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On behalf of Peaceful Polls Project Nigeria 2015

Nigeria on the Brink?

Before the

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Rep. Christopher H. Smith, Chairman

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on an issue that is important to people concerned about terrorism and the state of human rights in our world today.

I especially want to thank you, Chairman Smith, for your outstanding leadership on this issue; for traveling to Nigeria multiple times, at great personal risk, to further explore the situation; and for urging the Nigerian government to create a Boko Haram victim's compensation fund. Thankfully, such a fund is being created.

I. AT THE BRINK – AGAIN: TOWARDS NIGERIA'S VALENTINE'S DAY ELECTIONS

Many years ago, a *New York Times* article wryly remarked that God was Nigerian. This facetious comment was predicated on the stunning comeback Nigeria made after years of brutal military dictatorship towards democracy without a violent upheaval.

Today, some wonder if this holds true as Nigeria again faces yet another brink - maybe even the mother of all brinks. As Nigeria holds its 5th presidential elections in 16 years, since its return to civilian democracy, there are lots of centrifugal schisms at play.

It is important to note the makeup of the past elections, in the delicate balancing act of region and religion that assuages simmering sensitivities in Nigeria:

1. 1999 – By popular consensus, three Southern Christians were the main candidates.
2. 2003 – By revolt, a Southern Christian General and A Northern Muslim General were the main candidates.
3. 2007 – By general consensus, three Northern Muslims were the main candidates.
4. 2011 – By revolt, a Southern Christian and two Northern Muslims were the main candidates.
5. 2015 – A Southern Christian and a Northern Muslim are the main candidates.

Nigeria is by far the largest country in the world with a population that is half Muslim and half Christian. Consequently, religion has always been a sensitive and important identity marker, and as such, influences the actions of ordinary Nigerians and their leaders. Politicians often capitalize on the religiosity of the people to boost their electoral support (International Crisis Group, 2014:5).

At the 2011 general elections, Nigeria was divided along religious lines mainly because the presidential candidates were seen as representatives of the two major religious groups in the country: Christianity and Islam. The incumbent, President Goodluck Jonathan, a Southern Christian from the People's Democratic Party (PDP), won the election. When Muslim challenger General Mohamadu Buhari lost the 2011 presidential election, violence erupted in 12 northern states where he commands a large following from the Muslim population. The final toll for the Christian community was staggering. In a 48-hour period, over 700 church buildings were burned, hundreds of Christians were confirmed killed, more than 3,100 Christian-operated businesses, schools, and shops were burned, and over 3,400 Christian homes were destroyed. Thousands of Muslim youths in 12 states with machetes, knives, matches and gasoline carried out

this pogrom. The “freest and fairest” elections resulted in one of the “fiercest and most ferocious” rampages of violence against innocent Christians that Nigeria has seen.

In several states that our fact-finding teams visited, taxis were randomly stopped by rampaging Muslims, and the Christians ferreted out for murder as happened to Pastor Isma Dogari. In one instance a taxi driver, despite the pleas of sympathetic Muslim passengers, drove a pastor to a mob and handed him over to be killed. My own cousin was shot five times.

While the homes of certain prominent ruling People’s PDP politicians (including Muslims) and a few PDP offices were attacked in the initial spate of violence, this was overwhelmingly an anti-Christian onslaught. Rioters in Zaria would enter a federal campus and attack only the Christian chapel, leaving the other buildings untouched. People were randomly required to recite the Koran or be killed. Throughout northern Nigeria, this violence was carried out along religious lines, with Muslims attacking unsuspecting Christians. More church buildings were destroyed than any properties associated with the ruling party, the government or any other category. **(See Annexure D).**

This occurred within the context of an already volatile situation in the north where Boko Haram has been waging a violent campaign of terror. Boko Haram has earned a dubious distinction as one of the top three most lethal terrorist organizations in the world. In a three year period, however, the three most deadly incidents of anti-Christian persecution – from three different aggressors – in Nigeria were as follows:

- the March 7, 2010 Dogo Nahawa massacre in Jos, Plateau state by Muslim Fulani herdsmen
- the April 16, 2011 Post-election massacres in the 12 sharia (Islamic law) states by rioters
- the Jan. 20, 2012 Boko Haram onslaught in Kano

The circumstances that surrounded the 2011 elections are quite similar to the political atmosphere in the run-up to the 2015 elections. I anticipate that the presidential election will once again be closely contested by President Goodluck Jonathan who will be representing the PDP and General Muhammadu Buhari for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC). Akin to the 2011 elections, the 2015 elections appear to be polarizing into essentially yet another Christian versus Muslim contest. Since Nigeria’s return to democratic rule in 1999, the PDP has won every presidential election, and has also dominated in the gubernatorial elections.

From its formation in February 2013, the APC has become a strong opposition party and will be the first to pose a major challenge, if not a setback, to the ruling party. However, because certain members of the APC party comprise of ex-PDP members, many Nigerians criticize the party as merely an alter ego of the ruling party (PDP), yet consider it a welcome development in the light of the hegemony of the PDP – a Hobson’s choice, if you will.

Considering the dominance of key Muslim figures in the APC party and the sensitivity of religion in Nigerian politics, many critics initially argued that a one-religion ticket can never win the presidential elections in the country. However, Buhari’s choice of a running mate, Yemi Osinbajo, countered some of his critics. Besides being a former Attorney General, Osinbajo is also a senior pastor with the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG).

The March 7, 2010 massacre in Jos by Muslim Fulani herdsmen, the April 16, 2011 sharia states post-election violence and the Jan. 20, 2012 Kano onslaught by Boko Haram mark three

consecutive years of triple-digit casualties, **each in excess of 200 lives lost from a single incident**, in northern Nigeria. Each incident was record setting in global conflictsconflict for that year.

Therefore, there is natural concern that the February 14th, presidential elections on February 14th 2015, may well shape up to be a Valentine’s Day Massacre for religious minorities especially. The dooms day scenario reflects a confluence between the tri-state Terror line in the northeast and the 12-state election violence contour.

From my recent trip to Nigeria **For the Peaceful Polls 2015 Project** – an initiative to mitigate violence given the lessons learned from our work in 2011 - a few of the more discernible dichotomies in the politically charged atmosphere are as follows:

A. TERROR TANGO

Nigerians appear locked in between northern extremists and southern militants who have both vowed violence if either of their candidates, the top challenger General Buhari and incumbent President Jonathan, do not win. The president is from the Niger Delta where some elements of the resource-control militancy in 3 South-South states are sympathetic to him. General Buhari is from the North where his sympathizers in 12 states unleashed mayhem when he lost the 2011 elections.

B. NORTHERN RELIGIOUS DOMINATION

Some Nigerians feel caught between islamization by Boko Haram insurgency, if President Jonathan is re-elected, or sharianization by democracy, if General Buhari is elected.

Boko Haram has railed against the country being ruled by an infidel as has General Buhari in the past. Similarly, they both have expressed support for the imposition of Islamic Sharia law on Nigeria.

President Jonathan on the other hand is perceived by many northern minorities to have ineffectively protected them. Many have been forcefully converted to Islam in Boko Haram captured territory or been killed. The Christian population of northern Nigeria has been massively eroded more under his watch than ever in the history of the nation. Entire Christian towns have been wiped out or overrun and many are now refugees in UN camps in Cameroun which I visited. They have lost the most basic elements of citizenship any human requires – identity, locality and security. Even terra firma – the very earth beneath their feet – the God-given ancestral homelands they were born on, have has been lost to terrorists.

C. UNPALATABLE PROPOSITIONS

Many in the electorate view themselves as caught between candidates perceived as Unsustainable and Unelectable. “Unsustainable” because the spate of insecurity has worsened, not improved, in successive years under the incumbent; “unelectable” because the primary challenger has been

haunted by ghosts of his past conduct and statements in three successive elections. The latter has contested in 4 out of the last 5 elections – more than any other Nigerian politician.

The insecurity quandary also applies to the corruption question. Most see the current levels of corruption under this administration as unsustainable and unacceptable. In the midst of austerity measures, falling gas prices and a major insurgency, the incumbent has included the purchase of a 12th airplane for the presidential fleet which is arguably the largest in the world.

While the challenger touts anti-corruption credentials, recently released reports of a government inquiry into a Petroleum Trust Fund he headed show evidence of fraud and abuse under his watch. More so, many wonder at some of his political compeers who are brazenly corrupt. The situation has been worsened by inconsistency as to whether he will or will not probe and prosecute past offenders.

D. DOMINATION BY REGION/RELIGION

Some in the electorate (and even within the main opposition party itself) view it as an unabashedly Muslim party. Most of its principal officers were Muslim. Indeed some perceive it as a grand alliance between the Muslim majority in the north and the Muslim minority in the south (to the exclusion of the Christian minority in the north and the Christian majority in the south), earning it the nickname “Muslim Brotherhood.”

On the other side, some view the president as being overweening in his Christianity. His two trips to Israel on pilgrimage last year caused a furor in northern Nigeria. Nigeria's rulers have tended to be Muslims with generally anti-Israel policy stances. In fact, northern Muslims protested against Israel last year during the clash with Hamas as has happened over the years.

However, because of the delicate balancing act of respecting religious sensitivities of both predominant faiths, Nigeria's government funds Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and, to a much lesser degree, funds Christian pilgrimages to Israel.

President Jonathan incurred the wrath of some Nigerian Muslims for daring to be Nigeria's first president to go on pilgrimage to Israel. This notwithstanding that his Muslim predecessor went on pilgrimage to Mecca several times a year and in fact remained there for months creating a leadership crisis at home.

The presidential villa in Abuja, where I was once held prisoner by late dictator General Abacha, had two mosques – one for the first lady and one for the president. On my first visit to the villa on the restoration of democracy, I was stunned to see a newly-built Christian chapel on the grounds of the villa not far from where my cell had been. It would seem that the architects of Nigeria's presidential villa never anticipated a Christian president.

Division by Region

In addition to the divisive politics of religion, there is the primal problem of region. Most southerners feel more comfortable with an urbane southerner as president, regardless of his competence, in contrast to a reclusive, austere or eccentric northerner. Northern figures such as former FCT Minister El-Rufai, former anti-corruption Czar Nuhu Ribadu and former Vice president Atiku Abubakar are amongst politicians who have crosscutting appeal in the south.

In addition, few southern politicians have traction in the north. In fact, some prominent northerners have insisted that “power must return to the north,” reducing the question of the leadership of Africa’s power house not to good governance but to crude feudalism. Thus, potential Southern Muslim stars like Lagos Governor Fashola, who is liked by a young generation of Nigerians purely on merit, have been excluded. Many young voters feel that if El-Rufai or Fashola, both technocrats who made their mark governing both the current and former capital cities of Nigeria respectively, were on the ballot, they would be more effective than General Buhari.

There is mutual fear on both sides of the divide on the shift of the pendulum of power from one region to the other. The south has finally tasted power and freedom many years post-independence and doesn’t want to return to the unspoken colonial vassal arrangement left by the British while the north has tasted loss of power and dominance and is afraid of its permanence.

Although the south has always been amenable to northern rulership for most of Nigeria’s lifetime, three factors in recent times have complicated the situation:

1. **The Yar’adua presidency:** The imposition of an ill-known northern governor as president in 2007 was itself a problem. However his ill-health, relocation to Saudi Arabia, refusal to handover to his deputy per constitutional requirements and his government by cabalocracy led to a popular revolt by Nigerian civil society, the cabinet and ultimately even the congress. History may well view this as Nigeria’s own micro version of an “Arab Spring.” This groundswell of support spurred the then vice president Jonathan into office by succession in 2010 and, subsequently by election, in 2011.
2. **The Boko Haram insurgency:** The violence of the jihadi terrorist group Boko Haram in its stated objective to Islamize the country has frightened many in the south. **Southern Muslims traveling to the south have been slaughtered by Boko Haram in spite of their Islamic faith because they are not considered extreme enough.**
3. **The 2011 Post-election violence:** The violence that trailed the last presidential elections that led to the deaths and destruction has not endeared many to a power shift to the north. The term “Born to rule” has come to exemplify the perceived attitude of the north to rulership in Nigeria. It is this mindset and the desperate power grab and accompanying carnage that causes recoil by many in the south.

All said, the battle line has been drawn for an electoral battle royale on the basis of region and religion.

To better elucidate the north/south dichotomy in Nigeria, I reproduce here an op-ed I wrote in the Nigerian Guardian Newspaper in the wake of the 2011 election violence which historically and politically contextualizes what is currently happening from regional/religious and military perspective.

Ogebe: Nigeria: Back to the drawing board

THAT Nigeria is an amalgamation of two distinct entities in 1914 is not in dispute. That Nigeria remains de facto a contraption without a coalescence of those two entities – north and south – 97 years afterwards is the shocking disclosure of the April 16, 2011 elections and the bloody

aftermath. It is an uncanny coincidence that the April violence occurred the exact week of the anniversary of the Major Gideon Orkar coup attempt.

That April 1990 coup was the first military attempt to split Nigeria after the secessionist movement of Biafra during the civil war. What was different about the coup was rather than be secessionist, the plotters wanted to be “excisionists.” They offered to release a portion of Nigeria from the burden of one nationhood. The coup is most known for introducing into our national lexicon the concept of the “Orkar line” which over the years has acquired an increasing even if sinister significance. The other issue that stretched the fabric that held together the nationhood of Nigeria was actually under a military attempt at brokering democracy. The June 12 election of 1993 was a successful attempt by a “southerner” to garner votes with sufficient spread across the country to win presidential elections that had only been won by a “northerner” before now. The people of Nigeria took great pains and sacrifices to achieve this in a fair and credible election. In spite of their ethno-religious and regional differences and rivalries, Nigerians were united and resolved at the 1993 elections to rid themselves of a virulent military regime. They even conceded to an unbalanced Muslim-Muslim ticket led by Businessman Moshood Abiola, to make this possible.

The military’s annulment of the June 12 election turned the nation upside down, disillusioning Nigerians regarding elections and nationhood. The annulment also destabilized governance for the next six years leading to 4 heads of state in that timeframe ending with a “compromise” president of southern origin. President Obasanjo who came into power from prison was truly a compromise. His military compeers released him from prison and granted him a presidential pardon thus paving the path to granting him the presidency. He had no constituency than the military and belonged to no party than the military. He was conscripted, given a script, PDP was commandeered and he did the bidding of the army party. The marching orders in the army’s script was simple “go, kill and come back” except that in the case of Obasanjo it was “go, keep, and return back.” It was not a huge risk on the part of the Minna hill-top generals who bank-rolled his “campaign.” General Obasanjo had done guard duty before. There was no reason to doubt his capacity to discharge simple gate-keeping orders. In 1976, he became Nigeria’s accidental “southern” Head of State after a failed coup attempt that eliminated his boss General Murtala Muhammed. He conducted elections and handed over (or handed back) power to President Shagari in 1979.

Obasanjo was the first Southerner to rule Nigeria for a full three years. Thus his accidental return to power exactly 20 years later in 1999 courtesy of Abiola’s sudden death in prison was a carefully orchestrated “army arrangement”- to quote his nemesis the late musician Fela. He won the 1999 presidential elections even without the support of his own people from the South-West, who resented the fact that he handed over power to a Northerner (the NPN party) in 1979.

However, even this arrangement began to derail. Barely a year into his presidency, several northern states decided to impose Islamic sharia law in their states. This “political sharia” as Obasanjo called it, threatened the secular status of Nigeria, challenged the constitution of the republic and undermined the center. As a result, massive loss of life occurred in the year 2000 in Kaduna. At the end of it all, twelve states, the “Sharia 12” had been added to Nigeria’s political topography. By hook or crook Obasanjo bounced back in 2003 elections largely through turning to his birth constituency in the southwest who sacrificed their regional dominance for his second term at the center. Obasanjo finally finding himself somewhat invincible without the help of his old constituency decided to breach the army arrangement agreement by “going and keeping but

not coming back.” The third term attempt was soundly crushed in a parliamentary counter coup of epic proportions and Nigerians for the first time saw “people power” at work.

True to his fabled vindictive form, Obasanjo reportedly orchestrated elections and primaries that essentially flushed out his opponents. He donated the presidency to Umar Yar’Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, two academics turned governors whose maximum global exposure were 2 medical trips abroad and sub-official visits overseas respectively. VP Atiku, the northerner-in-waiting was ousted. While the 2007 elections marked the first time Nigeria ever conducted a third consecutive general elections, the election was, nonetheless, replete with massive fraud and rigging. It was primarily a reflection of the wiles of the ruler and not so much the will of the voter. Although General Babangida attempted to collect the baton back from Obasanjo by contesting, OBJ declined. He returned to sender – but of his choice. In the absence of his late deputy Shehu Yar’Adua, he bestowed it upon his younger surviving brother Umar. Mission accomplished.

The problem began when Yar’Adua went missing in action and First Lady Turai Yar’adua surreptitiously took the reins of power bypassing VP Goodluck Jonathan. By a legislative counter coup, he became acting president, again showcasing the “power of the people” even though he was undermined by the Katsina cabal.

After Yar’Adua’s demise, Jonathan became Nigeria’s third accidental southern president (the first being General Obasanjo and the second being General Obasanjo.) His run for election in his own right was the only option to avoid reigniting the vexed question of nationhood especially in the context of oil-producing minorities of the troubled Niger Delta.

The election result became a confluence of lines like the River Benue and Niger meeting in Lokoja. Goodluck won in the South of Nigeria while General Buhari won in the north of Nigeria both regions basically voting on a regional pattern. However the Middle Belt region in the north of Nigeria was the big exception – they voted for Goodluck the “southerner” finally showing the political maturity and nationhood expected of one true Nigeria. The curious thing though is that the line of Goodluck’s victory goes all the way from the Atlantic Ocean to the highpoint of the Plateau and there ends. The Buhari line of victory begins from Bauchi and runs up to the border of Chad. The Buhari line is the same as the sharia 12 line of 2000 and the Goodluck line is the same as the Orkar line of 1990. What kind of confluence coincidence is this?

All the Middle Belt states went with Goodluck except one – Niger State. Niger is the only Middle Belt state implementing Sharia. The states where the election violence has broken out are essentially in these Sharia 12. Whether you call it the Orkar line or the Sharia line, it is clear that even after 50 years of independence and 15 of democracy, the election may reflect the will of the majority but does it reflect the reality of one nation? The British may have erased the line between north and south but persistent events in Nigeria have consistently drawn the line back. Three years to the 100th anniversary of the amalgamation, Nigeria is now back to the drawing board. Again.

END

POST SCRIPT

The North-South divide which played out in the 2011 elections may be reprised in the 2015 elections. The two candidates are poised to contest the presidential elections and will be fighting a

close battle that may not be determined by the confluence of lines. The opposition party (APC) controls certain key States in the South and the North. In a report issued by Africa Confidential in January 2015, it is argued that the key battlegrounds in the 2015 elections will be the middle belt and the south-west, not only because these areas have the most registered electorates, but also because it is assumed that President Jonathan would win in the South-South and South-East and Buhari in the North-West and North-East (if elections were to be conducted there).

Curiously, the same generals who supported Obasanjo and Obasanjo himself have pretty much endorsed his former opponent (Buhari) against his party's candidate (Jonathan) - another seeming 'army arrangement' in the making.

II. 2015 PRE-ELECTION PHASE: REGRESS OR PROGRESS?

There are several notable developments in the current electioneering phase.

A. RELIGIOUS INCLUSION IN LAGOS STATE

Recently, there have been agitations by Christians in Lagos state to produce a governor. Lagos state is highly cosmopolitan and, with a population in excess of 20 million, is Nigeria's most diverse state. However the political process has largely been ceded to the truly indigenous "Lagosians" who, although minority Muslims, have tended to dominate governance of the state.

It is therefore instructive and commendable that after a brief quest for a Christian governor, both major political parties by popular consensus presented Christian candidates and thus avert a Muslim/Christian faceoff as is occurring in the national elections.

Lagos state has been a model of religious tolerance in this respect and Southwestern Muslims are some of the most peaceful worldwide in terms of interreligious harmony. Although the last two governors were Muslim, both their first ladies were Christian.

With regard to region, Lagos state has a Christian from the Southeast as commissioner in the state cabinet. No state in the north has people from other states in the cabinet. Some northern states even deny indigenous Christians positions in their own state government. Kano state as at 2010 did not have a single Christian in any of 159 political offices.

B. REGIONAL EXCLUSION IN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

The presidential primary of the leading opposition mega party the APC was curiously slanted. Only northern candidates contested for the presidential nomination except for one southern maverick candidate who was in actual fact re-contesting his governorship seat. Therefore, key

opposition stalwarts, including current governors from the South who defected from the ruling party, mysteriously declined to contest for the ticket while their northern colleagues did.

It is important to note that this is not “progressive.” It is regressive. The June 12, 1993 elections were probably the watershed moment for a post-religious Nigeria. Muslims and Christians alike voted for a Southern Muslim and Northern Muslim Presidential and Vice Presidential candidate against a Northern Muslim President and Southern Christian Vice Presidential team. As in the current election, the perception was that the northern candidate was a fundamentalist and there was a yearning for a moderate southern candidate.

The APC toyed with the idea of a Northern Muslim President and a Southern Muslim Vice President – which is a reversal of the ill-fated June 12, 1993 combination. However, many now agree that such a combination would be highly insensitive as to be unviable in present day Nigeria. Indeed some fault General Buhari for running an administration, as head of state, where both the head of state and deputy were from the same region and religion.

As for the ruling People’s Democratic Party, a contrived “adoption by acclamation” process brought about what is arguably one of the least contested primaries that party has ever had. In terms of popular participatory democratic process, PDP has had intensely contested primaries that actually leave observers in doubt as to the winner until the convention itself.

This time, the party printed only one nomination form, essentially exclusively for the incumbent, to the exclusion of all others - regardless of region and religion. Whether this amounts to internal democracy is debatable, but it is certainly regressive rather than progressive given the PDP’s past robustly contested national primaries.

C. MILITARY REVERSION IN POLITICS

One curious unseen factor in the elections is the resurgence of the military factor. In 2003, I wrote an op ed in the Nigerian Guardian newspaper which addresses the issue.

The Lesser Of Two Ex-Dictators And The 2003 Elections

Nigeria's presidential elections of 2003 are peculiar and unprecedented in a singular respect - never have Nigerians had to choose between candidates who have ruled us -and some would say "misruled us" - before.

The best approach to handling the dilemma over who is the lesser of two evils would be to put the April 19 elections in a larger perspective based on the following insightful observations.

The 2003 election is a major step backward for Nigeria and is worse than the 1999 elections. This is because of the stark militarization of the candidate pool. In 1999 at least there was one ex-military and one civilian candidate. Now there are 4 ex-military generals and a major making Nigeria's general elections, Generals' elections indeed!

The implication is that dictatorship has permutated into a strange hybrid of militicians - military in mufti - posing as politicians. This arrangement cannot safely be called a democracy but must be considered a "Dicmocracy" at worst or a "Demockery" at best.

One could be forgiven for assuming that the real parties in this election are artillery and infantry brigades depending on which corp the generals served. In this sense it is not much different than ex-dictator IBB's transitional shenanigans in which he promised to appoint a civilian Vice President then promptly retired his second-in-command thus anointing him a civilian VP!

2003 is another step back for Nigeria chronologically. In 2003, Nigerians were being asked to pick between Ekweume VP in 1983 (20 years earlier), Obasanjo Head of State 1979 (24 years earlier), Buhari HOS 1985 (18 years earlier) and Ojuwkwu HOS Biafra 1970 (33 years earlier).

Compared with the US where President Bush the 43rd US President in 2000 is the son of President Bush the 41st president of 1992, in just 8 years the US was able to hand over the mantle of leadership to another generation while Nigeria has been unable to transfer the torch to another generation for over 3 decades!

In the absence of late PM Tafewa Balewa and late General Aguiyi-Ironsi, Queen Elizabeth may be seriously considered as a candidate from the 1960s - after all the economy was better before she handed over independence in 1960 than it is today!

2003 is retrogression for Nigeria historically. In 1979 Obasanjo on behalf of the military gave power to civilians in democratic elections. 4 years later Buhari collected power back to the military by coup.

In 1999 (20 years later) Obasanjo on behalf of the military collected power for civilians in democratic elections. 4 years later Buhari wants to collect that same power back again 20 years after he first did. One would be forgiven for presuming that there is a twisted ping pong personality clash going on between these two in which Nigerian democracy is their battleground!

UPDATE

Today, it can be convincingly argued that President Jonathan is the first non-military president since Nigeria's return to "civilian rule" in 1999. President Obasanjo 1999-2007 was a former military ruler. President Yar'Adua 2007-2010 was the younger brother of Obasanjo's former military deputy, who but for his death would have likely succeeded Obasanjo as a "civilian" president. Jonathan's accidental presidency has broken a string of presidents with military affiliations. The public support of former military rulers for General Buhari implies a surreptitious military reversion to power which may not be progressive.

On the other hand, President Jonathan has been criticized for saying, "Some Nigerians still want the President of this country to be a lion or a tiger; somebody that has the kind of strength, force and agility to make things happen the way they think. I don't need to be a lion, I don't need to be Nebuchadnezzar, I don't need to operate like the Pharaoh of Egypt, and I don't need to be an army general. I can change this country without those traits."

Regardless of whether the army is trying to remote-control the presidency, it is true that many Nigerians feel that a military background is helpful or needful in facing the insurgency.

III. X FACTORS IN THE NIGERIAN 2015 ELECTIONS

Overall, the trend of the current presidential elections is progressive. Nigeria is at a historic cusp in its history. For the first time, the opposition has put together a really formidable coalition, and there is a fleeting possibility that we could see a transition from an incumbent to an opponent.

However there remain numerous variables that complicate a clear-cut trend analysis of what will transpire in the polls. Some of these are listed below:

A. UNPRINCIPLED POLITICS

There are many pointers to the fact that the opposition has not clearly distinguished itself by ideology or pedigree. Some argue that it is change you can't believe in.

The following blog post circulating in Nigerian social media illustrates this perspective:

“APC has been consistent in saying that PDP has ruled Nigeria for 16 disastrous years in which corruption, impunity, insurgency, armed robbery and several ills of society held sway. But at a very close look at the APC, I am seeing:

1) Rotimi Amaechi – 8 years speaker; 7 year, Governor under PDP.

2) Atiku Abubakar – 8 years Vice president under PDP.

3) George Akume – 8 years Governor under PDP.

4) Bukola Saraki – 8 years Governor; 2 years, Senator under PDP.

5) Timipre Sylva – 4 years Governor under PDP.

6) Audu Ogebe – 2 years National Chairman of the PDP.

7) Aminu Masari – 4 years as the Speaker, House of Representatives under PDP.

8) Chris Ngige – 3 years Governor under PDP.

9) Rabiu Kwankwaso – 7 years Governor; 3 years Defense minister under PDP. 10) El Rufai – 4 years FCT Minister; 2 years BPE Chairman under PDP. 11) Tambuwal-3 years as Speaker House of Reps under PDP; and to cap it all, Obasanjo is the navigator of the APC, a man who spent 8 of the disastrous 16 years as the maximum ruler of Nigeria. It is now clear that APC is a waste basket of the PDP, where the people who created and perpetuated the 16 disastrous years are now dumped. So where is the change coming from? Are they now saints because they joined APC?”

For these reason, some call the APC – “Aggrieved Peoples Party” or “Alternative Platform for Campaigning”. This has created a distinction without a difference between both principal parties.

Speaking with the electorate, it is clear that in the north, most people are voting for the candidate not the party, but in the south, the majority will be voting for the party and not the candidate. This could be a turn off for some voters who would rather stick with the ruling party.

B. CROSS-CARPETING

For the ruling party, botched primaries and the imposition of unpopular nominees and the loss of incumbents in parliamentary elections have all contributed to mass defections to the opposition.

At the formation of the APC party, five Governors from the ruling PDP party announced their decision to join. They are: Rotimi Amaechi (Rivers); Aliyu Wamakko (Sokoto), Rabiun Kwakwanso (Kano); Murtala Nyako (Adamawa); and Abdulfatah Ahmed (Kwara) (APC Admin, <http://www.apc.com.ng/index.php/about-apc/about-apc>).

In a letter read on December 18, 2013 by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal, it was stated that ‘thirty-seven (37) out of the 208 PDP members in the House of Representatives also defected to the APC’. And on January 29, 2014, 11 senators from the PDP (some of whom were ex-governors) communicated their decision to decamp to APC in a letter addressed to the Senate President, David Mark. Among the senators that defected are: ‘Bukola Saraki, Mohammed Ndume, Danjuma Goje and Abdullahi Adamu’ (APC Admin, <http://www.apc.com.ng/index.php/about-apc/about-apc>).

At the present, 37 PDP lawmakers in the House of Representatives defected to the APC party. Their decision was acknowledged by the Speaker of the House (TVC News, January 22 2015). In the Senate, nine members from the ruling PDP also decamped last week to the APC. Given this turn of events, ‘the membership of the PDP crashed to 64 in the red chamber which has a total number of 109 senators. The APC now has 41 members while other parties constitute the remaining five’ (Punch, January 14, 2015). And in Niger State, the deputy governor and 200 other political public officials defected from the PDP to the APC. The defectors cited the unjust manner at which the gubernatorial primaries were held in the state as reason for their defection. They argued that the primaries were not ‘in accordance with the PDP constitution’ (Nigerian Eye, January 19, 2015).

The decamping of politicians is in violation of the law which requires them to vacate their office once they have decamped from the party that got them elected. But the law has not been enforced. This situation does not bode well for the PDP, which is losing significant members including several former cabinet ministers and a former chairman of the party who won the opposition primaries while still a member of the PDP.

C. INTERNAL IMPLOSION

The state of affairs following the primaries is such that there is massive internal revolt within the ruling party. The media reports controversial primaries in 17 states, which have created a serious breach that threatens party cohesion going into the elections. As one person described it, in the space of six months, the ruling party successfully alienated its base.

In the north, President Jonathan won only 7 states compared to President Obasanjo's 11 state victory the last time either of them ran against General Buhari in 2011 and 2003 respectively.

President Jonathan risks winning less states in 2015. Two states which he won with 1 million votes each, Kaduna and Plateau are at risk. A popular gubernatorial challenger El Rufai has changed the dynamic in Kaduna. In Plateau, controversial succession from the same zone as the current governor has caused disaffection. There is a real risk that in these states, PDP supporters may vote in protest for the opposition. The question is whether they will do so in both the federal and state elections.

Already in Kaduna state, the Christian population is aggrieved that the incumbent governor, who is a Muslim and from the PDP party, has abandoned most of the projects initiated by late Christian Governor Patrick Yakowa whom he succeeded after his mysterious demise in a helicopter crash. Moreover, many southern Kaduna people consider the 2015 election an opportunity to elect a governor from the southern region that may be more protective of their communities and interests, especially in the context of Governor's Yero apathy and toward the sustained attacks by Fulani herders on local communities in southern Kaduna (International Crisis Group, 2014:18-19).

As for the presidential election in the state, the International Crisis Group (2014:19) reports that many southern Kaduna leaders say they will vote for President Jonathan, while the Hausa/Muslims will largely vote for Buhari. However, it is not certain that the southern Kaduna people will vote for President Jonathan considering the death, in 2014, of their likely candidate, Senator Isaiah Balat, which has led many of them to change camps and start backing the APC gubernatorial candidate in the state, Nasir El-Rufai, a former minister of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Within this context, it is likely that the 2015 elections in Kaduna State will be heatedly contested between the APC and PDP even though the VP is from Kaduna state.

D.

E. THE WESTERN WILD CARD

The Southwest of Nigeria is considered politically astute. It has also historically been dubbed the "wild west" for its turbulent earlier years. It remains a wild card as far as swing votes go.

In 2003 and in 2011, the last time President Obasanjo and President Jonathan ran against General Buhari, the Southwest vote was critical to their respective victories. What was particularly intriguing is that after merger talks failed, the Southwest decided not to vote for its Muslim/Muslim ticket. Rather, all but one of the six states in the region voted for President Jonathan.

In 2007, the Southwest showed greater sophistication than in 2003 when they voted the ruling party in for both federal and state elections. In 2011, they voted the opposition in state elections and the ruling party in national elections.

This “sell out” of their own party’s candidate – a Northern Muslim – was telling. There were speculations of bribery or blackmail. But whatever the case, there was some horse trading that caused him to win only 1 state. It remains to be seen what will happen this time around with the western wild card, and this may not be until the day after the elections.

F. THE MIDDLE BELT SWING VOTE

Probably the most critical swing voting bloc in Nigeria is the north central “Middle belt” zone. The Middle Belt is a broader concept beyond the strict geographical boundary of the NC that encompasses marginalized Christian and Muslim minorities in the “core north” (NW and NE) as well. Notable Middle Belt leader, the late Chief Solomon Lar fondly named “the Emancipator,” broadened the definition to include all “oppressed” northerners.

Without the independence of the Middle Belt bloc, it would be virtually impossible for a southern presidential candidate to meet the constitutional threshold that stipulates a minimum geographic spread of votes in the country.

In 1999, the Middle Belt compensated for General Obasanjo’s loss of his SW homeland to help him win victory. In fact, he won the party primaries in Jos, Plateau state – the putative capital of the MB only with the help of its people.

Since then, the MB has backed every winner. In 2011, the MB was crucial to President Jonathan’s victory. In only one MB state was there post-election violence.

This year, the MB is a toss-up. However a recent statement by the *Middle Belt Dialogue* aptly captures the mood of the region:

“The Summit noted that:

Ø There is general anger and disappointment in our communities against the current federal government, flowing from the sad reality that despite the huge political investment by our people in installing the Goodluck Jonathan administration in 2011, there has been no commensurate political patronage in terms of projects and appointments. Rather, we have watched in awe as hostile regions/personalities to Jonathan particularly in the north, attract, secure or corner appointments and projects in the Jonathan administration.

Ø It is obvious that as a result of the huge political investment of our communities in 2011, our communities have been exposed to unimaginable genocide and consequent untold hardship, while governments at the state and federal levels have appeared indifferent to the suffering of our people;

...Ø Comparable to operations of the Janjaweds during the slave trade era, Fulani militias and Boko-Haram have ravaged and destroyed our communities, attacking serene, quiet settlements in the Middlebelt thereby killing thousands of people between 2011 to 2014 and sacking hundreds of villages and thereby ensuring that our communities and people were displaced from their regular homelands before the 2015 elections.

...Ø If our people have been so single-mindedly targeted for genocide at a time that the patrons of the Fulani militia and Boko Haram are not in power, how much more would they be able to do should their patrons be put in charge of the Federal Government of Nigeria?;

Ø Although the federal government allegedly provided funds to state governments to pay compensation to victims of the 2011 post-election violence, it is clear that governors across the north circulated these funds to the communities that perpetrated the violence/destruction and killings. The churches and Christian victims have not been rebuilt nor has such compensation been extended to families of victims.

...Ø Delegates observed further that whereas the Middle Belt people have been unhappy with the "kid gloves" with which President Goodluck Jonathan has been treating the Islamist Boko Haram, the Middle Belt would be in a worse situation under Muhammadu Buhari who openly said that the Islamist Boko Haram who have been bombing churches, slitting the throats of women and children and abducting innocent girls and turning them into sex slaves are "fighting for justice";".

G. THE ARMY PARTY

The unobtrusive military factor must not be discounted even in this election. As I said in my 2003 op ed

“It can only be concluded in the light of the larger context provided above that the 2003 elections cannot improve Nigeria historically or politically by any significant measure. The much touted fear of civilian-to-civilian transfer precipitating military intervention is baseless for a key reason - the military has already intervened but out of uniform...

The only expansive lesson that could conceivably emerge from this election is whether there has been a sufficient realignment of political forces and interests to such a point that the pendulum of presidential power can swing back and forth across the regions of the nation on the steam of the electorate rather than on the strength of subterraneous gerrymandering by pedagogues and potentates.

If that happens then 2003 would indeed have brought about a seismic shift in favor of the nationhood of Nigerians, the viability of Nigeria and the survivability of democracy.”

Today, the presidency of Nigeria is ensconced in a golden cage with multiple trapdoors:

- If the military high command moves against the incumbent, it is headed by a northern general
- If the incumbent is defeated in the elections, he will be replaced by a retired northern general
- If the elections are repeatedly inclusive, the constitutional chain of succession is a retired northern general

IV. STORM CLOUDS ON THE HORIZON

In addition to progressive and regressive trends as well as ubiquitous x-factors, there are ominous clouds on the horizon. The following are a few: examples of these challenges:

A. CYBER WARFARE

Nigeria's infamous political gangsterism recently acquired a new battleground – the internet. An army of bloggers have been conscripted to undertake cyber warfare on behalf of the parties. YouTube videos, cartoons etc. are popping up. The otherwise normal evolution of politicking to social media platforms took an unhealthy turn when bloggers from one party filed bogus complaints that led to the closure of the Facebook Page of a prominent and incisive opposition blogger Soni Akoji. Although Facebook ultimately reversed the ban, the pre-election “virtual violence” has begun.

There were also media reports of attempted hackings of party databases, and physical attack on the APC data base in Lagos by security outfits ostensibly doing the bidding of the ruling PDP. The attack was compared to the ‘Watergate scandal of the U.S’ by APC National Publicity Secretary, Lai Mohammed. In addition there are various certificate scandals and fake medical unfitness records circulating online.

B. POLITICAL VIOLENCE

The drumbeats of political violence have been sounding for a while, but during my time in Nigeria, the manifestation began. In the last few days, the convoy of the president has been pelted with stones and his posters burnt by urchins in northern Katsina and Bauchi states. And shortly after President Goodluck Jonathan's campaign in Maiduguri on Saturday, violent altercation ensued between Islamist fighters and the Nigerian security forces.

The **Peaceful Polls Project 2015**, which I am presently implementing, issued an Early Warning Threat Alert 30 days prior to the election which is reproduced below:

While Nigeria has experienced election violence in the past, regrettably, there has been a culture of impunity and scant precedence on prosecution and punishment of election-related offences even of a violent nature.

INCIDENT REPORTS

1. PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN JOS, PLATEAU STATE

- i) *Arson attack - Videographic evidence reviewed by our monitors and readily available online captures the torching by arson of a campaign vehicle belonging to the presidential campaign of People's Democratic Party (PDP). On the video, the arsonists can be heard*

chanting the name of primary challenging candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC).

- ii) *Historical background - We particularly wish to raise an alarm over the situation given the history of such incidents. In 2008 shortly before results for Jos Local Government elections were announced in Plateau State, some people took to the streets on a rampage burning down churches and houses which ultimately led to the deaths of almost 1000 people. There was no recourse to the law courts for adjudication of election matters as laid down in the law.*

*In 2011, a similar pattern emerged. Without the full release of results, some people again unleashed full scale urban warfare on innocent civilians and passersby again burning places of worship as well as homes/businesses of individuals across 12 northern sharia states. **Again another 1000 lives were lost.***

*Unfortunately, those systematic attacks across multiple fronts in several states of northern Nigerian have been fueled and fed by campaign rhetoric spanning several years. **Party leaders did not move swiftly to condemn the attacks by their supporters.***

c) *Recommendations –*

- i. *We urge the Attorney-General of Plateau State and the Attorney-General of the Federation to, as a matter of urgency, begin immediate prosecution under applicable laws while the evidence is still fresh and the thirteen suspected attackers are in custody. **It is crucial that the perpetrators are aware that the global community is watching and that Nigeria has the capacity to hold people accountable for senseless violence.** We commend the security forces for swiftly arresting the perpetrators.*
- ii. *We urge swift prosecution as far as possible to send a deterrence message to others contemplating election violence.*
- iii. *We urge party leaders to ostracize the perpetrators of the violence.*

d) *Action taken*

Peaceful Polls 2015 has engaged counsel to follow up with the prosecutors to ensure that the 13 suspected perpetrators of the violence are held accountable for their actions.

2. ***PRE-ELECTION TENSION TRIGGER IN MATAZU, KATSINA STATE***

- a) *Proposed Demolition of 99-year old church – Documentary evidence reviewed by our monitors indicate that Katsina State has ordered work stoppage on a 99-year old church in Matazu. The church was reportedly attempting to build a fence to protect itself in compliance with a Federal Government directive to schools and churches in view of the Boko Haram terrorist threat. However Katsina State government claims it plans to build an access road through the church compound even though such a road reportedly leads nowhere.*
- b) *Historical background - Katsina state was the state which had the most massive destruction of churches in the most LGs of any state during the 2011 post-election violence. In Funtua town, every single church was destroyed.*

The state has not compensated for or repaired the destroyed churches. Rather Katsina State released 360 million naira for the building of mosques in each local government council even though no mosque was attacked during the Post-Election Violence. Approximately 100 churches were attacked in Katsina in April 2011.

Similarly Katsina has not disbursed compensation for Post-election violence provided by the Federal Government to most victims 4 years after the attacks. In Malumfashi in particular hundreds remain without payment.

A few months ago, an RCCG pastor was killed in Katsina by a mob even after he had been first rescued and taken to a hospital for treatment. Katsina has a history of hostility to minorities of religious, ethnic and political distinction. Therefore, these minorities cannot, as the Southern Igbo of the 1966 massacres did then and are doing now, retreat to their home base as a safe haven. These minorities are in dire danger.

c) *Recommendation*

- i. *We urge the Katsina State government to desist from interfering with the legitimate desire and right of the ECWA church Matazu to protect its premises by building a fence. Safeguards should be top priority to stop avoidable bloodshed and douse tensions.*
- ii. *We urge Katsina State to pay compensation to victims of the previous election violence of 4 years ago as a matter of urgency.*

d) *Action taken*

Peaceful Polls 2015 has through our counsel issued a FOIA request to the Attorneys General of the states impacted by PEV in 2011 as well as to the AGF.

3. *PRE-ELECTION VIOLENCE GENERALLY*

Media reports indicate attacks or attempts on opposition parties in Ebonyi, Rivers amongst others by unknown persons. Security persons and all citizens are urged to be vigilant and report, as well as document, any suspicious activities.

END

The propensity for violence is very high and must be mitigated.

C. ELECTORAL ISSUES

The Independent National Electoral Commission under Professor Jega has been plagued with pervasive project management challenges.

From the 2011 elections (which at a point had to be rescheduled to more recent state elections in Anambra which appeared still to overwhelm INEC) not much confidence has been inspired on competency even if integrity is a given.

1. Excessive Polling Booths

One troubling issue that arose in the polity that called integrity in question, the Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC) announced the allocation of new polling units in August 2014, numbering about 21, 615 for the north as against 8,412 for the south. This came after INEC had carried out a sanitizing exercise that had reduced the total number of validly registered voters in the country; meaning that the number of eligible voters in the north will not be able to populate the 21,615 polling units that INEC initially created for the region (Ajani, Vanguard August, 24 2014). In which case, ‘it is easy for politicians to rig election by conniving with election officials to make returns of votes based on those polling units; this, given that INEC normally produces ballot paper for every voter on the register as well as result sheets for all polling units’ (Ajani, Vanguard August 24 2014). Although the plan to create the controversial polling units was eventually rescinded, the attempt to do so created the impression that INEC is involved in a political maneuver to favor the north (Muslims) against the south (Christians) (Ajani, Vanguard August, 24 2014).

2. Delayed Voters Cards

INEC’s logistical woes received a decided thumbs down when just last week the National Security Adviser, Sambo Dasuki, at Chatham House, London, suggested the postponement of the election.

At issue is the Permanent Voters Card which has been touted as a major achievement by this administration in the quest for elusive electoral transparency.

According to the NSA:

“our concern with INEC just as I was discussing upstairs the law provides that election must be conducted not more than 90 days before and not less than 30 days to the end of the administration. February 14th is closer to the 90 days before the end of the tenure. And we raised it with INEC and we said look there is a problem, if you’ve had a year plus and all you’ve been able to do is to distribute about 50% of the cards. We still have about 30 million cards. According to them, we have about 30 million cards to distribute. Look at the possibility of shifting this thing and doing it when everybody else has a card because it doesn’t cost you anything. It is still within the law and is safer for all of us. So that is what we are encouraging. They keep assuring us that everybody would have his card but I doubt it. You’ve a year and you have distributed 30 million. I don’t see how you would distribute another 30 million in two weeks. It doesn’t make sense but that is where we are.”

While it is arguably within the purview of the NSA to speak on political matters, it is instructive that his analogy was concerning Nigeria’s top Muslim leader (a relative of his). The subliminal message here therefore is unfortunately that the Muslim leadership of the country has signaled to their adherents and to the international community their discomfort with the impending election date.

D. VICTIMS OF INSURGENCY

The ferocious Boko Haram insurgency has expectedly caused a milieu of problems. More territory is held by Boko Haram than ever before in the history of hostilities.

About 20 Local Governments in three north east states are reportedly in their grip. By middle of this year, the Boko Haram insurgency would have exceeded the Biafran civil war by three years.

There is concomitant massive internal displacement and a rapidly deteriorating cross border refugee situation that combined have impacted over 2 million people. There is a real risk that elections may not be safely held in much of the northeast. Even if they are, there is a possibility that the constitutional threshold of 25% of votes in 2/3 of the states to clinch the presidency may not be met.

To mitigate this, INEC is rolling out PVCs in IDP camps. The problem here is that there are multiple camps across the north. Some are state run but most in the middle belt are privately run. INEC appears not to have engaged with those run by NGOs leaving those in government camps at an advantage.

Secondly, there appear no plans to reach the refugees in Cameroun, Chad and Niger. This implies that the worst hit of the victims who were unlucky enough to flee the country have been further disenfranchised in addition to denial of humanitarian relief. The mechanism for Diaspora voting is not in place which would have conceivably addressed this situation.

Without a comprehensive approach that embraces both IDPs and Refugees, any arrangement would be lopsided and results flowing therefrom will be skewed.

Researchers indicate that many Christian IDPs gravitate to relatives or stay in churches rather than in IDP camps thus missing out on registration and distribution of supplies.

My visit to UNHCR camps in Cameroun revealed that the majority of refugees there were Christians. Refugees told me that they flee abroad because of Boko Haram's house-to-house genocide targeting them. Many IDPs who remain in the northeast area are Muslims who still feel relatively safer than their Christian neighbors.

Similarly many IDPS in the north central, capital city and the south are Christians moving further away from the genocide. Our findings indicate that Cameroun has been so inundated by refugee inflows from both Nigeria and Central Africa Republic that they created a safe travel corridor that allows Nigerian refugees into Cameroun but their convoys are then rechanneled through a safe passageway back into Nigeria as IDPs away from the northeast.

It is unclear how INEC's PVC distribution applies to these IDPs and whether their votes will count in their states of origin.

It should also be noted that Boko Haram bombed INEC offices during the 2011 elections and there is distinct likelihood of similar attacks this year.

E. 2011 Post-Election Violence Victims

1. Non-payment of compensation

Recently victims of the worst post-election violence in Nigeria's history protested the non-payment of promised compensation by the government, four years after the fact.

Last week, the VP announced that payments would be disbursed. However, four years of deprivation and destitution would lead to desperation. Many victims would be wary of future elections or could potentially be aggressive in the forthcoming elections.

2. Non-prosecution of offenders

Similarly our findings indicate that there was wholly inadequate prosecution of perpetrators of the violence. One victim told how his attackers still roam free till this day. He lives in fear that they will come to finish off what they started.

The lack of justice not only frustrates victims to aggravation but the impunity emboldens perpetrators.

3. Temporary Displaced Persons

The fear of repeated election violence has created an additional flight of people from the north. Many southerners who traveled home for Christmas have chosen not to return till after the elections.

In addition, media reports indicate community groups from the south demanding the return of remaining southerners in the north back home.

F. JUDICIAL CRISIS

Nigeria's fractious elections have tended to be superintended by two key institutions – first the INEC and secondly the Judiciary. In 2007, the floodgate of litigation resulted in a record 1260+ election petitions being filed in the courts. The current situation is:

a. Court Paralysis

The courts have been paralyzed due to judicial workers strike. As a result, no pre-election cases are being filed or heard. INEC has been stripped off its powers to disqualify ineligible candidates courtesy of an amendment of the law.

Accordingly although INEC referred parties with complaints about the qualifications of candidates to the courts, there were no courts sitting to bring these challenges. This has a propensity to raise political tensions in the polity.

b. Court Inundation

The monumental irregularities in the primaries will lead to a floodgate of litigation over the nominees. There is a real possibility that these pre-election cases, which are usually not impacted by the legal amendments setting a deadline for the adjudication of election cases, could inundate the courts.

This could result in what I called a Judicial Tsunami that could overturn numerous elections as occurred in 2007.

c. Prison Congestion

The court strike impacts not just civil cases related to the elections but criminal cases as well.

Although 13 suspects were arrested for political violence by arson in Jos, Plateau state, they could not be charged to court within 28 hours as required by law.

It is unclear what the authorities will do in this situation but it is certainly a recipe for anarchy if all offenders must be let loose, regardless of their crime, if there are no courts to arraign them in.

d. Court Congestion

It is important to note that regular cases are backlogged as judges are pulled out for special duty on election tribunals thus adversely impacting the smooth and expeditious administration of justice in a legal system that is already laborious.

V. SCENARIOS: HOW IT COULD END

Against the preceding background, it is difficult to predict what will happen during or after the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Although momentum seems to be building on the side of the APC party, the history of elections in Nigeria has shown that the ruling party has the power to manipulate election results. However, the following are scenarios that are within the realm of possibility.

A. SLEEPER CASE

Although a federal High Court in Abuja has declared President Goodluck Jonathan eligible to run for presidency in 2015 election, his critics are still lamenting that he did not respect the zoning system set up by his party (WANEP, 2014:3). They argue that ‘he upset this informal power agreement when he succeeded the late President Yar’Adua and continued to seek re-election, which if he wins, will mean that he would have been in power for 10 years’ (Fact Sheet Nigeria, 2015:3). Buhari has also been criticized for purportedly stating that if he loses at the 2011 election he would not be contesting in the next one.

The fact is that this case is currently on appeal and there is a possibility that the president could be declared ineligible by the courts having already been sworn in twice into the office. The implications of this – whether, power reverts to the Vice President or whether the entire election will be voided, is subject to debate. Whatever the case such an outcome might cause consternation and disaffection in parts of the South South.

B. HEALTH

While it is impolitic to speculate on the health of individuals, practical circumspection and the dictates of rigorous liberal analysis make it imperative.

Media reports claim the APC candidate slumped during a campaign run.

While this could happen to anyone given the rigorous daily multi-state campaign stops, the facts are that General Buhari at 72 is no longer in his prime. Given his military pedigree and his austere lifestyle, he is palpably the fittest looking of his military peers.

That said, if anything were to happen to a President Buhari leading to succession by his Southern Christian VP, it would be de ja vu all over again. It could be met with disaffection in the core north.

C. HOME CRISIS

President Jonathan's home region is in political disarray. The First Lady's home state of Rivers is an opposition state. A battle royale has been waging there for a while.

President Jonathan's own state of Bayelsa is fast slipping out of his grip. A cold war is brewing between the president/the First Lady and the state governor who is a successor to the last governor he fell out with.

Therefore, the president himself is at risk of the ultimate fatality that any politician could face, as Al Gore found to his chagrin in the US 2000 elections – you cannot afford to lose your own home state.

D. DEADLOCK

While a tie is not particularly possible, an inconclusive outcome is - considering the constitutional requirement for 25% of the vote in 2/3rds of the states.

In that event, there would have to be a re-run amidst horse-trading. Fortunately, the elections are at the early end of the 60 day window within which elections must be held. However INEC has reportedly said that it does not have the capacity to pull off a re-run within the requisite 7 days and is seeking an amendment to work around this.

One likely outcome from a failure to elect a president by inauguration day on May 29th will be power devolving to the Senate President.

VI. CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF ELECTION OUTCOMES

Nigeria is faced with two presidential candidates who never won an election before they found themselves in the presidency – one as an unconstitutional president and one as an accidental president.

One can argue convincingly that General Buhari has no democratic credentials whatsoever in the same breath as saying President Jonathan has no presidential credentials.

The current election is one that will decide the fate of insecurity, corruption and the economy – each of which is at crisis point now. Boko Haram has taken on its biggest target so far – the city

of Maiduguri, capital of Borno state this week; many states have been unable to pay salaries for months ostensibly due to corruption related to funding the elections and the economy is on tenterhooks as crashing gas prices wreak havoc on Nigeria's oil dependent economy. I will focus here on the insecurity and the insurgency.

A. THE STATE OF THE INSURGENCY: BAGA AND THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Jihadist terror group Boko Haram's attacks in 2012 approximated 2000 killed. If the numbers for the Baga massacre are confirmed, they have exceeded that total in the first 7 days of 2015 alone. Terrorism on steroids doesn't even begin to describe this. Boko Haram, in one week, did what it took them 6 months to do last year. The global silence is deafening on this burgeoning genocide.

Although they happened at the same time, Paris was bad but Paris is no Baga. In the first place, the world rallied for the three days of Islamist attacks that left 17 dead in Paris and dallied on the 4 days of violence that wiped out Baga. During the attacks I transited via Paris to Nigeria and was stunned at how much coverage Paris was getting on local Nigerian TV.

Speaking with a security official, I inquired what happened in the north. Wryly, he responded, "there are attacks daily." Baga could pick a number. As countries showed their support for France, two countries neighboring Nigeria – Niger and Chad - stopped troop contributions to the multinational joint task force based in Baga. Only last year, Boko Haram had decapitated one of the soldiers which precipitated alleged military reprisals. Curiously, Chad immediately sent troops to help Cameroun - not Nigeria. While perpetrators were being identified and apprehended in France by security forces, in Nigeria total casualties were being denied by security forces sparking outrage at the "only 150" claim.

But besides the local and regional muted responses to the Baga massacre, the global is equally concerning. This is slightly more complicated than #blacklivesdontmatter. Part of the issue is jihad denial by some in the west.

The U.S. has blamed Nigeria's president for Boko Haram's terrorism as they did Iraq's PM on ISIS. This notwithstanding that President Jonathan ran an exceptionally inclusive government of northern Muslims whilst Al Malaki was accused of sidelining Shiites.

But in addition to these politicized policy positions, even experts on persecution of minorities focus narrowly on MENA as I noted at a UN event. Well the stark, sad fact is that West Africa (actually northern Nigeria alone) saw more Christians martyred than the rest of the world combined not just Middle East and North Africa in 2012!

France, on the other extreme, finances Boko Haram - and ISIS - by paying millions in ransom for abducted French citizens. This is a serious problem as France may think that the jihad is far removed from them. However in essence it is fueling Boko Haram's mass murders which are inspiring other global jihadists into a frenzy.

Until France recognizes that global jihad is ruthless, relentless and pervasive, it remains a major violator of the UN financial sanctions against Boko Haram imposed in May which I have pushed

for. France's paying ransoms to jihadists does two things - it sends a message that African lives are expendable in exchange for French lives. Worse still it fosters a hostage cottage industry against Westerners with reports claiming a \$20 million turn around in Iraq last year alone.

But the French connection to Boko Haram's rabid insurgency goes further. The successful French-led military roll-back of MUJAO jihadists in northern Mali had an unintended but not unavoidable impact on Nigeria. Boko Haram relocated its training camps and equipment from Mali back to Nigeria with a slew of foreign fighters in tow.

Speaking to a colleague whose town was captured by Boko Haram, locals reported seeing Malian Tauregs acting as commanders. In a scene poignantly reminiscent of the holocaust, his 84 year old dad fled over 10km on foot to escape. His arthritic wife moved into the Muslim neighbor's home. Five days later someone turned her in to Boko Haram as a pastor's wife. Another pointed out their home as a retired pastor's. The jihadists blew up the empty house with an RPG.

Similarly, NATO's overthrow of Gaddafi has led to documented arms proliferation into northern Nigeria. Over 5000 out of 8000 missiles had not been accounted for according to US analysts - again an unintended but not inevitable fallout of the Libyan intervention. Viewing the theater of conflict as localized jihad has been disastrous regionally in both situations. The new violent Jihadi strategy "Thinks Global and Acts Local" for those who can't afford to be foreign fighters and "Thinks Global; Links Global" for those who can.

Nigeria successfully recaptured territory from Boko Haram when President Jonathan declared a state of emergency in May 2013. Today, more territory is in terrorist control than ever.

Now US troop training in Nigeria has stalled amidst accusations that the U.S. denied arms and helicopter sales to Nigeria. The U.S. cut back on oil purchases from Nigeria leaving 35 million barrels of unsold crude in December.

At a time when it needs the world's help the most against a global scourge that imperils us all, Nigeria looks as though it were under sanctions similar to Russia, Syria and Iran. Yet, when the world needed Nigeria for peacekeeping, it showed up. Now that Nigeria needs the world, not much help is forthcoming.

Baga was an extinction level event for a town with a multinational military base. The world needs to join Nigeria to end this now before Boko Haram ends thousands more lives. Past history of genocides committed against ethnic and religious minorities in Rwanda, and Bosnia, are salutary reminders of international negligence in the face of horrific onslaught against innocent civilians by a genocidal regime, and non-state groups. France, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, will do well to start by complying with UN sanctions per Security Council resolution 2083 (2012) barring finances to Al Qaida linked genocidal groups like ISIS and Boko Haram.

B. IMPACT OF THE OUTCOME ON THE INSURGENCY

Should President Jonathan win re-election, there will likely be an increase in Boko Haram's insurgency although with daily ongoing attacks, this seems almost impossible. However the fact is that Boko Haram will be re-energized, recruitments will rise and sleeper cells and sympathizers will likely initiate attacks beyond the northeast terror corridor.

If General Buhari were to win, the problem of Boko Haram would still remain. He has gone from being endorsed by the group to negotiate peace on their behalf some time back to being targeted for assassination last year. Indeed, because of statements he made in the past endorsing the imposition of Islamic Sharia law across the country, there is a real possibility that if he does not follow through if elected, not only the terrorists would be even more violent but many northern voters who view him as the sharia harbinger.

This is precisely what galvanized Boko Haram at its inception. The group was not satisfied with the Sharia law imposed in 12 states in northern Nigeria in 2000 and formed in an effort to practice a more extreme version. Indeed, even when Umaru Yar'adua Governor of Buhari's home state of Katsina and a sharia operator became president in 2009, all efforts by him to negotiate with Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram's leader, failed. His tenure witnessed a bloody Boko Haram uprising where hundreds were killed and Christian pastor George Ojih was abducted and publically beheaded by Yusuf personally. Yusuf subsequently died in police custody after he was captured.

The same way that Al Maliki's substitution for Al Abadi as Prime Minister in Iraq did not necessarily mean the automatic defeat of ISIS, so also change in Nigeria may not *ip so facto* equate to the death knell for Boko Haram's insurgency. The international community must brace for a long and hard battle to isolate and extinguish Boko Haram regardless of who wins the presidential elections.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. MORE MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT. There is need for robust international cooperation to assist Nigeria to face this threat of existential proportions that has brought Nigeria not merely to the brink but the precipice.

Last week the international community met to assess assistance to Iraq over ISIS. The contrast could not be clearer:

1. The US says 6000 ISIS fighters have been killed in recent months. Amnesty says 2000 Nigerian citizens were killed in the first week of January. Suffice to say that if 6000 Boko Haram fighters were decommissioned as in Iraq, the insurgency would be all but over. While ISIS has massive global recruitment, Boko Haram has much less foreign fighters and much less voluntary recruitment.
2. Iraq is asking for deferred payments to purchase weapons from the west in view of the oil price crash. The US donated and shipped tons of weapons and F16s to Iraq. Nigeria on the other hand, even though willing to pay, cannot purchase Cobra helicopters from Israel because the US blocked the transaction according to the NYT.
3. The US says 2000 air strikes have been launched against the terrorists. Nigeria cannot purchase US made choppers to be used in operations against Boko Haram even though BH destroyed 5 aircraft in one attack on an air force base and several more have been downed.

4. The president of Nigeria has not been invited to a major global partnership forum like Iraqi PM Al Abadi was for consultation and support. It is possible that this is to avoid a seeming endorsement of his candidacy but the reported loss of 2000 citizens in the first week of 2015, the highest of any global conflict so far overrides any such arcane considerations.

It should be noted that since 2012, Boko Haram has exceeded ISIS in global terrorism rankings, yet there is no commensurate global outcry or response to its virulent genocide. (See Annexure III)

B. GREATER GROUNDSWELL OF GLOBAL SUPPORT. The world should stand with Baga as it stood with Paris against terror. Humanitarian relief groups should be on ground as should the media highlighting this horrific situation.

The world stood with the abducted Chibok schoolgirls for fifteen minutes last year and moved on. It's been nine months. 219 are still missing. Anything could happen in nine months. We could be looking at the rescue of 219 x 2.

By my modest efforts, we have relocated and re-enrolled 10 Chibok girls in schools in the US without major institutional funding from any source. I wish to thank Congresswoman Frederica Wilson for her support of the Education After Escape project. We say #bringourgirlsbacktoschool for others of the 57 courageous girls who were able to escape.

Recent evidence available to me indicates that they were finally all married off only in the last 4-5 months as the terrorists awaited a prisoner swop. Delay has resulted in the forced marriages and conversion of these poor innocent girls but although it is now nine months since their abduction, they are still in relatively good shape for rescue within the next 40 days (see detailed report in Annexure II).

The world cannot look another holocaust in the eye and blink on the brink. Again.

C. PASS TERROR VICTIM FUND BILL. The congress should pass and President Obama should sign the proposed bill putting looted Nigerian assets seized by the US into a humanitarian assistance fund to assist the largely forgotten victims of insurgency in Nigeria.

Mr. Chairman, a month after you addressed a press conference calling for victim support in Nigeria, President Jonathan launched Victim Support Fund. Media reports indicate that the VSF has not been fully funded nor rolled out. <http://odili.net/news/source/2015/jan/23/802.html>.

Today congress can provide Nigerian funds for humanitarian relief in Nigeria by supporting the successor bill to HR 5778 which lapsed in the last congress and which should be resuscitated. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/5778?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22hr+5778%22%5D%7D>

This is a powerful shot congress can take, not to curse the darkness but to light a candle for the victims of a modern day genocide. It is not an air strike but it is a care strike that we can do.

It is also something that Attorney General Holder could do with a stroke of the pen. He can order these forfeited funds to be used for victim compensation since forfeiture reform is currently in his purview.

D. MORE MILITARY ASSISTANCE. The US military should provide excess hardware to Nigeria to fight Boko Haram. True war ships have been donated but these have no strategic bearing on the security situation in the landlocked north.

It does not appear logical that US military trainers are complaining that the Nigerian army had no equipment to train with, as NYT reports, while at the same time the US is denying weapons sales to Nigeria.

Some Nigerian sources maintain that the US trainers wanted them to bring back weapons from the battlefield for training exercises and this was a deal-breaker for the training.

Nigeria has human resource aplenty to maintain a strong army but it needs capacity rebuilding from years of atrophy.

E. END OIL EMBARGO. The US should not economically strangle Nigeria's oil exports. As the Nigerian Guardian reports:

“US officials at the press briefing did not address the issue of the ongoing importation from other oil producing nations, including OPEC members like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and non-OPEC suppliers like Canada. In fact, as at last month, it was reported that, while US completely halted oil imports from Nigeria, it increased its importation from those three countries.

The reduction of US oil importation from Nigeria to zero is the very first time since 1973 that the US did not import oil from Nigeria. ..“This marks a dramatic reversal for Africa’s largest economy, which in 2010 was still among America’s top 5 oil suppliers and exported at its peak 1.3m barrels per day to the United States.”

According to Deutsche Bank, the decline in US imports from Nigeria, “proceeded much faster than for the US’ other major suppliers.’ It is the rather drastic and complete zero oil imports from Nigeria that suggested a possible political connotation...

Observers say it is not unlikely that oil imports termination with Nigeria and the refusal of the US government to sell weapons to Nigeria to fight Boko Haram might both be political signals from President Barack Obama to the Nigerian presidency as it can be seen as demonstration of a lack of commitment by the US government to a supposed strategic partner —Nigeria — in Africa.” - See more at: <http://www.nguardiannews.com/lead-story/191117-why-we-stopped-buying-nigeria-s-oil-by-white-house#sthash.s3dhVYdw.dpuf>.

The US should strongly reconsider re-instating some oil purchases from Nigeria to enable it weather its financial throes even if it means redirecting orders from more stable countries like Saudi Arabia who are actually trying to destroy the US oil industry.

F. DIPLOMATIC DENOUEMENT. Finally, the US should engage more diplomatically, transparently and pragmatically with Nigeria. It is worrisome that Secretary of State Kerry visited Nigeria for the first time just this week after Hilary Clinton’s visit of 2012. It is bad enough that Africa’s largest nation and biggest economy, Nigeria, did not get a Presidential visit from America’s first African American President when both Republican and Democrat President’s Bush and Clinton visited twice apiece.

If President Obama’s record is a brief stopover by a Secretary of state, that speaks volumes on the state of the relations.

With a Binational Commission in place, it is puzzling that there continues to be a rift in military and bilateral cooperation.

The US and Nigeria were unified in refusing to designate Boko a Foreign Terrorist organization. Now after we successfully led a campaign to reverse this, many thanks to this committee for your bill in this regard, both countries are disunited in their effort to combat a common identified enemy.

Similarly the US must appreciate that extremist violence in northern Nigeria is not predicated on political marginalization in the same way that the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack was not caused by an aversion to French cuisine. For all the political support President Jonathan got from the South, the South-East and South-West remain quite under-represented in his government.

Of the top 5 government positions – President, Vice President, Senate President, Speaker and Deputy Speaker – only the South-East has two deputies. The South-West, which was a critical last minute swing vote in 2011, got nothing. So-called marginalization is not a “legitimate grievance” to justify bloodshed. Now that we have identified the problem rightly, let us respond rightly.

Let me conclude by urging the US to help with real-time satellite coverage to monitor post-election violence in February.

During our fact-finding mission in the aftermath of the 2011 PEV, we discovered that Kaduna was the only state out of the 12 Sharia states where Christians fought back and mosques burnt.

A local pastor told us that when he tried to intervene and restrain Christians, one told him, “I am fighting back now because in 2000 when I didn’t defend myself, they killed my family.” Years of impunity have hard-wired many and any trigger now could break the dam.

I wish to close with a tribute to Ike, a young college grad who was posted on national service to Bauchi state where he was assigned to election duty.

Ike and several service corps colleagues fled to a police station after being chased by virulent northern youths. Six of them were subsequently killed even in the police station.

When I was myself posted from the North to the South for national service, I got to meet Ike who was then a little boy in primary school. Many years later, like me, he was posted from the South to the North for national service. Unlike me, he did not survive it.

The deaths of these young heroes must not be in vain and they must not be repeated.

I thank you.

ANNEXURE I

PRESS RELEASE

Washington DC, August 8, 2011

NIGERIAN ELECTION VIOLENCE UNFAIRLY TARGETED THOUSANDS OF CHRISTIANS, US GROUP REPORTS

The post-election violence in Nigeria last April unjustly victimized thousands of Christians in the northern part of Africa's largest country, a public interest law group reports. The Justice for Jos Project quoting a report submitted by the Christian Association of Nigeria which corroborates our own human rights fact-finding mission to Nigeria indicates that over 500 hundred churches were attacked, while almost 200 Christians lost their lives in twelve northern states.

In addition to the data recently submitted by the leadership of Nigeria's churches to a presidential panel inquiring into the 3-day crisis that rocked the nation's tentative democracy after indications that a Christian was leading the presidential vote, J4J's mission observed specific instances of extreme prejudice against people of faith:

- In Bauchi state a rural missionary was accosted at a road-block mounted by Muslim youths and dragged into a mosque after being singled out as the sole Christian in the taxi. After repeated orders to renounce his faith, his eyes were gouged out and he was taken out, stabbed and then incinerated.**
- In Kano state, a church secretary ran to a police station three times for help when Muslim youths converged on his church office. The police refused to respond and 15 churches were systematically burnt by**

the attackers. They returned several days later to finish of one building they had missed.

- In Jigawa state a senior police officer visited a conclave of Christian churches and promised them protection. Moments later, while he was within the vicinity a band of attackers besieged the churches and burnt them in full view of the police. After protests by the pastors, some of the suspects were arrested. However they were immediately released.
- In Gombe state a woman and her family were set ablaze in their own home. Though she was rushed to a hospital, she was turned down for admission. She was subsequently accepted in another hospital where she eventually died from 3rd degree burns over 80% of her body.
- In Kaduna state, Muslim youths invaded a federal university and destroyed the Christian chapel directly adjacent to campus security building. At off campus residences, the belongings of Christian students who were out of town were brought into the street and set ablaze.

These are just a few of the more egregious instances documented during a 3 month investigation from May to July 2011 that included travel to most of the 12 states that experienced the worst of the violence. These attacks were replicated on a similar pattern in all 12 states.

J4J notes that there were backlashes from Christians in one state. In Kaduna state, we noted Mosques burnt in the southern “Christian” side of the state capital and also in the southern part of the state. Reprisal attacks occurred in some communities while defensive actions were carried out in others. As a result Kaduna has the worst overall impact with thousands of people losing commercial and personal property and tens of thousands across the north displaced.

While J4J sees as commendable the panel set up by the federal government to look into the crisis, we note that there have been a plethora of such panels in the quarter century of violence religious persecution that has be recurring in Nigeria. Nothing much has come out of these inquiries. Indeed some of the churches burnt now had been rebuilt after being burnt in 1987. J4J is particularly concerned that the current panel is handicapped by:

- too little time to effectively gather comprehensive data

- **overly restrictive terms of reference that focuses on damage assessment but not perpetrator identification**
- **overly burdensome requirement for Internally Displaced Persons to provide professional bills of quantities for their lost houses**
- **inadequate information and public awareness of the public hearings of the panel**

J4J urges the Nigerian government to:

- **compensate the victims in a timely manner to facilitate a quick recovery**
- **promptly and diligently prosecute offenders to end impunity in the worst cases of religious discrimination cloaked as political protests**
- **investigate and punish instances of reported complicity, negligence or inaction by law enforcement authorities**
- **clearly redefine rules of engagement during civil strife to ensure the protection of civilian populations, especially vulnerable and endangered minorities**
- **release a comprehensive report of its findings**
- **initiate an action plan to implement recommendations for resolutions**

(The Fact-finding report is available on request)

ANNEXURE II – INSIDE PEEK INTO BH CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Nine Months A Slave – Face-to-Face with a Boko Haram escapee

In years of working with victims of Boko Haram terrorism in northern Nigeria, I have never seen anyone like him. After the mass abduction of 300 Chibok schoolgirls, I have worked closely with about 20 who escaped half of whom I have placed in US schools. Although it is now nine months since the April attack, not one of them escaped after that first week.

This is why Henry's escape after 9 months is all the more stunning. While the survival of the girls is understandable, Boko Haram has never seen a live Christian male it liked.

Three male survivors I have worked with have similar stories. Habila - sole survivor of 19 Christian men killed in his neighborhood; Nate - survivor of 5 killed at work; Ike - survivor of 19 killed at a funeral. They all had horrific trauma to their heads - the kill shot favored for infidels who refuse to convert. Now Boko Haram just slits throats. It's harder to survive a beheading.

Henry must have touched a cord of compassion amongst the bloodthirsty killers. At abduction, they initially assumed his injured leg was a war injury. Being a soldier meant immediate beheading. Christians usually were given a chance to convert before being killed. Not soldiers – Christian or Muslim.

They seemed to believe his denials. When they asked him later if he had anyone they could call to ransom him, he said he had no one and had just come out of a 14-month hospitalization. The terrorists offered to be there for him.

Many months later, after the abduction of the Chibok girls, they said to him, "if you need anything, tell us – even if you want a wife, you can marry one of the girls we captured." Henry is one of only a couple of people I know who has inside perspective about the girls' abduction apart from the girls themselves.

He says people were recruited from multiple camps for the attack that night. Those from his camp bragged about their exploits when they returned.

When it was reported widely on the radio, they said, "we disturbed the world by abducting these girls. If we'd known, we would have been doing this before. One time we killed a bunch of schoolboys at Buni Yadi and let the girls go after warning them to leave school. We should have taken them then and we will from now on."

Henry never saw the girls. It was considered a sin to look at women so they were kept in a separate camp. Only mullahs and teachers were allowed to see them (indoctrination is a key requirement of life in Boko Haram's concentration camps in Sambisa Forest.) Even in his camp, the terrorists had a kind of MOQ (Married Officers Quarters) apart from everyone.

"Once a woman comes there, there is no going back," Henry told me. He knew a woman who was on her third husband. The first two had been KIA. There were other "celebs" in camp. One was a little kid. Henry's captors proudly told how his dad and two wives had blown themselves as suicide bombers in three different attacks in Abuja, Kano and Gombe.

One day, Henry asked after Ahmad. He was one of the few people he'd known before captivity. He had trained as an engineer and was considered brilliant by his peers. Henry had been interpreting for the other captive who was a Southerner and couldn't communicate with the terrorists. Then Ahmad came and began his Quranic instruction in fluent English but Henry hadn't seem him in a while.

"He is in paradise," they replied, gleefully. "He detonated himself when we captured a certain city to become our caliphate."

On another day, Henry buried his head and wept silently as the terrorists described how they had completely destroyed a town - his hometown. It was a completely Christian hilltop enclave that had survived numerous attacks. He wondered what had happened to his aged mum. He must not let the terrorists know it was his hometown lest they finish him off too.

After 9 months, Henry and a co-captive fled. Before they did, they heard one last thing about the Chibok girls. There were rumblings in the ranks that the girls should be sold or shared out to them in marriage since a prisoner swap failed. Boko Haram head Shekau has released a video stating this has happened. Henry's experience provides some helpful insights. As the U.S. and Nigeria bicker on if the rescue window closed, it is critical to note a couple of points.

Firstly, after nine months in captivity, it certainly would be a logistically-challenging time to attempt rescue given the propensity that there would now be hundreds of heavily pregnant or nursing schoolgirls. Secondly, while there is evidence that some were indeed abused at the early stage, the new info indicates that the mass marriages occurred much later. Therefore the rescue window has widened somewhat and needs to happen in the next 45 days.

Thirdly, the existence of MOQs in the terror camps might well mean that the girls though married off could still be in Sambisa Forest. The time to act is now. This is actionable intelligence. Boko Haram won't voluntarily bring back our girls.

Emmanuel Ogebe, a human rights lawyer and Nigeria expert just returned from conducting this investigation in Nigeria. (Names of individuals mentioned in this report have been changed for security reasons).

ANNEXURE III – BOKO HARAM GLOBAL TERROR RANKING

According to the 2014 Global Terrorism Index, Nigeria is one of the five countries in the world where over 80 per cent of lives were lost in 2013 as a result of terrorism. The other four countries are Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Syria. The Index further indicates that Nigeria has the fourth highest number of deaths from terrorism over the last three years, and has the highest casualty in a single attack by Boko Haram in 2013 (Global Terrorism Index, 2014). The following is an analysis of the 2014 Global Terrorism Index by the Tony Blair Faith Foundation:

A key section of the report looking at the activity of the groups over recent years says that the deadliest terrorist group is the Taliban and Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) in Pakistan, which has killed over 12,000 people. This was closely followed by al-Qaeda and its major affiliates which have killed at least 8,585 people. The other two largest terrorist groups (both of which have a shorter history) are ISIS and Boko Haram. Based on data up to the end of 2013, these two groups were responsible for 3,000 deaths in four years, half of which were in 2013 alone (<http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/reports-analysis/report/global-terrorism-2013-dominated-four-groups>).

To corroborate the foregoing, a 2014 report by the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) states that Boko Haram was responsible for 2.34 percent of more than 34,000 terrorist attacks that took place worldwide from the period between 2009-2013. The group is regarded as the deadliest in the world, and ranks 3rd as the most lethal terrorist group from the period between 2009-2013. The first two groups are the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Al-Qaida in Iraq (now ISIL) was the fourth most lethal perpetrator according to the START report.

Global Terrorism Index, 2014.
http://www.visionofhumanity.org/sites/default/files/Global%20Terrorism%20Index%20Report%202014_0.pdf

Tony Blair Faith Foundation, 2014. Report: Global Terrorism in 2013 Dominated by Four Groups. <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/religion-geopolitics/reports-analysis/report/global-terrorism-2013-dominated-four-groups>

START, 2014. Boko Haram Recent Attacks. Background Report. https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport_BokoHaramRecentAttacks_May2014_0.pdf