

Post-Election Healing



Policy Recommendations

1. Whoever emerges as President should be magnanimous in victory and build bridges across ethno-religious divides.
2. The President-elect must ensure the pursuit of public interest.
3. The winner of the presidential election must strive to ensure the inclusion of women and people with disability.
4. There is a firm need for commitment to human security by the new administration.
5. The new administration should ensure social justice and a means of curbing insurgency and agitation.

On February 23, 2019, Nigerians went to the polls in the country's Presidential and National Assembly elections. The optimism of local and international stakeholders was dampened last week, when the elections were postponed for a week by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on account of poor logistics. Though the re-scheduled elections were largely peaceful across a number of states, yet pockets of violence, arson, ballot theft, vote inducement, political thuggery and [killings were recorded in some states such as Rivers, Lagos and Oyo](#). Sadly, systemic violence has denied majority of Nigerians the dividends of democracy in the last two decades that the country has witnessed uninterrupted civil governance. So, as Nigerians and its international partners await the official results of the elections and deal with the myriad outcomes of the polls, it is pertinent to begin to [set agenda](#) for the old or incoming administration on how to heal the festering wounds of Nigerians who have been brutalized by years of mal-governance and endless violence. Thus, this edition of Nextier SPD Weekly examines implications of zero-sum politics in Nigeria and makes recommendations on post-election healing.

Over the years, Nigerian politics has been characterized by a zero-sum syndrome in which the party that wins election dominates political power to the exclusion of the opposition leaving post-election wounds bleeding. The ruling party appoints political heads into Ministries, Departments and Agencies on the [basis of patronage](#) and ethno-religious sentiment rather

than competence. As witnessed lately, states and regions where the President did not secure huge votes are punitively neglected in development administration and award of contracts for infrastructure. Such political immaturity often proves counter-productive as those selected on the basis of patronage and identity politics perpetrate corrupt practices with airs of untouchability (Ayokunle, 2008). The contentious politics, divide-and-rule strategy, and institutionalisation of double-standards among citizens who are supposed to be equal sometimes result in militant resistance as Nigeria has witnessed with the Niger Delta insurgents and neo-Biafra agitators in the South-South and South-East geopolitical zones respectively.

Against these backdrops, the incoming administration needs to embrace some inclusive policy measures to heal the wounds of the past and foster [national integration and development](#).

1. Whoever emerges as President from the 72 contestants should be magnanimous in victory. S/he must build bridges across ethno-religious divides and appoint people into offices on the basis of competence rather than patronage. Importantly, members of opposition parties who have the capability to engender sustainable development should be brought on board.
2. Anyone who emerges as President must ensure the pursuit of public interest. Over the years, public office holders have rationalized private and sectional agendas as public interests thereby denying the people of the much-needed development (Brancati,

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2009).

3. The winner of the presidential election must strive to ensure the inclusion of women and people with disability. The woman question has been largely unaddressed in Nigeria for decades (Ebohon, 2012). Interestingly, a handful of women even vied for the presidential position in 2019. Thus, there is need to ensure effective women representation in the new administration. Besides women, youth and people with disability must also be mainstreamed into the power arena for their voice to be heard.

4. There is a firm need for commitment to human security by the new administration. Indeed, no peacebuilding and development can be achieved in a stagnant economy. The high rate of poverty must be drastically reduced so that the people can key in to government programmes with relative ease.

5. The new administration should ensure social justice. The high level of security threats in the country in recent years has resulted in unfair treatment and injustice to many. From the Niger Delta to the North-East, thousands of persons have been unjustly victimized, brutalized, and killed (Oriola, Haggerty, and Knight, 2013). No matter how attractive a reconciliatory peacebuilding approach (Aghedo, 2013) such as amnesty might be, the government must ensure that those who have deliberately perpetrated mass murders and other heinous crimes are brought to book and their victims adequately

compensated to ensure healing and forgiveness as was done in Rwanda after the genocide (Castilo, 2008).

This post-election healing should also involve the media and other non-state actors whose activities and engagements are needed to pull the country together. Deciphering Ellen Gardner's work "[The role of media in conflicts](#)" and Bettina Peters' "[Seeking truth and minimising harm](#)", there is a strong conviction that the media plays both negative and positive roles in perpetuating hate or in promoting peace. With the nature of divisive campaigns, fake news and negative electioneering propaganda by the two major political parties, civil societies groups especially the various socio-cultural groups across the country are needed in this nation-building project. The engagement of these groups in a constructive manner, targeting nation-building will make the healing easier. This is because, "[the destruction of relationships and loss of trust, confidence, dignity, and faith](#)" has the potential to undermine solutions to political, institutional, technical and security issues (Stiefel, 2001), so building such relationship is better driven as a grassroots, bottom-up solution.

Finally, the social fabric in Nigeria has been broken in the last couple of years on account of mass poverty, ravaging unemployment, criminal violence and everyday security threats. To bring the people back on track, the incoming administration must build a broad-based coalition and inclusive government in order to heal the festering wounds of most Nigerians and ensure national integration and sustainable peace.

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