

Pilgrims has compiled this report, drawing on information from a variety of media, open and privileged sources.

Any feedback on this report is most welcome and should be addressed to:

**Email:** [intcel@pilgrimgroup.com](mailto:intcel@pilgrimgroup.com)

**Tel:** +44 (0)1483 228 787

The aim of this report is to provide clients with an overview of key issues in Nigerian politics and security with an assessment of its future course

**SPECIAL  
REPORT**

# *Nigeria* – Security Assessment

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Political Climate</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Security and Politics in the Oil Producing Regions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tension and Inter-group Relations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Faith, Violence and Security</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Scenarios for the Future</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>7</b>



## Introduction

Nigeria is one of Africa's most important countries, not only because of its staggering population of 140 million but also because the country provides the biggest underdeveloped market in the world.

Nigeria is Africa's largest oil-producing nation and also possesses one of the world's largest deposits of natural gas. However, the political and socio-economic situation in the country continues to make investors cautious. The dynamic pattern of its politics and the fluid nature of its security make it necessary to monitor developments and update strategies to suit ever-changing situations. This report highlights key issues central to the future of Nigerian politics and security.

## The Political Climate

With local, state and national elections in April 2007, the political atmosphere in Nigeria is predictably tense, especially as previous elections in the country have been known to exacerbate ethno-religious tensions that expose the contradictions in the country's composition. There are, however, a number of other reasons to be concerned about the forthcoming election and its possible aftermath.

### *First civilian-to-civilian transition in the country's history*

Previous transitions have been from military rule to civilian, with the military government having the apparatus to suppress any protest that could come from disputed election results. During this first civilian-to-civilian transition the efforts of the current administration to adjudicate will be under considerable scrutiny, and the credibility of its response may determine the nature of any crisis.

### *Extended term in office*

For quite some time it was not certain whether there would be an election at all, as it was widely believed that the incumbent President Obasanjo was looking for ways of extending his term of office beyond the constitutional mandate of two terms. Although his efforts failed and the President confirmed openly that he had given up on the idea, there are still those who believe that the plan has not been completely abandoned. Sceptics believe that some of the actions being taken by the government, including the arrest and prosecution of those who were alleged to have corruptly enriched themselves, are intended to destabilise the political situation and thus pave the way for the imposition of a state of emergency. Such an outcome would automatically lead to the President prolonging his term in office.

### *Infighting between the President and Vice-President*

There has been open disagreement for months between President Obasanjo and his Vice-President, Atiku Abubakar, with the two men trading insults and allegations of corruption. At the roots of the problem was the Vice-President's desire to assume office after President Obasanjo's bid to extend his presidency for a third term failed, and the avowed determination of the President to prevent this. The Vice-President later abandoned the ruling party to join a rival party, the Action Congress (AC), which gave him the presidential ticket. Since the fall-out between the two leaders, there have been rumours in the country that prior to the election the Vice-President could be arrested for



President Obasanjo and his Vice President, Atiku Abubakar in happier times before allegations of corruption soured their relationship.

(AP Photo/Saurabh Das)

alleged corruption by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC). This is a step that is likely to provoke violence, not necessarily because the Vice-President is popular, but because many of the unemployed segments of the population would see such an action as an opportunity to foment trouble.

### *Presidential candidate selection issues*

There are several people contesting the presidency, but only three appear to be serious contenders. The first, Alhaji Umar Sheu Yar'Adua, represents the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) and is presently the governor of Katsina State. He is the younger son of late General Sheu Musa Yar'Adua, who was President Obasanjo's deputy when the latter was the military Head of State. The second is retired Major General Mohamadu Buhari, a former Military President, representing the All Nigerians People's Party (ANPP), and the third is the Vice President Atiku.

All these individuals have strong support bases across the country and it is generally expected that the elections will be bitterly contested. There are on-going discussions between the Action Congress and the ANPP to collaborate and produce a single candidate for the presidential election, but this process has suffered a number of setbacks and the prospects for a successful outcome appear quite slim.

All three candidates are from the northern area of Nigeria. This seems to be creating subtle resentment in the country, especially from the Ibos in the eastern region. There is ongoing agitation from this group, many of whom argue they have not been fully reincorporated into national politics since their attempted secession 40 years earlier. The Yorubas from the south-west appear not to be in contention for the position, as President Obasanjo is from this area and there is an implicit understanding that they cannot produce two national leaders in quick succession.

### *Local political unrest*

Apart from the potential for unrest at national level, there are dangerous signals coming from all the states, especially Anambra, Oyo and Lagos. In both Anambra and Oyo states there have been unconstitutional impeachments of state governors, who were only reinstated after court judgements. The situation in Oyo is particularly serious, as a political godfather who is against the reinstated governor has threatened to ensure the victory of his candidate, even if this is against popular will. In Lagos, the economic capital of the country, the ruling AC party has suffered a major setback because the incumbent governor, Bola Tinubu, allegedly

imposed his chief of staff (Tunde Fashola) as the party's governorship candidate. Consequently, many of the party's stalwarts, including the governor's deputy, Femi Pedro, have decamped to other parties, where they have been able to get nominations to contest the election against Tinubu's alleged favourite. There are examples in many other states of people changing political party after they failed to gain party nominations, and in all cases there are indications that the elections will be bitterly contested.

### *Electoral Process*

There are also doubts over the extent to which the body responsible for conducting the election, the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), can effectively conduct a free and fair election. There are already criticisms about how the commission is handling aspects of the preparations. In this situation it becomes easy for candidates who lose elections to argue that the results were rigged to favour opponents. Already, police have uncovered ballot boxes intended for use in election rigging in the private houses of local politicians.

All the above issues are major causes of concern for the period immediately before and shortly after the election.

## Security and Politics in the Oil Producing Regions

While there has been conflict over a long period in the oil-producing Niger Delta, the problems have increased significantly since the second half of 2005. Indeed, between January and March 2006, Nigeria lost over US \$1 billion in revenue as a result of the crisis in the region, while the country's oil output has been cut by almost 20%. One problem with the Niger Delta is that there are several layers of conflict, which are sometimes mutually reinforcing but at other times mutually exclusive.

Three factors have accounted for the recent increase in instability in the oil-producing regions. These are: the arrest, by the federal government, of the leader of one of the most militant groups, Mujahid Dokubo Asari, of the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF); the arrest by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, the former governor of one of the oil producing states, and the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), by far the most militant of the groups operating in the region.



Nigerian oil pipelines belonging to Italian oil company Agip in Obrikom, Nigeria.

(AP Photo/George Osodi, File)

### *The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)*

Many of the recent security developments in the Niger Delta are linked to the activities of MEND. MEND was formed around the middle of 2006 and since then has controlled the activities of many of the armed groups in the Niger Delta. Of all the groups that have emerged in the last decade, it appears to be the one most resolute in its determination to attain its objectives by force. It is also evident from recent clashes with government security forces that the group cannot be brought down by military means. MEND targets the activities of multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta, demanding that those companies share more of the profits from oil extracted from the delta with the region's inhabitants. It has not been possible for the Nigerian security forces to meet the challenges of these groups, especially as the Niger Delta terrain, with its thousands of mangrove-lined waterways, gives the militants advantages over any military force that is trained in conventional warfare. The bombing of Shell's East Area facilities in February 2006 forced closure of fields and subsequent losses averaging 470,000 barrels per day.

### *Hostage taking*

Although hostage-taking has always been an issue in the Niger Delta, the practice has increased significantly in the last eight months, and more than 50 hostages have been taken during this time. Although most of the hostages taken are later released, there are growing fears that hostage-takers are becoming more militant in their demands. All the hostages released have indicated that they were well treated while in captivity; however, in 2006 an attempt by the security forces to release hostages resulted in the death of two hostages (British and Nigerian).

It is not only oil workers who are targets for the hostage-takers; a naval officer kidnapped by militants was later found dead. At the time of writing this report, MEND is still holding some hostages, and the group has stated categorically that they will not be released until MEND's demands, which include the release of Dokubo Asari and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, are met. The Nigerian government has, of course, refused this demand. The security agencies are reluctant to seek a military solution to the hostage crisis, especially following the bungled attempt in 2006. Another point worth noting is that, while historically it has been key multinational corporations such as Shell that have been the targets of attacks, foreign oil workers from less-known organisations are increasingly becoming victims of kidnap.

### *The Spread of Conflict*

A further concern is the extension of conflicts into regions that have previously remained immune from such problems. Since October 2006 conflicts have spread to places like Akwa Ibom state, which was previously considered relatively peaceful. Although foreign oil workers and even indigenous ones are making attempts to stay safe, the nature of the environment and the tasks they perform are such that government security agents are unable to ensure their security.

### *Diversification of Militant Tactics*

Apart from kidnapping, MEND has also begun to use car bombs, claiming responsibility for two devices detonated near compounds belonging to Anglo-Dutch Shell and the Italian group Agip in the Nigerian oil city of Port Harcourt. This adds a new dimension to the conflict in the oil-producing communities, as it appears to be bringing the battle closer to the homes of oil executives. MEND has also threatened to use suicide bombers. While it remains to be seen whether they will introduce this tactic to their struggle to secure greater benefits from their natural resources, the whole idea of martyrdom through suicide bombing is not a practice known in the country.

The government is trying to end the hostage-taking crisis, employing a strategy of persuasion and force. While the President continues his appeal to militants to end the kidnappings, there are also attempts to use force against them. At one stage it was believed that efforts were being made to seek the assistance of countries like the United States, China and India, to work with the Nigerian security forces to end the practice of kidnapping. However, these countries have denied having any intention of sending troops to help counter the activities of the Niger Delta militants. Their unwillingness to become militarily involved in the region is understandable, since the terrain is very difficult and any foreign force is likely to find engagement here hazardous. The military option the government now seems to be considering is an all-out attack on militants, which brings with it a danger of significant civilian casualties.

## **Tension and Inter-group Relations**

With a population of 140 million and more than 250 ethnic identities in Nigeria, managing inter-group relations in the country has always been a major challenge.

A development that needs to be watched very closely is the propensity for unexpected incidents to ignite inter-group tensions. For instance, the national census conducted in January 2006 gave Kano state (in the northern part of the country) higher population figures than Lagos state and further highlighted that the population of the northern part of the country is greater than that of the south. This led to minor tensions in relations. The southerners are now arguing that the figures for the north were inflated to give the region advantages in issues such as revenue allocation and the distribution of other federal amenities. Differences over issues such as land have also been a major cause of conflicts. Land remains the most important natural resource in Nigeria, largely because of its economic, political and spiritual importance. In recent times, however, conflicts over land have remained largely localised and contained.

## **Faith, Violence and Security**

Religious conflicts have also been a major security problem. There is a general assumption that the north is Muslim, the east Christian and the west traditional religion worshippers; however, this generalisation does no justice to the complicated nature of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria. With many of the states in northern Nigeria now passing Sharia law, the divergence of views between the north and the south continues to widen. However, this has not been a cause of any major national security crisis in recent years.

## Scenarios for the Future

Against this summary of the political and security situation, below are some of the issues that could occur in the West African nation.

### **(a) Possibility of violence during April 2007 election (80% likelihood)**

It is widely believed that the April 2007 election will bring with it considerable violence, and indications of this have already been seen in the country. The problems here are likely to manifest themselves at state and national levels. Nigeria has a history of not accepting the outcomes of election results and there is nothing to suggest the forthcoming election will be different from previous ones. If there is massive vote rigging across the country, there are bound to be riots and the use of the military could be required to bring them under control.

It is expected that the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) will win the presidential election, an outcome that is likely to raise further allegations of election rigging. It may take some time to address all the conflicts that arise from the election. The use of election monitors is not likely to prevent malpractice, since in most African countries election rigging often does not take place on the voting day itself.

### **(b) Continued violence in the Niger Delta (80% likelihood)**

Violence in the Niger Delta is almost certainly going to continue, especially as there is no common ground between the militants and the Nigerian government. The militant groups, especially MEND, are asking for the release of Dokubo Asari and Diepreye Alamiyeseigha, which the Nigerian government is not willing to countenance. It is impossible for the Nigerian armed forces to protect the oil-producing region effectively for a number of reasons. First, the region is massive and beyond the scope of easy management by the army. Second, the militants have sophisticated arms and are strong enough to meet a more effective challenge from the security forces. Third, the militants know the terrain better than the security forces and have exploited this advantage. It is thus likely that the kidnapping of hostages will continue for some time to come, and foreign companies should factor this into their plans.

### **(c) Moves towards disintegration (10% likelihood)**

Predictions of the total disintegration of Nigeria now seem far-fetched. Although there are ethnic differences, they are not strong enough to threaten the fabric of the state. The military is effectively united and appears ready to defend the unity of the country. While there will be pockets of problems, these will be contained, and the continued unity of the country is not in any serious doubt.

### **(d) Religious riots (10% likelihood)**

Unless there are any developments that ignite global religious riots, as in the case of the Danish cartoons of Prophet Mohammed, it is not likely that there will be any major religious crisis that will engulf the whole country. There is the possibility of minor problems at local level, especially in the northern part of the country, but these are not likely to spread nationwide and would not be difficult to control.

### **(e) Full scale national riots over downturn in economic realities (20% likelihood)**

A nationwide protest against the downward turn in the nation's economic situation is an unlikely scenario, provided the government does not come up with any unpopular policies such as an increase in the price of petrol. There are no indications that this is being considered by the government. In the past, government decisions to increase the price of petrol have always been preceded by ministers giving such indications.

## Conclusion

As Nigeria faces the future, it is almost certain that its security challenges will continue to be of concern to the country and those interested in its affairs.

In a number of ways 2007 will prove crucial. Apart from the impending general elections, there are also key issues that centre on the complexities of managing 140 million people with more than 250 ethnic identities. What seems to be of greatest concern is the managing of the country's main natural resource, oil. With the increasing militancy of the armed groups, the Nigerian government is now facing a major challenge to its authority. While there can be no doubt that the Niger Delta armed groups cannot compete on a like-for-like basis with the superior firepower of the Nigerian military, the fear of the enormous civilian casualties that could accompany any military response by the government continues to be a major concern for political authorities. It is likely that the government will have to contend with this dilemma for some time to come: how can they adequately address the security issues in the oil-producing regions and maintain the confidence of stakeholders – the local population, international companies and investors – to ensure that they continue to engage in the region.

What also seems clear is that security concerns and issues will have a continuing impact upon foreign companies and investors for the foreseeable future, requiring management time and effort and, of course, expenditure to ensure that appropriate measures and responses are in place.

## Further Information

### **Pilgrims Group**

Pilgrims House  
The Links Business Centre  
Old Woking Road  
Woking  
Surrey GU22 8BF  
UK

Tel: **+44 (0)1483 228 778**

Fax: **+44 (0)1483 228 780**

**[www.pilgrimsgroup.com](http://www.pilgrimsgroup.com)**