

# **Patronage and Power Politics in the 2027 Presidential Election in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Nigeria's Fourth Republic has been shaped by power struggles and fierce political rivalry, even as the nation battles with complex insecurity and violence within its electoral democracy. The viability of democratic governance, however, is seriously threatened by the actions of modern political actors, who have increasingly fueled volatility. Using historical records, analysed employing a theme-based strategy, this study examines the tactics used by political actors and evaluates the consequences of these tactics for patronage politics in Nigeria. The findings reveal that the support extended by political actors to electoral candidates has fostered a volatile and fragile democratic environment characterised by inflammatory rhetoric, politically motivated violence, and instances of state-sanctioned aggression. The primary objective of this research is to develop a framework

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aimed at mitigating the risk of politically instigated violence in the coming 2027 general elections. Furthermore, this paper seeks to illuminate the existing insecurity divisions and violent conflicts, with the goal of facilitating strategies for managing and accommodating potential violent conflicts during the 2027 presidential election.

**Keywords:** Power Politics, Presidential Elections, Political Violence, Patronage System, Democratic Governance, Fragile State

## **Introduction**

The electoral landscape has been thoroughly studied worldwide (Lopez-Pinor, 2000; Kambale, 2012; Fombad, 2016; Onyalo, 2020), with particular emphasis on the Nigerian context, where Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) play a crucial role in ensuring credible electoral processes and have garnered significant scholarly interest (Adeyemi, 2022; Adejumo, 2023). Nevertheless, existing literature has not sufficiently explored the catalytic mechanisms within Nigeria's electoral system, especially the dual roles of political actors in either promoting peace or inciting violence during elections. Issues such as vote-buying (Ibrahim et al., 2015; Ukase, 2016; Ariyo, et al., 2017; Babatunde, Shaibu, & Ariyo, 2019), voters' apathy and electoral sensitisation (Ariyo & Fasunwon, 2022; Ariyo, Akomolafe and Oke, 2025), security challenges (Oke & Ariyo, 2018), and the relationship between electoral misconduct and violence (Ariyo et al., 2017) have been extensively documented. Similarly, the foundational doctrinal challenges to democracy in Africa have been investigated (Jega, Wakili & Umar, 2003; Anifowose and Odukoya, 2013).

Notably, scholarly discourse on populism and power struggles has largely adopted a Eurocentric lens (Hassan, 1998; Karimi, 2021), with limited attention given to African political contexts, aside from some exceptions such as the power contestations involving Odinga in Kenya and Tsvangirai in Zimbabwe (Kalama & Eseduwo, 2020). Theoretical investigations have also explored the influence of realism, resource curse theory, and opportunism on leadership succession and the behavioural tendencies of

political actors across Africa. Nevertheless, there remains a significant research gap concerning the propensity of political actors in Nigeria to vie for political power and the subsequent impact this has on electoral integrity. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how political actors' pursuit of power and recognition affects the credibility of the electoral process in the lead-up to the 2027 presidential election in Nigeria.

### **Empirical Review**

Studies on power struggles and political competition have often been sparse in European literature but more pronounced in African contexts (Jega, Wakili & Umar, 2003; Ashindorbe and Albert, 2023). Karimi (2021) argues that power dynamics shaped by party politics, combined with economic disruptions and demographic shifts in Canada's liberal democracies, have created fertile ground for populist movements. His analysis highlights the strategic approaches populist parties employ to consolidate power. Similarly, Hassan's (1998) study of political transitions in India focuses on the decline of the Congress Party and the rise of exclusivist Hindu nationalist groups, emphasising escalating democratic instability marked by fragile governments and political volatility.

In African contexts, Ashindorbe and Albert (2023) examined campaign rhetoric and the quest for power in Nigeria's 2015 and 2023 general elections. Their findings suggest that political actors frequently deploy manipulative rhetoric, exacerbating ethnic tensions, religious violence, and money politics before, during, and after elections. However, the study did not sufficiently address the political turbulence orchestrated by key political gladiators that have often resulted in political crises during Nigerian elections.

Jega, Wakili, and Umar (2003) analysed the historical underpinnings of electoral violence in Nigeria, particularly focusing on the north-western region, which has witnessed significant political violence fuelled by stakeholders controlling thuggery and instigating unrest. While their study proposed mitigation strategies, it did not fully explore the illegal mechanisms through which political stakeholders perpetuate electoral injustices.

Furthermore, Anifowose and Odukoya (2013) revisited the violent aftermath of Nigeria's 2011 post-election crisis, highlighting how political instability severely hindered the country's democratic development. Northern states such as Adamawa, Kano, Kaduna, and Bauchi were hotspots of

election-related violence, resulting in the deaths of protesters, National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members, and civilians, alongside widespread destruction of property (Orji & Uzodi, 2012). Despite these insights, these studies fell short of exploring the specific activating factors linked to political actors during electoral contests. The findings underscored a zero-sum political competition marked by a crisis of expectations, manifesting in the aggressive behaviour of party supporters and violent conflict, hence this study.

### **Theoretical Review**

This study employs queuing theory and expectancy theory as its analytical frameworks to explore the tendencies of political actors toward power struggles and the subsequent impacts on the electoral system. Queuing theory, originally developed by Agner Krarup Erlang in 1909 to manage telephone traffic, has since been adapted to political analysis. The theory conceptualises political actors as participants in a queue, where the waiting period serves as a measure for assessing candidate quality and viability. It highlights the costs and sacrifices incurred by actors as the queue lengthens, with these costs increasing proportionally to waiting time. Such cost analyses can inform strategies to optimise operational efficiency. Within this framework, leaders control the duration followers must wait and may balance these queuing costs against the perceived quality of candidates. Prolonged waiting may enhance a candidate's probability of securing political power, as some leaders deliberately delay rewarding followers to test their patience and loyalty, albeit risking their defection to rivals. Despite its utility, queuing theory falls short of addressing the specific expectations and services that followers require to sustain their position while waiting for power.

Expectancy theory, popularised by Victor Vroom in 1978, posits that political power is contingent upon the maximum effort exerted by followers, who are motivated by the expectation of rewards, thereby suggesting that anticipated outcomes directly influence the level of commitment and performance (Glueck, 1980). This theory emphasises that motivation plays a critical role in mitigating fatigue and enhancing performance during pre- and post-election activities. Political actors are thus driven largely by the perceived rewards associated with their efforts, such as patronage or access to resources. Unlike queuing theory's relatively static depiction of waiting,

expectancy theory integrates performance as the key criterion used by political “godfathers” or societal elites in selecting candidates for political roles. According to this perspective, political actors’ acquisition of power is directly linked to their performance in the electoral process. The rewards they seek may include political power, elevated status, financial incentives, or contracts, all of which are attainable through concerted effort toward electoral success. Consequently, political actors prioritise expected outcomes over the inputs or efforts required to achieve them. Expectancy theory’s strength lies in its comprehensive explanation of how the pursuit of desired outcomes, such as power, motivates behaviours characterised by violence, patronage, and persuasive influence to achieve political goals. However, it has been critiqued for insufficiently accounting for the distorting effects of group dynamics and manipulation in shaping productivity and motivation.

#### **Power Disposition and Patronage System in Nigeria**

Power politics has long been a fundamental feature across Africa, with Nigeria’s electoral landscape exemplifying the complex dynamics of power struggles among political actors. Recent developments in Nigeria’s elections have illustrated how political actors aggressively manoeuvre and scramble for power, often at the expense of the populace. In their quest to attain and retain power, these actors employ diverse strategies, including blackmail and intimidation, either directly or through loyal party affiliates. Ukah (2011) contends that Nigerian political actors are primarily driven by a desire to win or maintain power at any cost. This drive is perpetuated by the entrenchment of individuals in office, the vulnerability of electoral officials and security agencies to corruption, and the electorate’s readiness to sell votes to the highest bidder.

The northeast region of Nigeria has, since the 2011 presidential election, become a flashpoint for insurgency and violent conflict. Political leaders in this region, desperate to reassert their influence within the political system, have either condoned or actively engaged in violent and illegal tactics to secure power (Anifowose and Odukoya, 2013). The post-election violence of 2011 in northern states stands as a grim testament to the illegitimate methods employed by political actors through proxies, resulting in widespread death and property destruction.

Comparative studies by Kalama and Eseduwo (2020) on Zimbabwe and Kenya reveal similar patterns of pre- and post-election violence, where political crises have been exacerbated by ethnic militias serving the interests of dominant actors. These cases underscore the use of blackmail and state-sponsored violence by incumbents seeking to maintain power. Similarly, in Nigeria, political jobbers, individuals who promote government policies to curry favour with those in power, often do so without regard for public opinion or ethical considerations (Okibe, 2016). Opposition parties, meanwhile, frequently engage in character assassination and political witch-hunting, employing tactics such as verbal abuse and proxy blackmail to undermine rivals (Udeuhele, 2021). This strategy is exemplified by the use of political tacticians who systematically demean party members and opponents to gain political advantage (Wahab, 2025).

A striking example of such political manoeuvring is illustrated by Daniel Bwala, a former spokesperson for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), who later served as Senior Special Adviser to the Nigerian President under the All Progressive Congress (APC). Bwala's pre-election role involved intense criticism of the APC, but post-election, he distanced himself from his previous antagonistic rhetoric, highlighting the performative and often opportunistic nature of political allegiances (Wahab, 2025). This case underscores how politically motivated rhetoric can inflame religious and ethnic tensions, with detrimental effects on national cohesion.

Violence and political assassinations have also been recurrent features in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999–2025), with over 5,000 election-related deaths reported (Saleh and Abimiku, 2023). High-profile cases such as the assassinations of political figures like Funsho Williams (Lagos State) and Ayodeji Daramola (Ekiti State) reveal the lethal stakes involved in electoral contests. The killing of Bola Ige of Osun State in 2003 further illustrates the bloodletting that has characterised Nigeria's political environment (Braj, 2024). These violent acts are often pre-emptive measures targeting perceived threats to favoured candidates and have become normalised tactics in political competition.

Beyond violence, political actors have employed mass protests as strategic tools to challenge and delegitimise incumbent governments. The 2012 protests against fuel subsidy removal, led by opposition figures such

as Femi Falana, Femi Kuti, and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, exemplify how civil unrest can be mobilised to discredit ruling parties and shift power dynamics (Saleh and Abimiku, 2024). Similarly, movements like the #EndSARS protests in 2020 and the #EndBadGovernance campaign in 2024 illustrate how protests serve as platforms for political contestation and power struggles.

Jega, Wakili, and Umar (2003) argue that violence has become an accepted instrument for resolving political disputes that might otherwise be addressed through dialogue. Ukah (2011) links this to a pervasive “do or die” political culture that fuels post-election violence. Inflammatory rhetoric from political leaders, such as General Muhammadu Buhari, in the 2003 and 2011 elections, exacerbated tensions and violence (Anifowose and Odukoya, 2013). The entrenched winner-takes-all system incentivises politicians to deploy thugs and agitators to influence electoral outcomes, particularly when they lack broad-based popular support.

Money politics further exacerbates electoral violence and institutional subversion. Political actors use financial inducements not only to bribe voters but also to manipulate electoral officials and security forces, thereby compromising the integrity of the electoral process (Babatunde, Shaibu & Ariyo, 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2015; Ukase, 2016). While military and paramilitary forces have often been scapegoated for election violence, evidence indicates that political actors sponsor both violence and counter-violence to advance their ambitions (Jega, Wakili and Umar, 2003). Political domination is deployed strategically to disrupt electoral processes, especially in northern Nigeria, where insurgents maintain covert relationships with political elites. The visit of President Tinubu’s son (Seyi Tinubu) on 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2025 to Muslim scholar Sheikh Gumi, known for mediating with insurgents, highlights the complex nexus between politics, security, and insurgency.

Historically, Nigeria’s electoral system was characterised by mutual consent and integrity, with politics seen as public service rather than personal enrichment (Adeyemi, 2022). However, contemporary politics has become marked by inflammatory rhetoric, media sensationalism, and the exploitation of ethnic and religious divisions, as seen in the 2011 elections, where opposition supporters used social media and SMS campaigns to incite communal hostility (William, 2011, Ariyo et al, 2017). Domestic and

international media have been criticised for intensifying political polarisation through biased reporting.

The heightened expectations of political actors have fuelled the rise of vigilante groups, ethnic militias, and separatist movements across Nigeria (William, 2011). These groups often emerge in response to perceived exclusion from political power and are sometimes mobilised by political elites to advance regional interests. Examples include the Odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, Arewa People's Congress, Operation Zaki-Zaki, MASSOB, Eastern Security Networks (ESN), and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Although many of these groups engage in activities that threaten national stability, their actions are often tacitly supported or unchallenged by politicians from their ethnic constituencies. Adefisoye and Ariyo (2019) argue that the political elite's management of ethnic grievances and separatist agitation plays a significant role in sustaining these groups and their influence on Nigeria's electoral politics, particularly with the approaching 2027 presidential elections.

### **The Impact of the Patronage System on National Development**

#### ***Erosion of Democratic Institutions and Governance Challenges***

The robustness of Nigeria's democratic institutions has been significantly undermined, posing a critical threat to the country's procurement and governance processes. This erosion has manifested in widespread inefficiency, wastefulness, and delays in governance delivery. Both political and security institutions, which are constitutionally mandated to safeguard governance integrity, have been compromised by entrenched prebendal politics and an entrenched patronage system. This system has facilitated the rise of "cabal governance", particularly evident during Muhammadu Buhari's administration, where key security agencies such as the Nigerian Customs Service were staffed predominantly by political appointees rather than career professionals. For instance, Colonel Ahmed Ali (Rtd) served as the Comptroller General of the Nigerian Customs Service, reflecting this politicisation of security institutions. The Nigerian Police, Department of State Services (DSS), and other critical security agencies, intended to be managed by career officers, have instead become instruments of political patronage in the Buhari and Tinubu's administrations. Ministerial positions



during Buhari's tenure were recycled among former governors and senators, further entrenching this system of political favouritism. While secondary school leavers and the accused certificate forger are rewarded in key ministries like the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology in Nigeria respectively. This speaks volume of the unethical conduct within political cycles with attendant effects on democratic governance in Nigeria.

***Legal Breaches and Institutional Implications under the Tinubu Administration***

Sanusi (2025) observes that under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration, notable breaches of existing laws occurred. The appointment of Kayode Egbetokun as Inspector-General of Police (IGP) was initially set to expire upon his 60th birthday, but an amendment to the Police Act allowed him to remain in office for a full four-year term regardless of age, contradicting previous statutory provisions. Similarly, the appointment of Ola Olukoyede as Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) contravenes Section 2(3) of the EFCC Act, which requires the chairman to be a serving or retired security officer with at least 15 years of experience. Olukoyede's legal background and lack of security experience contradict these legal mandates (Ogundapo, 2023). This circumvention of statutory provisions represents an affront to the constitution and the rule of law. The National Assembly, expected to act as a check on executive excesses, has instead been complicit in accommodating "sit-tightism" prolonging tenure beyond legal limits, thus undermining constitutional governance (Sanusi, 2025).

***Corruption and Inefficiency***

According to Imokhuede (2016), Nigeria's vast natural resources, including oil and agriculture, have paradoxically become a resource curse due to pervasive patronage politics. The appointment of politically connected but inept individuals has fostered endemic corruption, inefficiency, and ethical decline within the political system. This malaise has exacerbated ethnic divisions and political apathy, costing Nigeria around \$30 to \$35 trillion since the inception of the Fourth Republic (Imokhuede, 2016).

The scramble for political power fuelled by patronage has also shifted the political discourse toward violence and insecurity, contributing to Nigeria's low ranking (163rd out of 186th) on the Human Development Index (Bassey, 2025). The prevailing "sapa syndrome", a Yoruba term describing extreme poverty and hunger, reflects the negative outcomes of poor governance and policy failures, which have deepened citizens' despair and economic hardship. Political competition driven by personal enrichment rather than patriotism has further intensified election-related violence and insecurity across the country.

### **Political Realignments and Prospects for the 2027 Presidential Election**

#### ***The Dynamics of Power Politics and Electoral Violence***

Nigeria's Fourth Republic elections have historically been characterised not by issue-based campaigns but by personal attacks, financial manipulation, and violence (Oke and Ariyo, 2018). The North-Eastern region, notably, witnessed significant violent conflict during the 2011 and 2015 elections, resulting in election postponements. The post-election violence following the 2011 presidential election further underscored the influence of ethno-political rivalry and the violent contestation of power. Similar dynamics are anticipated for the 2027 presidential election, with candidates like Peter Obi (South East), Atiku Abubakar (North East), and Bola Tinubu (South West) facing ethnically polarised support bases. Political strategies employed to silence opposition, such as the 2003 Southwest state capture by the People's Democratic Party (PDP) under President Olusegun Obasanjo, may be replicated by the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) ahead of the 2027 election.

#### ***Electoral Strategies and Political Alignments***

Winning the 2027 presidential election will require control over a majority of Nigeria's 36 states, translating into securing at least 25% of votes in two-thirds (24) of these states. Incumbent President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, leveraging incumbency advantages, has rewarded key political allies, including former governors like David Umahi and Nyesom Wike, with ministerial appointments to secure their loyalty and electoral support (Anuga,

2025). Furthermore, off-cycle or standalone governorship elections scheduled in six states (Ondo, Osun, Ekiti, Edo, Bayelsa, and Anambra) before the general election represent critical battlegrounds. The APC has strategically secured victories in Ondo and Edo States in 2024 as well as aligned with the victory of All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) in Anambra State Governor, H.E. Soludo in 2025, while the remaining states' standalone elections in 2026 are expected to be fiercely contested, with past violence in Osun State exemplifying the potential for instability (Donald, 2025).

A major realignment of current governors ahead of the 2027 presidential elections is seen in recent political movements throughout Nigeria. Notably, a number of governors who were initially elected on the People's Democratic Party (PDP) platform have officially defected to the All Progressives Congress (APC), including Peter Mbah of Enugu State (defected on October 14, 2025), Douye Diri of Bayelsa State (15 October, 2025), Umo Eno of Akwa Ibom State (6 June, 2025), and Sheriff Oborevwori of Delta State (23 April, 2025). Many people see these defections as calculated attempts to secure political importance as the 2027 elections draw near and to place their states within the new national power structure (Anuga, 2025).

In addition to improving their chances of winning elections, aligning with the ruling party also shows loyalty, which may lead to federal favoritism and state development incentives. Additionally, this realignment gives current governors a political safety net. It provides a way to combine their administrations and lessens the possibility that they will be targeted by security services or the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), especially for governors serving second terms. These governors increase their political negotiating leverage and reduce their susceptibility to politically motivated prosecutions or post-tenure probes by assimilating into the federal ruling alliance.

### ***Political Turbulence and Opposition Realignment***

The former Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike, has been implicated in political unrest aimed at destabilising the opposition and influencing future elections. Reports indicate that the 2023 general election experienced rigging and ballot manipulation, raising concerns about the integrity of the 2027

election. Political realignments are already underway; key opposition members who have been disenchanted with President Tinubu's administration are developing an alternative approach in addition to the realignment among current governors. Former Osun State Governor Rauf Aregbesola, former Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, former Senate President David Mark, former Kaduna Governor Nasir El-Rufai, and 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi are among the notable figures who were formerly affiliated with or within the APC and are currently leading a new opposition coalition centered around the African Democratic Congress (Anuga, 2025; Ateboh, 2025). This realignment seems to be motivated by a common fear that Tinubu's APC is solidifying a quasi-one-party state as well as electoral ambition for 2027 (Ateboh, 2025).

The coalition chose the ADC as its platform and named Rauf Aregbesola as national secretary and David Mark as interim national chairman in a major symbolic step. The tactic is similar to the opposition tactics used prior to the 2015 election, when leaders of several parties united or formed coalitions through the All Progressive Congress to oppose Goodluck Jonathan, the president at the time. In order to get world attention or even involvement, the plan involved strong media and diplomatic operations abroad, such as portraying Jonathan's government as unstable or in crisis.

A pivotal point in Nigeria-US ties coincides with the present opposition realignment. Citing "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom," the United States declared Nigeria a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC) under the International Religious Freedom Act in November 2025 (Scot, 2025). The domestic political stakes were significantly raised by this categorisation. Critics contend that Tinubu's portrayal of Nigeria, which includes ongoing accusations of authoritarianism, contributes to a similar narrative of "Nigeria as a country of great concern," even if the current opposition has not specifically called for foreign involvement. President Tinubu's detractors contend that the CPC designation not only expresses strong international criticism but also gives opposition leaders more leeway to depict the regime as becoming more dictatorial and intolerable. Scot (2025) argues that the Nigerian government should see the designation as an urgent call to rectify long-standing breaches of freedom of religion or belief.

The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram were designated as “of particular concern” by Washington in December 2023, according to the Scot’s study. However, Nigeria’s internal security situation is worse, as seen by the rise in violent non-state actors, ongoing mass murders that target Christian communities in central Nigeria, and ongoing discrimination in some states that follow Shari’a. Therefore, Scot (2025) calls on Nigeria to react positively by seeing the CPC designation as a chance to seek the international assistance required to identify and hold accountable those who finance, enable, and commit acts of violence motivated by religion, as well as to close the protection gap by resolutely addressing all sources of insecurity.

This development is similar to some of the political tactics used by opposition actors prior to the 2015 general election, when President Goodluck Jonathan’s detractors engaged in extensive international advocacy; highlighting governance shortcomings, appealing to powerful foreign governments, and amplifying narratives of crisis to gain political leverage. The U.S. CPC designation bolsters the opposition’s accusations of poor governance under the Tinubu administration, even though they have not specifically called for international intervention. Thus, this will shape the country’s future electoral democracy.

### ***Insecurity, Prospects and Challenges for Peaceful Elections***

While Bassey (2025) notes increasing public acceptance of Tinubu’s policies on poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, widespread distrust and political violence continue to mar Nigeria’s electoral landscape. Opposition consultations to challenge the APC in 2027 may mark a shift from overt violence to subtler forms of political contestation, including state-sponsored protests, intra-party rivalries, and assassination attempts. The recurring violence in local government elections, particularly in Osun and Ekiti States, highlights the challenges of securing free, fair, and peaceful elections.

Nigeria is dealing with a complicated, multifaceted insecurity situation that affects almost every part of the nation. While extensive banditry and kidnapping for ransom plague the North-West and many other regions of the country, terrorism and insurgency, largely led by Boko Haram and ISWAP,

continue to threaten the North-East. Social tension is exacerbated by ongoing farmer-herder disputes, communal conflicts, and ethno-religious violence across the Middle Belt and beyond. The stability of the national economy is threatened by piracy, oil theft, pipeline damage, and militancy in the Niger Delta and coastal regions (Adefisoye and Ariyo, 2019). Armed robberies, cultism, and gang-related violence are commonplace in both urban and rural areas, and they are made worse by the growing prevalence of cybercrime. Democratic processes are further undermined by political violence, such as targeted assassinations, electoral disruptions, and violent acts. Human trafficking networks, weak borders, inefficient law enforcement, and institutional corruption all aggravate these security issues, which are further exacerbated by rising rates of poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic constraints that encourage criminal activity. These dangers increase public mistrust of government institutions, erode state authority, uproot communities, and interfere with economic activity. Voter turnout, safe campaign activities, and the legitimacy of electoral processes are all seriously threatened by insecurity as the 2027 elections get near. In the end, widespread violence might jeopardise the legitimacy and inclusivity of the general elections in 2027 by limiting the deployment of election officials, restricting access to polling places, and creating opportunities for voter suppression, manipulation, or intimidation. Without the political will to curb these practices and promote inclusive governance, the cycle of electoral violence, insecurity will likely persist.

Ahead of the 2027 elections, political calculations have changed and national fear has increased due to the purported October 1, 2025 coup plot in Nigeria and the recent wave of coups in Sahel states including Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso. Fears of democratic regression have increased, armed groups have gained confidence, and regional security cooperation has been damaged by the Sahel coups. The reported detention of military leaders in Nigeria due to the purported conspiracy has sparked worries about rifts within the armed services. When taken as a whole, these factors could affect voter behaviour, promote securitisation narratives, and force the opposition and the ruling party to adjust their tactics as the elections draw near.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study identifies power contestation among political actors as a primary catalyst for political violence in Nigeria. Electoral processes in the country have often been structured in ways that inhibit genuine opportunities for leadership change and restrict the electorate's ability to exercise their franchise effectively. Consequently, a significant proportion of the electorate experiences dissatisfaction and disillusionment. Political actors, particularly those who lose elections or whose parties fail to secure victory, frequently express grievances that translate into organised thuggery and violence, as evidenced in the 2003, 2007, and 2011 general elections.

However, there exists potential for mitigating electoral violence in the 2027 presidential election if political parties assume greater responsibility in fostering political education and internal regulation. Political parties should utilise their research centres as platforms to critically examine their relevance to national development, articulate clear policy positions, and enhance the political awareness of their members and the broader electorate. Furthermore, parties must establish and enforce robust regulatory frameworks to assess the integrity, credibility, and electability of their candidates. Such mechanisms would improve the quality of political representation and reduce the propensity for electoral violence during campaigns. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must also exercise diligence in fulfilling its mandate by proactively curbing hate speech and defamatory campaigns. Sanctions against political parties or candidates engaging in such practices are essential to uphold the integrity of the electoral process and foster a peaceful electoral environment.

For Nigerian citizens, transcending divisions based on ethnicity, religion, profession, or social status is imperative. The nation's political actors offer a valuable example of unity in pursuit of national development, as exemplified by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's political journey in Abeokuta. Nigerians must collectively chart a clear and inclusive path toward national progress, identifying and supporting candidates who demonstrate competence and commitment to national interests regardless of their ethnic, religious, gender, or social backgrounds. By embracing these approaches, Nigeria can create a more stable political environment conducive to peaceful elections and sustainable democratic governance.

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