

KEY MESSAGES

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** All reports are based on anonymous NSRP sources.

ON THE GROUND

1. HUMAN COSTS OF INSURGENCY AND EMERGENCY ESCALATE IN NORTH EAST

The human costs of the insurgency escalated in May 2013 as the Jama'atu Ahli Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) consolidated its hold on parts of Borno and Yobe States. In many parts of Borno and Yobe schools, hospitals, and markets had been forced to close down for up to eight months in some local government areas (LGAs), as residents either fled for their lives, or heeded the warning of the insurgents to stay away from schools. There were also reports of abduction and forced marriages by JAS militants, which locals call 'Auren Markas' (literally 'Markas marriage', named after Markas, the first headquarters of JAS destroyed by the military in 2009). JAS members reportedly paid bride prices ranging from ₦2,000 to ₦5,000 to affected families. Information about the impact of this practice on the affected women remains scanty. However, there are indications that most of the women and young girls were used to prepare meals for the militants in their camps and strongholds, which were spreading in northern Borno in particular, before the declaration of the state of emergency.

The capacity of JAS to maintain such harems in their strongholds was indicative of its expanding resource base. Other indicators included the growing size of its fighters - some of whom were reportedly being paid to fight, the growing fleet of Toyota Hilux vehicles used during its expeditions against security forces, and its acquisition of sophisticated weapons including anti-aircraft missiles. Most of these resources were acquired through proceeds from the kidnapping of high value individuals and extortion from traders. For instance, JAS was reported to have been responsible for the kidnap of Dr. Alli Shettima Monguno, the respected statesman on 3 May as a ploy to extract ransom money from the state government. The resort to kidnapping signalled the movement's adoption and parodying of survival strategies of other insurgent groups.

Some conditions of living have worsened since mid-May following the deployment of more troops after the Federal Government declared a state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. The restriction of movements and curfews that were imposed have increased food scarcity, and caused the cost of some food items to increase. Reports from NSRP sources indicate that the cost of basic food items such as rice, meat and fish have tripled since the declaration of state of emergency. Also transport and communication costs have increased with the disabling of telecommunications networks in the affected states. The closure of borders has affected imports and exports and endangered the livelihoods of local populations and multinational cross-border traders who subsist on commercial activities in border areas.

Nigerians and the major actors in the insurgency appear polarised on the desirability and effectiveness of the state of emergency. Critics claim the Federal Government displayed its non-commitment to a peaceful resolution of the insurgency by declaring the state of emergency when a committee established to explore possibilities for dialogue and amnesty was just beginning to consult with stakeholders. The

perception of these groups is that the declaration of the state of emergency will undermine peaceful resolution efforts. Critics also claim the emergency rule was counterproductive as it would provide an unfettered environment for alleged impunity and human rights violations by security forces and further drive disenchanted local populations into the welcoming embrace of the JAS.

Supporters of the declaration of state of emergency claim it was necessary to stop the territorial gains and alleged atrocities perpetrated by JAS militants. At the time the announcement was made, JAS had reportedly sacked local council governments and security institutions in five LGAs in Borno State. These include Bama, Kalabalge, Kukawa, Marte and Ngala LGAs where the insurgents had reportedly replaced the Nigerian flag with their own flag. They claim the state of emergency was necessary to prevent secession, restore law and order in affected areas, and protect lives and properties.

Given the restrictions of movement and difficulty of communications, it has become more challenging to gather factual information on the current situation in the affected areas. The challenge of getting unbiased information is worsened by the dissemination of conflicting information by the propaganda machinery of both security forces and JAS insurgents on the state of affairs. While JAS insurgents have claimed victory over security forces and alleged that most of the casualties recorded as a result of the offensive by security forces are civilians, the security forces claim they are succeeding in their tasks of dislodging insurgents from their strongholds and freeing civilians from the stranglehold of JAS. The military authorities have also announced the killings and arrests of hundreds of insurgents.

NSRP sources confirm that the deployment of 3000 soldiers to the three states have resulted in the displacement of insurgents from their camps and strongholds. There are fears however that these gains may not be sustained in the medium to long term. Some sources claim most of the insurgents have escaped arrest, and are rapidly returning and infiltrating neighbourhoods in Maiduguri from where they fled in 2012 when the government announced a restricted state of emergency. There are also fears that military operations are being compromised because some members of the security forces routinely provide information to the insurgents. Fears of the existence of saboteurs in the security forces have been confirmed by military authorities who have announced arrests of suspected JAS informants in the security forces. There are also concerns that the current offensive against JAS has not targeted their financial supporters and political patrons.

Finally, it is feared that the military offensive will achieve little in the current state of disagreement among key political leaders on the state of emergency. It was expected that the decision of the federal government to retain elected governments at state and LGA levels in the affected states, against the historical trend of suspending governments when a state of emergency is declared, would attract the goodwill of leaders from the North East and earn support from the local population for the emergency. However, feelers from the affected states indicate that high stake politics is undermining consensus among key groups and leaders. Critics claim the retention

of elected officials is simply a ruse, as the emergency proclamation order gave the presidency powers over funds and security in the states.

However, it seems the state of emergency and the efforts of the Federal Government have started yielding some positive results. The Joint Task Force (JTF) has clearly succeeded in destroying all known JAS camps and put many militants on the run. Several communities held hostage by JAS for months have been freed and there are indications that local communities have welcomed the intervention. Some communities are cooperating with the JTF to arrest suspected fleeing JAS members surreptitiously returning to communities. There are reports of formation of neighbourhood watch groups by youths in some sections of Maiduguri to fish out fleeing JAS members. In one case, a father of a suspected JAS militant is reported to have reported to security agents that his son who had joined JAS had returned. The suspect was subsequently shot when he tried to escape from arrest. The emerging scenario of greater community cooperation with security agencies is due to growing public disaffection with recent trends in which suspected JAS militants allegedly resorted to the killing of unarmed civilians and engaging in criminal activities for personal enrichment. It also indicates some success of the initiatives by JTF to promote better relations with communities. The trend also questions earlier assumptions of public support for the insurgency indicating that the communities under terror were probably acting out of fear rather than love for the insurgents and hatred for security forces.

Also important is the fact that the Federal Government has not abandoned dialogue and mediation efforts as initially feared. The Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in Northern Nigeria is still active and has been reaching out to key stakeholders in the North. The Federal Government has also met some of the demands of the groups, echoed by respected northern leaders, by releasing women and children in detention, including the wife of Sheik Abubakar Shekau, leader of JAS. NSRP sources also indicate that the decision of the government of the United States to offer a reward for information leading to Shekau's arrest and freezing the assets of JAS leaders have contributed to putting pressure on JAS. The JAS leadership has reassessed its dependence on local support.

2. KADUNA CONSOLIDATES SECURITY GAINS

Kaduna State remained largely stable in May as Governor Ramalan Mukthar Yero consolidated his hold on power. There are indications that the reconciliatory measures so far undertaken by the governor has yielded positive results. For instance, the much expected cabinet reshuffle took place in May 29 without any major changes. The retention of most of the commissioners appointed by Late Governor Patrick Yakowa indicated that Yero had reconciled with some of the commissioners who reportedly worked against him while he was deputy governor. Also significant in the reconciliatory measures is the decision of the governor to appoint persons from Southern Kaduna as commissioners to important portfolios such as Finance, Justice and Local Government. Observers claim the appointments

are aimed at mobilizing support for Yero's re-election in the 2015 governorship election.

There were also no incidents of attacks on villages in Southern Kaduna. This suggests reconciliation initiatives facilitated by the state government as well as the deployment of more security forces to the area were yielding some results. The main incidence of violence reported during the period occurred in Birnin Gwari LGA, where gunmen killed 13 persons over a one week period. Two communities were affected in the attack, which led to the killing of two soldiers and other worshippers in a mosque.

Birnin Gwari is strategically located along the busy Lagos Road that links Kaduna and other states in the North West to Western Nigeria. The large forest in the area has over the years been the den and hideout of robbers who routinely rob travellers and disappear into the forests. However, since late 2012, the suspected armed bandits in the area have resorted to targeting worshippers in mosque and police stations. For instance, in October the armed bandits killed 20 worshippers in a mosque in Dogon Dawa community in the LGA. In late January, gunmen also killed three policemen and a civilian resident during an attack on a police station. The attacks on police stations and mosques as well as the discovery of the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have raised suspicions of the existence of other motivations than criminality. There are fears that the forests in Birnin Gwari now harbour cells of insurgent groups.

The response of security agencies to the emerging threat will be important in determining the state of security in the state in the coming months. This is because the area is very close to several strategic national institutions that are potential targets of attacks by insurgents. These include the Kaduna Airport, the Nigeria Defence Academy and the State Security Service (SSS) Training School. Residents are concerned delays in deploying troops to the area may provide incentives for more insurgents to relocate to the forests and carry out attacks on innocent civilians and government institutions.

3. SECURITY IMPROVES IN PLATEAU

The security situation improved considerably in Plateau State in May and early June. There were no repeats of surprise attacks on communities, road blocks, killings and raids on cattle sheds reported in previous months, especially in Barkin Ladi, Riyom and Wase LGAs. There were indications of a return of normalcy in areas affected by violence with the resumption of farming and trading activities.

NSRP sources attribute the relative improvement in security to the special intervention of the Security Task Force (STF) to contain cattle rustling, which has been a recurrent trigger of violence between communities of farmers and pastoralists in the state. There are also indications that conflict resolution initiatives such as the one facilitated by Senator GNS Pawjok, who represents Plateau Senatorial District, has yielded positive results. The initiative involved the convening of peace meetings between leaders and youths of Fulani and Berom communities.

The security situation in Plateau is likely to remain stable in the near future. Communities and the security agencies who welcomed the declaration of state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states are taking some measures to ensure that suspected fleeing JAS militants do not return to the state. There have so far been no reports of arrests of militants trying to re-enter Plateau State. A key concern of some observers is the likely security implication of the controversial emergence of Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau State as factional chairman of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF). Jang, who has been a critic of the presidency and the Federal Government especially over the handling of the conflicts in Plateau State, is now leading the faction of NGF believed to have the support of the president. There are concerns that Jang may become more influential in the presidency and Abuja. This may result in Jang being more successful in influencing the posting and overall mandate of the STF. It is also believed that Jang's new romance with the president would put him in a better position to anoint his preferred successor in the 2015 governorship election against the wishes of opposing political interest groups.

4. KANO CONSOLIDATES SECURITY GAINS

The security situation in Kano State remained stable throughout May 2013 with no reports of attacks by suspected JAS insurgents on security and civilian targets. The state continued to witness the steady withdrawal of military checkpoints from the metropolitan areas of Kano. NSRP sources estimate that one-third of checkpoints have been dismantled; only 17 out of the 48 checkpoints erected at the height of the insurgency last year remain. The reduction in number of check points is reportedly based on growing confidence among security agencies on the state of security in Kano as well as the need to mobilize troops to areas of need such as the North East and Mali.

There are however, lingering concerns over the sustainability of the improved state of security in Kano. These concerns stem from lack of progress in the arrest and prosecution of alleged sponsors of violence in the state. For instance, residents are apprehensive that no progress has been made in the arrest of the alleged sponsors of the plot to kill HRH Dr. Ado Bayero, Emir of Kano, after two failed attempts. This has led to a noticeable change in the protocol and itinerary of the respected traditional ruler.

Perceptions that the main drivers of violence in the state have not been addressed also remains a source of concern. First, Kano is yet to recover from the economic hardships aggravated by the insurgency. The volume of trade remains low as visitors who used to patronise Kano markets have continued to stay away. Desperate traders resorted to organizing state-wide prayers to seek divine intervention in the recovery of the Kano economy. One of the prayer events was organized by the Kano Traders Association on Friday 24 May. It is feared that poor recovery of the economy will threaten the consolidation of security gains.

Second, contestation for supremacy among opposing political interest groups have kept tensions high in Kano. Factional conflicts between allies of Governor Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso and Kano born Abuja-based leaders of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) notably Dr. Shamsudeen Usman, Minister of National Planning are deepening. The minister is suspected to be nursing the ambition to contest the Kano Governorship position in 2015 and is sponsoring a parallel empowerment programme in the state. The small enterprise loan programme sponsored by the Ministry of National Planning provides loans ranging from ₦50,000 to ₦5million as against the range of ₦10,000 and ₦50,000 provided by the Kwankwaso led Kano State government. The move is interpreted as aimed at using the 'federal might' to undermine the legitimacy of Kwankwaso whose future in the PDP reportedly remains uncertain. The relationship between Kwankwaso and his predecessor Malam Ibrahim Shekarau remains sour. Security agencies reportedly averted an incident of violence when Askarawan Kwankwasiyya - political thugs of the governor - and government house security details, prevented Shekarau from entering the premises of the Kano State University of Science and Technology, Wudil, Kano to witness the award of an honorary doctorate degree to Chief Bola Tinubu, leader of the opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN). Shekarau is representing his All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) in merger talks with ACN and the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) for the formation of All Progressive Congress (APC).

Thirdly, there are concerns that there are still large quantities of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Kano despite the successful weapons discovery initiatives of security agencies in the state in the past year. These fears were confirmed when the State Security Service (SSS) arrested some Lebanese businessmen in connection with stockpile of sophisticated weapons in residences and business premises in Kano and Abuja.

Finally, there are fears that Kano may witness influx of JAS militants fleeing offensives by the Joint Task force following the declaration of state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. This is based on reported relocation of JAS leaders and members to Kano when more troops were deployed to Borno and Yobe in 2010/2011.

The outlook for security in Kano remains precarious. Kano remains a major theatre in the deepening of rift between political factions in the PDP as well as the PDP and opposing parties. Kwankwaso has defied the presidency and is among the few PDP governors that have openly claimed they voted for Rotimi Amaechi as chair of the NGF. The political faction, led by Usman and Ghali Na'aba, former speaker of the House of Representatives, has openly challenged Kwankwaso over the failure to conduct LGA elections. There are fears of more frequent clashes between supporters of the two factions in the run-up to the 2015 elections. NSRP sources claim the growing menace and impunity of Askarawan Kwankwasiyya, which has also clashed with security agencies, is likely to lead to the proliferation of militant wings of political factions as opponents of Kwankwaso mobilize to raise their own hit squads.

5. TROUBLING SIGNS OF IMMINENT VIOLENCE IN THE NIGER DELTA

Political conflicts remained the major threat to security in the Niger Delta in May 2013. The reported rift between President Goodluck Jonathan and Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State escalated with the controversial victory of Amaechi in the chairmanship election of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF). Amaechi, whose candidacy the presidency and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) opposed, reportedly scored 19 as against 16 votes of Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau State, the adopted consensus candidate of the Northern Governors Forum, the PDP and the presidency. The controversial election has torn the NGF apart as supporters of Jang insist he is the duly elected chairman, by claiming that Amaechi rigged the elections.

The ruling PDP and the presidency is reportedly perturbed as the election is seen by most observers as a dress rehearsal of the likely humiliation of the PDP and Jonathan in the 2015 elections, though the president's ally and spokespersons have dissociated the president from the NGF chairmanship saga. The sense of humiliation is strong because it is believed that Amaechi who had rallied opposition party governors to his side could only have won the elections with the support of governors elected under the platform of the PDP. It is against this background that the PDP reacted by suspending Amaechi and Governor Wammako of Sokoto State - who is suspected to have supported Amaechi - from the party.

The implications of the face-off between Jonathan and Amaechi for security in the region are underscored by the region-wide divisions it is generating. Governor Godswill Akpabio of Akwa Ibom State, who heads the PDP Governors Forum that was allegedly formed to neutralise Amaechi's influence as chairman of NGF and three other Niger Delta governors have openly criticised Amaechi over the elections. Comrade Adams Oshiomhole, ACN governor of Edo State, is the lone supporter of Amaechi in the region. The battle for hearts and minds has intensified with pro-Jonathan and pro-Amaechi solidarity rallies competing for public spaces in Port Harcourt and other towns in the region.

Most worrisome is the fact that the conflict is suspected to be reviving animosities between Amaechi's Ikwerre ethnic group and Jonathan's Ijaw group as well as providing platforms for legitimisation by some ex-militants. Asari Dokubo of the defunct Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and Ateke Tom, leader of the Niger Delta Vigilante Service (NDVS) and the Icelander (German) Confraternity have so far threatened to return to the creeks – a euphemism for restarting the insurgency if Jonathan is not allowed to contest for the presidency. Ateke Tom has mobilized protesters to demand removal of Amaechi for so-called anti-Niger Delta activities through rumoured alliance with the North to remove Jonathan from power. There are allegations that pro-Jonathan elements have mobilized the militants to destabilize Rivers State and create a conducive environment for the removal of Amaechi. This is because, Ateke Tom, who has been executing surveillance contracts for government and oil companies, is an Ijaw from Okrika - the home town of Dame Patience Jonathan, wife of President Jonathan. Ateke Tom had also been previously allied to anti-Amaechi politicians since the controversial 2007 elections. Conspiracy theories

about a ploy by Ijaw elements to rout Amaechi spread when Ateke Tom hosted the convention of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in his former camp-turned Okochiri country home early June. Some members of the Rivers Peoples Assembly (RSA), which he formed and leads, recently held a rally in Port Harcourt where they called on Ateke Tom to contest as Governor of Rivers State in 2015.

Purported disagreements among politicians and ethnic groups over political ambitions are also visible in other parts of the region. In Delta State, the ambition of some politicians like Godsdan Orubebe, Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, to contest for the 2015 governorship election is overheating the system. This is mainly because it threatens the power sharing arrangement that favours the Delta North Senatorial District to produce the next governor. Orubebe's closeness to President Jonathan had raised fears that he had been anointed by the president for the post until elder statesman Chief Edwin Clark, believed to be the one of the president's political patron publicly opposed Orubebe's candidacy. Clark also expressed support for the retention of the power sharing agreement. Clark's intervention is perceived as intended to counter perceptions gaining ground across the Niger Delta of Ijaw domination as he seeks to mobilize support among different groups for Jonathan's presumed ambition to contest the 2015 presidential election. The rift between Clark and Orubebe is deepening as the Delta State Elders Forum has petitioned the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate allegations of corrupt enrichment by Orubebe. Clark is a prominent member of the Delta State Elders Forum which had instituted a similar charge against former Governor James Ibori. The face-off between the two prominent Ijaw politicians may undermine security in coastal Ijaw communities in Delta State.

The security outlook for the Niger Delta is precarious. Divisions among politicians and the reemergence of militants in the contests among the politicians is a signal of imminent violent confrontation. Also the mobilisation of ethnic sentiments and ethno-political associations into the power tussles is a threat to security. The war against oil bunkering and illegal refinery is succeeding as more suspects have been arrested. However, observers in the region worry that security agencies have so far not made any headway in the arrest of the big barons behind the business. Given the historical precedence where wealth from oil theft is believed to have been deployed for electoral contests, it is feared that incidence of oil theft will increase as the election approaches.

THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

6. PARTIES AND POLITICIANS POLARISED OVER STATE OF EMERGENCY

The May 7 declaration of state of emergency in three states of the North East has attracted opposing views among different political interest groups and parties in the country. While leaders and politicians elected under the platform of the ruling PDP have commended the president for the move, leaders of opposition parties have

opposed the decision. For instance, General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd.), leader of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) and Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, leader of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) have criticised the emergency declaration and the Federal Government's handling of the insurgency. Ironically, the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which controls Borno and Yobe States affected by the state of emergency and is involved in merger talks with the ACN and CPC in the formation of the APC, has expressed support for the decision of the president. This position is probably influenced by the decision of the president to allow the duly constituted state and LGA governments to remain in place, against previous experiences where declaration of emergency rule led to suspension of elected governments.

The presidency and officials of the ruling PDP have dismissed the criticisms and accused both Buhari and Tinubu as well as the ACN and CPC of playing politics with major national security challenge and the lives of Nigerians. They have also criticised Buhari for covertly supporting JAS, a position shared by some groups such as the Northern Christian Association of Nigeria (Northern CAN) that have asked security agencies to investigate Buhari for alleged support for the insurgency.

The conflicting position on emergency rule is symptomatic of the deepening polarisation of political actors in the country. There has been a tendency to give political interpretation to the declaration of state of emergency. For instance, some of Jonathan's critics in the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) have claimed the state of emergency was intended to water the grounds for the actualization of Jonathan's 2015 presidential ambitions. This explains why this group and National Assembly members representing the North have canvassed for the reviewing of the State of Emergency Act which gives the president powers over the funds of states under emergency rule.

The politicization of the emergency rule is also evident in the fact that key members of the ruling PDP in Adamawa State, which has a PDP government, have criticised the declaration of emergency in the state. The criticism stems from the tussle between Governor Murtala Nyako and Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, the PDP National Chairman for control of the PDP structure in Adamawa State. The executives of the state's chapter of the party and allies of Governor Nyako claim Tukur influenced the declaration of state of emergency in Adamawa to create an enabling environment to take control of the party structure in the state. The context of the allegation is the botched effort to replace the pro-Nyako state party executive with a pro-Tukur executive in the last state party congress.

The politicisation of the emergency rule in the state may undermine the early successes so far recorded. This is particularly so as the military scales down on operations, and the process of rebuilding devastated communities and rehabilitating displaced and wrongfully incarcerated persons begin.

7. DRUMBEATS FOR JONATHAN'S CANDIDACY IN 2015 GET LOUDER

The mobilization of support for the candidacy of Jonathan in the 2015 presidential elections gathered momentum in May and June with leaders of the ruling PDP and key office holders in the federal executive openly proclaiming the eligibility of the president and canvassing support for him. Interestingly, contrary to warnings emanating from the presidency on covert and overt campaigns for the 2015 elections, the president appears to be encouraging his vociferous supporters to campaign louder and bolder. The drumbeat became louder in May due to two major developments. First is the contestation over the chairmanship of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF). The insistence of incumbent chairman to run against the reported opposition of his party fuelled suspicions that he was being sponsored by opposition parties and politicians who want Jonathan to step down in 2015. This reportedly reinforced the resolve of pro-Jonathan elements to take control of the NGF by all means, including factionalization. Jonathan's supporters reckoned that the battle for control of the NGF required a strategy of allowing and sponsoring groups to openly proclaim support for the president's eligibility and candidacy.

The second stimulus for the open mobilization emanated from the submission of the report of the National Assembly Committee on Constitutional Amendment. The highpoint of the committee's recommendation is the proposal for a single tenure of six-years for the president and state governors that excludes incumbents. Jonathan's supporters interpreted the proposal as a direct attack on the president's ambition and strategized to counter the proposal through open campaigns. The strategy is to deploy every platform to drum up support for the president. Since party officials and appointees were critical to the delivery of this strategy, the president reportedly had to rethink the plan to drop some ministers in a cabinet reshuffle earlier expected to take place on 29 May 2013 during the Democracy Day celebrations.

Consequently, most ministers have been encouraged to use the platform of presenting their report card to justify the need for the continuation of the president in 2015 to complete the celebrated 'Transformation Agenda'. One of the major platforms for the launch of the campaign was the presidential dinner organized for PDP stalwarts on May 30. The PDP leadership apparently selected speakers from across the geo-political zones that would read the script. Most of the speakers praised the president for his performance; denied knowledge of any pact, which constrained the president from re-contesting; and affirmed the eligibility of the president to contest the elections. Moreover, the Minister of Information and National Orientation, who coordinates the good governance tour and on-going mid-term report of members of the federal executive council, has repeatedly advertised the right of the president to complete his 'natural' eight year tenure.

The implication of the early campaigns is that it is likely to heat up the political system. There are indications that political jobbers have joined the fray to campaign for the president. There are fears that the early campaigns and jostling for influence will have a destabilizing impact on government as political appointees are coming under pressure to join the campaign or risk losing their coveted positions. It is believed that many politicians who have eyed ministerial slots see this as an

opportunity to displace professionals who are still reluctant to start campaigning for the president.

There are also indications that the presidency is working to discredit the report of the National Assembly Committee on Constitutional Amendment by supporting states creation. The committee had recommended that no states should be created. The president is expected to use state creation to woo beneficiaries to his side. However, mobilizations for state creation are likely to create divisions among groups agitating for states and may result in violence as losers have historically picked holes in the processes and outcomes of state creation exercises.

8. COMMUNAL AND VIGILANTE VIOLENCE SPREAD ACROSS NIGERIA

There was escalation of incidence of communal and vigilante violence across the country as governments and politicians rolled out the drums to celebrate the 14 years of 'uninterrupted democracy'. The reports of violence were reminiscent of escalation of violence in several parts of the country in 2000 as the country marked the first anniversary of the return to civilian rule. One of the incidents which revived memories was the killing of 65 security operatives by suspected militants belonging to the Ombaste cult in Eggon LGA of Nasarawa State. The security personnel were ambushed by the Ombaste cult while on a mission to stop an initiation ceremony of the cult. The gruesome killings brought back memories of the killing of policemen and soldiers near Odi in Bayelsa State and in Zaki Ibiam, Benue State in 2000. However, a key lesson from previous incidents is that the search for the killers have so far not resulted in ransacking of communities and killings of innocent villagers as happened in Odi and Zaki Ibiam.

During the period, there were reports of violence between neighbouring communities in Taraba State; Nassarawa State and Benue State; and Cross River State and Ebonyi State which resulted in many deaths and loss of property. A troubling dimension in the conflicts is the alleged use of sophisticated weapons by ordinary community members. Another troubling dimension is the alleged involvement of security and government officials. For instance, the Ombaste cult was believed to have mounted the ambush after being tipped off by a government official who knew about the planned expedition.

There are fears of escalation of communal and vigilante violence as the 2015 elections approach. This is because some politicians have started mobilizing communal grievance to serve their political interests and ambitions. Moreover, politicians are supporting the formation and arming of vigilante groups in preparation for the elections. There were allegations that some prominent politicians are behind the Ombaste cult, which has been implicated in several killing incidents.