral commissions and to vest responsibility for all election management in the INEC.³⁹
- To deter impunity for violations of electoral regulations, the National Assembly should pass the pending bill to create a specialized electoral offenses commission with the authority to investigate, enforce, and prosecute electoral offenses.⁴⁰

Independent National Electoral Commission

- To more readily address rumors, misinformation, and electoral integrity concerns, INEC should implement a more assertive, dynamic, and far-reaching public relations strategy to communicate with voters, the media, and political parties before, during, and after elections, including a transparent approach to the release of election results. Such a strategy must go beyond generic voter information and civic education and be designed and differentiated for the realities of different regions. Further, there is a need to make internal communications within the large and diffuse INEC bureaucracy more efficient.
- To improve confidence in the administration of the election, INEC should recruit ad hoc staff earlier to allow sufficient time for training. Locally recruited staff should be more intensely vetted to ensure they are not politically affiliated, and a list of staff who have performed poorly in past elections should be maintained to ensure such individuals are not recruited again.

Police and security agencies

- To improve election security preparations across the country, the police, as the lead security agency, should be more assertive in coordinating with INEC. The police should ensure greater consistency in preparation throughout state police commands.
- To improve coordination among security agencies, both the police and other security agencies should more effectively use state-level mechanisms to address security concerns. Election security planning needs to start earlier in the electoral cycle and clearly consider and define the roles of other security agencies. Improving the transparency of ICCES, particularly at the state level, would also allow civil society organizations to play a more effective complementary role in mitigating election violence.

Political parties

- To ensure internal party disputes are better mitigated, all parties should work to strengthen systems of internal party democracy, educate their supporters on these systems, and publicly denounce members who engage in hate speech or acts of violence.

- As the incumbent party, a special responsibility falls on the APC to resolve interparty disputes. The effectiveness of the Inter-Party Advisory Council as a forum to resolve disputes would be improved if the APC more fully participated in all state-level IPAC settings.

Notes

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