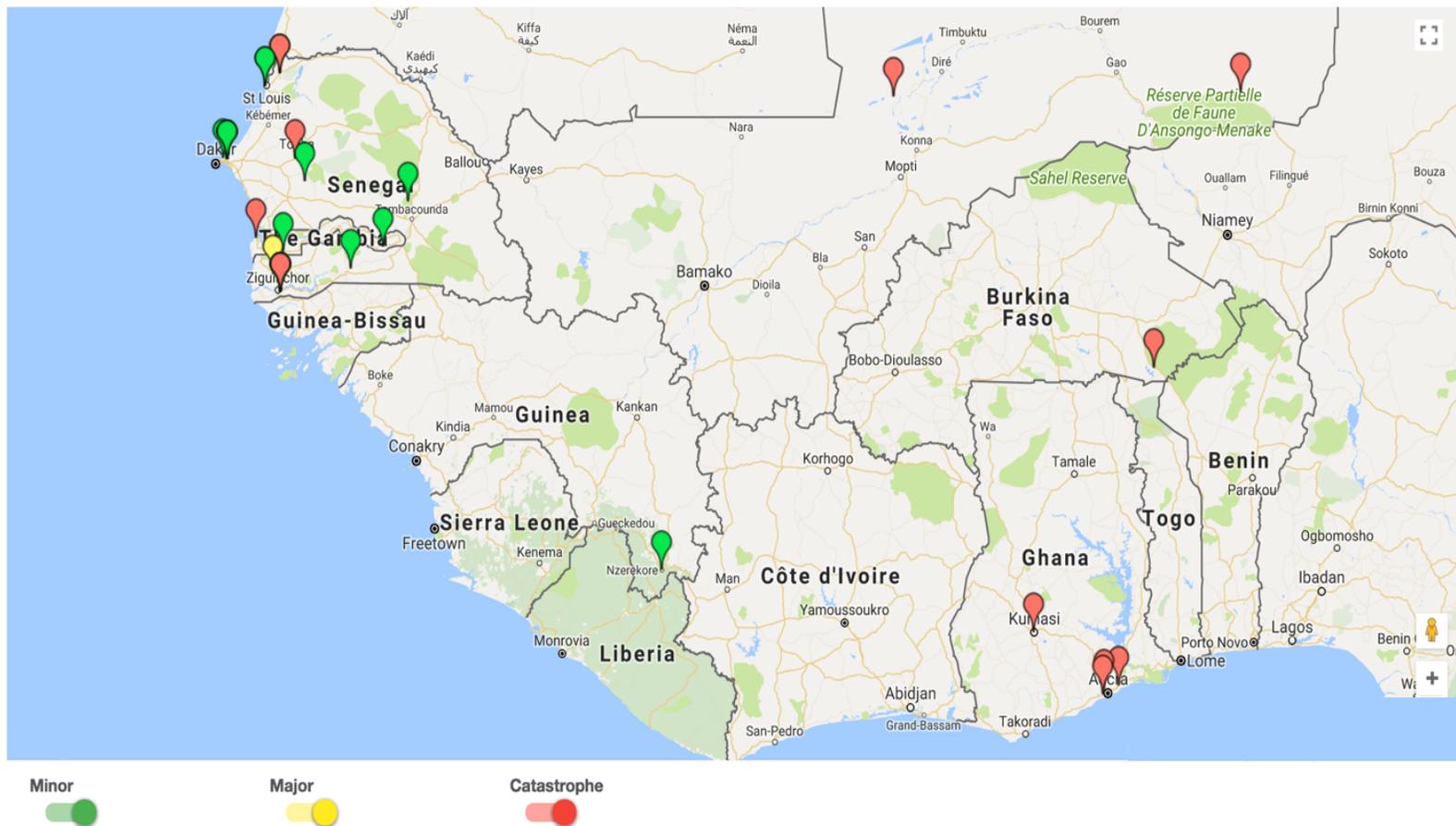


WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING OUTLOOK FOR 2018

Potential Flashpoints & Simmering Conflicts

📍 2018 WEST AFRICA INCIDENT REPORT

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF INCIDENTS: 32



WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)

Building Relationships for peace



INTRODUCTION

In 2017, West Africa made great strides in the promotion of democratic rule and maintaining political stability. With the enforced departure of Gambian former President Yahya Jammeh in January 2017, the West African region had for the first time since 1962 no sitting president who seized power through a military coup and transformed himself to a civilian Head of State.

This is a great achievement for a region which was synonymous with military coups. The West Africa region was the first to stage a military coup in Africa in January 1963 with Togo as the theatre where it unfolded.

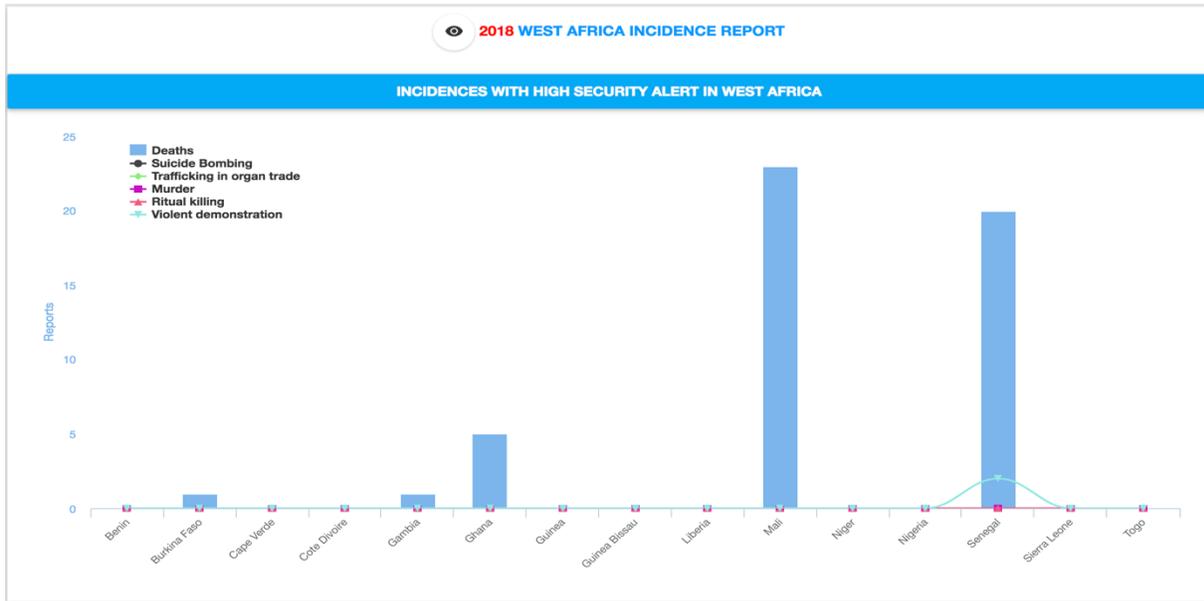
Furthermore, the West Africa region is poised to become the first regional bloc in Africa to have two-term presidential limit as a constitutional norm. Presently, Burkina Faso, The Gambia and Togo are the only member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) without a constitutionally mandated two-term presidential limit.

Nevertheless, both Burkina Faso and Togo have revised their Constitutions since July 2017 and September 2017 respectively to re-introduce the presidential term limit, while the Gambia National Assembly passed a law in December 2017 establishing a Constitutional Review Commission to oversee the drafting of a new constitution in 2018. It is likely that before the end of 2018 all three countries would have new constitutions with provisions for two-term presidential limit.

The constitutional entrenchment of a two-term presidential limit will be a great achievement and will go a long way in contributing towards the enhancement of political stability across West Africa. This will mark the end of the era of West African Presidents trying to perpetuate their stay in power.

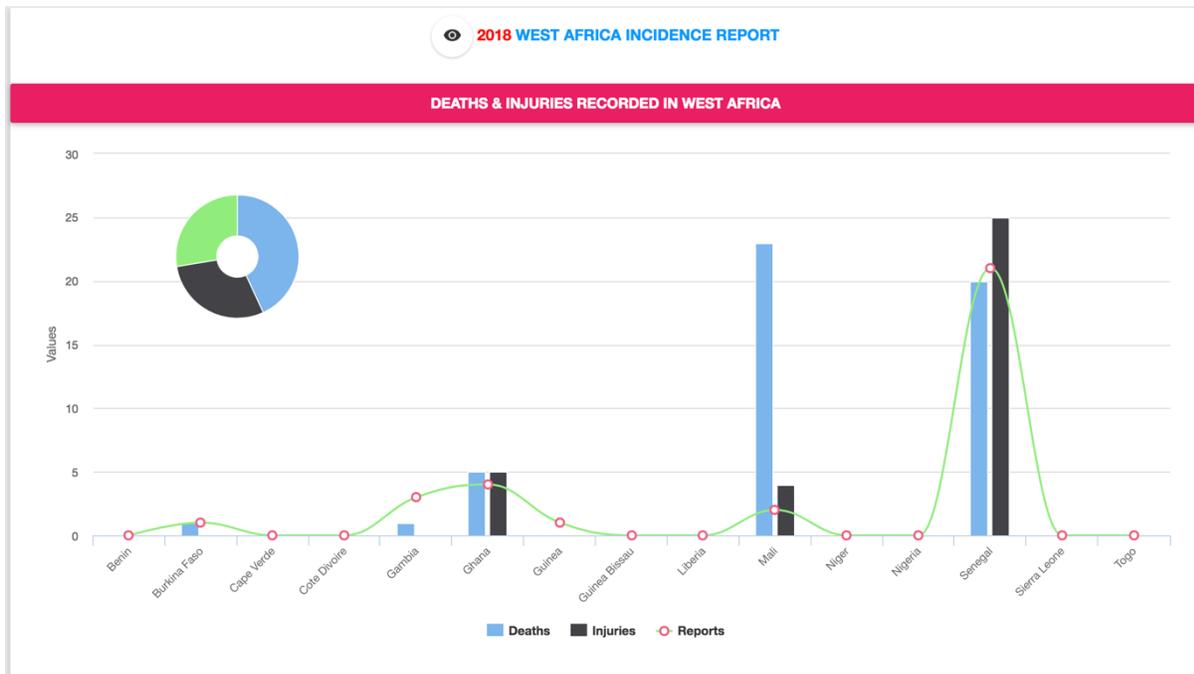
Much as the ECOWAS region is making progress, there is more to be done to consolidate the political gains made over the years: addressing gender-based violence, resolving ongoing conflicts and preventing future outbreaks of violence that undermine socio-economic development.

This report outlines potential flashpoints and challenges facing political stability and human security including the gender dimension in 2018 across the ECOWAS region that require closer monitoring and early intervention to manage and contain them.



Source: WANEP NEWS©

As a long-term strategy to win the war against terrorist groups, governments need to earn the trust, support and collaboration of the local communities. The involvement and active participation of the local communities is invaluable to the overall counter-terrorism strategy and operations in the Sahel-Sahara region.



Source: WANEP NEWS©

BENIN

President Patrice Talon in his first year in office failed to implement a key electoral pledge, which is to revise the Constitution to limit the mandate of the president to a single six-year term. Following the failure of his constitutional reform, Talon could likely run for a second term in 2021 although he had previously promised to govern for one term only.

While the Republic of Benin has made significant progress in its democratisation process including successive peaceful transfers of power, the country is struggling to deal effectively with regular industrial actions in the public sector. To deal with these economically-debilitating strikes, the government risks restricting the civil and labour rights of workers.

Political Stability Challenges: In March 2016, Patrice Talon, the businessman-turned-politician, became the country's second independent candidate to win a presidential election. Former President Boni Yayi was the first when he won in 2006. President Talon was a key financial backer of Yayi during the 2006 and 2011 presidential campaign. However, the cordial relations between the two turned sour in 2012 when Talon went into exile in France following accusations of tax evasion and plot to assassinate the president by Yayi's administration. ECOWAS has intervened to mediate between Talon and Yayi to avoid any retribution by the latter.

Another political challenge facing the country is the need to revise the Constitution. Yayi failed in his attempt as he was accused of trying to amend the Constitution to extend his stay in power. Despite the political capital of his successor, Talon has also failed when in April 2017 the National Assembly could not pass the revised Constitution as the president got 60 instead of 63 votes needed in the 83-member parliament.

Human Security Challenges: In December 2017, the National Assembly in Benin passed a law that forbids protests or demonstrations by security, justice and health workers. One of the reasons given for such a law to be enacted is that those sectors provide essential services that cannot be discontinued or abandoned due to strike actions by employees. This law has been widely criticized by the public, workers and trade unions in the country. The unions are

mobilizing support to denounce such restrictions to a fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the constitution.

Recommendations

- This is the opportune time to undertake constitutional reform in Benin to strengthen its democratic institutions including the independence of the judiciary. President Talon can withdraw controversial proposals such as his single six-year term for president and the immunity for lawmakers.
- The government should hold dialogue with key/critical sectors where industrial actions are now prohibited by law. The banning of industrial actions without a proper dialogue could only aggravate the situation and increase animosity between the president and public-sector workers.

BURKINA FASO

In 2018, President Roch March Christian Kabore will decide whether to hold a referendum or use the Parliament to adopt the draft revised constitution. The opposition and civil groups are likely to resist any attempt by President Kabore to use the Parliament to adopt the new constitution. In terms of security, the persistent attacks of Islamist armed groups in the North continue to threaten the peace and security of the country.

Political Stability Challenges: In July 2017, the Commission created to review the constitution submitted a revised constitution to President Kabore. The revised constitution has now been validated, awaiting its final adoption most probably by a referendum in 2018. The new constitution will replace the 1991 Constitution introduced by exiled former president Blaise Compaore. The controversial Article 37 that was introduced by Compaore to allow him to run for a third term has been replaced with a new article. The new article 59 stipulates a two-term limit of five years each.

The new constitution also states that parliamentarians should be limited to three terms in office whether successively or not. Also, it was made clear that President Kabore only has one

more term in the event that he is re-elected. This is to prevent another political crisis as to whether his first term begins or not after the adoption of the new constitution.

Human Security Challenges: Islamist groups will seek to carry out further attacks in Burkina Faso as part of their broader plans to expand and maintain their operations in the Sahel-Sahara region.

Since 2016, Burkina Faso has come under attacks by Islamist armed groups based in neighbouring Mali and Niger. Moreover, the country's first home-grown jihadist group, Ansarul Islam (helpers of Islam in Arabic) emerged in December 2016¹. The indigenous Islamist armed group, Ansarul Islam is led by Malam Ibrahim Dicko, a radicalised religious leader from the ethnic minority Peul/Fulani from the Northern Town of Djibo. Dicko was a former member of MUJAO and was captured by French forces in Tessalit in 2013 during "Operation Serval". Ansarul Islam has carried a series of attack in Northern Burkina Faso, killing in total over 50 people since 2016².

In 2017, Soum province in the North witnessed the closure of schools as teachers feared for their lives following a series of Islamist attacks. As a result, educational activities were adversely affected with more than 2000 school children no longer having access to education in the area³. More broadly, the impacts of the growing insecurity are not limited to only the disruption of educational activities but also exacerbate socio-cultural and economic challenges such as child marriage, low economic empowerment for women, sexual and gender based violence in these areas. Moreover, Governments' expenditures will be skewed in favour of security at the expense of education, health and other social services. In normal times, women and girls especially in the rural areas are neglected with little or no access to education. Many girls are led into early and forced marriage as a substitute for formal education. As a result of lack of education as well as poor health services, women are handicapped financially, economically and politically.

¹ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/burkina-faso/254-social-roots-jihadist-violence-burkina-fasos-north>

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-39279050>

³ Source: Press Briefing by the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso, July 2017 (WHERE IS THE LINK TO THIS PRESS BRIEFING). (Accessed, 11 July 2017)

Efforts to counter extremist threats in Burkina Faso are evolving. However, most of the initiatives have focused more on terrorism⁴. The country has developed a Counterterrorism Strategy focusing on addressing terrorist activities along its northern border. The country is also contributing troops within the framework of the G5 Sahel cooperation against violent extremism and terrorism. On the other hand, national and international civil society groups and partners are engaging with the local communities to design and develop frameworks for constructive dialogue and collective response to violent extremism.

Recommendations

- Burkina Faso needs the financial and material support from regional and international partners to deal with the threats posed by Islamist armed groups. If not, the educational and economic activities in the north including gold mining operations will be significantly badly affected.
- The G5 counter-terrorism force needs to be operational in earnest to contain the marauding militants.
- The solution to combat violent extremism should not be limited to military actions. There is need for strong and active engagement by the local communities including trust building while interacting with the security forces.
- The government should ensure the active engagement of civil society and political parties in the constitutional reform process to secure the buy-in of the general populace.
- Burkina Faso must review the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 taking into account the new challenges and involve women in the National Security Forum for the development of the National Security Policy.

⁴ WANEP Research Report (2017) on Current Dynamics and Challenges of Violent Extremism in West Africa.

COTE D'IVOIRE

The security and political stability of Cote d'Ivoire is under threat both from within the ruling coalition and the rebellious army. The country's (fragile) stability came under enormous pressure and stress in 2017 both from within the ruling coalition and the military. Given the unresolved political and security issues, the Ivorian polity will be further tested in the course of 2018.

The Ivorian government's plan to reform the military and transform the ruling coalition to a registered political party will determine the future stability of the country.

Political Stability Challenges: President Alassane Ouattara and members of the ruling coalition, Rally of the Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP) are planning to turn the coalition into a unified political party. This means that all six political parties forming RHDP will cease to exist as individual parties. The Rally for Republicans (RDR) and the Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) are the two main leading parties of the coalition.

President Ouattara of RDR and former president Henri Konan Bedie of PDCI set up a committee in December 2017 to materialise the plan of turning the ruling coalition into a single party. However, the race to succeed President Alassane Ouattara when his final term expires in 2020 is driving political infighting within the ruling coalition.

Former President Bedie has categorically stated that the next presidential candidate of the ruling coalition should either come from PDCI or they will take a unilateral action to field in their own candidate for the 2020 presidential contest.

Furthermore, supporters of Guillaume Soro want him to succeed President Ouattara in 2020. Soro is the president of the National Assembly and current Vice President of RDR. Notwithstanding, President Ouattara is believed to have his own preferred choice to succeed him.

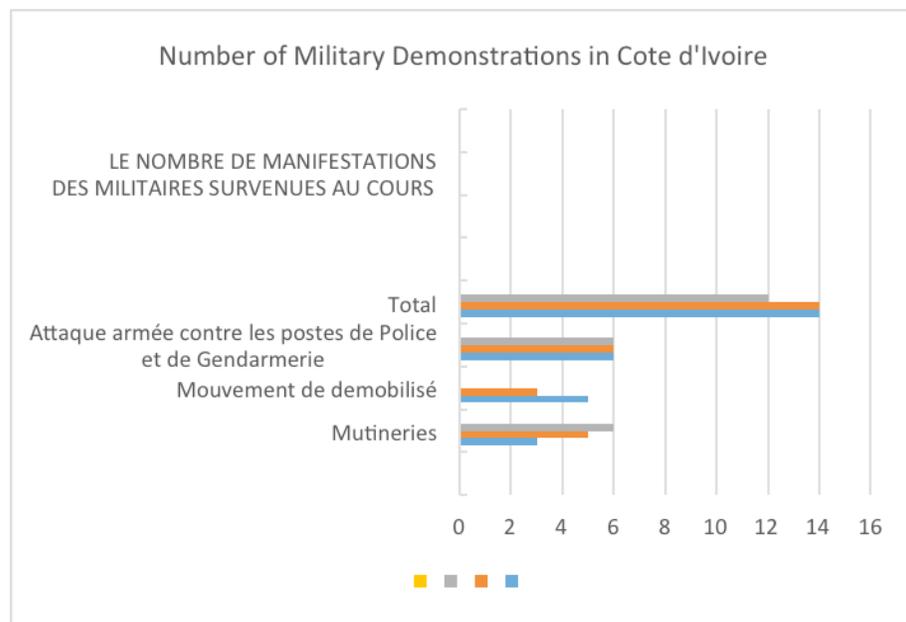
The incompatibility of the choices of the three main leaders of RHDP does not bode well for the future political stability of the country. Besides, the relationship between President Ouattara and Soro are strained. A complete breakdown in relations between Ouattara and Guillaume

Soro, president of the National Assembly will further heighten the country’s political instability threats.

Human Security Challenges: The Ivorian security remains precarious even after the end of the last civil war in 2011 that brought Ouattara to power and took former President Laurent Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

President Ouattara is now planning to reform the army before he leaves office in 2020. Until the military is reformed and substantially reduced, the country’s security will remain under threat.

In the course of 2017, Cote d’Ivoire experienced a spate of security incidents. Former rebel fighters integrated into the army staged large scale mutinies in Abidjan and Bouake, demanding



outstanding payments of bonuses. The mutinies demonstrated the little control the government had over a particular faction of the army, especially rebel fighters that were later integrated into the national army.

In addition to the mutinies, security forces discovered a cache of arms in May 2017 at the residence of Souleymane Kamagate Kone, the Chief of Protocol of Soro and in September 2017 in a location at Abobo. The arms included rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), several machine guns, ammunitions and explosives as well as some military fatigues.

Furthermore, a series of raids took place on police posts and stations nationwide from June to August 2017 with the seizure of sizeable arms and ammunition. The criminal raids were also

extended to jailbreaks at Abidjan in August 2017 and from the Katiola prison in the central part of the country in September 2017.

Islamist armed groups could take advantage of the lack of discipline of the military and rising criminality in the country to launch another deadly attack on the scale of the March 2016 one at Grand Bassam beach which resulted in the death over 16 people.

Regarding gender-based violence, women and girls continue to face the scourge of national and international human trafficking as well as early and forced marriage. Even though efforts are being made to address the problem, little progress has been made so far.

Recommendations

- Reforming the security sector, in particular the military, is of paramount importance to ensure the future stability of the country. This process was not given the attention it deserves when President Ouattara took over after the civil war ended in April 2011.
- In addition to reforming the security sector, the government needs also to revitalise the reconciliation process in the country. The country remains polarised on political, ethnic and regional lines. Without a genuine reconciliation, the country will hardly move on from the traumatic experience of the civil wars.
- The government must also pay attention to the fight against gender-based violence by reducing the vulnerability of women and girls through economic and political empowerment.

THE GAMBIA

The Gambia's hard-won fledgling democracy and tenuous security situation is under threat. The ruling coalition that ended the 22-years reign of President Yahya Jammeh is unravelling over a number of issues, in particular, whether President Adama Barrow should stay in office for three or five years.

On the other hand, the peaceful co-existence of local communities in The Gambia is also coming under threat from politically-motivated ethnic tensions between the ethnic-majority Mandinka and the ethnic-minority, Jola. If early mediatory intervention is not taken, the rising

inter-ethnic dispute could undermine The Gambia's long and enviable peaceful co-existence of local communities in the short term.

Political Stability Challenges: In January 2018, The Gambia marks the first anniversary of the enforced departure of President Yahya Jammeh, currently in exile in Equatorial Guinea. With the coalition government now in power, the issue of when President Barrow leaves office has resurfaced.

Constitutionally, President Barrow is meant to serve a five-year term. However, at the time of forming the coalition in the run-up to the 2nd December 2016 Presidential Elections, members of the coalition agreed that should they win the election, their presidential candidate should only serve for a three-year term to allow the organisation of fresh credible and transparent elections.

Last year, President Barrow intimated that he could probably do his five-year term. The first crack within the coalition clearly emerged over the Parliamentary Elections in April 2017. Instead of fielding candidates under the banner of the ruling coalition, the former opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) decided that each party should run on their own.

UDP, the leading party of the ruling coalition and the party of President Barrow, won the parliamentary majority. The ongoing political polarisation will intensify ahead of the Local Government Elections in April and May 2018.

Beside the growing political polarisation within the ruling coalition, the government is poised to overhaul the 1996 Constitution that could see the return of the two-term presidential limit and the removal of many draconian laws introduced by the Jammeh administration.

Another development that deserves keen observation is the trial of 12 soldiers of the Gambia Armed Forces (GAF) arrested between July to November 2017. They have appeared before a Court Martial, at the 1 Infantry Battalion in Yundum Barracks of West Coast Region. The accused officers are charged with nine counts of treason, concealment of treason, mutiny and defamation among others. They were alleged to be part of a group using WhatsApp social media platform to spread audio recordings to incite violence against the current government in contravention of Gambia Armed Forces Act⁵ (1984). It has been suggested that the trial will

⁵ Source: The Point Newspaper at: <http://www.thepoint.gm> (Accessed 23rd November 2017).

serve as a litmus test for the consolidation of the new government and also build public confidence in the credibility of the country's justice system.

Human Security Challenges: The security of The Gambia is largely guaranteed by the presence of the military troops of the ECOWAS Mission in The Gambia (ECOMIG), while the Gambian army is undergoing reorientation to serve the current administration.

In 2017, a series of violent incidents took place, resulting in injuries and deaths. In April 2017, Gambian soldiers stationed at Kanilai, the home village of Jammeh exchanged gun fire with ECOMIG forces, leading to injuries but no fatalities.

In June, security forces opened fire on protesters in Foni, resulting in the death of a protester from gunshot wound.

The police had a terrible record on crowd control under the Jammeh's regime. The current administration should discourage the use of similar approach against protestors. Under genuine democratic dispensation, organised demonstrations as well as sporadic protests do occur every now and then.

Further protests are likely in the course of 2018 especially in the Fonis where fear is running high among Jammeh's key political base that the current administration is out to oppress and impoverish them.

Recommendations

- Given the precarious security situation in the country, the mandate of ECOMIG should be extended beyond June 2018 until there is significant improvement in the security situation.
- There is the need for early mediatory intervention at all levels to resolve the polarisation within the ruling coalition as well as to arrest the rising politically-motivated inter-ethnic dispute between the Mandika and Jola political supporters. The Gambia's long and enviable peaceful co-existence of local communities should be preserved.
- The ongoing Court Marshal of 12 Gambian soldiers should follow due process for the ruling coalition to send a strong message that the era of miscarriage of justice under the

Jammeh administration is over. The human rights and dignity of these soldiers must be respected.

GHANA

Ghana's main challenges in 2018 is for the government to continue demonstrating its resolve to fight the scourge of corruption by passing the long-awaited Right to Information (RTI) bill as well as to deal with the herdsmen tension particularly in the Volta, Eastern and Ashanti regions.

Political Stability Challenges: Corruption is one obstacle towards the dispensation of justice as well as fair and adequate distribution of public resources. The Ghanaian judiciary was rocked with corruption scandal in 2015 that affected the reputation of the country. In December 2015, a number of senior judges and magistrates were forced to resign while others were dismissed following a thorough investigation by a journalist known as Anas Aremeyaw Anas with video evidence⁶. President Nana Akufo-Addo noted in March 2017 that the integrity of the judicial system was badly damaged on the back of Anas investigation⁷. To fight corruption and improve the image of the country's judiciary, the new government passed the Special Prosecutor Act and nominated the Special Prosecutor. However, the government has failed to pass the Right to Information (RTI) bill, which it promised to do in its first year. The bill has spent more than a decade since it was introduced in parliament. Journalists and civil groups want the bill to be passed and have argued that without it the special prosecutor would struggle to do its job.

Human Security Challenges: The dispute between local communities and herdsmen is worsening in the Northern and Ashanti Regions. The situation is getting to a point where police commander is ordering his men to shoot to kill herdsmen⁸. The "Operation Cow Leg" launched by the government comprising of military and police in Agogo has led to the killing of large number of cattle and driving herdsmen away. The Fulani communities have also complained

⁶ www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-35037318

⁷ www.citifmonline.com/2017/03/26/anas-expose-badly-damaged-integrity-of-judicial-service-nana-addo/

⁸ www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Agogo-commander-orders-shoot-to-kill-on-Fulani-herdsmen-617020

about the abuse and violation of their rights⁹. This is a sensitive issue that needs to be handled well for the promotion of peaceful co-existence.

Recommendations

- The government should expedite the passage of the RTI bill into law to send the message that it is serious in fighting the scourge of corruption in the public sector.
- Ghana and Nigeria with the support of the regional and international partners, should collaborate to address the challenges and enduring conflict between farmers and herders. The agro-pastoralist conflict is costing lives and destroying livelihoods. This senseless conflict should be brought to an end in the 21st century.

GUINEA

There is growing concern in Guinea over whether President Alpha Conde would try to amend the Constitution in a bid to have a third term in office. President Conde's silence over the issue is also fuelling the speculation. If the president tries to seek a third term, it will almost certainly trigger a civil uprising.

Political Stability Challenges: Political contestation in Guinea often degenerates into violence along ethnic lines, mainly between the Peul (Fula) and the Mandinka. The government and the main opposition parties are polarised on several issues including the organisation of the local elections. Since President Conde came to power in 2010, the opposition has been organising a series of demonstrations, demanding among others the restructuring of the national electoral commission, amendments of the electoral laws and the organisation of the oft-postponed Local Government elections to ensure a level playing field in terms of local governance. The current crop of heads of local authorities are appointed by President Conde and the opposition have been accusing them of using state resources to help President Conde win elections.

⁹ www.modernghana.com/news/829596/fulani-herdsmen-beg-president-akufo-addo-to-intervene.html

Several regional and international mediations led to the outcome of the August 2015 and October 2016 agreements signed by the main political actors. However, the opposition has repeatedly accused President Conde of not fully respecting these agreements.

Moreover, President Conde should finally ensure the organisation of the Municipal Elections that have been postponed since 2011. The new electoral code unveiled in July 2017 should ensure the organisation of the local elections together with the legislative elections in 2018.

Human Security Challenges: Protests in Guinea often turn violent, whether relating to political or socio-economic issues. In the mining town of Boke, a riot in April 2017 led to two reported deaths and 28 people injured. In early June 2017, violent protest also broke out in Kamsar over frequent power cuts and water shortages.

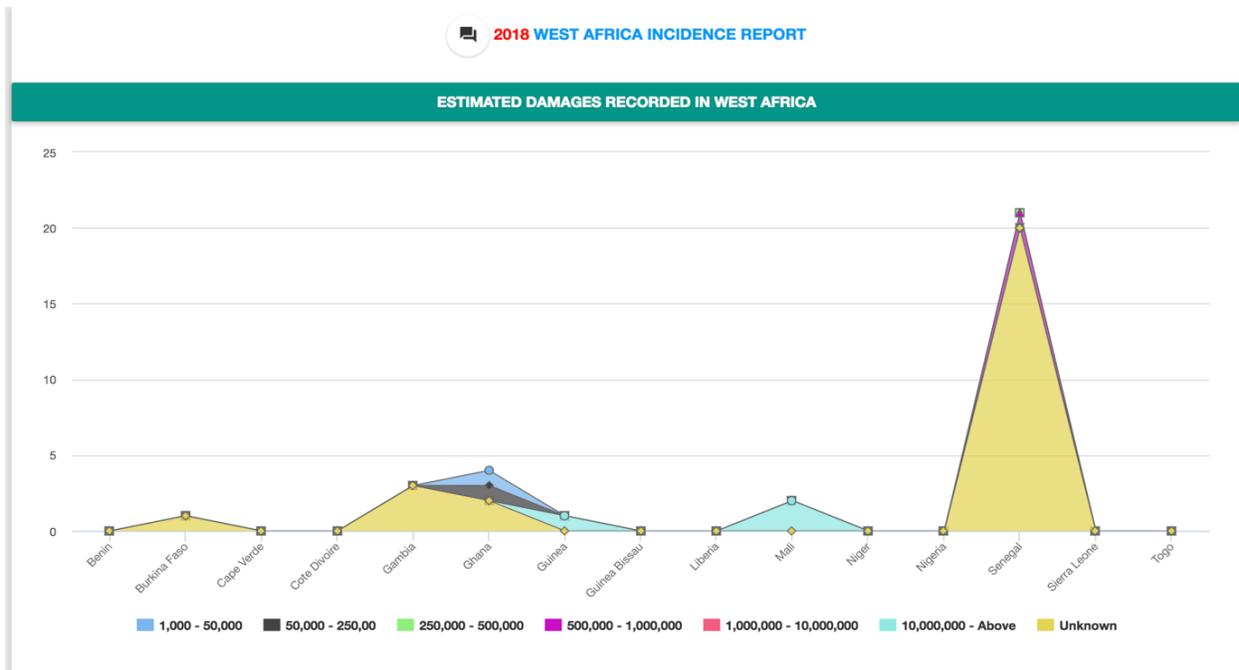
As the country prepares to hold local and legislative elections, there is high risk of violent confrontations taking place between supporters of the opposition and the security forces as well as supporters of the ruling alliance and the main opposition alliance led by Cellou Dalein Diallo.

Violent confrontations often result in economic disruption, damage to private and business property, injuries and sometimes death. Last year, a series of spontaneous unrest resulting in violent clashes led to the death of eight people in the capital, Conakry. Protesters blockaded major roads, disrupting the free movement of goods and people. It would be recalled that since the election of President Alpha Condé in 2010 - following Guinea's first democratic election - a total of 80 people have died in opposition political demonstrations¹⁰. This is mainly due to the heavy-handedness by security operatives in response to demonstration.

Apart from frequent street protests, criminalities remain a serious issue of concerns across the country, despite the efforts made by authorities. The country is struggling to deal with organized crime, highway armed robberies, and instant justice (mob actions). Regarding gender-based-violence, there is rising number of cases involving minors reported in the media. In 2017, 238 cases of rape were reported with allegations that the suspects have not been brought to justice.¹¹

¹⁰ WANEP-Guinea December 2017 monthly bulletin

¹¹ From January to December 2017, the WANEP-Guinea early warning system recorded several cases of insecurity, including armed robberies, cases of rape, kidnapping, lynchings and suicides



Source: WANEP NEWS©

Recommendations

- ECOWAS should persuade President Conde to dispel any speculation over his plan for a third term in office. This is needed to remove any uncertainty over the political transition of the country when his final term ends in 2019.
- ECOWAS should engage with President Conde to ensure the full implementation of the October 2016 Agreement including the organisation of the local and legislative elections in 2018.
- The training and promotion for the respect for human rights should be carried out for security forces to reduce heavy-handedness during protests and gender-based violence.
- Ongoing sensitization campaigns initiated by the government and civil society organizations should be intensified to fight against gender-based violence, including bringing perpetrators of rape to justice.

GUINEA BISSAU

The political crisis in Guinea Bissau is gradually becoming intractable. This is undermining the effective delivery of public services as well as the country's fragile stability and socio-economic development. The October 2016 Agreement signed in Conakry, the capital of Guinea has not been respected, proving almost impossible to be implemented¹². If the ten-point transitional plan of the Conakry Agreement is not implemented, it is most likely that the legislative elections will not hold in 2018.

Political Stability Challenges: The implementation of the Conakry Agreement, which includes the creation of an inclusive government and constitutional reforms, is proving extremely challenging. President Jose Mario Vaz and his ruling party, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) are at loggerheads and refusing to reach a common ground.

ECOWAS and other international actors including the UN are becoming impatient with the political impasse in Guinea Bissau. ECOWAS and the UN are threatening targeted sanctions on political leaders seeking to frustrate efforts to end the political impasse.

Guinea Bissau's Constitution is a key source of the current political crisis. According to the Constitution, it is the duty of the party with parliamentary majority and not the President to appoint a Prime Minister. Though the President is not allowed to appoint the Prime Minister, he has the constitutional right to approve and dismiss the Prime Minister. Given that the current Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló was directly appointed in November 2016 by the President Vaz contrary to the constitution, the PAIGC party has refused to recognise him.

In spite of the ongoing political crisis, ECOWAS is planning to end the deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), comprising about 500 troops. Already, some Nigerian troops left in June 2017, as a start of the phased withdrawal.

The absence of ECOMIB troops in Guinea Bissau could encourage the military of Guinea Bissau to interfere directly to resolve the political crisis. In the past, the military intervention to resolve political crisis had always led to a coup.

¹² www.news24.com/Africa/News/ecowas-threatens-guinea-bissau-sanctions-as-crisis-drags-20171217

No elected president has completed a full five-year term in office in Guinea Bissau, since the introduction of multiparty democracy in 1994. The army has seized power four times -- 1999, 2003, 2009, 2012 while trying to 'resolve' political disputes. President Vaz is likely to be the first to complete a five-year mandate in office if only ECOWAS remains engaged and active in keeping the country's army out of the conflict.

Human Security Challenges: The political crisis is withholding socio-economic development of the country and its populace. The flagship development programme of President Vas is well behind schedule. The Guinea Bissau Vision 2025 that was launched in March 2015 is a ten-year programme. The programme is called Terra Ranka (meaning a "fresh start"). The programme plans to improve electricity, construct roads, rehabilitate the port and enhance public service delivery.

So far, the country is still struggling to make a fresh start. The population are getting frustrated with their political leaders. Last year saw a number of street demonstrations. The situation is at risk of getting worse if nothing is done to resolve the current political crisis and allow for the organisation of a credible and peaceful legislative elections in 2018.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS should suspend the complete withdrawal of its ECOMIB troops. The presence of ECOMIB troops has served as deterrence for the Bissau Guinean army from interfering directly in the ongoing political crisis.
- Further regional and international pressure is needed to bring to bear on the key political actors to ensure the implementation of the Conakry agreements. Some amount of compromise between President Vaz and PAIGC is needed to enable the creation of an inclusive government and the organisation of peaceful elections legislative elections in 2018.

LIBERIA

Liberia took a historic step in October and December 2017 by undertaking the first genuine democratic transition from one democratically-elected civilian president to another since its

independence in 1847. Moreover, this was the first elections to be overseen by Liberian security forces instead of the UN peacekeepers since the end of the Liberian civil war in 2003. This goes to show that Liberia has made enormous progress in terms of building its fledgling democracy and consolidating its security gains.

Political Stability Challenges: President George Weah's presidency could be described as the beginning of Liberia's post-post-conflict era. The era of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf truly ends the post-conflict era and brought relative stability to Liberia as well as improved the country's international standing.

Under President Sirleaf, the UN lifted the last-remaining sanctions including arms embargo. The UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is now all but ended.

The political challenges awaiting the George Weah administration include constitutional reform, fighting corruption, and alleviating poverty with about 64% of Liberians below the poverty line of living on one dollar a day¹³.

Past Governments in Liberia have tried unsuccessfully to revise the 1986 Constitution. President Sirleaf could not also succeed. The Gbarnga Conference organised in April 2015 by the Constitution Review Committee (CRC) approved 25 new provisions to be included in the new constitution. However, in November 2016 the House of Representative only endorsed seven out of the 25 new provisions.

There is controversy over dual citizenship as well as the restriction of citizenship to persons of Negro descent only. Moreover, the Gbarnga Conference called for the reduction of the tenures for the President, Vice President and members of House of Representatives from six years to four years and the Senate from nine to six years¹⁴. The Conference also demanded the positions of superintendents, commissioners, paramount chiefs and chiefs be open to election instead of them being appointed by the government. They believe that having elected officials at local level will increase accountability and enhance local participation.

Human Security Challenges: The Gbarnga Conference revealed the simmering religious tension in the country. The Gbarnga Conference proposed the introduction of a constitutional

¹³ www.wfp.org/operations/200395-liberia-country-programme-2013%E2%80%932017

¹⁴ www.liberianobserver.com/news/7-propositions-passed-for-referendum/; voanews.com/a/liberian-constitutional-conference-approves-christian-nation-recommendation/2705243.html

provision to declare Liberia a Christian nation. This proposal was rejected by lawmakers. Nonetheless, this demonstrates the need for the continuous promotion of peace education and religious tolerance in the country.

Another human security challenge that the incoming government may face is addressing the issues of gender-based-violence including sexual violence and rape. From 2014 to 2016, about 1,511 cases of sexual and gender based violence including rape were documented across Liberia.¹⁵ It is obvious that, President Sirleaf's Government displayed high-level of commitments in signing and implementing international human rights treaties and instruments relating to the fight against sexual violence which women and girls experience, but the prevalence of rape and related offences in urban and rural areas across Liberia remains high and should be tackled. The new government should be more committed to redress gender and sexual based violence and make sure perpetrators of such crimes are dealt with according to existing national and international laws.

Recommendation

- President George Weah will need the support and expertise of regional and international partners to consolidate the peace and security bequeathed by his predecessor, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.
- There is need for sustained efforts and vigilance to prevent political and religious leaders to mobilise people on religious grounds for political gains. In the current environment of economic hardship amid high level of unemployment and poverty, the youths can be easily susceptible to adopting violent means to resolve their grievances.
- The new administration should promote women's active participation in politics and government, including increasing the number of women representatives in elected and appointed positions.

¹⁵ Addressing impunity of rape in Liberia, October 2016

MALI

Mali will hold its Presidential and Legislative Elections in 2018 amid a climate of high insecurity in the North and Central Regions. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita will be vying for his second and final term in office. Mali's political and security crisis is not getting any better and likely to further deteriorate as politicians jockey for power ahead of the 2018 Presidential Election.

Armed Islamist groups will try to disrupt the elections in the North and Central regions as well as dare to stage gun attacks in the capital Bamako.

Political Stability Challenges: In five years, President Keita has appointed five different Prime Ministers. The current Prime Minister, Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga was appointed on 31 December 2017. To improve his chances of re-election, President Keita allowed the return of former President Amadou Toumani Toure in December 2017 from his five-year exile in Senegal. Also, President Keita has promised to introduce a new law (Loi d'Entente) to promote national reconciliation and facilitate the peace process. The new law will seek to grant amnesty to almost all the rebel fighters.

President Keita will face a tough challenge to get re-elected. His administration is unpopular given its inability to improve the security situation in the country and make reforms that will improve the socio-economic development of the Malian masses. In June 2017, the government suffered a setback when he was forced to announce the postponement of the 9 July 2017 constitutional referendum. The revised constitution met with strong opposition from political parties and civil groups, accusing the president of trying to increase his presidential powers at the expense of consolidating democracy. Nonetheless, a revised constitution is vital for providing a legal and constitutional basis for the creation of the new interim authorities in the North in accordance to the Algiers Peace Agreement (2015).

Human Security Challenges: The presence of armed Islamist groups in the north will continue to drive up insecurity across the country. The Islamist groups are creating alliance to adopt a common strategy against common enemies, which are the Malian government, pro-government groups, Malian army and foreign forces.

The new Islamist alliance, the Group to Support Islam and Muslims was created in March 2017 and led by the Malian Tuareg Iyad Ag Ghaly. Since its creation, the alliance has claimed responsibility for many deadly attacks across Mali and in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger. Ghali remains the greatest obstacle to the peace process in northern Mali. He is a key financial backer of many rebel groups as well as other local leaders of aggrieved communities. In return, these communities provide support to Islamist fighters.

Armed groups are also committing gender-based violence in Northern and Central Mali. There are reports of women being dispossessed of their property by radical groups who terrorized local population. The issue of sexual violence including rape is being under-reported in Mali. Reports and data originating from the WANEP's National Early Warning System (NEWS) in 2017, highlighted a number of 70 cases rapes excluding other forms of sexual harassment that were committed by armed groups in Northern and Central Mali¹⁶.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS, AU and other international partners should undertake early preventive diplomatic intervention to ensure the organisation of the elections in 2018.
- The solution to combat violent extremism should not be limited to military actions. There is need for strong and active engagement by the local communities including trust building while interacting with the security forces.
- Gender-based violence including sexual harassment and rape should be given greater attention especially in the North and Central regions.

NIGER

As western forces set up bases in Niger, Islamist armed groups will seek to increase their attacks in the country by trying to gain local support from aggrieved and marginalised

¹⁶ WANEP National Early Warning NEWS Report, 2017

communities¹⁷. The growing number of displaced persons, (over 250,000 displaced people and 108,000 refugees in October 2016) in the south-western Diffa region is putting pressure on the meagre public services in the area¹⁸.

Political Stability Challenges: The growing presence of western military bases in Niger will heighten the threat level in the country. Jihadist will continue to exploit cross-border ethnic affiliations and socio-economic grievances of marginalised communities in Niger for recruitment and local intelligence gathering. Furthermore, desperate migrants that are stranded in the north of the country will also present recruitment opportunity for jihadists.

Human Security Challenges: Terrorist activities in Niger are on the increase with attacks on security forces, western nationals and jailbreaks. The killing of four American soldiers and five Nigerien soldiers in a single attack in October 2017 demonstrated the growing capability of these armed Islamist groups. There is the risk of more attempts to stage further attacks in 2018 in Niger.

Western forces are increasing their presence in the country as part of a broader regional counter-terrorism operation in the Sahel-Sahara region. The US army is constructing one of its largest drone base in Africa in Agadez, the Northern region of Niger closer to the border of Southern Algeria and Libya. Germany is also for the first time setting up military base in Niger, constructing an airfield for logistics purpose in support of the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Moreover, the French military has reinforced and scaled up its military resources at Niamey airport and in Madama in the North where the French special forces are based.

Moreover, the high insecurity in the country is rekindling old ethnic tensions between Tebu and Fulani communities. In the past, The Fulani communities joined forces with the central government to crush the Tebu rebellion in the 1990s.

Tebu leaders have created in September 2016, the Movement for Justice and Rehabilitation of Niger (MJRN) to fight against the marginalisation of their communities. The group is threatening war against the government. At present in Diffa, there are a growing number of Fulani vigilante

¹⁷ www.armytimes.com/flashpoints/2017/10/24/niger-is-a-central-hub-for-us-counterterrorism-ops-in-west-africa

¹⁸ www.reliefweb.int/report/niger/unhcr-niger-factsheet-october-2017

groups supporting the government in the fight against Boko Haram. However, Tebu communities have complained of excesses by some of these vigilante groups.

Without timely intervention and mediation, these communities could start a local war that will only help to worsen the security situation and provide the instability needed for terrorist and criminal operations to thrive.

Furthermore, the insecurity caused by elements of Boko Haram in the southeast of Niger has impacted disproportionately on women and girls¹⁹. The disruption of activities and livelihood has significantly heightened the prices of basics food, the level of poverty and unemployment, with women and girls being the first victims. Widows, separated women in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees camps, abandoned by their husbands, encountered challenges in taking care of their families. Some of these women are faced with sexual harassment and forced into sex trades in exchange for food or money. Some women and girls have been victim of rapes, abduction, child and forced marriages and among many others. The issue of stigmatization of women who were victims of sexual violence and children who were born out of these sexual abuses has to be addressed for a lasting peace and security after Boko Haram is defeated.

Recommendations

- The government of Niger is in need of the financial and material support from regional and international partners to deal with the threats posed by Islamist armed groups. If not, the educational and economic activities in the north including gold mining operations will be badly affected or stall altogether.
- The G5 counter-terrorism force needs to be operational in earnest to contain the marauding militants.
- The solution to combat violent extremism should not be limited to military actions. There is need for strong and active engagement by the local communities including trust building while interacting with the security forces.

¹⁹ www.rinnews.org/feature/2017/07/06/boko-haram-ups-its-pressure-niger ; www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/niger/245-niger-and-boko-haram-beyond-counter-insurgency

- Gender-based violence including sexual harassment and rape should be given greater especially in the Diffa region.

NIGERIA

In the course of 2018, the ruling alliance of All Progressives Congress (APC) will be debating the salient question over whether or not President Muhammadu Buhari should be allowed to run for a second term given concerns over his health. Alongside the political issue over President Buhari's continuity or succession, the resurgence of Boko Haram and growing violence between Fulani herdsmen and farming communities will be of utmost concerns.

Political Stability Challenges: Nigerian political leaders will engage in earnest in politicking ahead of the 2019 Presidential Election. Already cracks have emerged within the ruling APC, with a minister declaring her support for Atiku Abubakar to succeed President Buhari in the 2019 elections. In the event President Buhari decides not to seek re-election, political leaders of the South-West will be weighing their options including throwing their weight behind Vice-President Oluyemi Osinbajo.

Towards the end of 2018, political parties will be organising their primaries. It will be clear whether Buhari intends to run for his second and final term.

Threats to Human Security: Nigeria is facing security challenges on multiple fronts. There are the Niger Delta militancy, the Biafra Separatists, the Shia Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), the ethnic tensions driven by the agro-pastoralist conflict and the Boko Haram fighters. The last two issues are intensifying and causing the loss of more lives. The inadequate government response to the agro-pastoralist tensions and Boko Haram will only worsen the security situation, leading to more killing, disruption of local economic activities and destruction of property.

This instability has disrupted agro-pastoral activities, trade, and food supplies and also opened new routes for trafficking in humans, illicit drugs, small arms and lights weapons²⁰. For instance, the frequency and dimensions of extremist attacks in Nigeria has impacted on food security as

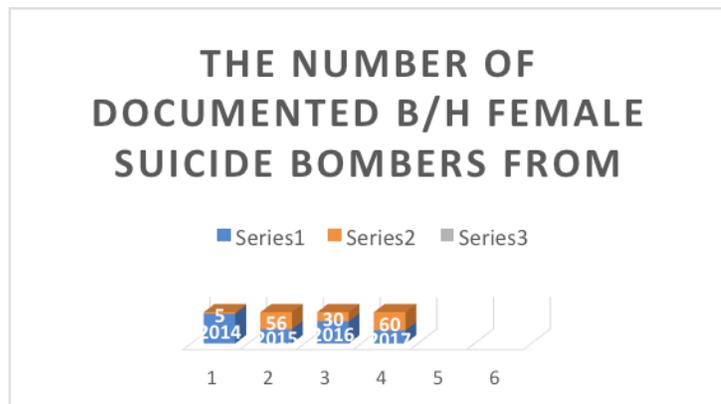
²⁰ Ibid

agricultural production has significantly reduced in the states with the highest occurrence. An estimated 5.2 million people are threatened with food insecurity in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states of Nigeria²¹. The gender impacts of the insecurity include the difficult and unsanitary conditions affecting women, girls and children living in IDP camps. They have to contend with outbreak and spread of diseases such as meningitis, malaria and cholera.

In addition, Boko Haram has also used women and girls as weapons of violence including suicide bombing on civilians and military positions. Since the first female suicide bombing in June 2014 that took place at Gombe in North-eastern, Nigeria, female suicide bombers continue to increase. A total number of 4 cases were documented in 2014. In 2015, 56 cases were recorded and in 2016, 30 cases documented. Between January to August of 2017, about 83 female suicide bombings were recorded and majority of these bombings occurred in Nigeria’s northwestern provinces of Borno and Adamawa states.²²

These security challenges are causing undue stress and frustrations for the average Nigerian. The insecurity across the country is taking its toll on the people.

The graph presents the number of documented female suicide bombers for 2014-2017:



Recommendations

- ECOWAS, AU and international partners should engage with the political leadership in Nigeria to provide support and guidance as the country seeks certainty over its future political and security directions.

²¹ WFP Nigeria, Regional External Situation Report, 24-31 March 2017. Pg.1

²² Saba Aziz, "UNICEF: Boko Haram Use of Child Bombers Soars", Aljazeera. August 22, 2017

- Nigeria is again struggling to contain the armed Islamist groups in the north east region of Borno State. Without regional and international support, Nigeria will continue to struggle to combat Boko Haram.
- The agro-pastoralist conflict is getting out of hand and runs the risk of turning into a destabilising civil war if urgent actions are not taken. ECOWAS, AU and international partners should engage the Nigerian government to take proactive and tough actions to address this dispute.
- The solution to combat violent extremism should not be limited to military actions. There is need for strong and active engagement by the local communities including trust building while interacting with the security forces.

SENEGAL

President Macky Sall's emphatic victory in the July 2017 Parliamentary Elections suggests he is on course to secure a re-election in 2019. In the course of 2018, the country will also be in an election mood as the opposition parties try to form an alliance to challenge President Sall. Senegal's immediate security challenge is the growing political polarisation as President Sall has managed to sideline his two formidable challengers for the next presidential elections. Other security challenges include the ongoing low-scale conflict in the Casamance region in the South for over three-decades and the latent risk of an attack by armed Islamist groups based in Northern Mali.

Political Stability Challenges: The two main opposition alliances, Manko Taxawu Senegal and Wattu Senegal are trying to come together as a political force against President Sall's re-election bid. Manko Taxawu Senegal is led by Khalifa Sall, the Mayor of Dakar but now in custody, while Wattu Senegal is led by former President Abdoulaye Wade, who lost to President Sall in March 2012.

The opposition alliances are aggrieved by the continued detention of Khalifa Sall, while Wade's contention is the return of his son Karim Wade, who is currently in exile in Qatar. Karim is in

self-imposed exile after being released early from prison in 2016, halfway into a six-year sentence on corruption charges. The imprisonment of Karim automatically disqualifies him from contesting any elections as the electoral laws bar former convicts from holding elected office. However, according to his supporters, Karim is a political prisoner as his imprisonment was politically-motivated to prevent him from challenging President Sall.

Mayor Khalifa Sall is in remand on charges of embezzlement. If he is convicted, he too will be also automatically disqualified from running for office in 2019. In the event Khalifa Sall is convicted, it will likely cause a large-scale street protests that could degenerate into violence.

Human Security Challenges: In 2017, the main opposition parties organised a series of demonstrations mainly in Dakar. Ahead of the parliamentary elections, opposition supporters had violent confrontations with security forces in Dakar. The forces used tear gas against protestors and made a number of arrests. As political campaigns intensify in 2018, more street demonstrations are likely to take place.

In the Casamance region, the low-intensity insurgency continues with intermittent attacks on civilian targets and theft of property. The insecurity in the Casamance region could provide a back-base for absconded Gambian soldiers, loyal to exiled former president Jammeh, to destabilise the Gambia.

Recommendation

- There is need for political dialogue in Senegal ahead of the country's presidential elections in 2019. The dialogue should lead to a political agreement by all actors to ensure peaceful and credible elections.
- A new and innovative approach is needed to resolve the Casamance conflict to promote greater stability and stop the operations of organised criminal networks between Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Guinea and Gambia.

SIERRA LEONE

The country will hold its Local Council, Parliamentary and Presidential elections in March 2018 amid an increasingly politically charged climate. In 2017, rival supporters of the ruling All

People's Congress (APC) and the main opposition, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) clashed in the street of the capital Freetown. There were other clashes outside the capital including the mining town of Kono. The party office of the Alliance Democratic Party (APD) was set on fire in Freetown while its presidential aspirant, Mohamed Kamarainba Mansaray was arrested, detained and charged for possession of a stun gun and other misdemeanors. These violent incidents and perceived attempts to frustrate opposition party leadership do not augur well for peaceful and credible March 2018 elections.

Political Stability Challenges: The race to succeed President Earnest Koroma is causing tensions and polarisation both within and between political parties. The contest is traditionally between the ruling APC and the main opposition, SLPP. However, a third element, the National Grand Coalition (NGC) led Kandeh Kolloh Yumkella (the former head of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation -UNIDO) has joined the race, threatening the dominance of the two main political parties. If NGC succeeds, it could be the first time since independence that Sierra Leone will have a new president that does not belong to the two dominant parties.

The NGC is however made up of senior members who broke away from the SLPP. Yumkella was an SLPP stalwart but decided to leave in protest and formed the NGC after accusing the SLPP of unfair treatment and intimidation before the party's conventions to choose the national executives and the presidential flagbearer for the 2018 elections. Similarly, the former 'two-times' APC elected Vice President, Chief Alhaji Sam Sumana – unseated for anti-party activities - has also formed the Coalition for Change (C4C) party and will contest as a presidential candidate in the March 7th, 2018 elections.

Nonetheless, there are likely to be long drawn-out legal battle in the court over Section 76 of the 1991 Constitution that disallows all Sierra Leoneans with dual citizenship from running for elected positions. There is controversy of the invocation of this constitutional provision given the fact that many past and current parliamentarians of the APC and SLPP hold dual citizenship but were allowed to contest and won parliamentary seats in the 1996, 2002, 2007 and 2012 elections.

The invocation of this constitutional provision this time by the APC is perceived by supporters and sympathisers of the NGC as a strategy by the current government to bar their presidential candidate Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella from running given his growing popularity.

Barring any eventualities, the main presidential contest is likely to be between Samura Kamara of APC, Julius Maada Bio (former Head of the military junta) of SLPP and Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella of NGC.

Human Security Challenge: The main security challenge is the rising level of political violence with fighting between rival supporters and attacks on assets of political leaders. In 2017, Sierra Leone suffered another natural disaster following flash floods and mudslide in Freetown, killing at least 600 people. The country has weathered the turbulent times brought about by the Ebola crisis, causing untold suffering and distress for the populace.

The outbreak of politically motivated violence will add further pressure to an already traumatised populace and will also present the opportunity for unemployed youths to loot and destroy property.

Recommendations

- The threat of electoral violence is looming in Sierra Leone. ECOWAS, AU and international partners need to undertake sustained engagement with President Koroma and other political aspirants until the elections in March to ensure political leaders are committed to promoting peaceful and credible elections.
- The government should maintain its commitments and engagements to support victims of the mudslide in 2017 and the Ebola outbreaks from 2014-2015. These people should not be forgotten in the electioneering period .

TOGO

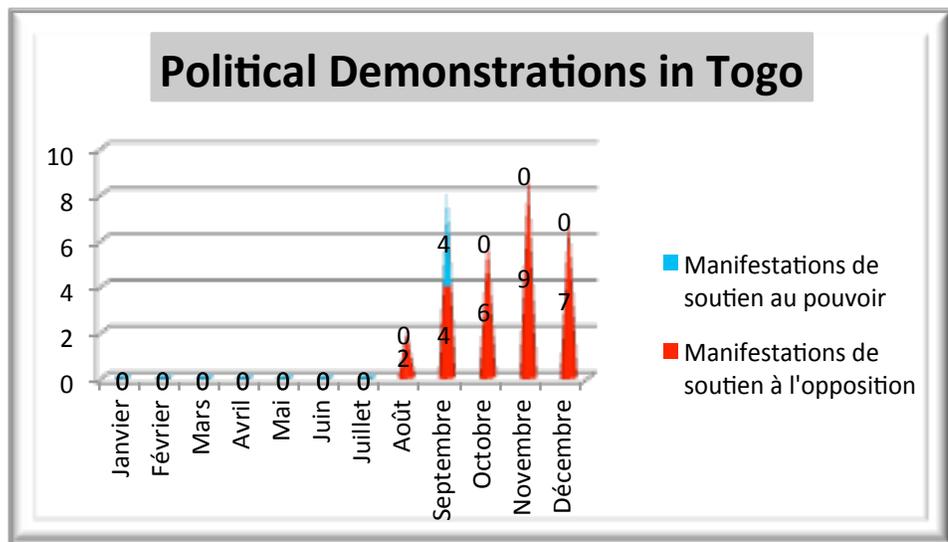
The future of President Faure Gnassingbe hangs in the balance. The opposition coalition and civil groups are determined to hold regular protests until President Faure leaves power. In

2017, Togo witnessed an increased level of violence that threatened the stability of the country. Further violence is likely especially around the Legislative Elections in 2018.

Political Stability Challenges: President Faure is planning to hold a referendum over a new constitution. The new constitution includes the introduction of a two-round presidential vote and a two-term presidential limit. Nonetheless, the opposition coalition has rejected the revised constitution and instead called for return of the 1992 Constitution.

The two-term presidential limit was first introduced in the 1992 Constitution but was later removed following another constitutional review in the early 2000. If the 1992 Constitution is reintroduced, then

President Faure will have to stand down as he would have completed his two terms given that he came to power in May 2005. President Faure wants the two-term limit to take effect in 2020 to give



him the chance to stay in power until 2030.

The impasse between President Faure and the opposition coalition will remain unless ECOWAS and international actors make concerted efforts to find a common ground between the conflict parties.

Human Security Challenges: The political violence in 2005 when President Faure won his first election resulted in large-scale violence that left over hundred deaths and tens of thousands displaced. The tense political climate and the determination of both the government and the opposition to have the last word could lead to a repeat of the 2005 political violence.

The frequency and intensification of violence in 2017 have resulted in deaths and wanton destructions of public and business property. Since August 2017, a series of opposition protests

had degenerated into street battles with armed security forces in Lome and Sokode. Over 20 people had been killed, and scores hospitalised with gunshot wounds. Protesters lynched two soldiers in Sokode. The growing violence led the government to deploy heavily armed troops in Sokode and Bafilo in the North and banned public demonstrations across the country.

In the spirit of reconciliation and dialogue, the government released in early December 2017 a number of prisoners including the Secretary General of the Pan-African National Party (PNP) and a well-respected Muslim cleric of Sokode. The army was also withdrawn from Northern towns and the ban on demonstrations lifted.

Despite President Faure's overtures, the opposition has refused to enter into dialogue, accusing him of calling for dialogue, while at the same time beating up opposition supporters.

Without a breakthrough in the current impasse, the 2018 Legislative Elections could be a trigger for large-scale violence.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS, AU and international partners should persuade the opposition to engage in dialogue with President Faure in search of a breakthrough to the impasse. A dialogue will prevent the needless loss of lives through violent confrontations with security forces.
- ECOWAS, AU and international partners should make concerted efforts to find a common ground between President Faure and the opposition parties.