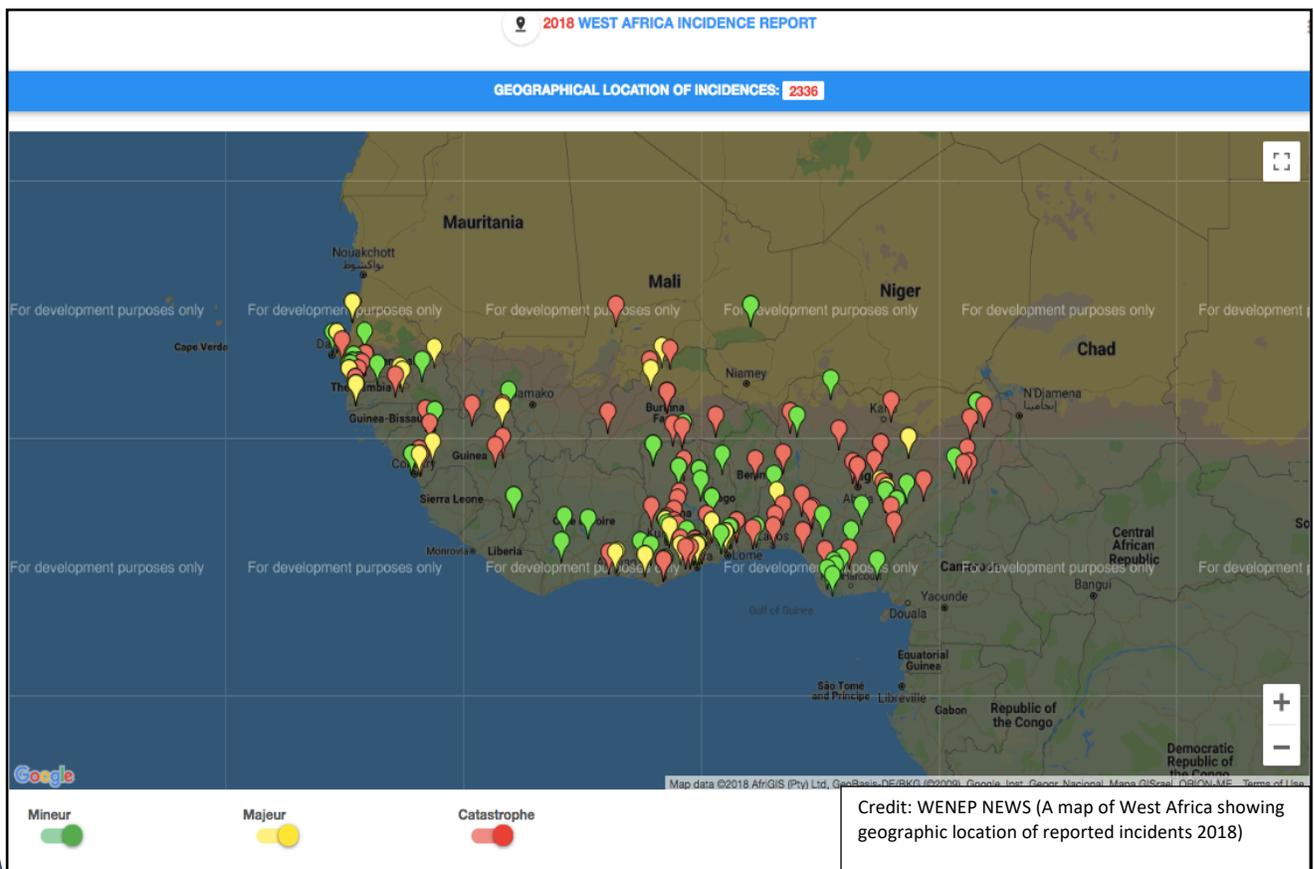




WEST AFRICA EARLY WARNING OUTLOOK 2019

Potential Flashpoints and Simmering Conflicts in the Region



WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANEP)

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

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Introduction

West Africa has made steady progress in the areas of improving democratic governance, regional cooperation and integration, as well as increasing economic growth in 2018. The expanded role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in election monitoring in member states has contributed not only to peaceful elections in the region, but also to smooth transitions, as reflected in the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone. In terms of regional integration and economic growth, the push for an ECOWAS single currency and continued implementation of ECOWAS protocol on free movement of people, goods and services has engendered trade and economic activities within the region.

Notwithstanding this positive trend, the peace and security landscape of the region is still fraught with a host of security threats that undermine its development. These include intra-state conflicts, violent extremism, recurrent demonstrations, proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW), illicit drug and human trafficking, illegal migration, piracy, diseases, resource-based conflicts, climate change, and cyber insecurity among others. The consequences of these threats are seen in the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugee crises, food insecurity and environmental disasters which have accentuated the region's vulnerability to insecurity. However, there are existing efforts to address these challenges. For example, as part of remedies to violent extremism in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, States and regional actors continue to support mechanisms such as the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the G5 Sahel Operations.

Additionally, in an effort to enhance democracy and good governance in the region, West Africa is experiencing a political wave and clamour to institutionalise two-term presidential limits across member states in line with the proposed amendment to the 2001 ECOWAS supplementary protocol on Democracy and Governance in the region. This will not only consolidate the position of ECOWAS as the strongest regional economic bloc, but also serve as an example of democratic practice on the continent. Burkina Faso and The Gambia have initiated constitutional review processes aiming to end unlimited presidential tenures with the likelihood of Togo kickstarting its process in the near future.

Furthermore, the implementation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF, 2008) and other peace and security mechanisms has facilitated conflict management and prevention across the region. To respond to the growing security dynamics of the region, ECOWAS is restructuring its Early Warning mechanism to link warning with response at the level of the Early

Warning Directorate and also within member states with the establishment of the National Early Warning and Response mechanisms to enhance its approach and impact for conflict prevention and mitigation. As part of its complementary effort to support the new direction of ECOWAS, WANEP is also restructuring its National Early Warning System (NEWS) to become more relevant in providing analyses and preventive strategies on peace and security in the region in line with its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ECOWAS. This gives WANEP an additional leverage to support and resource ECOWAS, the African Union and National infrastructures for peace in the region¹ at Track One level². For this reason, all the 15 countries in West Africa have revised country specific indicators to capture data on a wide range of threats including emerging security challenges.

This report seeks to highlight the human security challenges of the region in 2018, including the gender dimension and to make projections of flashpoints in each of the member states for 2019 that will inform and guide monitoring and early intervention strategies.



Benin

Between 1991 and 2016, Benin had demonstrated relative political stability, as reflected by six presidential, seven legislative and three local government elections highly regarded as peaceful and credible by both domestic and international election observers. This encouraging practice is expected to be maintained in the years ahead. However, there are concerns about increasing socio-economic challenges including persistent industrial strike actions, public misdemeanors, organised crimes and maritime insecurity along the Gulf of Guinea.

Political Stability Challenges: With surges in armed attacks and violent extremism in neighbouring Nigeria, North and Central Burkina Faso, as well as political instability in Togo, Benin grapples with potential threats of insecurity from all borders. In light of already existing socio-economic challenges, this raises further concerns and evinces the need for bilateral and multilateral arrangements between Benin and neighbouring states in order to develop preventive strategies against threats of terrorism and other transnational organised crimes. Internally, the Government's restrictions and law³ to curtail protests or demonstrations by public

¹ See selection in WANEP Annual Report "Consolidating and Sustaining A Vision-Driven Institution", 2016 (Pg. 5-7).

² Track One Diplomacy - refers to official governmental diplomacy whereby communication and interaction is between governments.

³ In December 2017, the National Assembly in Benin passed a law that forbids protests or demonstrations by security, justice and health workers on the grounds that those sectors provide essential services that cannot be discontinued or abandoned due to strike actions by employees.

security forces, justice and health workers are perceived by trade unionists and citizens as a violation of fundamental human rights and the freedom of expression. Another political challenge is the amendment of the Electoral Law to increase registration fees for presidential candidates from 15 Million to 250 Million CFA franc and from 10 Million to 200 Million CFA franc for Parliamentary candidates. This Law appears to be unpopular among the opposition parties, and largely seen as controversial and limiting inclusive participation, especially of women and youth (given that most women and youths are not adequately empowered economically to meet such high fees) in politics.

“With inadequate preventive mechanisms, Benin’s vulnerability to environmental risks including desertification, deforestation, wildlife poaching, and water and air pollution will persist in 2019.”

Human Security Challenges: Benin is among the least developed countries in the world, ranking 166 out of 188 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index⁴. The economy is weak, and the rates of poverty and unemployment remain high⁵. There is rising public discontent over the management of the economy. In this regard, strikes and industrial actions have become commonplace in recent months. A related worrying trend is the rapid spread of the desert into agricultural lands in the north of the country reinforced by the slow onset of droughts which has the potential to exacerbate food insecurity in the years ahead with cascading worsening effects on poverty rates and other socio-economic indicators. With inadequate preventive mechanisms, Benin’s vulnerability to environmental risks including desertification, deforestation, wildlife poaching, and water and air pollution will persist in 2019. There is also reported cases of violations of the rights of women and girls, especially in regard to child marriage, rape, access to quality education, land and inheritance in the country.

Recommendations

- The Government should hold inter-party dialogues to discuss the increment in candidature fees for parliamentary and presidential elections in the country, taking into consideration the potential impact of excluding women/youths and its ensuing consequences;
- CSOs should consider strengthening their preventive peacebuilding mechanisms to ensure that the grievances informing the surging demonstrations in Benin does not degenerate into violence;

⁴ See: UNDP Human Development Index 2018 (November 24, 2018).

⁵ Ibid.

- ECOWAS should support the Government of Benin in its effort to counter threats from violent extremism and transnational organised crime in line with regional and continental arrangements;
- Security agencies should develop partnerships with civil society organisations for early warning and response, border security management and women’s engagement in Peace and Security. This will ensure that the country continues to build on its democratic credentials and political tolerance;
- The Government through its relevant agencies should intensify actions and ensure compliance to environmental protection laws and policies as well as provide more resources and equipment against deforestation.



Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso appears to be relatively stable. However, there are diverse security challenges ranging from the surge in violent extremism and terrorism, cross-border crime, illicit drug abuse and trafficking to youth delinquency among others. One of the perceptions held regarding increased terrorist attacks relates to the trial of the alleged coup-plotters who are believed to have links to terrorist groups on the ground. Therefore, the increase in attacks is perceived as an attempt to pressure the Government to discontinue the ongoing trial. These persistent armed attacks and their consequences on citizens and businesses calls attention to the fault lines and weaknesses in the security sector of the country. Even though there are regional and international strategies focusing on countering violent extremism and escalation of violence within the Sahel, implementation of such strategies has not yielded the desired results.

Political Stability Challenges: President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré’s first term in office expires in 2020, paving the way for fresh elections in Burkina Faso. Already, the political landscape is gathering momentum as the country prepares for the next election. In 2018, Burkina Faso introduced constitutional reforms, particularly the extension of the franchise to the diaspora community, as part of efforts to enhance inclusive democratic participation in the governance space of the country. While this is seen as an encouraging development, the ruling Government and opposition parties have disagreement over the implementation of the Electoral Code (2018)⁶. The source of division emanates from the stringent measures associated with the processes involved in acquiring the voter card in the diaspora. Another critical issue is the ongoing

⁶ Electoral Code (Version 2018). Independent National Electoral Commission of Burkina Faso. Available at: <http://www.ceni.bf/sites/default/files/CODE%20ELECTORAL%20VERSION%20DEFINITIVE.pdf> (Accessed January 25, 2019).

court-martialing of military officers and civilians accused of plotting a coup to overthrow the interim Government of President Michel Kafando in 2015. The trial process, which is nearing completion, is expected to serve as a litmus test of the country's judicial system. In the face of all of these, the Government is also challenged with a dearth of capacity in critical sectors and has to contend with the need to intensify its counter terrorism efforts to prevent further attacks and spread of violent extremism and organised criminal armed groups to other parts of the country. The recent attacks in the Waterfall region is a worrying signal of the spread of armed groups to new regions in Burkina Faso. So far, a state of emergency has been declared in 7 out of the 13 regions of the country⁷. In 2019, violent extremist groups within and around the borders are likely to control the forest areas the country shares with Mali, Niger, Benin and Togo, to carry out further attacks as well as expand and maintain their operations in the Sahel-Sahara region.

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Insecurity in the country is a critical concern in 2019. There are concerns of lack of motivation and resources in the security sector and a seeming insufficient State response to the spate of violence in the country. For instance, 10 of the Penitentiary Security Guard (Garde de Sécurité Pénitentiaire-GSP) who were demanding an improvement of their working and living conditions were dismissed, pointing to increasing citizens disenchantment and

dwindling confidence in the governance structure of the security sector. This decision has potential to heighten tension and increase violent demonstrations and protests in the months ahead. Another challenge is the increased public demonstrations by teachers, students, opposition parties as well as trade unionists, raising tension and risks to peace and security in the country. If this persists, there is a likelihood of exacerbating violence and public disorder in 2019.

Human Security Challenges: Accusations of corruption is a serious governance and human security challenge in Burkina Faso. The 2017 report of the Supreme State Control and Anti-Corruption Authority (ASCE-LC) cited several state institutions for embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds⁸. Despite this, a lot of corruption cases across the country remain unaddressed, raising the possibility of more protests by interest groups with potential to

⁷See UN Security Council Brief on 'Peace Consolidation in West Africa and the Sahel'. Presented by Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative of the Secretary General to West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) on 10th January 2019 at UN Headquarters in New York. Available at: www.webtv.un.org . (Accessed on 22/01/2019). See also <http://lefaso.net/spip.php?article87271> . (Accessed on 22/01/2019).

⁸See Burkina Faso: ASCE-LC 2017 Report. Schemes take Elevator in the Administration. *AllAfrica*. Available at: <https://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201812030357.html> (Accessed on 22/01/2019).

erupt into violence and public disorder. For this reason, public opinion on the Government points to dwindling trust and reduced confidence.

A cascading effect of public distrust and government's inability to provide adequate security has been a spring up of self-defence groups such as Koglwéogo and Dozo, who have positioned themselves as alternative security in hard-to-reach-communities. However, there has been public outcry against human rights abuses perpetuated by these groups in the affected communities. In addition to this, agro-pastoral, ethnic and sectarian conflicts are also rife in the country. These have resulted in deaths, injuries, forced displacement, destruction of business and private properties.

Other areas of concern include women who continue to suffer violent extremist attacks which affect their social and economic well-being. Harmful traditional practices including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and early and forced marriages are also prevalent in Burkina Faso. In October 2018, Amnesty International reported that 48 girls suffered medical complications from FGM, and more than half the girls were forced into marriage before their eighteenth birthdays⁹. Though FGM is prohibited in the country, the practice continues in deplorable and unsanitary conditions¹⁰. These threats impact negatively on the education of women and girls, especially in the Northern and Eastern regions of the country. Climate change and its associated threats such as droughts, floods and food insecurity lead to displacements and forced migration in the Central, North and Sahel regions of Burkina Faso. During the period May 1 – August 7, 2018, floods and high winds affected 4922 people (989 men, 1266 women and 2667 children) in seven regions (Boucle du Mouhoun, Center, Center-Nord, Center-Ouest, Hauts-Bassins), North and Sahel)¹¹. Furthermore, illegal mining activities are common, resulting in landslides and flash floods with economic implications for the country.

Recommendations

- International partners through the G5 Sahel arrangement should expedite existing strategies and provide resources to the Government of Burkina Faso to mitigate the spread of violent extremism and other transnational organised crime in the country;

⁹Amnesty International. 'Burkina Faso: Urgent Need to protect Girls from FGM and Forced Marriage'. October 10, 2018. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/10/burkina-faso-urgent-need-to-protect-girls-from-and-forced-marriage/> (Accessed 15/12/2018).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹ See: <http://www.fasozine.com/actualite/societe/4830-inondations-au-burkina-4922-sinistres-et-7-deces-enregistres-du-1er-mai-au-7-aout-2018.html> (Accessed December 3, 2018).

- The Government should collaborate with international and relevant local partners to strengthen security sector reforms that would lead to depoliticisation and enhance professionalism in the defence and security sector, as well as ensure their submission to democratic order and the rule of law;
- The Government, NGOs, CSOs, especially women’s groups and international partners, should broaden the space for women’s engagement to stop the spread of violent extremism and criminality;
- The High Council for Reconciliation and National Unity (HCRUN) and the newly created Department for National Cohesion in the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation should be provided with technical and financial support to strengthen socio-political dialogue, leading to national reconciliation.



Côte d'Ivoire

Over the last five years, Côte d'Ivoire, has made remarkable economic strides as one of Africa’s most vibrant economies with a growth rate of 7.6 percent¹². According to a World Bank country report, Côte d'Ivoire’s economic outlook for 2019 is positive with growth rate expected to hold steadily at around 7 percent¹³. This economic upturn suggests an encouraging development in the livelihoods of the average Ivorian. However, this progress is threatened by an unsteady political and security climate prevailing in the country. Politically, an internal power struggle within the ruling coalition, the Rally of the Houphouetists for Democracy and Peace (RHDP), for succession to the presidency after the tenure of incumbent President Ouattara, has led to the breakaway of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) from the coalition. Furthermore, the accusations and counter-accusations of violent attacks that characterised the October 2018 Municipal and Regional Elections are manifestations of the divisions within and between the political parties. Also, persistent demands from the opposition parties to embark on reforms of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) are likely to increase political tension and protest ahead of the 2020 presidential election.

Apart from the aforementioned, the security of Côte d'Ivoire is also a cause for concern. In January 2018, security forces clashed in Bouake and military protests also occurred in several cities and towns across the country over conditions of service. The country is also challenged with enduring porous borders with its neighbours which have been exploited by crime syndicates for

¹² The World Bank – Côte d'Ivoire Overview. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/Côte d'Ivoire/overview> (Accessed on 24/01/2019).

¹³ Ibid.

illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, contraband goods and drugs. Continued occurrence of these threats portends increased tension and insecurity in 2019.

Political Stability Challenges: The transformation of the ruling coalition RHDP into a unified political party was an attempt to strengthen inter-party dialogue to resolve long standing political disputes. However, the race to succeed President Alassane Ouattara at the end of his presidency in 2020 continues to heighten political tension and wrangling within the ruling coalition. For example, the current political struggle within the ruling coalition is the interest of Guillaume Soro, the President of the National Assembly and Vice President of Rally for Republicans (RDR), to succeed the current President. The PDCI-RDA of former President Henry Konan Bedie has expressed an interest in forming a coalition with other political parties including the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI). This new platform has the potential to change the political dynamics of Côte d'Ivoire. Besides this, the scale of political intolerance and violence witnessed in the 2018 Municipal and Regional elections amid opposition boycott and demand for reforms of the IEC are pointers to the political challenges in the build-up to the 2020 presidential election. Despite the release from detention and amnesty of political prisoners and leaders of the Gbagbo regime including the former First Lady, Simone Gbagbo, there are accusations of alleged political victimisation of opposition members by the ruling Government, which have the potential to ignite protests from opposition parties.

“Growing activities of violent extremists and terrorists in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso constitute a major security concern for Cote d’Ivoire in 2019.”

Human Security Challenges: Growing activities of violent extremists and terrorists in neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso constitute a major security concern for Cote d’Ivoire in 2019. Furthermore, armed robberies, car theft and other violent crimes are prevalent in the country. In particular, certain sections of the country, including Abidjan, have recorded high rate of crimes committed by young boys/men called “microbes” who engage in day-light robbery. Increased frequency of protests and demonstrations by students and trade union workers also have implications on the country’s security. Recurrent demonstrations have led to the destruction of property, which sometimes impede economic activities. Sexual and gender-based violence is another prominent human security concern particularly in rural Côte d'Ivoire¹⁴. Women and girls continue to suffer rape, harassment and other indecent offences. Despite the several gender security reform programs introduced, the Police force is still challenged to respond and reduce

¹⁴ BMC International Health and Rights. Gender norms and economic empowerment intervention to reduce intimate partner violence against women in rural Côte d'Ivoire: a randomized controlled pilot study. Available at <https://bmcinthealthhumrights.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-698X-13-46> (Accessed 14/12/18).

crime and violence against women. With regard to environmental security, in June 2018, heavy rains destroyed houses, roads and polluted water sources in six districts of Abidjan – Abobo, Adjamé Attécoubé, Cocody, Kumasi, Yopougon and Tiassalé in Côte d'Ivoire¹⁵. 550 household were affected in Cocody, 155 households in Attecoube and 400 households in Tiassale¹⁶. Given the trend in heavy rainfall usually witnessed in rainy season, incidents of floods are likely to feature prominently and will impact livelihoods and security in 2019.

Recommendations:

- UNOWAS and ECOWAS should facilitate political dialogue and mediation on electoral reforms and political stability ahead of the 2020 presidential election;
- Government and its partners including civil society should support the Implementation of the “Loi de programmation militaire¹⁷” on the reforms of the security sectors and the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-soldiers in Côte d'Ivoire;
- The Government, ECOWAS and other international actors in peace and security should strengthen existing country and regional counter terrorism strategies to mitigate threats of violent extremism and other transnational organised crimes. This should also include strengthening bilateral and multi-lateral collaboration with neighbouring states to enhance peace and security;
- CSOs, NGOs, community radio stations should utilise existing local women social network platforms to intensify training and mentorship on preventive measures for sexual violence against women and girls at all levels of the country;
- ECOWAS/UNOWAS should consider preventive diplomacy actions with key political and civil society stakeholders to ensure that the eventual or likely return of ex-president Gbagbo does not further divide the country and increase security concerns.



The Gambia

Two years after its first democratic transition, The Gambia has laid the foundation for reconciliation and national unity. The setting up of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (TRRC) by an Act of Parliament to establish a historical and reliable record of human rights violations during the tenure of former President Yahya Jammeh (July 1994 – January 2017) is seen as a step forward in the consolidation of national cohesion and reconciliation in The

¹⁵ DREF Update. Côte D'Ivoire Floods. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRCI010ou1.pdf> (Accessed 14/12/18).

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ A policy adopted by the Ivorian Government in relation to military restructuring, comprising severing components for implementation from 2019-2025.

Gambia. Among others, the Commission is mandated to recommend redress for the wrongs committed and abuses suffered as well as provide reparations for victims. Irrespective of this, The Gambia's nascent democracy continues to be challenged by internal disputes among members of the ruling coalition party regarding President Barrow's tenure of office, inter-ethnic polarisation, political intolerance, identity conflicts and national reconciliation issues. In addition, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia intends to move from a marble voting

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system to paper ballot and multi-tier elections in 2021. However, if adequate measures are not institutionalised to facilitate the smooth implementation of the new voting system, it could lead to political friction that could undermine the credibility and peaceful conduct of future elections.

Political Stability Challenges: The political climate remains fragile in The Gambia.

Pertinently, the coalition arrangement that ended the 22-year regime of former President Yahya Jammeh through an election in December 2016 stipulates a three-year transitional government that allows for fresh elections in 2019. However, this arrangement contravenes Section 63 subsection (1) of the 1997 of the Constitution, which states that the term of office of an elected President shall be for a period of five years¹⁸. In view of this, if the coalition agreement should be respected, The Gambia should be prepared for another presidential election in late 2019. This would call for constitutional amendments to address the ensuing political situation. In an event of President Barrow's refusal to adhere to the coalition agreement and complete his first five-year term, it would result in heightened tensions and disagreements, which could lead to a split within the ruling coalition. Granted, a split within the ruling coalition would also weaken President Barrow's chances of a second term of office and make him to explore other possible avenues to enhance his re-election in 2021. One of the scenarios is to make political concessions that could result in building alliance with the main opposition party, Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC) of former President Jammeh. The likely condition that could facilitate this alliance is granting of amnesty to Jammeh and his close associates in exile and within the country. This would have implications for the country's nascent democracy and the reconciliation process.

¹⁸ Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia, 1997 Reprinted 2002. Chapter VI The Executive. Part 1: The President. Tenure of Office of President Section 63. (Accessed December 12, 2018).

Again, the cracks within the ruling coalition manifested in the parliamentary elections of April 2017 and also at the local government elections of April and May 2018, where political parties within the coalition filed separate contestants for various elective positions. Also, political intolerance, intimidation, and violent clashes between political parties are signs of insecurity that need to be mitigated. For instance, during the April and May 2018 Local Government elections, the country witnessed a number of violent clashes in Mankamang Kunda in the Upper River Region, Busumbala in the West Coast Region, and Tallinding in the Kanifing Municipality between supporters of the United Democratic Party (UDP) and the Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC). There were also election related violent incidents between supporters of the UDP and the Gambia Democratic Congress (GDC) in Jimara, Upper River Region. If the emerging culture of political intolerance and intimidation continues to prevail in the country, there is a possibility of rising tension that could lead to violence and public disorder. The country also grapples with a complex mix of politically motivated and Inter-ethnic tensions. Notably, the relationship between the current President's majority ethnic group, the Mandinka and former President Yahya Jammeh's ethnic-minority group, Jola, is strained¹⁹. This is further deepened by the perception of Mandinka domination of cabinet and other key positions in the current Government. The inter-ethnic tension is a critical factor for the stability of the political landscape of the country in 2019 and beyond.

Human Security Challenges: Communities feel increasingly insecure due to frequent cases of armed robbery, theft, and burglary in The Gambia. There are also cases of transnational crimes such as money laundering, drug and human trafficking prevailing in the country. Unemployment, especially among the youth, is also a human security challenge in the country. the national unemployment rate hovers around 30 percent, with a rate of 40 percent affecting youth between the ages of 15 and 24²⁰. This is a contributing factor to the high youth outmigration in search of better economic opportunities outside the country. Over 8,498 Gambians arrived in Europe in 2017, with many others in Africa along the Central Mediterranean route now opting for voluntary return. Between January 2017 and October 2018, more than 3,700 Gambian returnees have been assisted²¹. Natural resource-based conflict and its impact on the environment also contribute to communal tension and violence. A typical instance is the killing of three people and the injuring of several others following clashes with protesters at Faraba Banta in the West Coast Region over issue of sand mining in their community by Julakay Engineering and Construction Company.

¹⁹Managing President Yahya Jammeh's Exit: "From Consolidated Autocracy to Consolidated Democracy?". WANEP WARN Policy Brief. January 26, 2017.

²⁰ *Conflict and Development Analysis – The Gambia*. A collaboration of Ministry of Interior of the Republic of The Gambia and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding – The Gambia (WANEP), with support from joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and United Nations in The Gambia. 15 June 2018.

²¹ See: <https://rodakar.iom.int/country/gambia> (Accessed November 26, 2018).

In the Gambia, female genital mutilation, early marriage, teenage pregnancy and other forms of violence against women in homes and communities are still prevalent²². Early marriage is a harsh reality for many girls under the age of 18 in The Gambia²³. About 46.5 per cent of girls marry before age 18. In total, 76.3 per cent of girls in The Gambia have experienced some form of FGM²⁴. However, cases are often under reported due to deeply rooted traditions and cultural beliefs. Due to a lack of resources, the Police is very limited in its ability to respond to such acts or provide full services to crime victims.

Recommendations

- There is the need for preventive diplomacy by ECOWAS/UNOWAS and other international partners to engage key political actors to facilitate dialogue on the political direction for The Gambia;
- The Government should set up an Inter-Party Committee (IPC) to tackle the current and emerging inter-party tensions, political polarisation and intolerance, to constructively work together to promote political dialogue, tolerance and non-violent communication in The Gambia;
- The Truth Reconciliation and Reparation Commission should be more open and transparent in implementing its mandates, especially with regard to timeliness, reparations for victims and reintegration of perpetrators into the community.



Ghana

Ghana has made significant progress in the quest to consolidate democracy and good governance. This is evident in an independent judiciary, freedom of speech, press freedom, respect for human rights, transparency, accountability and participation in governance. Owing to this, the country continues to experience relative political stability and economic development. Nevertheless, there are perceptions of the public on the neutrality of the newly appointed Commissioners of the Electoral Commission (EC). In addition, political vigilantism, labour agitations, student unrests, community protests against poor social services and infrastructure, police brutality and farmer–herder conflicts which often results in low intensity conflicts in the Greater Accra, Ashanti, Northern, Brong Ahafo, Eastern and Western regions in particular.

²² UNICEF The Gambia. Adolescence. Available at https://www.unicef.org/gambia/children_1266.html (Accessed 14/12/18).

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

Political Stability Challenges: Corruption perception is a critical governance challenge in Ghana.

“The use of vigilante groups by the two major political parties would reinforce the threat of violence with the commencement of political campaigns in 2019.”

According to the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index of 2017, Ghana is ranked 81 among 180 countries assessed²⁵. This has led to public outcry and increasing despondency within the public space. In response to this challenge, the Government has set up the Office of the Special Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute corruption cases. The increasing activity of vigilante groups associated with the major political parties, the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) is also a serious security concern for election 2020. For example, in the recent NDC primary elections, vigilante groups known as ‘Hawks’ and ‘Lions’, were engaged to provide security. Prior to this, the NPP was widely accused of engaging vigilante groups, ‘Bull Dogs’ and ‘Delta Force’ throughout the election process in 2016. The use of vigilante groups by the two major political parties would reinforce the threat of violence with the commencement of political campaigns in 2019.

Other potential challenges for the electoral process have antecedents of issues related to the introduction of National Identification Cards intended to be used as the voter ID in the 2020 election. Concerns have been raised about the criteria for the acquisition of the ID card, which include; birth certificate, passport, tax identification number, residential address and social security number among others. Recent corruption cases against the EC has also led to a seeming trust deficit and waning confidence on the part of the public. This could affect voter turnout and peaceful conduct of the elections. New regions have also been created through a referendum organised in December 2018. However, the location of the capitals of the newly created regions has led to intense lobbying and agitations in communities that need critical attention as the decision unfolds. In addition, civil unrests in reaction to poor social amenities, labour agitations for better working conditions, students and community protests, increased armed robbery and cybercrimes are potential sources of insecurity in 2019. The concerns around increased criminal violence are further heightened with the escalating threats of violent extremism emerging from the southward spread of the phenomenon in Burkina Faso. With porous borders between Ghana and Burkina Faso, coupled with the establishment of violent extremism movements and networks in the West Africa region, there are fears of their infiltration into Ghana.

²⁵Transparency International Corruption Perception Index 2017. Available: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2017/results. (Accessed on 23/01/2019).

Human Security Challenges: The Government, through the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources in collaboration with security agencies, the media, and CSOs intervened in the activities of illegal small-scale miners (galamsey), which have contributed to widespread environmental degradation, especially water pollution and the destruction of farm lands, thereby affecting livelihoods in communities. While this intervention has subsided the activities of illegal mining in the country, the alleged use of force by the security agencies has led to allegations of violations of human rights in mining communities. Ghana also continues to be plagued by incidents of flood and poor sanitation. Recurrent floods, particularly flow of water from the Bagre Dam in Burkina Faso, and torrential rains persistently devastate human livelihoods, crops, livestock and hectares of farm land in communities in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions usually between August and September. According to the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO), in 2018, spillage from the Bagre Dam and continuous rainfall destroyed close to 10,000 hectares of land and communities in the affected regions²⁶. Without the adequate mechanisms, Ghana's vulnerability to environmental risks will persist in 2019. Paradoxically, droughts remain a security concern. Perennial droughts in the Upper East, Upper West and Northern regions of the country persistently result in decreases in farm yields and livestock production among rural poor farming communities. Given this and inadequacies in interventions, food security would be threatened in 2019. In relation to droughts, farmer-herder conflicts are a recurrent environmental security threat. These usually occur during the dry season in the Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Volta, Western and Northern regions.

Recommendations

- The National Peace Council (NPC), Police and relevant stakeholders should strengthen national and regional dialogues aimed at addressing the issue of political vigilantism;
- The EC should activate the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) to constantly engage political parties on issues regarding voter ID Cards in the lead up to the 2020 elections;
- The Governments of Ghana and Burkina Faso should continue to strengthen their bilateral cooperation to create the necessary platform to dialogue on issues relating to the threats of the spillage from the Bagre Dam, which undermines livelihoods in the affected areas in Ghana;
- The Government of Ghana should strengthen collaboration with bilateral and other Inter-Government Organisations to intensify strategies to counter threats of violent extremism and enhance community resilience.

²⁶*The Chronicle*. 'Ghana Must Economic Use of Bagre Dam Spillage'. September 6, 2018. Available at: www.thechronicle.com.gh (Accessed 15/12/2018).



Guinea

Guinea has seen notable infrastructural development under the current Government. For example, the energy and transport sectors have received a boost with the construction of the Kaleta Hydroelectric Power Plant in the Basse-Guinée region and ongoing roads constructions in the country. This has contributed to economic growth, improved livelihoods and building confidence of the people in the country. Despite this, there are significant political and socio-economic challenges in Guinea. On the political front, there are concerns that President Alpha Condé may attempt to amend the Constitution to enable him run for a third term in 2020. In an interview with *The Economist*, the President argued that African presidents should not have term limits, because they get in the way of their ability to complete already initiated long-term projects²⁷. This could be suggestive of an intention to run for a third term. An attempt to amend the Constitution could trigger widespread political unrest that could destabilise the country. Student protests and labour agitations are also rife.

Political Stability Challenges: An attempt to amend the presidential term limit as enshrined in the Guinean Constitution presents an enormous security challenge to the country. The main opposition party, the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), civil society and other interest groups have already expressed their concern regarding any attempt to change the Constitution. Political intolerance and ethnic cleavages are risk factors to the political stability of the country. The ruling Rally of the Guinean People (RPG-Arc-en-ciel) and the opposition UFDG have accused each other of intimidation, harassment and electoral fraud, especially before, during and after the February 2018 Local Council Elections. There were reported instances of attacks and counter-attacks on party supporters and party structures during public protests in 12 municipalities including Kindia, Dubréka, Conakry, among others. Amidst these protests, a political agreement was signed between the two main political parties to resolve the disputes arising from the local elections. However, implementation of the agreement has not been consistent and coherent, heightening tension and politically motivated violence in some parts of the country. These unresolved political disputes will pose significant threats to the parliamentary elections due in February/March 2019.

²⁷ Ibid

The issue of politically motivated ethnic tension is also a key challenge to the stability of Guinea. A key feature of this ethnic alignment stems from the domination of the RPG by the Malinké group which constitute about 35% of the population, while the opposition party (UFDG) garner support from mainly the Peul group, estimated to comprise 40% of the country's population²⁸. The Peul have accused Conde's government of discrimination and extrajudicial killings by the security forces²⁹. Ethnicity and identity conflicts have been exploited by politicians in the country to access power, which heighten tensions and leads to ethnically motivated clashes.

"As of November 30, 2018, over 176 public protests and demonstrations were recorded with at least 28 people dead and more than 450 injured. It is anticipated that these figures could increase in the lead up to the elections of 2019 and 2020."

Human Security Challenges: Guinea remains one of the region's least developed nations despite its vast mineral resources. Its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is estimated at \$800 per person, about half the region's average³⁰. Persistent demonstrations in major cities and towns in Guinea indicate economic hardships on the citizenry. The students, Trade Unions and other interest groups have expressed concerns over the economic hardship, low wages and unemployment. As of November 30, 2018, over 176 public protests and demonstrations were recorded with at least 28 people dead and more than 450 injured³¹. It is anticipated that these figures could increase in the lead up to the elections of 2019 and 2020.

Organised crimes including illicit drug dealing, human trafficking, illegal migration as well as armed robbery are also common across the country. These often results in disruption of economic activities, businesses, injuries and sometimes deaths. There are also reports of arrests and seizure of locally grown marijuana consumed and abused among the youth population. Violence against women and girls including rape and other forms of domestic violence are also common human security threats in rural communities. Media reports indicate that eight out of ten women in Guinea experience work place sexual harassment and FGM³². In addition, there have been reported cases of teenage pregnancy and an increase in women illegal miners³³. This has affected girls' education and socio-economic empowerment of women. In a similar vein, persistent teachers' strike actions agitating for better conditions of service have affected the

²⁸Op. cit

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰ Op. cit

³¹ See: WANEP Guinea NEWS Bulletins January and November 2017.

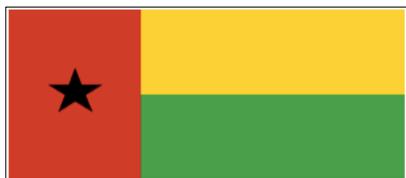
³² Africanews.com. 'Gender-based violence on the rise in Guinea'. January 18, 2018. Available at: www.africanews.com (Accessed 15/2018).

³³ See: WANEP Guinea NEW Bulletin November 2018.

public-school curriculum for 2018. This has implications on the educational system as well as the safety of children in the country. In terms of environmental security, the country is confronted with pollution of water bodies due to illegal mining in some rural communities, especially in Kintinlan in the Siguiro region.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS/AU/UNOWAS should intensify preventive diplomacy with President Alpha Condé, opposition leaders and other stakeholders to respect political agreement and the Constitution in the lead up to the 2019 Legislative Elections. An ECOWAS diplomatic mission to Guinea is imperative;
- CSOs, religious leaders, women and youth groups should engage political leadership for dialogue ahead of the 2020 elections;
- The media and CSOs should intensify civic and peace education to strengthen social cohesion in communities.



Guinea-Bissau

The general political and socio-economic situation in Guinea Bissau is a cause for concern in the region. Intra-party disputes in the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), particularly between President Jose Mario Vaz and the former Prime Minister, Domingos Simoes Pereira has the potential to mar the ongoing democratic process in the country. Despite the intervention of ECOWAS which negotiated the Conakry Agreement (2016) to resolve the impasse, the political elites have ignored the full implementation of the agreement. This is a major factor underpinning the current political stalemate in the country. Once hailed as a potential model for African Development, Guinea Bissau is now one of the poorest and most fragile countries in the world³⁴. Corruption is deeply rooted and manifests in the political, economic and social spheres of the country. Guinea Bissau has been ranked as the 171st most corrupt country out of 180 according to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2017³⁵. Corruption and bribery continue to undermine the fight against illicit drug trafficking and other transnational organised crimes in the country.

Political Stability Challenges: The Legislative and Presidential Elections of 2014 in Guinea-Bissau were considered a major platform for the restoration of constitutional order and the promotion of the social and economic stability of the country. However, internal squabbles within the ruling

³⁴ See: www.bbc.com (Accessed November 25, 2018).

³⁵ See http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2017/results

PAIGC and constitutional violations persistently disturb the country's peace and security ahead of the legislative and presidential elections in 2019. The political crisis bedeviling the country is also shown in the emergence of a new political party – the Movement for Democratic Alternation (G15) - formed by the 15 National Assembly Members expelled by the PAIGC in 2015. The country's inability to conduct its legislative elections as enshrined in the Constitution is a further manifestation of the protracted political imbroglio that needs to be addressed. Between April and November 2018, the legislative elections were repeatedly postponed with the latest proposed election slated for March 10, 2019. The constitutional crisis arising from the postponements of elections is inducing widespread public dissatisfaction, which is a potential for violence in the country.

“Internal squabbles within the ruling PAIGC and constitutional violations persistently disturb the country's peace and security ahead of the legislative and presidential elections in 2019.”

Human Security Challenges: Poverty is widespread in Guinea Bissau with more than 60% of the population subsisting on less than US\$1.25 a day³⁶. Unemployment and illiteracy levels also remain high, particularly among females, while maternal and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world³⁷. Another human security challenge confronting Guinea-Bissau is uncontrolled transnational organised crime. The country is a notable hub for illicit drug and human trafficking as well as illegal migration. More importantly, increased drug trafficking is having an adverse impact on agriculture, as most people find it a lucrative enterprise to the detriment of farming. As a result of this, the country is vulnerable to food insecurity, especially in rural areas. For example, between February and May 2018, approximately 210,000 people were forecast to become food insecure, including more than 25,000 who would require immediate food assistance³⁸. Last, but also important, attention needs to be paid to labour strikes; the National Workers' Union of Guinea (UNTG), for instance, has called for several industrial strikes in demand of readjustment of wages across the country. If this trend persists, the country is likely to experience more social unrests which could further intensify the fragile peace.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS and international partners should intensify their engagement with all national stakeholders, including the President, the Prime Minister, the President of the National

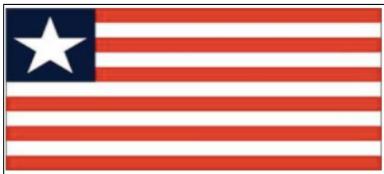
³⁶ See: www.hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-note/GNB.pdf (Accessed November 25, 2018).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See: “Developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau”; Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council. S/2018/771, August 16, 2018. (Accessed November 25, 2018).

Assembly and the leaders of PAIGC and PRS, to continue constructive dialogue that would lead to the full implementation of the ECOWAS Roadmap for Peace in Guinea-Bissau;

- ECOWAS/AU/UNOWAS should intensify engagement with the President to hold the impending elections in accordance with the relevant provisions of the constitution and other democratic principles;
- ECOWAS/AU/UNOWAS and international partners should support ECOMIB in its mission to strengthen the security sector in addressing the security challenges confronting the country;
- There is urgent need for the establishment of a national peace architecture in Guinea Bissau to ensure there is local flavour and sustainability in the peace processes.



Liberia

The peaceful transition of power which culminated in the transfer of power to President George Weah in January 2018 is regarded as an encouraging sign of progress in consolidating democracy in Liberia. With the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the security of the State is fully entrusted in the hands of the Liberian Government for the first time since the end of the civil war in 2003. This underscore steady progress in the areas of governance, peace and security over the years. Notwithstanding this development, Liberia still contends with corruption, human rights violations, political intolerance, intra party conflicts, gender-based violence and disease outbreak.

Political Stability Challenges: A major governance and security concern facing Liberia is the call for the full implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) recommendations, including the establishment of an extraordinary criminal tribunal for Liberia³⁹. Despite the growing interest at national and international level, there has not been any meaningful signal of Government's interest in the matter. Already, there are reports of allegations by prominent political stakeholders against the voices that support a war crimes tribunal. The divided opinions on the issue of transitional justice portray divisions within the political space which could heighten tensions in the country if not

"Inter and intra-party tensions, especially among the ruling coalition party is deepening. The recent decision by the National Patriotic Party (NPP) to expel the Vice President, Jewel Howard Taylor, from the party could ignite a constitutional crisis that would be counterproductive to the political stability of Liberia in the coming months."

³⁹ See: www.liberianobserver.com (Accessed November 19, 2018).

managed well. Again, Inter and intra-party tensions, especially among the ruling coalition party is deepening. The recent decision by the National Patriotic Party (NPP) to expel the Vice President, Jewel Howard Taylor, from the party could ignite a constitutional crisis that would be counterproductive to the political stability of Liberia in the coming months.

Other security and political challenges include constitutional reforms, endemic corruption and the missing L\$16 billions (Liberian Dollars), high unemployment among youth, robbery, illicit drug use and trafficking. The border areas with neighbouring countries are also porous and susceptible to criminality due to poor border security management. There are also reports of protests and demonstrations against low wages, limited access to social services including education and healthcare. In many instances, these protests and demonstrations have turned violent and threatened public safety⁴⁰.

Human Security Challenges: Domestic violence, sexual assault and rape are the most commonly reported violent crimes affecting women and children in Liberia. Between January and October 2018, at least 50 cases of rape, sexual harassment and assault, resulting in the deaths of 32 women, girls and boys were reported across the country⁴¹. Liberia also faces severe flooding during the rainy season (May-November). Heavy rains and wind storms in the capital Monrovia and surrounding counties washed away roads, destroyed bridges and polluted water sources. According to the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), at least 31,186 people were affected by floods within the period of July 17 – 18⁴² in Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties. Similarly, outbreaks of diseases like Lassa Fever, Meningitis and Skipes, Skin Pox were eminent in Maryland, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado Counties.

Recommendations

- The ruling Coalition for Democratic Change (CDC) Government should initiate internal party resolution mechanisms that promotes dialogue to address emerging political threats to peaceful governance in Liberia;
- The new government should continue to strengthen security sector reforms to bridge security gaps created by the exit of UNMIL;
- Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, women's groups, local CSOs, NGOs, the media, and international partners should support existing mechanisms to mitigate rising violence against women in the country.

⁴⁰ WANEP Liberia NEWS.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Source: National Disaster Management Agency of Liberia Assessment on flooding-affected areas including Montserrado, Margibi and Grand Bassa Counties. Available at: www.ndmaliberia.org (Accessed November 19, 2018).



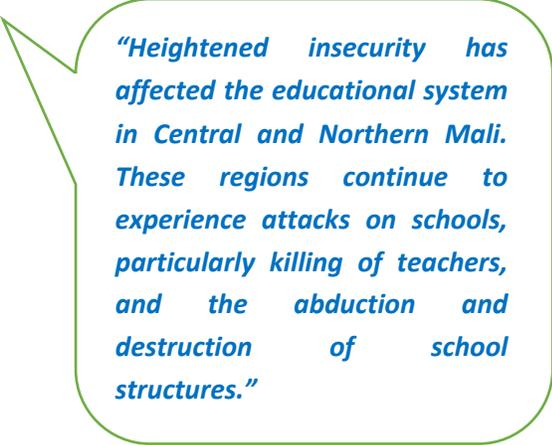
Mali

Against the backdrop of insecurity in Mali, a presidential election was conducted successfully on July 29, 2018. President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta of the Rally for Mali Party (RPM) was re-elected and has been sworn in for his second and final term of office although the main opposition party, the Union for the Republic and Democracy (URD), led by Soumaïla Cissé, rejected the results of the elections on grounds of electoral irregularities. This has led to a political dispute which heightens tension and insecurity. In addition, new terrorist groups have emerged in the North of Mali, posing further challenges to governance and security in the country. The governance weaknesses in Mali manifest in the absence of Government authority in some parts of the country. This has provided space for terrorist and violent extremist activities to flourish without hindrance.

Political Stability Challenges: Increased activities of terrorist and violent extremist groups in the Northern and Central regions of Mali continue to undermine governance, peace and security in the country. This is further compounded by the emergence of new armed groups and organised criminal networks exploiting the many ungoverned spaces in the hinterlands to perpetuate extreme violence against unarmed civilians. It has also given them the opportunity to exploit such spaces to launch attacks against neighbouring countries such as Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Cote D'Ivoire. Another critical security challenge that needs to be looked at is the process of reintegration of ex-combatants who voluntarily surrendered, into communities. This is largely due to inadequate resources on the part of the Malian Government to pursue the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) program which is critical to the peace process in Mali. Additionally, the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2015 has also been slow. In response to the concerns of rebels under the Peace Agreement, the Government has concluded consultation on the creation of new regions and the Bill to legalise it is being considered at the National Assembly. There are also recurrent strikes by public sector workers, especially the judiciary. The poor conditions of service of the judiciary is a threat to justice delivery, which is important to stabilisation process in the country.

Human Security Challenges: The growing activities of terrorists and violent extremist groups in the Northern and Central parts of Mali pose serious threats to human security. Between January and November 2018, Mali recorded 135 attacks with 500 deaths and 912 injured, almost double the figure for the entire 2017⁴³. This shows increasing fragility, proliferation of arms and spread of violent extremist groups in Mali. Importantly, growing insecurity in Mali has affected human

⁴³ Source: WANEP NEWS Bulletins January – November 2018



“Heightened insecurity has affected the educational system in Central and Northern Mali. These regions continue to experience attacks on schools, particularly killing of teachers, and the abduction and destruction of school structures.”

livelihoods, as is evident in food insecurity, migration, worsened refugee situation and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The emergence of new terrorist and extremist groups in the cities of Gao and Sevare of Northern Mali has further aggravated the security complexities of the country. Communal and sectarian violence is also taking a heavy toll on human lives and properties in the Mopti region. Together, these security challenges continue to hinder effective governance,

development and stability in Mali. Armed groups are also reported to be perpetuating human rights abuses in Mali. This is reflected in increasing incidence of rape and violence against women and girls in Northern and Central Mali. Moreover, heightened insecurity has affected the educational system in Central and Northern Mali. These regions continue to experience attacks on schools, particularly killing of teachers, and the abduction and destruction of school structures.

Increasing illegal mining activities in the Niger River is also a critical concern to human security in Mali. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of communities surrounding the Niger River. The Niger River serves as important resource for fish farming, crop cultivation and water for both human and livestock consumption. With the rapid dwindling of the river, crop and fish farming activities would be adversely affected. This will lead to shortage of food, livestock and water in 2019. The consequences will translate to increased competition for scarce resources that could escalate violence.

Recommendations

- The Government of Mali should intensify its collaboration and cooperation with the G5 Sahel to counter increasing activities of terrorist and armed criminal networks in the country; a human security approach should also be vigorously pursued to deal with the ideological aspect of extremism;
- The Government in collaboration with the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the international community should ensure the provision of technical benchmarks and guarantee the fairness of the DDR process to avoid hindrances to the peace process;
- The Government of Mali, CSOs, NGOs and relevant actors should intensify effort to reintegrate ex-combatants of violent extremist groups who surrender voluntarily;

- The media, local CSOs, and NGOs in collaboration with the private sector should enhance public awareness and peace education through community radio stations.



Niger

With support from international partners including the establishment of military bases, Niger has made significant strides in the areas of countering violent extremism, terrorism and illegal migration. This notwithstanding, Niger continues to grapple with several political and socio-economic challenges. Disputes within the ruling coalition and limited space for the opposition to participate in the National Council of Political Dialogue (Conseil National de dialogue politique - CNDP) have implications on the electoral process ahead of the 2021 Presidential Election. Another issue that needs attention is the Government's Anti-Migrant Smuggling Law of 2015, which has resulted in a crackdown on a number of people who were engaged in migrant smuggling for livelihood. While this Law will contribute to mitigate organised crime, it has the potential to expose young people to terrorist recruitment. Therefore, implementation of the Law should be complemented with alternative livelihood strategies. The increase in the number of unemployed youths as a result of this action by the Government will increase their vulnerability to exploitation by terrorist groups operating in the Sahel region⁴⁴. Another issue is that the country still struggles in the face of frequent droughts, food insecurity⁴⁵. This continues to devastate livelihood security across the country.

Political Stability Challenges: The security and political stability of Niger is heightened by increased threats from violent extremist groups, including Boko Haram militants operating in the Maradi and Diffa regions bordering Nigeria. Despite the coordinated responses of the Nigerien Security Forces, the Multinational Task Forces, G5 Sahel and the U.S Army, terrorism with its ensuing humanitarian crises remain a challenge. In 2018, Niger experienced several attacks and killing of foreign workers, kidnapping for ransoms and drug trafficking across the country mainly in the capital Niamey, Maradi, Tahoua and Diffa⁴⁶. The country also continues to contend with persistent demonstrations linked to the "*loi des finances 2018 et 2019*"⁴⁷, which social and Human Rights activists regard as "anti-social" and places a financial burden on an already impoverished population. Even though the Law has been described by the World Bank as a good

⁴⁴ Source: "New Terrorists Threat as EU stance on migrants trigger disquiet in Niger." (Available at: www.theguardian.com on November 23, 2018)

⁴⁵ UNDP. Human Development Report, Niger. Available <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2018-update> (Accessed 14/12/18).

⁴⁶ WANEP NEWS 2018

⁴⁷ The 2018 and 2019 Financial Laws seek to make adjustments on existing taxes and create new ones. This has been met with widespread public disapproval, leading to industrial demonstrations.

initiative for the development of the country, series of demonstrations were organised to pressure the Government for its modification. Following the prohibition of demonstrations, several leaders of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including three key activists, were arrested on March 25, 2018 after confrontations between Security Forces and protesters. Although most detainees were released after four months following both national and international pressure, some key activists are still incarcerated in various prisons in the countries. It is expected that further demonstrations by CSOs and pressure groups would follow in the coming months in demand of the release of the remaining detained activists. This may heighten security and political tensions in the country.

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Human Security Challenges: The prevailing security threats in the Niger and Lake Chad borders have compounded the complex humanitarian situation in the country. Available 2018 data indicates that the country has an estimated 176,740 refugees and 153,024 internal displaced persons⁴⁸ in South-western Diffa, Tallaberi and Tahoua. This has increased Government spending and added pressure on public facilities and services in communities. The influx of illegal migrants and asylum seekers hosted in camps in Agadez by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) also poses security and humanitarian risks, including exposure to diseases and competition over scarce resources, especially food and clean water in the host communities. Also, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported 45 deaths and nearly 209,000 humanitarian cases caused by flood disasters since June 2018⁴⁹. The floods destroyed nearly 17,400 homes, killed more than 33,000 livestock and destroyed nearly 8,000 hectares of millet, maize and bean fields in 2018⁵⁰. Issues of gender-based violence including rape, early marriage and human trafficking and slavery in some communities still remain major challenges in Niger. High rates of illiteracy and disease outbreaks are also common in the arid regions. According to UNICEF database in 2018, most women aged 20-24 years married before the age of 18, and most women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone FGM⁵¹.

⁴⁸ UNHCR Niger Country Operation Update October 2018. see: <https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/country/ner> (Accessed November 23, 2018)

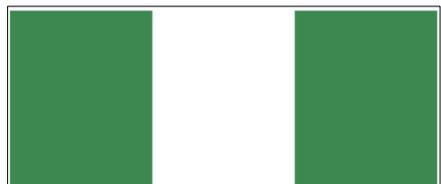
⁴⁹ Floods in Niger claims 45 lives since June (2018). Available at: <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/floods-in-niger-claim-45-lives-since-june-un-20181016> (Accessed 23/11/18).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ UN Women. Global Database on Violence Against Women – Niger. Available at: www.evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/Africa/niger#1. (Accessed on 15/12/2018).

Recommendations

- ECOWAS and partners including local CSOs should intensify engagement with the Government to review electoral reforms that enhance inclusive political participation for a peaceful and transparent electoral process in the lead up to the 2021 Presidential election in Niger;
- ECOWAS and international partners and the Government should strengthen synergy among the various forces within the G5 Sahel in the fights against violent extremism and terrorism;
- Government should intensify collaboration with CSOs, NGOs, local leaders, faith-based institutions and other relevant actors to strengthen peace infrastructure to enhance community resilience in the fight against terrorism, slavery and violence against women and girls.



Nigeria

As a key player in stability in West Africa, Nigeria has made progress in the area of governance over the years. Periodic elections, free media, freedom of speech and participation in governance have become entrenched in the democratic space of the country. In spite of this, Nigeria continues to battle diverse security threats amid interventions by state and non-state actors at different levels. The Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, ethnic and communal clashes, armed banditry and environmental risks would be of utmost concern in the lead up to and immediately after the 2019 elections. While these risk factors remain a threat to the elections, electoral credibility that will facilitate peaceful political transition is a necessary precondition for governance stability that would contribute to addressing the security deficits in the country.

“The Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder conflicts, ethnic and communal clashes, armed banditry and environmental risks would be of utmost concern in the lead up to and immediately after the 2019 elections.”

Political Stability Challenges: As the country goes to the polls to elect political representatives at federal and state levels on February 16 and March 2, 2019, the ability of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to conduct free and fair elections will be a litmus test for democratic consolidation in the country. The Governorship Elections in Ekiti and Osun States in 2018 raise questions about INEC’s preparedness to conduct free and transparent General Elections in 2019. The media, local and international observer groups’ reports highlighted incidents of political intolerance, vote-buying, electoral irregularities and security high handedness during the

Ekiti and Osun elections. In a similar vein, the conduct of political parties' primaries, especially those by the All Progressives Congress (APC) and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), were marred by protests and violence. Available data and reports reveal the death of three people in Ebonyi, Bauchi and Lagos States. Another 35 persons were injured in Taraba, Imo, Bauchi, Ebonyi, Lagos and Niger States during the APC Party primaries for the gubernatorial and National/State Assembly elections. The PDP also recorded several protests from aggrieved party members in Benue, Kano and Cross River States with about 10 people injured in Benue State. Aggrieved party members from the two main parties have issued statements threatening to seek legal redress over perceived manipulation of the primaries. This could have implications for the conduct of the elections and the advent of election related court cases in affected constituencies. More importantly, opposition parties, CSOs and lawyers have raised concerns about attempt by the Federal Government to remove the country's Chief Justice, Walter Onnoghen, from office. As the head of the judiciary, the Chief Justice plays a vital role in resolving electoral disputes. In that regard, the opposition believes the charges are a pretext for replacing the Chief Justice ahead of the 2019 elections. The outcome of this issue has implications for the 2019 elections' outlook.

Human Security Challenges: The multiple and varied security challenges confronting Nigeria remain a national and regional concern. The attacks of Boko Haram, farmer-herder conflicts, sectarian and ethnic violence, armed banditry and cult group clashes among others have resulted in deaths, injuries, destruction of properties and disruption of local economic activities. The attacks on schools and abduction of girls by Boko Haram have negative implications on education. In March 2018, two female health-care workers were abducted in Rann, Kala-Balge Local Government Area (LGA) of Borno State and executed in September and October respectively. Another health-care worker abducted in Yobe State as well as the lone Dapchi school girl remain in Boko Haram's custody. Cases of female suicide bombing constitute a threat in the North-eastern region of the country. Between January and October 2018, 41 incidents of female suicide attacks on civilian and security positions in the Northeast were reported⁵². Proliferation of arms, illegal migration, human trafficking and drug abuse among the youth also continue to heighten human insecurity in the country. Equally, health and environmental risks arising from floods, droughts and outbreaks of diseases such as Cholera and Lassa Fever are recurrent issues likely to continue to impact populations at community and state levels.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS/UNOWAS and National Peace Committee should intensify engagement with the leadership of the ruling and key opposition parties to ensure their adherence to the Abuja

⁵² WANEP Nigeria NEWS November 2019.

Peace Accord to promote peaceful and credible elections and ensure a conflict resolving governance approach in the post transition period.

- ECOWAS/UNOWAS in collaboration with the National Security structures, should engage citizens as an integral part of security strategies to curb growing insecurity in the country. This further requires community engagement and inter-ethnic and religious dialogues to create the necessary platforms for sustainable peace.
- CSOs, NGOs, traditional and religious leaders, women and youth groups should strengthen existing local peace structures to engage in civic and peace education in communities. There is need for the institutionalisation of preventing and countering violent extremism strategies in the school curriculum



Senegal

Senegal has commenced preparations leading to its Presidential Election in 2019. President Macky Sall has been criticised for allegedly suppressing freedom of expression and anti-government demonstrations. In spite of ongoing infrastructural developments, economic challenges and allegations of corruption continue to dominate political discourse in the country. With the discovery of crude oil in Dakar, Fatic and St. Louis and its planned exploration by 2020, public debate over its management has increased. Senegal has witnessed series of protests by local community groups, especially in Kédougou and Casamance against perceived neglect and marginalisation by the Government prior to the discovery of gold and zircon.

Political Stability Challenges: The Presidential Election on February 24, 2019 is significant for democratic stability, peace and security in Senegal. Credible elections would contribute to democratic consolidation in the country. However, the decision by the court to disqualify key opposition candidates Karim Wade and the former Mayor of Dakar, Khalifa Sall, from contesting the election based on convicted charges of corruption is causing tension in the lead up to the election and may continue afterwards. The 2018 Law on Parrainage, which enjoins candidates to secure 52,000 endorsements from 7 out of the 14 regions of the country is also seen by opposition as an attempt to manipulate the elections to the advantage of the ruling Alliance Pour la République (APR) party. Reports of lack of space for the operations of CSOs and NGOs has become common in Senegal. For instance, Lead Africa Francophone, which is alleged to support *Y'EN A MARRE* – an activist group advocating for good governance - had their certificate seized by the Government. The Government's intention to regulate social media is another issue seen as a deliberate effort to control the media space and crackdown on political dissent. Attempts to control social media and disqualification of opposition members from contesting the election

could lead to protests and violence in 2019. Equally important to note, labour strikes by health workers, drivers and teachers for better conditions of service are rampant. Economic hardships and poor conditions of service would also serve as a key campaign debate for public sentiment and support in the coming elections. These developments would be a threat to the peaceful conduct of elections and in the management of transition in 2019.

“Youth radicalisation and street children syndrome is gaining root in the country. Timbuktu Institute’s study on youth radicalisation in Senegal has revealed that youth in the outskirts of Dakar are increasingly becoming more radicalised. These vulnerabilities are of serious security concern to the stability of the country in the year 2019 and beyond.”

Human Security Challenges: Senegal has recently been under the spotlight for threats of violent extremism and organised crime. Youth radicalisation and street children syndrome is gaining root in the country. Timbuktu Institute’s study on youth radicalisation in Senegal has revealed that youth in the outskirts of Dakar are increasingly becoming more radicalised⁵³. These vulnerabilities are of serious security concern to the stability of the country in the year 2019 and beyond. Senegal risks possible attacks or could serve as a potent hub for Islamic radicalisation that could aggravate its susceptibility to violent extremism in the West African Sahel. Further, youth illegal migration is increasing and has socio-economic implications on the development of the State. Incidents of armed attacks and robberies, especially in the Casamance region are equally worrisome. Another issue of security concern is violence against women, largely driven by an entrenched patriarchal system that undermines women development and security in the country. The stabbing of Mariama Sagna, a member of the Pastef Political Party and advisor of the Municipal Council, in Kadougou in the South-East of Senegal is a notable case of threats to women security in the country. Besides, recorded cases of FGM and early child marriage are preponderant in rural communities in Senegal. According the UN Women Database, 31 percent of women age 20-24 years were forced into marriage before age 18, while 23 percent of women age 15-49 have undergone FGM in Senegal⁵⁴.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS/UNOWAS and other international partners should facilitate and strengthen inter-party dialogue and manage political disputes ahead of the 2019 election;

⁵³ See: Youth Violence and the Challenges of Violent Extremism in Zinder. Available at http://timbuktu-institute.org/images/youth_violence_extremism_zinder_niger.pdf (Accessed January 24, 2019).

⁵⁴Op. cit. UN Women.

- The Government, through the security operatives and religious leaders should strengthen community peace infrastructure along border communities to identify security threats from violent extremist groups and provide timely response;
- The Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, local NGOs and CSOs should strengthen public education and awareness creation on tolerance and non-violence ahead of the elections in 2019;
- ECOWAS should revisit its support to Senegal to strengthen systems and support structures to safeguard the protection of vulnerable children in the country.



Sierra Leone

A successful political transition with the transfer of power from one elected leader to another - of different political parties - in April 2018, was an essential milestone in the consolidation of democracy in Sierra Leone. The new President, Julius Maada Bio has strengthened the anti-corruption commission to investigate and prosecute alleged corruption cases. Similarly, free education in all government and assisted schools has been introduced across the country. However, concerns have been raised about political intolerance, unemployment, sexual and gender-based violence, reviving the economy and improving the health sector that was adversely affected by Ebola outbreak between 2014-2016. In this regard, there are high expectations on the part of the citizens for the new Government to deliver on its campaign promises in 2019.

Political Stability Challenges: The political climate in Sierra Leone is a mixed bag of occurrences.

“The cycle of political violence and intimidation, as well as perceived biases of the GTT report and the establishment of the Commissions of Inquiry are potential indicators for heightened tension and violence in the 2019 outlook.”

The outcome of the recent election produced a Parliament where no particular party has an absolute majority. This is seen as an opportunity for consensus building and inclusivity in governance and decision making. However, polarisation of politics along ethnic and regional lines is contributing to the simmering tension in the country. There are recurrent reports of alleged political intimidation of opposition party members in Parliament and other public spaces. Also,

in spite of the recommendations submitted by the Cross-Party Committee set up by the President to address political violence and intimidations, the problem still persists. In another development, the House of Parliament has passed Constitutional Instruments 64, 65 and 67 of 2018 for the setting up of a Commissions of Inquiry into corruption offences of public officials

and other private individuals mentioned in the Government Transition Team (GTT) Report⁵⁵. However, the opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) has described the Commission as a tool for political ‘witch-hunt’. The cycle of political violence and intimidation, as well as perceived biases of the GTT report and the establishment of the Commissions of Inquiry are potential indicators for heightened tension and violence in the 2019 outlook.

Human Security Challenges: Sierra Leone is challenged by illicit drug trafficking and cultivation of marijuana by youths. The interventions of Police in illicit drug cases have led to the death of a 29-year old in Mile 91, North of the country in September 2018. Another 29-year old was shot dead by police following a disputed by-election in Constituency 056, Ward 196 in Tonko Limba Chiefdom, Kambia District. The use of absolute force by the Police in response to unarmed civilians was met with public outcry, which has potential for civil protest that could trigger violence in the country. There are also reported cases of FGM, rape and sexual exploitation of women and girls. 39 percent of women aged 20-24 years are forced into marriage before age 18, while 90 percent of girls and women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM⁵⁶. In addition, 29 percent of women and girls aged 15-49 years experienced intimate partner, physical and sexual violence in the last 12 months⁵⁷. These have triggered campaigns and protests by women and various interest groups against the increased spate of sexual exploitation and violence against women and children. Recurrent flooding and poor sanitation are also rife in the country. The consequences of these manifested in the outbreak of epidemics like cholera, diarrhoea and malaria, which have implications on human livelihoods and security the outlook of Sierra Leone.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS, AU and UNOWAS should continue to engage political actors and other stakeholders including CSOs and local NGOs in facilitating the establishment of infrastructure for peace to enhance reconciliation and national cohesion in Sierra Leone;
- ECOWAS/AU/UNOWAS, CSOs, and other partners should intensify engagement with the Government and opposition parties to create a space for political dialogue that would contribute to mitigating rising tension and political violence in the country;
- Government, through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs, the Police and Legal Aid Board should strengthen and enforce the laws protecting women and girls against sexual violence and exploitation.

⁵⁵ See Sierra Leone Government Transition Team (GTT) Report 2018.

⁵⁶ Op. cit. UN Women Database.

⁵⁷ Ibid.



Togo

The current political landscape of Togo remains uncertain as result of the ongoing political crisis between the ruling Union for the Republic (UNIR) Party and the opposition coalition C14. This has heightened tensions and made the security situation in the country unstable. Since 2017, opposition has been organising nationwide protests in demand for constitutional reforms and a return to the 1992 Constitution which had two-term presidential limit that was amended by the late President Gnassingbe Eyadéma.

Political Stability Challenges: The current political crisis in Togo has gained regional and international focus. The opposition's demand for political reforms, including a return to the two-term presidential limit and electoral process has sparked series of protests, resulting in the crackdown on and detention of protesters by security agencies. Also included in opposition's demands are reforms in the country's judicial system, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and an end to repression against political opponents of the Government. Despite these demands and opposition boycott, the IEC conducted the legislative elections in December 2018 amid uncertainties and mass public protests. There has not been significant progress in the dialogue process initiated by ECOWAS and the Africa Union under the leadership of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo of Ghana and Guinea's President Alpha Condé. The protracted political stalemate has serious implications on political stability and democratic governance in Togo. It is expected that the protests by the opposition which is supported by citizens in the diaspora will continue, with possible repression and crackdown by the security forces. The crisis has affected education and other socio-economic activities in the country. The growing insecurity in Togo continues to have repercussions on regional security. Neighbouring states, such as Ghana and Benin have been witnessing an influx of migrants and political refugees fleeing State for fear of repression. With the increasing activities of terrorist and extremist groups in West Africa, an outbreak of violence in Togo would serve as a potential avenue for extremist groups to spread their operations in the region.

"The protracted political stalemate has serious implications on political stability and democratic governance in Togo. It is expected that the protests by the opposition which is supported by citizens in the diaspora will continue, with possible repression and crackdown by the security forces."

Human Security Challenges: The main human security challenge in Togo is the ongoing political crisis. The recent killing of a youth protestor by a security officer in northern Togo has triggered

the opposition's plan for another protest which could further heighten tensions in the country. Opposition protests are expected to rise in response to the Government's intransigence to their demand for political reforms, as demonstrated in the recently held legislative elections which happened despite calls for postponement. Apart from this, incidents of armed robbery, mob justice and mosque attacks have been observed in the country in 2018. In particular, the cases of mosque attacks have potential to trigger sectarian violence and offer opportunity for violent extremist activities. The persistent political crisis has adversely affected the economy of Togo. Economic growth has decelerated since the onset of the recent political crisis, slowing the growth rate to an estimated 4.4 percent from 5.1 percent between 2016 and 2017⁵⁸. As such, there has been high unemployment rate and high prices of goods and services, affecting living conditions. Economic vulnerability is high among women because they have fewer opportunities and are underrepresented at high levels of decision making⁵⁹. Female headed households experience higher rates of poverty than male-headed households – 57 percent against 55 percent⁶⁰. The economic hardship and its associated impact on gender disparities is likely to complicate the intractable political conflict in the country in the years ahead.

Recommendations

- ECOWAS/AU/UNOWAS and international partners should intensify various levels of engagements with the governing party and the opposition C-14 to agree on a timetable for meaningful political reforms in the country and ensure that leadership of political parties commit to the mediation process as well as promoting peaceful elections and political transition;
- Togolese in the diaspora, the civil society and the media should ensure responsible use of formal and social media to douse tensions and promote social cohesion in the country;
- The CSOs (C7) and the media should continue to set the agenda for healthy public discourse on the required constitutional and institutional reforms, elections, and the ongoing processes to restore peace and stability in Togo;
- The mediation team should review the configuration of stakeholders who participate in the dialogue process as well as development of parallel processes at lower tracks is imperative. This will provide opportunity for the inclusion of opinion leaders in the diaspora, youth groups, women's groups, traditional leaders and other civil society groups to ensure broad inclusion of all issues and concerns;

⁵⁸The World Bank – Togo Overview. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/togo/overview> Accessed on 24/01/2019.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

- The mediation team in consultation with the conflict parties should explore the possibility of an alternative and acceptable location beyond Lomé for the dialogue process as a confidence building measure to encourage balanced participation and frank contribution of all stakeholders its success.