The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 and subsequently registered in Lagos – Nigeria in 1999 as an independent, not-for-profit, research, training, advocacy and capacity building organisation. The Centre was established to mobilise global opinion and resources for democratic development and provide an independent space to reflect critically on the challenges posed to the democratization and development processes in West Africa, and also to provide alternatives and best practices to the sustenance of democracy and development in the region. CDD envisions a West Africa that is democratically governed, economically integrated – promoting human security and people-centered development. The mission of the centre is to be the prime catalyst and facilitator for strategic analysis and capacity building for sustainable democracy and development in the West African sub-region.

Voting Amidst Insecurity: Nigeria’s 2019 Elections

Idayat Hassan, Director, Centre for Democracy and Development

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The 2019 general elections will be the sixth consecutive electoral cycle since Nigeria’s return to democracy in 1999. The 2019 elections, scheduled for 16 February and 2 March 2019 - comprising the Presidential and National Assembly elections and the Governorship and State House of Assembly elections respectively - by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) will see a number of firsts. It is the first general election to be conducted with Professor Mahmood Yakubu at the helm of INEC, the first general election that the former opposition, now ruling All Progressive Congress (APC), will oversee and a first chance for people born since the country’s return to democracy to cast a ballot.

With at least 91 political parties - the largest number in Nigeria’s electoral history - expected to be on the ballot and a total number of 84,271,832 citizens on the voter’s roll, the forthcoming 2019 elections is set to be one of the most contested elections in the history of Nigeria. With four months to go, the political scene remains tense with unofficial campaigns already underway. Just like in 2015, there are ongoing attempts by political parties and actors to form alliances and coalitions to win offices. The People’s Democratic Party (PDP) and 38 other parties have formed the Coalition of United Political Parties (CUPP), the ruling All Progressive Congress, itself a coalition, is also working with other parties. Defections of serving elected officials and their supporters from APC to PDP and vice versa continues to happen with alarming regularity and at very senior levels as candidates pass judgment on who gives them a better chance of re-election. On 31 July 2018 the Senate President, Bukola Saraki, defected from the ruling APC to the PDP having supported a number of other sitting senators to do likewise. Newcomer political parties have also benefited from this merry-go-round of defections. One of the prominent defectors from the APC, former vice-President Atiku Abubakar, clinched the PDP presidential ticket and will contest against incumbent President Buhari in the 2019 elections.

INEC, the body charged with the conduct of the 2019 general elections, is preparing assiduously. However the late approval of the election budget may pose potential challenges to the forthcoming elections. One clear challenge is the insecurity pervading different parts of the country. Insecurity is an issue upon which the 2019 elections will be won and lost for candidates but will also be a significant obstacle to be overcome by those running and participating in the polls. This brief will take a look at the insecurity situation in Nigeria and the implications it may have on the elections, before concluding with some recommendations.
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Facts about 2019 elections

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91 Political Parties

This is the largest number in Nigeria’s electoral history

84,004,084 citizens on voters roll

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Security Threats to 2019 Elections in Nigeria

- Herders - Farmers Conflict
- Armed Bandits
- Biafra Separatists
- Political Thugs
- Cultists
- Boko Haram
- Delta Militants
- Informal Security Groups
- Security Forces
Conflicts between farmers and herdsmen in Nigeria have consisted of disputes over natural resources, mainly land and water. They are often presented not altogether accurately in the media as conflicts between farmers and nomadic herdsmen and by extension, between Christians and Muslims. The ongoing conflicts have had a massive human and economic cost for Nigeria. Violent incidents are now taking place across the six geo-political zones but with heavier frequencies of incidents recorded in the North Central States of Benue, Taraba, Plateau, Adamawa, Zamfara and Kaduna. The conflict is tearing apart the social fabric of the country and further dividing the country along ethnic, religious and geopolitical lines.

Between January and July 2018, 183 incidents that are linked to herdsmen/rural banditry have been recorded in Nigeria according to CDD figures. Across the country April was the deadliest month with 54 attacks resulting in 409 deaths.

Between January and July 2018, 183 incidents that are linked to herdsmen/rural banditry have been recorded in Nigeria according to CDD figures. In January 2018, a total of 17 attacks were recorded in Benue State alone, with 108 deaths. Across the country April was the deadliest month with 54 attacks resulting in 409 deaths. Since the escalation of violence in January 2018, an estimated 300,000 people have fled their homes particularly in Adamawa, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states. An Afrobarometer survey¹ found that seven in 10 Nigerians are “very concerned” (48%) or “somewhat concerned” (23%) about the farmers/herders conflicts.

¹ Ojewale O & Nyamekye J. A (2018) Nigerians worried about violent clashes, praise government efforts to address armed extremism, dispatch No. 199, Afrobarometer, accessed 14/07/18
Herdsmen-Farmer Conflicts

Between January - July 2018

183 INCIDENTS

Linked to herdsmen/rural banditry have been recorded in Nigeria

January 2018

17 ATTACKS

108 DEATHS

Benue State

April 2018

54 ATTACKS

409 DEATHS

Across Nigeria

Since January 2018

An estimated 300,000 have fled their homes

Adamawa, Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau and Taraba states

Source: Afrobarometer survey

48% of Nigerians are very concerned about the farmers/herders conflict

23% of Nigerians are somewhat concerned about the farmers/herders conflict
This conflict is likely to impact on the 2019 election. For instance the incumbent governor of Benue state, one of the most affected states, has already defected from the APC to the PDP. Before his defection, a coalition of 40 Benue youth groups blocked the governor’s house and insisted he should not undertake his travel to Abuja to dialogue with the APC. Bearing placards with inscriptions such as “we don’t have land to donate for ranching”, “APC is Miyetti\textsuperscript{2} Party”, “Our farms are not for cow” and “2019: on Ortom we stand”\textsuperscript{3}. This defection coupled with the perceptions of the people that APC is a Fulani party, in part because President Buhari is himself Fulani, further heightens political tension ahead of the elections. North Central, which is heavily affected by this conflict, is a swing region in the country. The 2015 general elections was the first time since 2003 that the PDP trailed in the presidential ballot, with Buhari winning 58% of the votes cast\textsuperscript{4}. In an attempt to win votes, the risks of the conflict escalating and being exploited arise. Furthermore, the perceived complicity of the security agencies and government in the conflict is fast eroding trust between communities, government and the security agencies.

In many of the affected states, the security agencies are perceived to be supporting the herders. Former Minister of Defence, Lt. General Theophilus Danjuma (rtd.) accused the military of complicity of ongoing killings in the country and called on people to defend themselves and their country\textsuperscript{5}. Another complaint is the slow response of the security agencies when there are attacks on the communities. This has led to the formation of self-help vigilante groups or ethnic militias. While communities create some of these groups as a response mechanism to stem insecurity, in some instances states are also creating or backing these groups. State governors have consistently argued that the lack of operational control over the police in their states leads to slow response during violent conflicts.

In Ekiti, Kogi and Benue they have created or supported vigilante groups. These groups openly bear arms. In fact in Kogi state the law creating the Kogi state vigilante outfits allows them to legally do so. The implications for the elections are clear. There is the strong possibility of these militias being used to perpetrate violence in the polls.

\textsuperscript{2} Okello A. I. et al (2014) Identifying motivators for state pastoralist dialogue: Exploring the relationships between livestock services, self organization and conflict in Nigeria’s pastoralist Fulani, Volume 4, issue 2, Research policy and practice


\textsuperscript{4} Author n/a (2017) No Referendum, No Election: Biafra Agitation and Boycott of the 2017 Anambra State Governorship Election, Centre for Democracy and Development publication

Attacks and Deaths from Herdsmen-Farmer clashes in Nigeria (January-July 2018)

Attacks and Deaths from Herdsmen-Farmer clashes in Nigeria (2008 - 2018)
There are no legal provisions in the 2010 Electoral Act as amended or the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria to cater for internally displaced persons (IDP) voters. This presents a challenge on the part of INEC in catering for IDPs living in camps and host communities, which are scattered across the country. In the 2015 elections INEC utilized its power to create additional polling units to allow IDP vote in the three states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Compared to 2015, the numbers of IDPs from the several active conflicts in various parts of the country has increased. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Nigeria had 1.7 million IDPs at the end of 2017. The leading causes of internal displacement are intercommunal violence, natural and man-made disasters and the Boko Haram insurgency, which has contributed more than 50% to the numbers of IDPs in the country. They face practical and administrative challenges to register to vote and cast a ballot. Specific voter education targeting IDPs is required. Nigerian electoral law stipulates people vote where they register. While those who have been displaced or have relocated due to conflict do have the opportunity to transfer their voters' card from where they are registered, or with the unregistered ones, register afresh, time constraints and a lack of specific voter awareness may have a negative impact. Furthermore INEC adhered to its announced cutoff date of 31 August 2018 for ending the continuous voters registration exercise. Meaning that anybody who tries to register or transfers his or her voters registration or relocates after that date will not be able to participate in the forthcoming elections.

The increased cost of running the elections and the access to, and safety of election materials, are big challenges. However, the right of IDPs to participate in elections must be affirmed as it can be an avenue to foster reconciliation and address existing divisions and perceived marginalisation pervading the polity. Disenfranchisement will further exacerbate already rising tensions in North Central and the North West geopolitical zones.
In Zamfara and Kaduna states, armed bandits are involved in killing, raping, robbery and displacement of communities. The bandits operate from the Rugu and Falgore forests that traverse the states of Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara. Since the beginning of 2018 at least 371 people have been killed in Zamfara state alone, with a further 18,000 displaced, according to Amnesty International report released on 31 July 2018. According to the Zamfara state government, 3,000 lives have been lost to banditry, 500 persons kidnapped, 2,000 homes destroyed and 500 cars burnt since 2011.

The government have responded with a massive military deployment in the states, but this has not helped in stemming the conflict. There is a growing distrust of security agencies, government and judiciary. The immediate implication of the security challenge for the 2019 elections is the accessibility of election officials and the safety of its materials to several parts of the states as well as the considerable number of IDPs scattered within and out of the states. IDPs poses a legitimacy risk to the polls primarily because voting is attached to the place of registration. With low enlightenment and trust in government and the time consuming process of registering for voter cards, many will not be encouraged to seek voters card. Therefore it is important that INEC not only provides mechanisms to allow IDPs to vote, but specifically targets civic education initiatives to reach these persons.

“The government have responded with a massive military deployment in the states, but this has not helped in stemming the conflict. There is a growing distrust of security agencies, government and judiciary.”

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6 Zamfara SSG: we lost 3,000 to banditry The Nation August 20, 2018 accessed on http://thenationonlineng.net/zamfara-ssg-we-lost-3000-to-banditry/
Armed banditry

The bandits operate from the Rugu and Falgore forests that traverse the states of Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara

Since January 2018 in Zamfara State

at least **371** people have been killed

18,000 people have been displaced

Amnesty International report released on 31 July 2018

Since 2011 in Zamfara State

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Biafra Separatists

“IPOB have threatened that unless the federal government calls a referendum for the determination of the state of Biafra, there shall be no elections in the southeast in 2019.”
The renewed agitation for a separate state of Biafra has intensified since the inauguration of President Muhammadu Buhari as the head of state in May 2015. The agitation is being championed by several groups including the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Independence Movement (BIM), Biafra Zionist Federation (BZF) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). The loudest agitations have been from IPOB led by Nnamdi Kanu, whose whereabouts was unknown for thirteen months after soldiers raided his family house in Abia state in September 2017. Kanu finally resurfaced in a video praying in Israel on 20 October 2018.

IPOB have threatened that unless the federal government calls a referendum for the determination of the state of Biafra, there shall be no elections in the southeast in 2019. This started with the Anambra governorship elections on 18 November 2017. In mobilizing for the boycott of the Anambra governorship election they adopted hate campaigns, commenced a campaign “If You Vote You will Die”, undertook door-to-door mobilisation, used SMS and activated a rumour mill, often of false information, all in an attempt dissuade voters from voting on election day.

The elections went on as planned despite all the machinations of the IPOB. Nonetheless a post election analysis undertaken by the Centre for Democracy and Development revealed that there was a comparative lower voter turnout in the IPOB strongholds of Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Ogbuagu, Idemili South and Ihiala local government areas (LGAs). The analysis further revealed that many of transport workers engaged by INEC for smooth deployment of election materials and ad-hoc staff and observer groups to monitor happenings on election day refused to show up; a combination of fear for their life or, in some cases, an expression of support for the movement.

IPOB is mobilizing against the 2019 elections. An attempt to broker peace by Prof. Ben Nwabueze between the group, the Ohaneze Ndigbo - the apex Igbo socio-cultural group - and the southeast governors broke down in August 2018. The BZF led by Barrister Onwuka, have also issued a threat that no election will hold in the defunct Biafra region during the 2019 general elections. Despite the threats from these groups, they are not a major security challenge to the election. The emergence of Peter Obi, former governor of Anambra state, as the running mate of the PDP flagbearer, Atiku Abubakar, may further neutralize any planned uprising and possibly increase the low voter turnout often experienced in the south east during the election. It is however imperative for the government to engage in some form of dialogue with the groups ahead of the election to prevent voter apathy and address legitimacy challenge that may arise from the elections.

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9 Author n/a (2017) No Referendum, No Election: Biafra Agitation and Boycott of the 2017 Anambra State Governorship Election, Centre for Democracy and Development publication
“Boko haram on ideological basis may attack during the election.”

“Militia forces operating in the Boko Haram affected states also pose a threat to the 2019 general elections. Birthed in response to the threat of Boko Haram, in Borno alone, there are the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) - popularly referred to as Yan Gora (the boys with sticks) - , the Borno Youths Empowerment Scheme, the Hunters Group and the Men of the Nigeria Vigilante Group.”
The Boko Haram insurgency, now in its ninth year, remains a challenge to the forthcoming elections. This challenge presents itself differently from the 2015 elections, where Boko Haram was occupying an area almost the size of Belgium across the three states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. They do not control the same vast swathes of territory and Boko Haram is now effectively split into two factions. One that is led by Abubakar Shekau and the other by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the later recognized as the ‘authentic leader’ by the Islamic State in August 2016. The al-Barnawi led faction is politically conscious and may want to obstruct the electoral process during the 2019 elections.

The ongoing campaign by the Islamic State (IS) media characterising democracy as false and those who vote as an apostate has to be taken seriously. The Libyan Electoral Commission was attacked by the IS in Tripoli by a two-person suicide operation. The group declared it was in response to the communication by the parent body to hit all election centres and activists. The same scenario played out during the recent Afghanistan poll where IS affiliates attacked voter registration centres and in Pakistan where pre-election and election day violence was perpetrated by IS affiliates. While Al Barnawi has credited himself as humane without deliberately targeting civilians, he may seek to emulate this strategy to impact on the polls. However the recent murder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) midwives Hauwa Liman and Hussaini Khorsa who were abducted by the group provide a counter-narrative to Al Barnawi’s claim.

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“The role of cult groups in elections played out strongly during the Rivers gubernatorial elections and subsequent re-run which saw wanton killings and destruction of property of rival political actors.”
For decades, student fraternity groups (cults) have flourished because influential Nigerian political figures, particularly senators and state governors, use them as instruments to settle political scores and win elections. Increasingly politicians are taking advantage of these secret structures to kidnap foreign oil workers for ransom, sabotage oil installations and attack law enforcement agents. Some of the notorious cult group include Greenlanders and Icelanders, Deywell, Junior Vikings and Bermuda. In Rivers State a report found cult violence killed 254 people in 2016. Many local communities, cities and states in the Niger Delta, have witnessed violent clashes between rival fraternity groups sponsored by politicians during election periods.

The role of cult groups in elections played out strongly during the Rivers gubernatorial elections and subsequent re-run which saw wanton killings and destruction of property of rival political actors. The court ordered rerun elections to be held in December 2016 having noted the serious cases of violence and intimidation during the first vote that forced INEC to declare several results as inconclusive. Inconclusive elections are declared when the gap between two leading contenders is less than the total number of votes in polling units where elections could have been set aside because of violence. The outcome is declared inconclusive until a supplementary election is conducted in those affected polling units.

Even the Rivers rerun witnessed over 70 incidents of deliberate obstruction of the electoral process according to INEC chairman. The two gubernatorial candidates of the APC and PDP engaged in claims and counter claims over the role of cult groups and the violence being visited on their supporters. The activities of the groups led to the disruption of elections and the barricading of the Registration Area Centres by people who prevented election officials from carrying out required tasks.

The activities of cult groups who operate as hired arms and work for the political class to intimidate, carry out violence and rig during elections represents potential challenges for the elections particularly in the South South geo-political zone. For instance the Bayelsa Governorship elections in 2015 was declared inconclusive due to violence in Southern Ijaw LGA. Despite the deployment of soldiers, the elections witnessed ballot box snatching, hostage taking of electoral officials and violence.

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19 Waatch Project Sixth Report on Violence, 2016. The killings occurred in 11 LGAs, especially in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni (80 deaths), Ahoada East (59), Emuoha (51), and Ilwerre (26) within 2016 alone.

20 Edosie V (2016) APC, PDP on war path over Rivers rerun election, Daily Trust, accessed 15/07/18

21 Author n/a (year n/a) Rivers Rerun: INEC Releases 4 Federal Constituency And 11 State Constituency Results, Independent National Electoral Commission, accessed 30/07/18


23 Author n/a (year n/a) Rivers re-run elections: Over 70 incidents of deliberate obstruction of electoral process recorded- INEC chairman, Independent National Electoral Commission, accessed 28/07/18


25 Author n/a (year n/a) Further statement by INEC on the Rivers re-run elections, Independent National Electoral Commission, accessed 10/05/18

Further disruption in the South South during the 2019 polls is a strong possibility as the zone has historically
been a strong votebank for the PDP. According to the Chairman of INEC Prof Mahmood Yakubu, "violence was a
major factor among the many reasons responsible for the myriad of inconclusive elections in Rivers and Bayelsa
conducted by INEC." Inconclusive elections increase voters apathy and lead to a decline in trust in the electoral
system. Thus the imperative for peace cannot be overemphasized.

Aside from the challenge of inconclusive elections, INEC may also postpone elections if there are reasons
to believe that there may be a serious breach of peace if the election is proceeded with on that date or it is
impossible to conduct the elections as a result of natural disasters or other emergencies. The commission
may postpone the election and shall in respect of the area, or areas concerned, appoint another date for the
holding of the postponed election, provided that such reason for the postponement is cogent and verifiable.
In 2015 the general elections were postponed by six weeks on the grounds of insecurity.

27 Daka T (2016) Violence, a major factor for inconclusive election, Guardian Newspaper, accessed 24/06/18
https://guardian.ng/features/violence-a-major-factor-for-inconclusive-election/
28 Author n/a (year n/a) Electoral act 2010: Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1999- 2016 enactments, Centre for laws of the Federation of Nigeria,
us-nigeria-election/nigeria-postpones-feb-14-presidential-election-to-march-28-inec-idUSKBN0LB0TL20150208
Militancy in the Niger Delta has continued to simmer, with the proliferation of militia groups and interests having served to heighten tension. Since the inauguration of President Buhari, the biggest threat has come from the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). Between 15 January and 26 May 2016, there were eight different attacks on oil installations, mostly in Delta and Bayelsa States while in July 2016, NDA perpetuated five separate attacks on oil facilities, including the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Crude Oil Trunk Line, that supplies crude oil to the Warri refinery.

“Since the inauguration of President Buhari, the biggest threat has come from the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). Between 15 January and 26 May 2016, there were eight different attacks on oil installations, mostly in Delta and Bayelsa States while in July 2016, NDA perpetuated five separate attacks on oil facilities, including the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Crude Oil Trunk Line, that supplies crude oil to the Warri refinery.”
Political violence poses a threat to the forthcoming general elections in 2019. Political power is a means of accessing wealth in Nigeria, making politics a do or die affair. Previous elections in Nigeria have led to the loss of lives, arson, bomb explosion, assassination, thuggery and destruction of properties. A report by the Nigeria Human Rights Commission (NHRC) following the 28 March 2015 general elections, revealed that several cases of violence and security breaches led to the death of over 50 people\(^3\). According to the report, acts of violence resulting in fatalities were reported in Akwa Ibom, Borno, Bauchi, Edo, Gombe, Lagos, Osun, Rivers, and Yobe States. A further NHRC report found that prior to the vote that no fewer than 58 people were killed in election-related violence across 22 states between 3 December 2014 and polling day\(^3\). In spite of this, there is little evidence to suggest that decisive steps have been taken by the law enforcement agencies to punish the perpetrators and sponsors of this violence. The pervading impunity has allowed electoral violence to go unpunished.

As the 2019 elections draw closer, the potential for violence escalates further. Intra and inter party conflicts in the two major parties of APC and PDP are likely to result in violence during the election campaign and aftermath. Recent political defections are likely to create tension between the old members and the defectors within the political parties, further accentuating already existing intra party conflicts. During the APC state congresses held on 19 May 2018\(^3\), parallel processes were held in at least ten states (Lagos, Kwara, Delta, Rivers, Ondo, Enugu, Kogi, Bayelsa, Oyo, and Ebonyi). In Ondo State, at least 50 journalists, politicians and observers were beaten by thugs aligned to a member of the House of Representatives\(^3\).

Intra party conflicts are largely centred around who controls party machinery. Governors become at loggerheads with several of the elected officials, party officials or the godfather who brought them into office. In Kano state Abdullah Ganduje, a former protégé of Senator Musa Kwankwaso, was elected as Governor in 2015. Ganduje was deputy governor to Senator Musa Kwankwaso in 2003 and 2011 and served as political adviser to Kwankwaso when he was appointed Minister of Defence. Now Governor, the former allies have turned enemies with the emergence of Gandujiyah political movement battling a Kwankwasiyya one. The feud between the two groups has already led to violence on several occasions in Kano state. Even though

\(^3\)Author n/a (2015) 58 people die from pre-election violence in Nigeria- NHRC, Vanguard, accessed 15/05/18 https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/02/58-people-die-pre-election-violence-nigeria-nhrc/
\(^3\)Author n/a (2018) APC Holds State Congress Nationwide, Channels, accessed 20/05/18 https://www.channelstv.com/2018/05/19/live-update-apc-holds-nationwide-congress/
\(^3\)Author n/a (2018) Parallel APC executives emerge in 8 states, Vanguard newspaper, accessed 04/07/18 https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/05/992743/
Kwankwaso has now defected from APC to PDP this political grudge is likely to be a factor in next years elections. Kano was an important vote bank for President Buhari in 2015. The teaming up of Kwankwaso with actors from the PDP may affect the voting patterns of citizens in 2019. Similar intra party dynamics exist within the PDP.

The just concluded primary elections as organized by the political parties gives us a glimpse of what to expect in the 2019 general elections. The level of violence experienced in Zamfara, Bauchi, Delta, Benue, Plateau, Gombe, Ogun, Lagos, Ebonyi, Akwa Ibom and Rivers, states further validates the propensity of these states to election-related violence. For instance, during the River state APC governorship primaries, an explosive device, suspected to be dynamite, that was placed by thugs, went off near the APC secretariat[^34]. In Akwa Ibom state, one person was also killed[^35] during the APC governorship primaries. In the same vein, violence also broke out during the PDP governorship primary in Gombe State as suspicion of manipulation grew[^36].

The potential for inter party conflicts are accentuated by the mix of politics, media and money. Irresponsible media coverage, which promotes hate speech, disinformation and fake news are likely to contribute to violence in the forthcoming elections. During a PDP stakeholders meeting in Port Harcourt the Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike told the party’s supporters to get ready and prepare their minds for the upcoming elections, according to him: “PDP is a party to beat in any election in the state. We have won elections before and even if the election is conducted 10 times, PDP will still win. You should not be afraid of anybody. You should not allow anybody to intimidate you. If anybody slap you one time, slap the person two times. If somebody is talking of the rule of law and slap you, slap the person two times before the rule of law will take its course. Such law will take care of you,”[^37].

[^35]: 1 killed as violence mars the APC governorship primaries in Akwa Ibom https://www.peoplespostmedia.com/niger-delta/item/19813-1-killed-as-violence-mars-the-apc-governorship-primaries-in-akwa-ibom
The readily available groups of political thugs and criminal gangs are major tools to be instrumentalized by politicians to foment violence during the elections (a list of some of the political and criminal gangs operating in Nigeria is provided in Annex 1). These groups utilize physical, structural and psychological violence to influence electoral outcomes. Utilising physical violence such as assassinations, kidnapping, assaults, intimidation and arson towards citizens, election officials and political party members, they are deployed by politicians to deter voters from participating in the elections or to influence them to register and vote for a particular candidate. In a by-election held to fill the House of Representative vacancy in Koton Karfe federal constituency on 11 August 2018 two people were killed\(^\text{38}\) by suspected political thugs allegedly trying to perpetrate electoral fraud. A wave of political killings is already sweeping the country. Two political aides of top politician, the former governor of Ekiti state and APC stalwart, Segun Oni were shot dead in Ado Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti state. Benue Governor Samuel Ortom’s Principal Special Assistant, Dr Tavershima Adyororough, was murdered in Makurdi, Benue state\(^\text{39}\).

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The power that comes with elected office, has led to the transformation of elections into violent confrontations among the political elites and parties with the citizenry bearing the brunt. In response to this trend, the securitisation of elections has become a dominant feature of Nigeria’s electoral process since the return to democracy in 1999. While elections are supposed to be a civil affair handled by the police, they are often see as akin to warfare.40

The involvement of the military for the enforcement of law and order during elections, creates a condition of securitisation. With the police mostly confined to the polling units, the military takes over the streets. While the justification for the deployment of the army as witnessed in Ekiti, Ondo and Edo is anchored on the fact that it guarantees the sanctity and security of the electoral process, the biggest concern is that it will lead to the politicisation of the military and truncation of democracy in Nigeria.41 There remains a strong perception, fueled by recent events such as the unauthorised takeover of the National Assembly by the Department of State Security Service (DSS), that the security agencies are biased and utilised for political ends. The DSS on August 7th 2018 undertook an unauthorised takeover of the National Assembly, preventing lawmakers from entering the legislature.42 This move was seen by many as an attempt to intimidate opposition politicians.

The Osun governorship re-run elections, concluded on 27 September 2018 raised further concerns ahead of the forthcoming general elections. The Osun governorship election, held on 23 September, was declared inconclusive by INEC pursuant to Section 153 of the Electoral Act which stipulates a rerun if the margin of victory in an election is lower than the number of voters in units where elections are cancelled. The PDP candidate, Ademola Adeleke, won majority votes of 254,698 votes while Gboyega Oyetola of the APC came second with 254,345 votes. There was a difference of 354 votes while the total registered voters in the seven polling units where elections were cancelled was 3,498 votes. Invoking its power, INEC declared the elections inconclusive. However on the day of the rerun elections, observer groups such as CDD reported widespread misconduct by security agencies, including intimidation of accredited journalists, observers and even voters of the opposition party.

At the 18 October 2018 National Security Council meeting, the Nigerian government announced it would deploy soldiers and security personnel across Nigeria to ensure security during the 2019 general elections. The decision they claim is predicated on the need to douse tension created in the aftermath of contentious political party primaries, an alleged stockpiling of arms and the antics of some politicians to derail the electoral process. However, this planned deployment is raising concerns amongst citizens and politicians alike with fear that the security forces are being deployed for partisan purposes. There are palpable fears that the security agencies may in the pre-election period intimidate political opponents and voters, on election day refuse to escort INEC personnel and materials to voting units and undertake selective deployment of security agencies particularly into opposition stronghold.

Whilst security agencies have an important role to play in the forthcoming elections, they must be seen to carry out these duties in an unbiased and efficient way. To do this the security forces must be impartial and adequately equipped to discharge their core and statutory function of guaranteeing security during elections.

“While the justification for the deployment of the army as witnessed in Ekiti, Ondo and Edo is anchored on the fact that it guarantees the sanctity and security of the electoral process, the biggest concern is that it will lead to the politicisation of the military and truncation of democracy in Nigeria”

45 The meeting on Thursday October 18th, 2018
Mitigating violence: Nigeria’s 2019 election

Active Citizenry

Since the 2015 elections, there has been a reinvigoration of citizenship participation in governance. Nigerians are getting involved at the local to the national level, raising issues, asking questions and proffering alternative solutions. Interest groups and different categories of citizens - women, youth, persons with disability and professionals - are contributing to debates about nation development. The #OpenNASS campaign, aimed at compelling the National Assembly to be transparent in its spending, eventually led it to publicly publish the breakdown of its budget for the first time in 2017. In the same vein, the launch of the Buharimeter, an independent monitoring tool which aims to track the implementation of the campaign promises of President Muhammadu Buhari and his APC party, has enhanced citizen awareness of ongoing service delivery, or a lack thereof.

Increasingly, the power of citizens is forcing the Nigerian government, at national and subnational levels, to take salient actions to deliver more accountable governance. Citizen action, that started online has led Acting President Yemi Osinbajo to direct the Inspector General of Police to overhaul the management and activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Investigations are to be carried out into activities of SARS that may have violated human rights by NHRC. The forthcoming elections will be conducted against this background of renewed citizen engagement, with the voter register standing at 84,271,832, a sharp rise from the 69,720,350 voters registered for the 2015 general elections.

Asides traditional civil society, there has been an increase in numbers of citizens movements and groups that have emerged since the beginning of the elections. The Red Card Movement is trying to oust the PDP and APC from office by providing an alternative path forward and Our Mumu Don Do Movement is acting as a watchdog of government institution such as INEC. In addition, church, mosques and traditional institutions have been busy canvassing citizens to register, collect their permanent voters cards (PVCs) and vote. These actors are expected to contribute to peace in the forthcoming elections.

Youth

Youth are going to be a powerful voice in the forthcoming general elections. Ongoing mobilization, around the Not Too Young to Run Campaign has created momentum. This was sustained by the signing into law of the Not Too Young to Run Bill on 31 May 2018. The law reduces the age qualification for president from 40 to 30; governor from 35 to 30; House of Representatives membership from 30 to 25 and State House of Assembly membership from 30 to 25 years of age. This feat was achieved by a collection of youth focused non government organizations and individuals. Since the passage of the bill into law, many Nigerian youth have indicated interest to run for office as political parties seek to target and win over youth votes. However the costs of contesting for politics in Nigeria still excludes a number of more youthful candidates, despite the reduction of age restrictions.

Social Media

The political landscape has changed in the last decade, and social media platforms have played a significant role that transformation. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp allow citizens, politicians, INEC, civil society and the government to easily disseminate information in the public sphere. The sheer speed at which news, poll results and rumours are shared is staggering. In the recent off-cycle gubernatorial and by-elections in Ekiti and Lokoja/Koton Karfe constituency, viral pictures and videos of vote buying and ballot stuffing surfaced on the social media. Social media allowed citizens activate their watchdog role contributing to the integrity of the elections with a hashtag such as #SnapAndSend. Results were being posted immediately after counting and individuals were able to collate the outcome of the polls, with the aim of comparing them with the final tally announced by INEC. While the risks of misinformation and disinformation are real and likely to be prevalent on social media, it is also important to stress that accurate reporting will also be prevalent on the same platform. This can play significant and positive roles in improving awareness, transparency and accountability.
The International Community

The visit of John Kerry to meet with President Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidates of the PDP, and APC, respectively ahead of the 2015 elections helped to prevent post election violence. The international community has a role to play in promoting credible elections. The advocacy for respect of international obligations, that electoral process must pass the integrity test can douse tension and prevent violence. The role of the international community is accepted in Nigeria’s election. In addition to issuing statements, they are also supporting the electoral process both financially and technically. The PDP through its national chairman, Chief Uche Secondus has, on several occasions, called on the international community to help facilitate a peaceful 2019 elections, the most recent example being during a meeting with a team from the UN led by Mr. Serge G. Kubwimana.

INEC

The introduction of technology can be a game changer in instilling confidence and mitigating violence in the electoral process. INEC has introduced the use of satellite communication devices to monitor and track elections. The commission has signed a collaborative agreement with the Nigeria’s satellite, NIGCOMSAT with the objective of deploying its satellite to cover areas currently not covered by 3G and 4G networks (the so-called “black spots”). Enabling INEC to transmit election results directly from each polling unit. INEC also plans to utilize an e-tracker which allowed for the tracking of the distribution of sensitive electoral materials during the July 2018 Ekiti gubernatorial election. With this INEC is able to track all vehicles carrying sensitive materials to locations real time from departure, en-route and arrival. The introduction of similar technology in 2019 could bolster trust in the electoral process if the overall work of the commission is seen as credible.

INEC has an important role to play in the organization of a successful 2019 elections and presently they seem to be on their way to achieving that. Since assuming office, the commission has overseen or conducted almost 200 elections with very few nullified in court. INEC has also undertaken several institutional reforms including launching a new strategic plan, working on a youth engagement strategy and reviewing its gender policy. It has promoted deserving staff and, in an unprecedented move, prosecuted officials found to have committed wrongdoing in the 2015 elections. The commission has cleaned up the voters and conducted continuous voters registration. One of the defining characteristics of the Yakubu commission has been its openness towards partners; civil society, political parties and media. The commission has maintained it intends to consolidate on the improved 2015 general elections and is assiduously working with partners both local and international to achieve that.

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48 Author n/a (2015) Elections: U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, in Nigeria to meet Buhari, Jonathan, Premium Times, accessed 15/05/18
Conclusion and Recommendations

The 2019 general elections will be the sixth consecutive electoral cycle since Nigeria's return to democracy. These elections will be the first election to be conducted by the APC led administration, the first by the new chair of INEC, Prof Mahmood Yakubu and the first elections in which those born after Nigeria’s return to democracy will be eligible to vote. The stakes for this election are high and insecurity pervading the polity may have a significant impact on the ability of INEC to organize credible elections in some parts of the country. The insecurity challenges will undoubtedly raise the cost of running the elections. The cost of conducting special elections for IDPs entails more human and financial resources, security and logistics but are crucial to avoid the disenfranchisement of millions of Nigerians. It is important that all stakeholders continue to work to deliver an improvement on the broadly credible 2015 elections. To do this the following recommendations are made:

- Provide clear operational guidelines for security agencies active on election day. This could include a publicly available 'rules of engagement' handbook.
- Use INEC’s Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security to improve the security of the electoral environment before, during and after the 2019 elections.
- Desecuritizing polls and security risks during elections should not be limited to security forces alone. There is a strong need to promote citizen groups as independent election watchdogs.
- INEC should ensure measures are in place that allow IDPs in the North Central and the North West States to vote.
- Specific voter education targeting IDPs should be carried out by INEC in partnership with civil society.
- The Inter-Party Advisory Council along with INEC should develop a framework for the conduct of campaigns and political rallies in the election and all parties should be encourage to sign up to the code of conduct.
- The government should promote dialogue, rather than military force, as the primary approach to dealing with prevailing insecurity.
- The media should promote responsible reportage, respond to fake news and abide by the Nigerian Media Code of Election Coverage.
- The international community should use its influence among key political stakeholders to advocate for a zero tolerance approach to violence and a commitment to accepting the electoral outcome declared by INEC.
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Annex 1: Political and Criminal Gangs Operating in Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of political/criminal gangs</th>
<th>States active in</th>
<th>Typical characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sara- Suka</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kaduna</strong></td>
<td>Consists of youths between 14-28 years olds&lt;br&gt;Often found in the possession of knives, guns, locally made pistols, motorcycles, boats, bows and arrows, cutlasses, drugs, charms&lt;br&gt;Revenge attacks&lt;br&gt;Murder&lt;br&gt;Stealing&lt;br&gt;Destruction of property i.e. setting properties ablaze and cars&lt;br&gt;Update: A minimum of 7 years imprisonment for offenders has been implemented in Kaduna state. The leader, Umar Ibrahim been charged to court with 32 of his members over the offence of criminal conspiracy, being in possession of dangerous weapons and disturbance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bauchi</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plateau</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kalare</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gombe</strong></td>
<td>Aim to silence political enemies&lt;br&gt;Revenge attacks&lt;br&gt;Largely politically motivated violence&lt;br&gt;Abduction&lt;br&gt;Destruction of property&lt;br&gt;Harassment&lt;br&gt;Murder&lt;br&gt;Update: The creation of Talba youth orientation and rehabilitation centre created by Governor Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo, trained 4000 youths trained in two batches becoming environmental, security, traffic and ward marshals as a means of rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gana’s gang</strong></td>
<td><strong>Benue</strong></td>
<td>In possession of high calibre arms and ammunition such as AK-47 as well as large quantities of ammunition&lt;br&gt;Murder&lt;br&gt;Thick forests often used as hideouts&lt;br&gt;Kidnapping&lt;br&gt;Armed robberies&lt;br&gt;Cultist violence&lt;br&gt;Update: There has been an increased number of arrested members as well as important information being exposed such as the confession confirming the gangs responsibility for the death of former senior special assistant on security, Denen Igbana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taraba</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of political/criminal gangs</td>
<td>States active in</td>
<td>Typical characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yandaba</td>
<td>Kano Plateau</td>
<td>Murder, Destruction of property, Described as ‘forerunners’ for local politicians, Political and criminal thuggery, Theft, Drug taking, Destruction of property, Murder, Rape, Kidnapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOMOG</td>
<td>Borno</td>
<td>Youth led, Reputation for violence or tendency to be violent especially at political/campaign outings, Murder, Assassination, Links with Boko Haram, Killing of rival political thugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NURTW</td>
<td>Lagos Oyo</td>
<td>Use of guns and cutlasses, Tribal clashes, Transport workers doubling as a street gang, Used as a tool for political violence, Disruption of political rallies, In-still fear at polling booths, Hijacking ballot boxes, Assassination under the instructions of the former NURTW chairman, Update: All union activities suspended indefinitely in Oshodi and the Chairman, Mukala Lamidid, sentenced to 6 years imprisonment with 4 others standing trial for conspiracy, murder and attempted murder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation Boys</td>
<td>Kogi State</td>
<td>Intimidation, Arson, Murder, Drugs abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD October 2018)**

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) was established in the United Kingdom in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit, research training, advocacy and capacity building organization.