TONY BLAIR
INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL
CHANGE

Democracy Under Threat: Why the Security Risks to Nigeria's 2023 Elections Must Not Be Overlooked

AUDU BULAMA BUKARTI

Contents

Executive Summary

One of the most high-stakes elections that Nigeria has witnessed in decades takes place on 25 February 2023. The country's citizens will go to the polls to elect their new president, vice-president and all 469 members of the Senate and House of Representatives. Two weeks later, there will be elections for 28 state governors and the legislatures of all 36 states of the federation. If successful, it will be the first time during its 63 years of independence that Nigeria has secured three consecutive peaceful transitions of power – an important indicator of how democracy has been progressing incrementally there since 1999, when the military last ruled. If unsuccessful, though, it will be a huge blow to a country already reeling from serious security threats, polarisation and economic challenges.

Nigeria is Africa's largest democracy and economy and most populous nation, so its election will also be closely watched by other countries on the continent, especially those that consider it a model for democratic process. Either outcome is likely to affect Nigeria's neighbours. A successful election could send a strong message to other African states where democracy has been backsliding. Since 2010, more than 40 coups and attempted coups have been documented on the continent, half of them in West Africa, where in the past three years alone, six have been successful.[1] Similarly, political instability in Nigeria could have a ripple effect in many other African nations. Alongside the socioeconomic implications, an aborted election, or one fraught with violence and malpractice, would weaken Nigeria's political and moral authority to take a stance against unconstitutional takeovers of power elsewhere on the continent.

While peaceful and credible elections have never been a foregone conclusion in Nigeria, there are additional threats next year, with the biggest among them the violent activities of several non-state armed groups who have publicly expressed a wish to scupper the country's vulnerable democracy. Boko Haram, which has attempted to disrupt past elections and has expanded its operations since the last cycle, remains a threat while others – the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and "bandit" gangs – have emerged with a sophistication and lethality that should raise concerns. Past experience shows that an election can be a trigger for violence, with the potential for widespread social unrest. This risk is heightened by the ruling party selecting presidential and vice-presidential candidates drawn from the same faith as well as the spread of disinformation on social media.

In this report, we provide an overview of the 2023 electoral landscape and explore the threats from non-state groups and other triggers for violence, before showing how disinformation on social media could fan the flames of insecurity while undermining the integrity of campaigns. It is essential for policymakers in Nigeria, and the country's international partners, to understand these threats and move to mitigate them to ensure a peaceful transition of power and support any incoming administration on the ground. To

enable this, we set out recommendations showing how to ensure credible elections in the final chapter of the report.

In summary, they include the following steps:

- **Expand efforts to liberate or secure affected villages and towns:** Nigerian security, law-enforcement and intelligence agencies should use the few months left before the February election to push back violent groups and secure vulnerable communities as well as liberate those already seized.

- **Balance the allocation of security forces for election monitoring and the continued containment of violent groups:** Nigerian security and law-enforcement agencies should carefully balance the need to redeploy troops and resources for election monitoring with the continued focus on containing violent groups across the country.

- **The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the police should maintain impartiality:** Violence often starts with allegations of bias and rigging that involve the electoral body and the police. The reputation of INEC and, to an extent, the police, for maintaining neutrality during elections has improved over the past few cycles, but this professionalism needs to be maintained.

- **The INEC should expand its voting system for internally displaced people to ensure their participation in the election.**

- **The election peace accord should be expanded and respected:** The National Peace Committee's (NPC's) peace pact for presidential candidates should be cascaded down to candidates for governorships and parliamentary seats. To achieve this, the NPC should partner with credible community-based and civil-society organisations (CSOs) in each state.

- **Tech companies should monitor election-related fake news:** Social-media platforms – especially Twitter, Meta (Facebook), YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram – should step up efforts to identify and deal with election-related misinformation, disinformation and conspiracies as well as intercepting violent or intimidating messages. This will require hiring and training more local experts who not only speak the languages in which content is published, but also understanding the context as well.

- **Raise awareness on the responsible use of social media among young people:** CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) should educate young people on the responsible use of social media, also training journalists and youth on how to spot and expose election-related fake news, misinformation and disinformation.

- **The media should counter election-related fake news.**

- **The international community should mobilise in support of peaceful and credible elections.**

- **Early warning, prevention and mitigation mechanisms should be developed:** CSOs and CBOs should be supported to develop tools for early reporting, prevention and mitigation of electoral violence. This mechanism can be coordinated by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room that

brings together more than 60 national and local organisations to share information, anticipate problems and respond rapidly.

- **Offenders should be prosecuted swiftly to serve as a deterrent**: Perpetrators of election violence, and those distributing dangerous fake news that violates Nigeria's Cybersecurity Act, Electoral Act or other relevant laws, should be prosecuted swiftly so that others are deterred.

- **Religious and traditional leaders should advocate for peaceful elections.**

Nigeria's Election Landscape in 2023

There are 18 political parties set to participate in the 2023 elections, with the main contenders – the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) – contesting every seat up for grabs. The remaining parties will be competing in the core presidential election and vying for executive and parliamentary seats across the country. [2] While the 2023 election could be a two-horse race between the APC and PDP, both the Labour Party (LP) and New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) are contenders, which means the winner could be decided in a second round of voting. This has never happened in Nigeria before. In addition to the 36 presidential candidates and their running mates, there are 4,259 candidates for the 469 seats of the National Assembly (comprising the Senate and House of Representatives). [3] For the state elections, there are 837 candidates running for the 28 governorships and 10,231 candidates vying for 993 assembly seats. [4]

For the first time in Nigeria's modern democratic era, there will not be a former military ruler on the presidential ballot. President Muhammadu Buhari, who has been in office since 2015, will not be contesting. And, in another first, the ruling party is fielding two Muslims, Bola Tinubu and Kashim Shettima, as its candidates for president and vice-president, respectively, leading to a crack among its ranks. This is seen by many as a violation of the country's unwritten political convention: that the two most senior offices in the land be held by leaders from its two main religions – Christianity and Islam. [5] Similarly, PDP's presidential candidate hails from the north of Nigeria, which is considered by some a violation of the party's "zoning gentlemen's agreement", according to which a southerner should be its candidate this time around. This, in combination with the fact the party chairman also comes from the north, is threatening to splinter the PDP before the election takes place. [6]

Approximately 12 million new voters, more than 70 per cent of whom are aged between 18 and 34, have been registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) since the last election in 2015, [7] creating a total of at least 96 million voters for the 2023 cycle. [8] INEC forecasts this will drop down to 95 million after it has finished "cleaning up the data of new registrants by removing ineligible persons such as underage persons, non-Nigerians and those who registered more than once". [9] Youth participation has also increased, with many now involved in election campaigning or contesting specific electoral offices. This unprecedented enthusiasm for political participation has been partly attributed to the "sense of an election that is more open for candidates who might have the integrity and openness that young voters are seeking." [10] But it is also an indication of increasing faith in Nigeria's voting system – a result of the INEC's continuing digitalisation efforts and the influence of social media as well as the growing population.

To account for the increase in the number of voters, the INEC has added more than 56,800 new polling units (a 41 per cent increase) to bring the total to 176,846 polling units for the year. [11] The electoral body will deploy a team of four to each polling unit to total 707,384 election workers, in addition to the tens of thousands of supervisors, collation officers, returning officers and officials from local to national levels. [12] This will entail transportation by road and water of almost 1 million election personnel along with the distribution of materials to locations that, at times, can only be accessed by highways at real risk of activities by criminals and terrorist groups. Thousands of security staff, journalists and election observers will also be travelling to these locations. So, while the 2023 electoral environment may be the most diverse ever seen in Nigeria, it will also be fraught with security and administrative challenges that must be surmounted.

Threats to Security and Election Integrity

Muhammadu Buhari, the outgoing president, came to power in 2015 on three campaign promises: tackling insecurity, fighting corruption and growing the economy. In his first few months in office, he took major steps to contain and thwart Boko Haram, which had become one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world. However, while security forces were dismantling and pushing Boko Haram back to the fringes of the Lake Chad region, two other serious threats were escalating. While the secessionist IPOB predates the Buhari administration, the group did not pick up arms until well after he became president. Similarly, criminal gangs or, as they are known locally, "bandits" have been operating for more than a decade, but their danger and reach have increased during the president's tenure. Today, these acute security threats are turning Nigeria into a nation at war with itself, albeit without any formal declaration.

Despite assurances by the government, Boko Haram remains a serious threat around the borders of the Lake Chad Basin. The group's three splinter factions have expanded their reach over the past two years into new territories, including in North West and North Central Nigeria, and even parts of the south. However, the primary threat in the North West remains the bandits who, over the past seven years, have killed and kidnapped thousands of people while destroying hundreds of villages and causing the displacement of millions. In the South East, IPOB's militia, dubbed the "Eastern Security Network", is targeting the northern citizens of this region along ethnic lines, imposing weekly illegal lockdowns and systematically attacking election infrastructure in order to derail democratic process. These developments are taking place alongside criminality, ethnic profiling and the feared return of oil thefts by organised gangs across the country, the latter especially in the south where Nigeria's fossil-fuel deposits are found in abundance.

Data confirm this acute deterioration during the Buhari administration. Between 29 May 2015 and 29 May 2022, 55,430 people were killed by terrorist groups and criminals gangs operating across the country. [13] In 2021 alone, 3.2 million Nigerians had been displaced from their homes, mostly from the north. [14] While some fled across the border to Niger, the majority reside with relatives, typically in urban and suburban areas that are deemed safer. The situation has escalated in the past 18 months. During this period, 8,948 Nigerians were killed and 7,184 abducted while, as of July 2022, at least 2,455,190 were registered as internally displaced. If this trend continues, millions of Nigerians will be displaced from their designated polling unit on election day. Individuals are only allowed to cast their vote in polls where they originally registered, so the high number of internally displaced people (IDPs) could make a big difference to the outcome of the 2023 election. For example, the 2015 presidential election was won by a margin of less than 2.6 million votes while in 2011, it was by less than 4 million. [15]

Figure 1 – The number of internally displaced people in Nigeria has been increasing since 2017
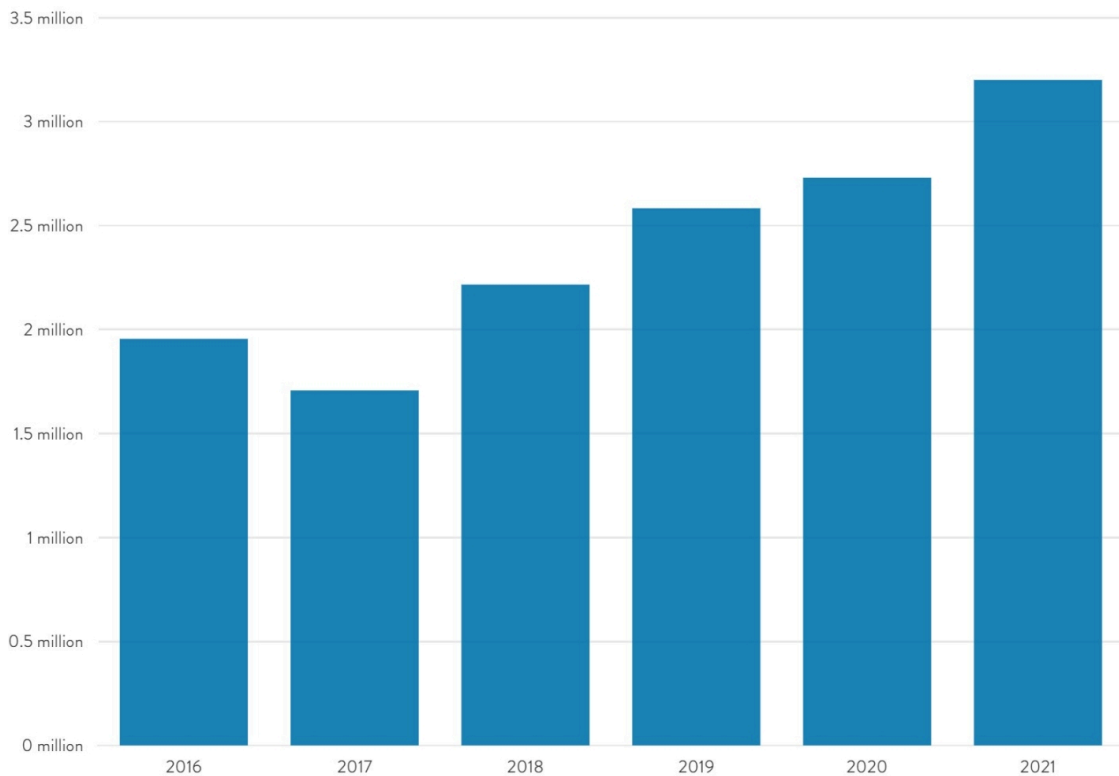
To try and address this situation, the INEC has developed a framework and regulations that allow displaced citizens to vote at designated "IDP Voting Centres". [16] While this policy will help include some IDPs in the electoral process, millions may still not be able to participate because many, especially in the northwest, do not reside in designated camps where voting centres will be established. Even assuming the INEC allows non-resident IDPs to vote in IDP Voting Centres, the long distances and restrictions on movement imposed by law on election day would not allow them to participate. For camp-based displaced citizens, the framework states that those who live outside their state of origin can only vote in the presidential election, meaning this demographic cannot have a say in any elections at the governor, state or national parliamentary levels. Additionally, if violence continues as seen recently, hundreds of villages would still be considered too unsafe to serve as polling units.

Another issue is transparency and election integrity. With ever-shifting numbers of internally displaced people in different camps, it will be hard to know the exact tally of each camp until very close to the election. This could lead to allegations of rigging and malpractice, undermining credibility. For example, in the run-up to the 2019 election, the opposition PDP alleged the ruling APC was plotting to use the IDP voting system to create "illegal polling centres for allocation of fictitious votes, massive ballot stuffing, voting by aliens, underage and unregistered persons to pull millions of fictitious votes" for President Buhari. [17] With additional IDP voting centres in the North West and North Central regions of

Nigeria, these allegations will continue in 2023. Ultimately, this could undermine the integrity of the next election as well as the ability of the next government to unify Nigeria and govern effectively.

For these reasons, the INEC should work with political parties and other stakeholders to expand and strengthen the credibility of its IDP voting system. First, it could broaden the system to allow both camp-based and community-based displaced citizens to vote. Second, internally displaced people should be allowed to participate in all elections, not just the presidential one. Third, their documentation should continue until the weeks leading up to the election, and be published prior to voting. To ensure transparency and reduce allegations of rigging, the INEC should work closely with political parties and civil society in developing and implementing this strategy while aiming for the full participation of IDPs by partnering with organisations, such as the International Organization for Migration and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

Non-State Armed Groups

Three of the most active violent groups in Nigeria – Boko Haram, bandits and IPOB – threaten the 2023 election in different ways. Boko Haram's factions will try and endanger the election because this is one of the group's publicly declared ideological objectives. They will do so by stepping up attacks, including bombings in major cities, while displacing some communities and ensuring remote ones are inaccessible for campaigning or holding elections. While bandits are not purposely anti-democratic, their attacks on villages and displacing of more than a million people is set to disenfranchise many Nigerians. Meanwhile, IPOB targets critical election infrastructure and threatens candidates and voters while attacking northern residents of the South East region. Additionally, all three will actively target the 1 million election workers who will be transported across Nigeria as well as the thousands of journalists and observers who will monitor the election. Boko Haram will attack on an ideological basis, bandits will carry out kidnaps-for-ransom, and IPOB will seek out journalists and observers to send its separatist message while demonstrating its control over the South East.

Boko Haram

One of the five pillars upon which Boko Haram was founded was the rejection of democracy. The group's manifesto, published in 2008, dedicated a whole chapter to denouncing democracy, which it branded "modern calamity" and "modern idol", giving several reasons why it was an "unbelief" as well as a forbidden act for Muslims, which they must work to destroy. [18] Not only did the group's founding fathers preach against registering to vote, but they have also made an active attempt to scupper it in the past. On 13 April 2007, the group's operatives assassinated Sheikh Ja'afar Mahmud Adam – northern Nigeria's most famous Salafi cleric – as he was leading prayers in Kano, the country's most populous city. According to Nigeria's Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Isa Ali Pantami, Boko Haram

launched this attack on the eve of the 2007 presidential election because the group hoped to ignite widespread public unrest to disrupt voting activities the next day. [19]

The three factions of Boko Haram that operate today are the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jamaʿatu Anṣaril Muslimina fī Biladis Sudan (Ansaru) and the independent Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS). With a combined 7,000 fighters active in the North East, North West and North Central regions, the factions differ in modus operandi and are engaged in a long-running civil war with each other, which has killed hundreds. However, what unites them is a universal rejection of democracy. For example, when claiming responsibility for a 2017 bombing of Muslim worshippers at the University of Maiduguri, which killed four people including a professor, the group's late leader Abubakar Shekau said the attack was carried out because the organisation was mixing "Islam with democracy". [20] Even ISWAP and Ansaru, which both claim they don't harm civilians, consider those, including Muslims, who participate in democracy as apostates to be targeted and killed.

Boko Haram's most successful attempt to derail Nigeria's democracy came when it forced the 2015 general elections to be delayed by six weeks. [21] This sabotage came on the back of a vow by Shekau: "This democratic election will not hold even if we are dead … Allah will never allow you to do it." Just before polling commenced, the group stepped up attacks on civilian and military targets, overcoming many towns and villages to the extent that security and intelligence agencies were forced to declare they could not guarantee the security and safety of voters, or the electoral process itself. [22] The delay, which was described by APC as a "major setback for Nigerian democracy", led to accusations being hurled among politicians and shook the faith of many Nigerians in democracy. Even when the new election day finally arrived, Boko Haram renewed attempts to prevent it by attacking polling stations in Gombe and killing more than a dozen people. Indeed, the group forced some voters to abandon polling units because they feared for their lives. [23]

Boko Haram made similar attempts in 2019. On the day President Buhari launched his re-election bid, the Islamist group assaulted a Nigerian Army battalion in an attack that killed at least 118 soldiers, with 150 others left unaccounted for. The following day, when Nigeria's former vice-president and main opposition candidate Atiku Abubakar launched his own presidential campaign, Boko Haram assaulted a rescue team that was sent to recover the bodies of the previous day's victims, causing additional casualties. [24] Just hours before voting for the presidential election opened on 23 February 2019, ISWAP – Boko Haram's biggest faction – launched coordinated attacks on multiple cities across northeast Nigeria. [25] It attempted to enter the city of Maiduguri, detonating multiple rocket-propelled grenades that triggered at least 13 explosions, five of which hit the airport and two others that targeted the Nigerian Army's headquarters.

The attack on the airport was an attempt to destroy sensitive election materials. Elsewhere, in Borno State, ISWAP launched rockets at the town of Gwoza, injuring three people and partially damaging a mosque. The group also targeted towns on both sides of the border of Borno State as well as Zabarmari village. At around the same time as Maiduguri was struck, ISWAP moved on a major town in Yobe State too – although this move was repelled by troops who had been alerted by locals. All these attacks, from destroying election infrastructure to scaring voters and officials as well as distracting security agents, were calculated to prevent people from voting.

If the past is any indication, coordinated attacks by each faction of Boko Haram are to be expected in the period leading up to the 2023 election. ISWAP's recent expansion and offensives in North East Nigeria, and in the North Central region including Kogi State, are an indication of the group's capabilities. [26] Even though JAS, the most brutal faction, has been dramatically weakened by the death of Shekau in May 2021, its fighters continue to terrorise communities in North East and North Central Nigeria. Furthermore, Ansaru has already started interfering with the 2023 elections, outlawing campaign activities in areas where it holds sway. It will be impossible to deploy election officials and infrastructure to areas where they are active. [27] Ultimately, this will disenfranchise many Nigerians unless measures are put in place to uphold the security and integrity of the democratic electoral process.

Bandits

Violence orchestrated by organised criminal gangs has been escalating in North West and North Central Nigeria since 2016. With an estimated 30,000 militias divided across 100 distinct groups, these bandits have killed more than 20,000 people in the past ten years, extorted millions of dollars in ransom and displaced millions from their homes after destroying villages. These gangs, who initially targeted rural communities, have also dramatically expanded their operations to encompass major towns, highways and infrastructure, such as trainlines and military targets, while their methods have evolved to the use of heavy weapons including anti-aircraft missiles and explosives. When they abducted 344 schoolboys from Kankara town in Katsina State in December 2020, the bandits embarked on a new chapter of violence that involved the targeting of educational institutions. [28] After the December attack, another eight schools across five states were ransacked within a year and at least 1,000 students and teachers were abducted. [29] While most of the victims were released immediately, most likely after ransom payments, some students remained in captivity for months.

Besides this increase in violent activities, two recent developments have transformed the perception of bandits among local communities. First, the gangs have started to identify sociopolitical and ethnic grievances as justifications for their violent actions. For instance, when one of the most notorious bandit leaders, Bello Turji, gave an interview to the *Daily Trust* earlier this year, he claimed that violence was a reaction to the corruption and repression of the Fulani ethnic group, human-rights abuses by Yansakai –

a vigilante unit set up in the early 2000s to fight petty criminality in the North West – and the failures of the justice system that have led to gangs picking up arms. [30] Similar claims have been made by other bandit leaders who have cited "injustice" and "neglect" of their ethnic groups as reasons for getting involved with bandits. [31] Although the groups say they do not have a political agenda, their narratives of grievance clearly reveal one.

With bandits adopting similar sentiments to Boko Haram's anti-democracy ideology, they are more likely to launch attacks to scupper the 2023 elections.

The second development is more worrying. Some bandit elements have forged alliances with Boko Haram, with at least one major group known to have established a link with Ansaru. This faction, which is affiliated to al-Qaeda, has been based in North West Nigeria since its emergence in 2012. Operationally inactive between 2013 and 2020, the Boko Haram faction made a public comeback with a claim that it had killed and wounded 22 Nigerian soldiers, and "completely" destroyed a military convoy in Kaduna State, communicated in al-Qaeda's al-Hijrah Media. Even when it was operationally inactive, Ansaru continued its recruitment campaign through preaching and sermons, including in the local Fulfulde language, as an attempt to infiltrate certain ethnic bandit groups based in the North West.

Ansaru has worked and fought alongside a major bandit gang led by Dogo Gide, "cooperating" on logistics and the procurement of trade weapons. [32] More recently, Gide has started espousing a jihadi ideology, suggesting his relationship with Ansaru goes beyond mere "cooperation". In the wake of an Ansaru-led abduction of schoolchildren in October 2021, Gide released an audio recording proclaiming: "I am [a] jihadi working with al-Qaeda." He claimed he had orchestrated the abduction of the children "because Allah has commanded us to abduct those who go to school, and also Europeans". [33] Furthermore, the bandit leader insisted he would not collect ransoms from the parents because his real target was the government while also saying that, if a ransom was not paid by the authorities, he would "instil in [the children] Islamic extremism so that they … fight the oppressors" and also "marry off the girls to my boys". The children confirmed that Gide was indoctrinating them, [34] with reports emerging he married off 13 girls, some of whom subsequently became pregnant. [35] With bandits adopting similar sentiments to Boko Haram's anti-democracy ideology, the group could well launch attacks intended to scupper the 2023 elections – or secure non-monetary concessions from the government, such as the disbanding of Yansakai or the release of detained members, ahead of the election season.

Whether with or without allegiances to a jihadi group, bandits constitute a threat to the 2023 elections. First, their violence has displaced millions and forced populations to leave the villages where they are registered to vote. Second, their activities could inhibit the INEC's ability to organise polls in the remote

areas of the North West, consequently disenfranchising voters. Third, the environment they have created is likely to prevent politicians from engaging with or campaigning in remote areas. Where election officials are deployed, they could be abducted in an attempt to extort ransoms or concessions from the government.

Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)

In South East Nigeria, the violent activities of IPOB are becoming pervasive. Formed in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a British-Nigerian, IPOB aims to establish an independent state in South East Nigeria. In December 2020, Kanu announced the formation of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as IPOB's militant wing, with a self-proclaimed mandate "to defend our land of Biafra" from Fulani invaders and to keep fighting "until we eradicate every trace of Fulani terrorism in our midst". [36] Kanu has accused northern Nigerian cattle herders of grazing on Igbo farmlands in the South East and committing other more serious crimes including the rape and murder of local residents.

Since Kanu's announcement, the six states of the South East and parts of the South-South have seen an alarming increase in coordinated attacks targeting security personnel, government buildings and northerners residing in the region. Between October 2020 and June 2021, suspected ESN militants targeted 164 police facilities, killing 175 security personnel, according to Nigeria's Attorney General. [37] IPOB has not officially claimed responsibility for these attacks, with the perpetrators described as "unknown gunmen" by the southern Nigerian media. However, the government attributes blame to IPOB/ESN and Kanu has frequently been seen "gloating" about the attacks on his Twitter account. In October 2020, in the wake of the #EndSARS protests against police brutality, Kanu phoned in to local radio calling on members of IPOB to burn down all police stations and kill the security forces.

While IPOB is a recently formed group, its roots can be traced back to the history of the Igbo people from which most of its members originate. The aspiration for the establishment of an Igbo nation state dates back to the early period of Nigeria's independence when, on 30 May 1967, Odumegwu Ojukwu declared the former Eastern Region of Nigeria – where he served as a military governor – independent, renaming it the "Republic of Biafra". This development culminated in the Nigerian civil war (1967–1970). Following the defeat of Ojukwu's troops by the federal government, the war ended with the proclamation of Nigeria as a single, united nation. Although the Biafra forces were defeated, the ethno-religious and political factors that triggered the war were not addressed and, in fact, they were exacerbated by the accusations of genocide made against the Nigerian forces.

When President Buhari – a Muslim northerner, who was a commander with the government during the war – came into power, IPOB's anti-government rhetoric peaked. Kanu and IPOB framed the growth of kidnap-for-ransom and other criminal activities, often perpetrated by Fulani criminals, as "the Fulani conquest of the rest of Nigeria" and "Islamisation and Fulanisation agenda." Also promoting the idea that

these activities had been clandestinely supported by the Buhari administration, Kanu used this narrative to instigate attacks on the government, as well as on northern traders and herder residents based in the South East. [38]

Every Monday, workers, traders, students and residents were forced by IPOB to stay at home while markets, shops, banks, schools and government offices were required to remain closed.

In July 2021, IPOB declared a weekly lockdown of South Eastern states. Called "sit-at-home Mondays", the lockdown was imposed by the group until Kanu, who has been arrested on treason and terrorism charges, was released unconditionally. The group warned residents who flouted their illegal directive of "huge consequences". [39] Every Monday, workers, traders, students and residents were forced to stay at home while markets, shops, banks, schools and government offices were required to remain closed. Those who went out during the IPOB ban were summarily attacked and, in some cases, killed while their vehicles, shops and property were burned by the group's "enforcers". [40] In September 2021, IPOB militants invaded a high school in Imo State for breaking its "sit-at-home" order, [41] the gunmen chasing out teachers and students who were sitting their final-year exams and burning down property. Although IPOB lifted the weekly lockdown in December 2021, one faction continues to insist on the illegal order remaining in place, with attacks continuing on those who fail to obey the directive. [42]

One especially worrying feature of IPOB's activities has been the systematic destruction of critical election infrastructure. Between October 2020 and June 2021, there were 19 attacks on the INEC's facilities, resulting in the destruction of offices and arson attacks against 18 vehicles, election materials and electronic devices in five South East states as well as Akwa Ibom and Cross River in the South-South. In May 2021, the INEC's chairman stated that these attacks – which are "quite orchestrated and targeted" – may "undermine the Commission's capacity to organise elections". [43] In November 2021, IPOB warned that unless Kanu was released, it would impose a seven-day lockdown in Anambra to prevent the state's governorship elections. [44] Although IPOB withdrew its threat in the face of pressure from Igbo leaders, this could be a sign of what is to come next year. [45]

The group has already threatened to disrupt the 2023 election if its leader, who is facing treason charges, is not released. In a video clip published on 21 April 2022, four gunmen brandishing rifles proclaimed that "there shall be no election [in the South East], and anybody that attempts any election matter will die." The group also explicitly warned election officials, stating "for the INEC people, what will happen to you when we get you, only God knows". Vowing to burn politicians that participate, IPOB declared: "No more posters – political posters in Biafraland. If you try us, you [politicians] campaigning [for the election], fire will burn you." [46]

> ## *We shall no longer tolerate any rubbish from the media again.*

Masked men in IPOB video

The masked men concluded the video by threatening Nigerian journalists, who they branded "fake media", while stating: "You think you can post any rubbish? We, the unknown gunmen, have endured enough from you. We shall no longer tolerate any rubbish from the media again." On 11 September, gunmen ambushed and opened fire on the convoy of Senator Ifeanyi Ubah who represents Anambra South Senatorial District in the Nigerian Senate. The attack killed five people while the senator, elected on behalf of the Young Progressives Party, escaped unhurt in his bulletproof vehicle. The government blamed the attack on IPOB. [47] Similarly, on 24 September, four gunmen wielding rifles assaulted members of the Labour Party who were holding a meeting at a primary school in Enugu State – the third such attack in less than two months. [48]

If this is any indication, more attacks on the INEC's staff, security forces, politicians and government officials can be expected in the coming months. IPOB may even impose another sit-at-home order on election days. If events manifest in this way, turnout will be hampered because residents will be too scared to vote. Northern Nigerian residents of the South East may be especially targeted because of their ethnicity and to stop them voting for another northerner. Given IPOB's modus operandi, the group will likely attribute blame to the government for disenfranchising the "people of Biafraland", using this narrative to undermine its legitimacy and to propel forward its secession plan.

Why Elections Are the Trigger for Violence

In addition to the threat posed by non-state armed groups, candidates themselves can spark violence by using ethno-religious messages or framing an election as a competition between regions to mobilise their constituencies. Identity-based or ideological politics has often led to violence during election campaigns and in the aftermath of results. Over the six decades of Nigeria's independence, elections have been marked by violent episodes – mostly at the state level, but also at national and regional levels.

Nigeria's electoral system is set up so the candidate or party with the highest number of votes at the federal, state or constituency level takes it all. In a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country, the prospect of total control of national resources and finances by one group, with very little public or institutional scrutiny, can amplify simmering tensions. Some states, such as Kano, have seen short-term, party-based violence contained to the election period. However, in other states, such as Plateau, contentious politics has led to years of protracted ethno-religious violence that has killed an estimated 4,000 people. [49]

Figure 2 – Lives lost to election violence in Nigeria since independence in 1960

Year	Lives lost
1999	80
2003	100
2007	300
2011	800
2015	100
2019	145

A highly divisive campaign created the most deadly election period of the past 25 years

Source: HRW, ICG, CD, Africa Watch compiled by HumAngle Media

Nigeria's bloodiest election period followed the 2011 election, which was also, ironically, its most credible electoral process up to that point. The announcement that the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, had won the election, and that the main opposition candidate, Buhari, had lost resulted in three days of violent riots and communal unrest that left at least 800 people dead and 65,000 displaced. The killings and destruction followed religious and ethnic lines. Mobs, mainly from the north, burned homes, vehicles and the properties of ruling-party stalwarts, many of them fellow Muslims, as well as Christians and traditional leaders who were perceived to be supporters of Jonathan. In retaliation, Christian mobs in predominantly Christian parts of the north, such as Kaduna, Plateau and Benue States, killed Muslims and destroyed Muslim properties, including mosques. [50] This bloodshed was the result of a highly divisive campaign that pitted a Christian southerner against a Muslim northerner, and the fact that the losing candidate refused to concede defeat. But it was also exacerbated by decades of religious and regional tensions, and unaddressed incidents of violence.

No widespread riots or communal clashes were documented in 2015 or 2019, but this does not necessarily mean these years were wholly peaceful and devoid of violence. The EU Election Observation Missions assessed the 2019 election to be "increasingly marred by violence and intimidation of voters and INEC officials, primarily by party supporters". It reported that approximately 145 people were killed in election-related violence in 2019, higher than the estimated 100 killed during the 2015 general election. [51] As deadly as the elections of 2015 and 2019 were, they improved on the previous standard. The enhancements in security over these two election cycles, which were primarily a product of concerted efforts by domestic and international partners, make the violence of 2011 seem much further in the past than it actually is. Complacency in the run-up to the next election could lead to a revival of past electoral instability. Unfortunately, the 2023 election has more in common with that of 2011 than it does with either 2015 or 2019.

For example, in the 2019 election, the main candidates, Buhari and Abubakar, were both Fulani Muslims hailing from the north. This dynamic helped de-escalate tensions in the wake of the election. Likewise, in 2015, former President Jonathan's concession of the election even before the final result was declared helped to avoid the violent scenes of 2011. Although the two main contenders for president in the 2023 election, Tinubu and Abubakar, are both Muslim, they don't share the same tribal and regional similarities as Buhari and Abubakar did. Furthermore, the upcoming presidential election has two additional serious candidates, Peter Obi, a Christian from the South East, and Rabi'u Kwankwaso, a Muslim from the North West, both of whose supporters are ardent and ideologically loyal. Unless concerted efforts are made to maintain peace and ensure politicians respect the outcome of the election, 2023 may see a post-election period more similar to 2011 than to 2019.

To complicate matters, the APC's "Muslim-Muslim" ticket – seen as a violation of Nigeria's unwritten political convention, which recommends that occupants of the two highest offices in the land should come from different regions and religions – is causing concern in Christian quarters. A number of Christian organisations and leaders, including the Christian Association of Nigeria and several senior members of the ruling party who are Christian, have denounced this "ungodly" ticket as unfair. They have also called on Christians not to vote for APC candidate Tinubu and his running mate Shettima, declaring it "unchristian" to do so. [52] Religious rhetoric could intensify in the run-up to the 2023 election, with the old theory that the ruling party is an "Islamic party" likely to be advanced once again. [53] Even though the main opposition candidate, Abubakar, is also Muslim, he has always been portrayed by his supporters – as well as his opponents – as "pro-south" and "pro-Christian". Thus, the 2023 contest may be framed as a competition or even a clash between Islam and Christianity.

This narrative will further polarise an already-divided country and may cause election-related violence. Religion has historically been misused by some Nigerian politicians, but the APC's same-faith ticket has given "agents of division" something tangible to brandish in 2023. To avert this, all candidates must work with religious groups and commit to fair treatment of all communities if they win. Politicians must shun

incitement to violence, and those interested in peaceful elections in Nigeria should work with pastors, imams and other religious leaders to caution their followers against the incendiary messages of unscrupulous politicians.

On 29 September 2022, all the major candidates for the presidency committed to a peaceful campaign in the lead-up to the 2023 election when they signed an accord championed by the National Peace Committee (NPC). [54] This represents a step in the right direction, but the NPC should further ensure peace through working with domestic and international partners to set up a mechanism that will make certain this agreement is respected in practice and by reprimanding any candidates who violate it. Furthermore, this kind of peace agreement should be extended to the states of the federation, so that campaigns for governors and state legislature may be covered.

The Challenge of Political Thuggery

The use of political thugs to disrupt and influence the outcome of elections has been a feature of Nigerian politics since the country returned to a democratic form of government in 1999. Political thugs are typically recruited or hired by local politicians or party officials who often finance and orchestrate their sometimes-violent manoeuvres to intimidate political opponents, steal or destroy ballot boxes, and harass voters, election staff, journalists and election observers. The gangs that serve as political thugs are known by different names in different states: "Kalare" in Gombe State; "Yan Daukar Amarya" in Adamawa State; "Yan Sara Suka" in Bauchi State; "Area Boys" in Lagos State; "Egbesu" in Bayelsa State; and "Bakassi Boys" in Abia State. [55] Politicians who employ these gangs, whose members are often young, village hunters or addicted to drugs, pay small wages per "disruptive operation". In return, the politicians are rewarded by leaders with government contracts, political appointments and immunity from punishment.

While this phenomenon is waning in some states, it is still a concern in many other parts of the country. The EU Election Observation Mission for the 2019 election reported "organised intimidation" of voters, violence and other misconduct in Kano by "groups of youths with clubs and machetes" while "people with party agent tags harassed voters". Political thuggery has escalated over the past four years in Kano and taken a new dimension, with clashes between thugs operating for different politicians in the same political party. [56] Both Kano State's ruling APC party and their main opponent, the NNPP, have publicly stated [57] they would use thugs in the upcoming election, as the APC did in 2019. This sets the stage for an environment of violence and instability.

Kano is not the only state showing early signs of violent political thuggery in the run-up to the 2023 election. Last January, the Nigerian Army arrested 98 armed thugs reportedly headed for Ekiti State in South West Nigeria to disrupt the PDP's primary election to nominate a candidate for governor. In June

2021, political thugs disrupted a collection of Permanent Voters' Cards, ID cards that enable registered voters to participate in elections, in the Ilesa West Local Government Area of Osun State. This was immediately followed by thugs vandalising election materials and firing gunshots into the air; scenes that triggered a wave of chaos that led voters to disperse. [58] Earlier in June 2021, the police arrested 24 hoodlums suspected to have been hired by a 2023 senatorial candidate in Nasarawa State. They were travelling with dangerous weapons and bulletproof vests. [59] On 9 November, PDP's presidential rally was attacked by political thugs during Abubakar's campaign visit to the city of Maiduguri, with more than 70 people injured and 70 vehicles damaged. [60] The attack, which was disputed by the police but verified by several news outlets, reportedly killed one person [61] and has been described by Abubakar as a violation of NPC's peace accord. [62] These incidents offer a window into what appears to be a contingent of competitive politicians seeking to mobilise gangs and hoodlums to harass and pressure opponents, make voters fearful and commit electoral malpractice in the lead-up to the 2023 election.

The Compound Effect of Misinformation and Disinformation on Social Media

Since 2011, social media has played an increasing role in Nigeria's political campaigns, with candidates and their supporters using major public platforms including Twitter, Meta (Facebook) and YouTube to spread campaign messages and negative election adverts. Other stakeholders such as the INEC, civil-society organisations and political parties have also used these platforms for election-related communication purposes. Similarly, the messaging platform WhatsApp played a "more central role in political parties' ground game" in 2019 than it had previously, with the ruling and main opposition parties each establishing and overseeing networks of locally embedded WhatsApp groups across the country. [63] There is no doubt that social media has contributed to Nigeria's democratisation and citizen participation in politics. However, its potential to spread fake news, conspiracy theories and mis- and disinformation are glaring and have the potential to further fan the flames of division and violence.

In the 2019 election, for example, social-media platforms including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube were used to spread false and misleading information in a "deliberate and tactical attempt to mislead voters". [64] WhatsApp, too, was used to spread fake news that promoted the political interests of its authors and undermined those of their opponents. One such fabricated story widely shared in the run-up to the 2019 election alleged that President Buhari had died and been replaced by a lookalike from Sudan named Jubril. This story became so pervasive on Nigerian social media and encrypted messaging services that President Buhari was compelled to publicly deny the accusations, stating "it's the real me" at a town hall in Poland three months before the election. [65] This incident is an example of the role disinformation can play in shaping narratives, especially during elections.

The reach and influence of social media have grown ever larger in the years since the 2019 election. It will play a pivotal role in the 2023 election, in terms of positive political communication and in terms of its ability to spread misinformation and disinformation. For example, fake stories and photos falsely claiming that Shettima is a Boko Haram sympathiser have been shared on Twitter. Photos of Shettima, who is a former Borno State governor and incumbent senator, posing alongside a Fulani community were published by anonymous Twitter accounts as evidence of Shettima "flexing with Boko Haram". [66] A fact check by two credible independent organisations found that the claim is false and that the photo was of Shettima visiting a community where he built a school. [67] Similarly, claims that the presidential candidate of the APC was seriously ill or even dead intensified on social media to the point that Tinubu was forced to post a video of his workout to prove that he had not "died" or "withdrawn". [68]

Social-media observers have since noted with concern an explosion of new Twitter accounts between June and September 2022. The Abuja-based Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, for example, claimed that between 70 and 80 per cent of the Twitter followers for all frontrunner presidential candidates are in fact fake accounts and "bots" created to "spread information disorder" during the 2023 election. False or misleading information spread on social media will ultimately strain coexistence and sow seeds for future violence. According to the BBC, false information spread on Facebook is "triggering communal violence in central Nigeria". [69] As evidenced by the aftermath of the 2020 US presidential election, when disinformation spread on social media fuelled the attack of the US Capitol that disrupted a session of Congress in January 2021, fake news can threaten even the most advanced democracies.

The Dilemma of Deploying Security Forces for Election Monitoring

The history of violence in Nigerian states – and amid federal elections – has meant huge numbers of police officers and soldiers are systematically deployed to secure election apparatuses, protect officials and monitor the conduct of elections. For example, the police deployed more than 35,000 personnel to Kogi State and more than 31,000 to Bayelsa State to securitise the election of governors in November 2019; 34,000 personnel were sent to Anambra State for its polls in November 2021. [70] This is in addition to huge numbers of soldiers and other law-enforcement personnel deployed to safeguard each state's out-of-season electoral processes in both years. Securitising the electoral process and protecting election officials and citizens is of the utmost priority. However, the deployment of security and law-enforcement officials to specific areas for election monitoring may inadvertently provide criminal gangs, terrorist groups and separatist militias operating in other geographies the space to rebuild their ranks and orchestrate and launch more attacks.

Additionally, new security challenges mean Nigeria cannot afford to deploy a contingent of security personnel as large as the ones deployed for recent state elections in Kogi and Bayelsa or during the last

general election of 2019. The country has an estimated 350,000 police officers and around 223,000 armed forces, who are thinly spread in active deployment to at least 30 of the country's 36 states. [71] Redeploying large numbers of security forces to election monitoring may result in troops being moved away from fighting acute security threats such as jihadists, bandits and violent separatists. It is therefore imperative to strike a careful balance between election monitoring and safeguarding citizens on the one hand and fighting criminal and terrorist groups on the other.

Conclusion

Peaceful, credible elections are vitally important, not just for Nigeria's future stability, but also for the continent's wider adoption of democratic process. A violence-ridden voting season could undermine the progress Nigeria has made since 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule, and it will boost the forces of division and instability. In the months leading up to the election, Boko Haram and IPOB are likely to attack election infrastructure, materials and officials while bandits may target officials for kidnap-for-ransom. These groups' activities are likely to disenfranchise millions of people who have been displaced from the villages in which they are registered to vote. It will also mean that campaigning activity and the holding of elections in villages could be compromised as a result of safety concerns.

Professor Mahmood Yakubu, chairman of the INEC, acknowledged recently that security concerns are a "challenge now more widespread" than during the last two elections. He also explained how the threat "keeps mutating" and shifting from place to place. [72] Furthermore, the election itself could be a trigger for riots, violence and community clashes, with some politicians using political thugs to harass voters, journalists and observers, and even commit electoral malpractice. Election-related fake news, misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories will intensify in the run-up to the election, and these illicit tactics could damage the overall credibility of the 2023 election while deepening social polarisation and fanning the flames of disorder.

While it is impossible to completely eradicate these threats, Nigeria and its regional and international partners can move to minimise violence, division and practices that could undermine the election. We recommend the following steps:

- **Expand efforts to liberate or secure affected villages and towns:** Nigerian security, law-enforcement and intelligence agencies should use the few months left before the February election to push back violent groups and secure vulnerable communities as well as liberate those already seized. This will require a renewed and sustained focus on terrorist groups and criminals as well as tightened border security to prevent the inflow of arms, ammunition and hard drugs that facilitate these illegal activities.

- **Balance the allocation of security forces for election monitoring and the continued containment of violent groups:** Nigerian security and law-enforcement agencies should carefully balance the need to redeploy troops and resources for election monitoring with the continued focus on containing violent groups across the country. While the presence of police and other security personnel at polling units is important to ensure a peaceful election, redeploying troops from the frontline will give terrorists and criminals more breathing space and allow them to attack frontline communities.

- **The INEC and the police should maintain impartiality:** Violence often starts with allegations of bias

and rigging that involve the electoral body and the police. The reputation of INEC and, to an extent, the police, for maintaining neutrality during elections has improved over the past few election cycles, but this professionalism needs to be maintained and adopted by other bodies closely connected to the election.

- **The INEC should expand its voting system for internally displaced people to ensure their participation in the election:** To this end, registration of internally displaced people (IDPs) should continue up until the election. Both camp- and community-based IDPs should be allowed to vote in all elections, not just the presidential one. To ensure transparency and reduce the allegations of rigging, the INEC should work closely with political parties, humanitarian organisations and civil society in developing and implementing its voting strategy for these people.

- **A major peace accord should be expanded and respected:** The NPC's peace pact for presidential candidates should be cascaded down to candidates for governorships and parliamentary seats. To achieve this, the NPC should partner with community-based and civil-society organisations (CSOs) in each state. In addition to encouraging politicians to respect the pacts by running peaceful, issue-based and national unity-oriented campaigns as well as the election outcome, the NPC should set up a central system for reporting violations, naming violators and, potentially, prosecuting them. Western and regional governments, organisations and the media should support such an initiative.

- **Tech companies should monitor election-related fake news:** Social-media platforms especially – Twitter, Meta (Facebook), YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram – should step up efforts to identify and deal with election-related misinformation, disinformation and conspiracies as well as intercepting violent or intimidating messages. This will require hiring and training local experts who not only speak the languages in which content is published, but who also understand the context. Nigeria's Western partners and pro-democracy groups, as well as the country's communication ministry, should engage with tech companies to achieve this.

- **Raise awareness on the responsible use of social media among young people:** CSOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) should educate young people on the responsible use of social media, also training journalists and youth on how to spot and expose election-related fake news, misinformation and disinformation. Organisations such as the Centre for Democracy and Development, Centre for Information Technology and Development, and Organisation for Community Civic Engagement, which are already working on these issues, should be supported to expand their activities while others should be empowered to reach across the breadth of the country. CSOs and CBOs should also discourage young people from being used as agents of violence by educating them about the risks of doing so and engaging them productively on election day, for instance through providing them with short-term paid work.

- **The media should counter election-related fake news:** The local services of the BBC – BBC Hausa, Igbo and Pidgin – and those of the Voice of America, Deutsche Welle and France International should create teams or dedicate resources to identifying and exposing election-related disinformation and misinformation. These outlets are trusted by locals and their impartiality in the elections gives them an advantage in helping to fight fake news. Credible local radio stations, television stations, newspapers and online sites should be supported to do the same. This will require

funding and training from pro-democracy groups such as the US-based National Endowment for Democracy and the MacArthur Foundation.

- **The international community should mobilise in support of peaceful and credible elections:** The United States, United Kingdom, European Union and rest of the international community should mobilise to send a clear message in support of peaceful elections in Nigeria, communicating clearly that electoral malpractice and/or violence will be unacceptable. Western governments and organisations can also help support Nigerian media and organisations to undertake best-practice election-related activities, and put pressure on big tech to effectively monitor their platforms.

- **Early warning, prevention and mitigation mechanisms should be developed:** CSOs and CBOs should be supported to develop tools for early reporting, prevention and mitigation of electoral violence. This mechanism can be coordinated by the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room that brings together more than 60 national and local organisations to share information, anticipate problems and respond rapidly. The Situation Room has monitored three Nigerian elections to date and, in 2023, should work with the NPC, security and intelligence agencies, and the media to ensure timely reporting and response.

- **Offenders should be swiftly prosecuted to serve as a deterrent:** Perpetrators of election violence, and those distributing dangerous fake news that violates Nigeria's Cybersecurity Act, Electoral Act or other relevant laws, should be prosecuted swiftly so that others are deterred. To achieve this, the recently established Nigerian police's Electoral Offences Desks should investigate and prosecute suspects quickly while Nigerian courts should process these cases at speed.

- **Religious and traditional leaders should advocate for peaceful elections:** Imams, pastors, emirs, chiefs and other traditional rulers have a big role to play in countering divisive election campaigns, the exploitation of religion by some politicians and the spread of fake news. As those who are closest to the people, these leaders should use their platforms to promote peaceful coexistence and civil contest.

Footnotes

1. ^ https://theconversation.com/why-west-africa-has-had-so-many-coups-and-how-to-prevent-more-176577

2. ^ https://guardian.ng/news/2023-inec-publishes-final-list-of-candidates/

3. ^ https://guardian.ng/news/2023-inec-publishes-final-list-of-candidates/

4. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/10/2023-inec-unveils-full-list-of-guber-state-assembly-candidates/

5. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/10/dogara-babachir-aggrieved-apc-christian-leaders-ditch-muslim-muslim-to-agree-on-consensus-candidate/

6. ^ https://dailytrust.com/breaking-pdp-crisis-worsens-as-g5-floats-new-group/

7. ^ https://www.sunnewsonline.com/over-12-million-nigerians-have-registered-to-vote-in-2023-poll-inec/; https://nairametrics.com/2022/08/02/top-10-states-with-the-highest-number-of-registered-voters-as-of-august-1-2022/

8. ^ https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/304715-2019-lagos-kano-top-list-of-registered-voters.html

9. ^ https://dailytrust.com/30-minutes-with-inec-chairman-professor-mahmood-yakubu

10. ^ https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/amid-nigerias-turmoil-election-could-alter-its-democracy

11. ^ https://guardian.ng/politics/inec-unveils-176846-polling-units-for-2023-elections/

12. ^ https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/468074-inec-creates-56872-new-polling-units-bans-voting-in-mosques-churches-palaces.html

13. ^ https://www.cfr.org/nigeria/nigeria-security-tracker/p29483

14. ^ https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria#displacement-data

15. ^ https://amp.france24.com/en/20150331-military-buhari-defeats-nigeria-goodluck-jonathan-presidential-vote; https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2019/02/26/africa/buhari-wins-nigeria-election-intl/index.html

16. ^ https://inecnigeria.org/elections/framework-regulations-for-idp-voting/

17. ^ https://mobile.twitter.com/officialpdpnig/status/1073650652860035072

18. ^ Abu Yusuf Muhammad ibn Yusuf, Hadhihi 'Aqīdatuna wa Manhaj Da'watina (Maktaba al-

Ghuraba 2009) 39 – 50.

19. ^ Author's interview with Isa Ali Pantami, January 2022.

20. ^ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfBXdcUy_lI

21. ^ https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31221545.amp

22. ^ Ibid.

23. ^ https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/03/28/nigeria-presidential-elections/70588026/

24. ^ https://institute.global/policy/how-boko-haram-trying-disrupt-nigerias-2019-election

25. ^ https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/02/23/boko-haram-attacks-nigeria-polling-day-maiduguri-geidam/

26. ^ https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/4/21/isil-group-claims-nigeria-bombing-says-about-30-killed-or-hurt

27. ^ https://dailytrust.com/ansaru-militants-take-over-kaduna-communities-ban-political-activities/

28. ^ https://africanarguments.org/2021/02/the-most-worrying-aspect-of-the-kankara-kidnapping/

29. ^ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gB_ByKxePEY

30. ^ https://dailytrust.com/i-watched-as-six-of-my-siblings-were-killed-turji-justifies-cause

31. ^ https://dailytrust.com/why-we-took-up-arms-turji-other-bandit-kingpins-speak-in-explosive-trust-tv-documentary; https://dailytrust.com/in-rare-access-to-enclave-bandits-speak-on-ravaging-insecurity

32. ^ https://ctc.westpoint.edu/northwestern-nigeria-a-jihadization-of-banditry-or-a-banditization-of-jihad/

33. ^ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRnYln2STFQ

34. ^ "Saurari Maganar Waya Da Dan Ta'adda Dogo Gide Akan Qaidodin Sakin Yaran FGC Birnin Yauri (Telephone conversation with the terrorist Dogo Gide on the conditions for the release of FGC Birnin Yauri students)", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRnYln2STFQ last accessed on 15 December 2021. Video now removed by YouTube, but a full transcript is on file with the author.

35. ^ https://dailytrust.com/10-months-after-11-yauri-schoolgirls-still-in-captivity

36. ^ https://saharareporters.com/2020/12/13/nnamdi-kanu-launches-eastern-security-network-says-not-different-amotekun-miyetti-allah

37. ^ https://dailytrust.com/stop-enabling-ipobs-terror

38. ^ https://twitter.com/MaziNnamdiKanu/status/1408756989505724419; Islamization & [a] Fulanisation agenda

39. ^ https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/07/30/ipob-declares-sit-at-home-every-monday-until-kanus-release/

40. ^ https://humanglemedia.com/sit-at-home-1-inside-the-killings-destructions-by-ipob-militants-in-southeast-nigeria/

41. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/09/sit-at-home-mayhem-as-gunfire-rocks-schools-towns-cities/

42. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/12/monday-sit-at-home-s-east-killings-continue-as-commercial-activities-resume/

43. ^ https://twitter.com/inecnigeria/status/1394998924935671816

44. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/10/anambra-rethink-7-day-sit-at-home-directive-ohanaeze-begs-ipob/

45. ^ https://urambled.com/click.php?key=vd22lhp2jzva4457jc95&SUB_ID_SHORT=15769787e02b943d58dd126b5793020f&cost=&PLAC

46. ^ https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=351790503592668; https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/525327-trending-gunmen-release-video-threaten-to-disrupt-2023-elections-in-south-east.html

47. ^ https://www.barrons.com/news/five-killed-in-attack-on-nigerian-senator-s-convoy-01662993907

48. ^ https://punchng.com/gunmen-attack-enugu-labour-party-meeting/

49. ^ https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/196-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-i-the-jos-crisis.pdf

50. ^ https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800; https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-violence-idUSTRE74F71S20110516; https://www.usip.org/publications/2011/08/nigerias-2011-elections-best-run-most-violent

51. ^ https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2020744/nigeria_2019_eu_eom_final_report-web.pdf

52. ^ https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/555114-muslim-muslim-ticket-dont-waste-your-votes-for-apc-ex-speaker-dogara.html

53. ^ https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/136116/apc-is-seen-by-nigerians-as-islamic-party-we-have-to-do-so.html

54. ^ https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/556744-2023-atiku-obi-others-sign-peace-accord-as-tinubu-is-absent.html

55. ^ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326088820_EFFECT_OF_POLITICAL_THUGGERY_ON_SUSTAINABLE_DEMOCRACY_IN_NIGERIA

56. ^ https://humanglemedia.com/thuggery-hurting-political-activities-ahead-of-nigerias-general-elections/

57. ^ YouTube, 24 December 2020, KWANKWASIYYA TV. "KWANKWASO INTERVIEW: Sen Kwankwaso angrily responded to Abdullahi Abbas's thuggish comments regarding 2023." - HIRAR KWANKWASO: Cikin fishi Sen Kwankwaso yayi martani akan kalaman Abdullahi Abbas 2023 ta dabance - YouTube (in Hausa).

58. ^ https://www.icirnigeria.org/political-thugs-disrupt-collection-of-pvcs-in-osun-community/; https://guardian.ng/news/suspected-thugs-disrupt-pvc-collection-in-osun/

59. ^ https://saharareporters.com/2022/06/07/police-arrest-24-political-thugs-nasarawa-create-electoral-offences-desk

60. ^ https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/11/10/74-hospitalised-70-vehicles-damaged-as-thugs-attack-atikus-campaign-in-maiduguri/

61. ^ https://www.channelstv.com/2022/11/11/one-death-over-100-injured-in-attack-on-atikus-convoy-borno-pdp-guber-candidate/

62. ^ https://dailytrust.com/attack-on-my-convoy-a-violation-of-peace-accord-atiku/

63. ^ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342945907_WHATSAPP_FAKE_NEWS_AND_AFRICAN_ELECTIONS_BETWEEN_POLITICAL_TURMOIL_A

64. ^ https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejotmas/article/view/222663

65. ^ https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/03/its-real-me-nigerian-president-denies-dying-and-being-replaced-by-clone

66. ^ https://cddwestafrica.org/fact-check-did-shettima-dine-with-boko-haram-terrorists/

67. ^ Ibid.

68. ^ https://dailytrust.com/i-am-not-dead-tinubu-breaks-silence

69. ^ https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/nigeria_fake_news

70. ^ https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/10/anambra-poll-massive-security-deployment-can-affect-turnout-but-igp/

71. ^ https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/06/09/nigerias-school-kidnapping-crisis-is-even-worse-than-you-think/; https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1

72. ^ https://dailytrust.com/30-minutes-with-inec-chairman-professor-mahmood-yakubu

FOLLOW US

facebook.com/instituteglobal
twitter.com/instituteGC
instagram.com/institutegc

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@institute.global

FIND OUT MORE
INSTITUTE.GLOBAL