

Elite Defections, Opposition Fragmentation, and the Risk of Party Predominance in Nigeria



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Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership operates as an independent, non-partisan think tank in compliance with Nigerian laws and regulations, committed to promoting good governance, transparency, and accountability.

Our mission is to conduct rigorous research and provide evidence-based recommendations that contribute to the development of a prosperous and forward-looking society in Nigeria.

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Cover Image: Photogrid of political rallies in Enugu, Uyo and Asaba, depicting Governors Sheriff Oborevwori, Peter Mbah and Umo Eno during their formal defection from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) to the All Progressives Congress (APC) in 2025.

Executive Summary

Nigeria’s formal multiparty democracy is entering a period of heightened vulnerability, with structural indicators pointing toward the gradual consolidation of de facto one-party predominance. Since 2023, elite defections, strategic political alignments, and weak enforcement of party-regulation rules have produced a measurable realignment of power in favour of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC).

This trend accelerated dramatically in 2025, when three governors from historically PDP strongholds—Delta, Akwa Ibom, and Enugu—defected to the APC, joining earlier waves of political elites who crossed over after the 2023 elections. These defections were not merely symbolic; they shifted the balance of power at the subnational level and provided critical momentum to the ruling party’s expansion strategy. With these realignments, APC now controls over two-thirds of state governments, significantly weakening the institutional capacity of opposition parties and altering the calculus of legislative oversight and executive bargaining.

The problem is institutional, not merely electoral. Ambiguities in anti-defection provisions, opaque party-finance practices, and limited enforcement of internal party democracy have lowered the personal and political costs of switching allegiance. Under current arrangements, defectors retain both office and access to public resources, thereby undermining representative accountability and deepening voter cynicism.

Comparative experience—from India’s anti-defection amendments, Mexico’s electoral-management reforms, and South Africa’s evolution under dominant-party dynamics—demonstrates that, without deliberate institutional correction, competitive politics can erode even when elections remain regular and formally multiparty.

To address these risks, this brief proposes a coordinated Electoral Integrity and Party Resilience Package (EIPRP). The package integrates enforceable anti-defection rules, transparent and conditional party financing, strengthened electoral autonomy, minimum standards for intra-party democracy, and expanded civic engagement. These reforms aim to realign elite incentives with democratic accountability by increasing the institutional cost of opportunistic switching, constraining incumbency-based advantages, and restoring the electoral returns to programmatic competition.

The evidence presented in this analysis suggests that isolated reforms will not suffice. Only an integrated and enforceable package—supported by statutory clarity, institutional autonomy, and sustained civic pressure—can interrupt Nigeria’s slide toward dominant-party rule and rebuild the foundations of a competitive democratic order.

Challenges to Multiparty Competition and Democratic Accountability in Nigeria

Nigeria’s multiparty system remains fragmented and fluid, marked by deep-seated institutional weaknesses that became unmistakably evident in 2025. While [INEC’s 2020–2022 deregistration exercise reduced the number of registered political parties to 18](#), weaknesses in internal party governance persist, and elite incentives to defect remain largely unaltered. Cross-carpeting and high-profile political endorsements have shifted political power both numerically and institutionally toward the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress (APC).

Sustained defections increased the APC’s Senate representation to approximately 68 of 109 seats and significantly expanded its numerical strength in the House of Representatives. At the subnational level, APC control of governorships rose to 23 of 36 states by September 2025, [leaving opposition parties structurally marginalised](#) and reviving the spectre of an emergent one-party state.

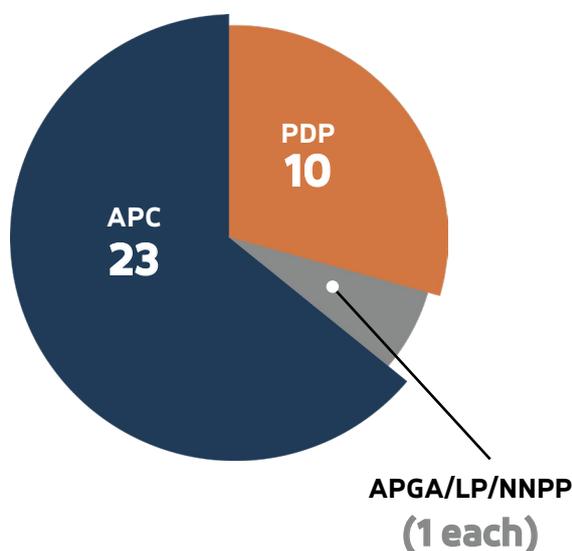
The challenge is fundamentally institutional rather than purely numerical. Ambiguous anti-defection provisions, weak party-finance transparency, and limited enforcement of intra-party democracy allow many defectors to retain both offices and associated resources. This undermines representative accountability and weakens party coherence. [Legal and scholarly analyses](#) have consistently highlighted the need to tighten anti-defection frameworks and strengthen internal party governance as prerequisites for restoring ideological differentiation and effective legislative oversight.

Key Indicators: Nigeria’s Multiparty Democracy (2025) At a Glance

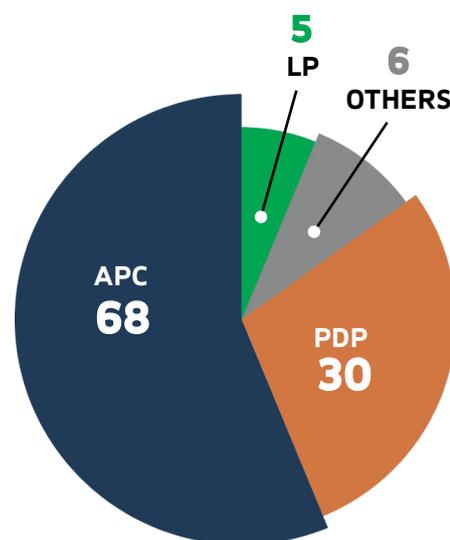
 **Registered political parties** ([INEC](#))

18

 **State governors (36 states)**
party counts



 **Senate composition**
(after 2024–mid-2025 defections)



 **Voter turnout**
(2023 general election)

26.7%

The Need for Reform

The proposed reforms rest on a defined causal logic. If the legal and institutional costs of elite defection are increased, if incumbency-based financial advantages are constrained, and if access to ballots and public resources is conditioned on minimum standards of internal party democracy, elite incentives are expected to shift away from opportunistic switching and toward party consolidation and programmatic competition.

Specifically, strengthened anti-defection enforcement raises the individual cost of switching; party-finance transparency reduces resource asymmetries between incumbents and challengers; credible electoral administration restores the electoral returns associated with competition; internal party democracy strengthens organisational coherence; and sustained civic engagement increases reputational and social sanctions against unaccountable behaviour. Collectively, these mechanisms operate to realign elite behaviour with voter-based accountability.

Table 1: Defection to APC (2023–2025): National Legislature and Governorships

Chamber/ Office	Party Composition at the 2023 Inauguration	Party Composition After Defections (Nov 2025)
Senate (109 seats)	APC entered the 10th Senate with 59 seats	The party's foothold widened to 75 seats, reflecting sustained inflows from opposition ranks
House of Representatives	At inauguration, APC held 178 seats	By late 2025, its strength had risen to 243 seats, driven by a steady stream of defections and court-ordered seat recoveries
Governors (36 states)	APC governed 21 states following the 2023 elections.	By 2025, the party controlled 25 states. The PDP, weakened by high-profile crossovers in 2024–25—including governors Sheriff Oborevwori (Delta) and later Peter Mbah (Enugu)—slipped into single-digit governorships.

Source: INEC

This pattern underscores a pronounced consolidation of political power around the APC, with defections reshaping Nigeria's political map more decisively than electoral cycles alone.

Table 2: Two-Year Post-Election Defection Cycles, 1999–2025

Election Cycle	Estimated defections within 24 months (national legislators and governors combined)	Dominant Party	Notes
1999–2001	25–40	PDP	<u>Marked by intense early realignment as the party system settled after the return to civilian rule</u> ; numerous governors and MPs switched affiliations
2003–2005	20–35	PDP	<u>Continued cross-carpeting</u> , with several governors and federal legislators repositioning ahead of the 2007 cycle.
2007–2009	15–30	PDP	<u>A relatively modest wave</u> , though party-switching remained a routine feature of coalition building
2011–2013	20–40	PDP	<u>Post-election churn driven largely by state-level patronage networks and intra-party disputes.</u>
2015–2017	40–80	APC	<u>A major realignment following the APC's historic national victory</u> ; many PDP figures shifted in response to the new balance of power.
2019–2021	50–120	APC	<u>A broad, sustained period of cross-carpeting</u> , including the notable 2020 surge that saw dozens of federal and state lawmakers defect.
2023–2025	120–250+	APC	<u>The largest documented wave to date</u> : by mid-2025, scores of federal legislators and multiple governors had defected, with media and academic trackers recording well over 100 high-level cases.

NOTE

No single authoritative public database tracks every mid-term party switch by date and office across 1999–2025. The figures above are therefore conservative, meant to illustrate comparative scale rather than provide an exhaustive count.

Across cycles, the trend is unmistakable: defections have grown both in scale and strategic significance, transforming from episodic realignments into a structural feature of Nigeria’s political competition.

Political Economy of Elite Defection

Defections have material consequences for governance, particularly in the domains of budgeting, oversight and legislative scrutiny. When the 10th Senate's committee leadership was first constituted, the APC controlled roughly two-thirds (60%) of all standing committees — [APC: 48; PDP: 18; LP: 4; SDP: 2; APGA: 1; YPP: 1](#). By mid-2025, successive defections further expanded APC influence, enabling the reconstitution of key committees and shifting strategic oversight positions into the hands of APC-aligned senators.

The policy implications are direct. With ruling-party control of Appropriations, Finance and Public Accounts, and with a firmer majority on the floor, [the opposition's capacity to resist or reshape the executive's budget proposals](#) diminishes, accelerating passage of government bills.

[Oversight also suffers](#). When ruling-party members or recent defectors chair investigatory panels, the intensity of scrutiny applied to ministries and agencies weakens, and inquiries lose depth. Procedurally, committee chairs control agendas, witness lists and the evidentiary record, giving them considerable latitude to limit minority participation (Parliament Reports). The result is a [chamber with fewer swing votes](#), reduced contestation during bill markup, and smoother confirmation processes for executive nominees — leaving the opposition [with little leverage to challenge or negotiate outcomes](#).

Beneficiaries of Elite Defections

From a political-economy perspective, defections produce unmistakable winners.



The Ruling Party

- Consolidates legislative and sub-national authority
- Smoothing the passage of executive priorities
- Tightening its grip on committee agendas
- [Reinforcing the patronage channels through which public resources are allocated.](#)



Incumbent Governors and Legislators

- Improved access to federal funding, appointments and project delivery — [a recurrently cited incentive in elite political bargaining](#)



Contractors and Rent-seeking Networks

- Weaker oversight
- Diminished legislative scrutiny create more permissive conditions for [procurement concessions and favourable budget allocations.](#)

Outcome: Concentrated Power and Resource at the Centre

Push-backs and constraints

These are expected from three principal sources.

Civil Society Groups and the Media

- Deploy monitoring, litigation and public advocacy to challenge opportunistic defections, though their influence is uneven and often contingent on political will and public attention.

The Judiciary and Electoral Tribunals

- Provide a second line of constraint, yet inconsistent case law and statutory ambiguities surrounding anti-defection provisions have produced highly variable outcomes, limiting the deterrent effect of legal sanctions.

Within the Parties Themselves

- Internal backlash — including threats of recall or local political isolation — does occur, but such mechanisms rarely bite in the absence of robust legal enforcement or cohesive party discipline.

Taken together, these pressures temper but do not fundamentally alter the incentives driving defections, creating a persistent tension between short-term political advantage and longer-term risks to accountability and institutional credibility.

Feasibility of Reform

Reform proposals must account for political resistance. Incumbent legislators benefit from weak anti-defection enforcement and opaque financing structures. Party elites may resist internal democracy requirements that constrain centralised control, while executive actors may oppose reforms that expand electoral autonomy.

However, potential reform coalitions exist. Opposition parties benefit from predictable rules and baseline funding; reform-oriented incumbents gain reputational credibility, civil society and media actors gain enforceable standards, and international partners may support capacity-building initiatives. Statutory and regulatory reforms represent the most feasible entry point, given the high transaction costs of constitutional amendment.

Table 3: Reform Risks and Mitigation

Potential Risk	Consequence (The Trade-Off)	Mitigation
Overly restrictive anti-defection provisions	It may suppress legitimate dissent and stifle constructive debate within political bodies.	Precise Drafting: Ensuring the language of reform is clear, unambiguous, and narrowly tailored to avoid unintended, overly restrictive, or exploitable interpretations.
Conditional Funding	It may encourage superficial compliance leading to reforms that look good on paper but lack genuine implementation or impact.	Independent Adjudication: Establishing a mechanism (e.g., an independent judicial or quasi-judicial body) to impartially rule on disputes arising from the reforms, particularly regarding anti-defection clauses. Graduated Sanctions: Implementing a system where penalties for non-compliance are proportional to the offence, ranging from minor warnings to severe sanctions, rather than relying solely on extreme measures.
Expanded electoral autonomy	It may provoke political resistance from entrenched interests or opposing factions, leading to institutional friction.	Sustained Civil Society Oversight: Encouraging and protecting the role of civil society groups to provide continuous, independent monitoring and reporting on the implementation and impact of the reforms.

Comparative Institutional Experience

This section examines selected comparative cases with relevance to Nigeria's institutional challenges. Both the intended effects of reforms and their unintended consequences are highlighted.

India

During the 1960s–1980s, India experienced widespread floor-crossing, which destabilised coalition governments and encouraged opportunistic behaviour among political elites. In response, [the anti-defection amendment](#) to the Constitution was adopted. The amendment disqualified legislators who defected from the parties under which they were elected. The reform significantly increased the formal cost of switching parties and curtailed large-scale defections after 1985. However, it also concentrated power within party leadership and produced inconsistent enforcement due to adjudicatory delays, illustrating the trade-off between stabilising party systems and preserving intra-party democracy.

Mexico

For much of the twentieth century, Mexico was characterised by dominant-party rule under the PRI, facilitated by weak electoral institutions. Beginning in the late 1980s, [a coordinated package of reforms](#) was implemented. These established an autonomous electoral authority, standardised voter registration, strengthened electoral justice mechanisms, and enforceable rules on campaign finance and media access. These reforms enhanced electoral credibility and facilitated competitive turnover, culminating in the peaceful alternation of power in 2000. Mexico's experience demonstrates the importance of comprehensive institutional reform in transforming entrenched party dominance.

South Africa

Post-apartheid South Africa adopted proportional representation and established a constitutionally protected Electoral Commission to ensure inclusion and electoral credibility. While these arrangements supported orderly elections and broad representation, they also contributed to prolonged dominance by the African National Congress (ANC). This unintended consequence highlighted the [limitations of institutional design when political support is heavily skewed](#). The case underscores that even technically sound institutions may not guarantee political pluralism without balanced voter alignment.

Table 4: Comparative Perspective on Anti-Defection and Electoral Institutional Reform

Dimension	India	Mexico	South Africa
Problem Context	Frequent floor-crossing (1960s–1980s) destabilised coalition governments, encouraging opportunistic party-switching.	PRI’s hegemonic dominance for much of the 20th century, reinforced by weak electoral institutions and clientelist networks.	ANC’s post-1994 dominance created de facto one-party control, raising concerns about oversight, accountability, and competition.
Policy Response	Constitutional amendment disqualifying defecting legislators; initial enforcement by Speakers, later subject to judicial review.	Comprehensive electoral reforms (late 1980s–1990s): autonomous Federal Electoral Institute (IFE/INE), biometric voter IDs, standardised procedures, strengthened electoral justice, campaign finance and media-access rules.	Closed party-list proportional representation (PR) system; strong, constitutionally guaranteed independent Electoral Commission (IEC); public party funding and transparency obligations.
Effects and Empirical Notes	Reduced mass defections; raised formal switching costs. Unintended effects: concentrated power in party leadership, adjudication delays, inconsistent enforcement, and circumvention tactics. Anti-defection stabilises party systems but can suppress internal dissent if not paired with transparent adjudication and internal party democracy.	Improved electoral credibility; first non-PRI presidential victory (2000); competitive turnover increased. Dependent on sustained political consensus, legal autonomy, and safeguards against rollback.	Strengthened electoral legitimacy and orderly turnover in provinces/municipalities; PR system led to concentration of seats for ANC, weakening local accountability. Institutional design alone cannot prevent dominance when support is skewed.
Key Stakeholders	Parliament (constitutional amendment), state assemblies, Speakers & courts (adjudication), parties (internal discipline), Election Commission of India.	Congress (legal reforms), INE (execution), courts & electoral tribunals (dispute resolution), political parties, civil society & media.	IEC (administration & independence), Parliament (party-funding laws), political parties, civil society, international observers.
Lessons for Nigeria	Anti-defection rules can reduce opportunistic switching but require: independent, rapid adjudication; clear legal definitions; safeguards for legitimate dissent to prevent elite capture.	Strengthen independent electoral management bodies and electoral justice, implement transparent voter-registration systems, and enforce campaign finance rules; institutional autonomy and cross-party consensus are critical to preserve gains.	Electoral administration independence is vital, but electoral system design (majoritarian vs PR) must balance party fragmentation and local accountability. Combined reforms—anti-defection, independent adjudication, strong INEC, and transparent party finance—are preferable to a single legislative fix.

Cross-cutting lessons for Nigeria

- Anti-defection law (India): Reduces opportunistic switching but risks concentrating power if adjudication is biased or slow.
- Electoral management and legal reform (Mexico): Strengthens institutional integrity, reduces incumbent manipulation, preserves credibility; success depends on autonomy and cross-party consensus.
- Electoral system and administration (South Africa): Ensures inclusivity and turnover; PR may weaken local accountability; institutional independence alone cannot prevent dominance.

Policy Implications for Nigeria: A coordinated reform package is essential, comprising the following components:

1. Clear anti-defection rules with expedited, impartial adjudication.
2. A stronger, budget-secure INEC with administrative independence.
3. Transparent party-finance regulation.
4. Attention to electoral system design to safeguard local accountability and mitigate dominance.

Policy Options: Electoral Integrity and Party Resilience Package (EIPRP)

This section presents a coherent package of policy options that directly responds to the gaps identified. The package combines strengthening existing policy instruments with an integrated new programmatic label so policymakers can adopt a clear, budgeted roadmap: Electoral Integrity & Party Resilience Package (EIPRP).

1. Anti-Defection and Recall Reform

Problem addressed: Ambiguity in law and uneven enforcement let defectors retain office; judicial outcomes are inconsistent.

Policy actions and programmes

- Legislate a Political Officeholder Fidelity and Recall Act to define seat-forfeiture triggers for mid-term party switching.
- Establish a fast-track, independent Electoral Tribunal for defection disputes with a 60-day adjudication mandate.
- Introduce voter-triggered recall for executive officeholders who defect.

Responsible stakeholders: National Assembly (legislation), INEC (technical verification), Judiciary/NJC (tribunal), State Assemblies (recall rules).

Expected outcome: Reduced opportunistic switching; predictable sanctions; stronger intra-party resolution.

3. INEC Autonomy and Capacity Strengthening

Problem addressed: Electoral administration capacity and financial independence are fragile; local office capture affects implementation.

Policy actions and programmes

- Secure multi-year, statutory budgetary allocations (e.g., a line item in the federal budget derived from a fixed percentage of tax revenue or multi-year appropriations) to insulate INEC from political manipulation.
- Strengthen INEC local offices with trained personnel, secure digital registers, and logistics support; upgrade logistics for off-season staff and materials.
- Ensure independent recruitment and merit-based postings for senior INEC roles are open to competition and monitored by civil society and the NJC.

Responsible stakeholders: INEC (implementation), National Assembly (budget/statute), Auditor-General (oversight), development partners (technical support).

Expected outcome: Credible elections; reduced administrative disputes; resilience to local capture.

2. Party-Finance Transparency and Equitable Public Funding

Problem addressed: Opaque funding advantages incumbents and patronage networks; limited enforcement of disclosure.

Policy actions and programmes

- Revise and operationalise the Political Party Finance Manual (INEC) into a statutory Party Finance Disclosure Act requiring quarterly public disclosure of major donors (above threshold), loans and in-kind donations, campaign expenditures above set bands, and independent annual audits. Mandate quarterly disclosure of donors, loans, in-kind contributions, and campaign spending.
- Introduce conditional, matched public funding: small baseline grants for all registered parties that meet minimum internal democracy criteria; enhanced matching funds for parties that reach thresholds in their internal transparency.
- Create a Party-Finance Compliance Unit within INEC to audit parties and refer criminal non-compliance to EFCC/ICPC.

Responsible stakeholders: INEC (regulations & enforcement), National Assembly (statutory backing), Auditor-General/EFCC/ICPC (audits/prosecutions), Ministry of Finance (budgeting public funds).

Expected outcome: Reduce incumbency rent capture; strengthen smaller parties; enhance public

4. Intra-Party Democracy and Conditional Ballot Access

Problem addressed: Elite capture of parties makes them vehicles for personal ambition; conditional ballot access can incentivise internal reform.

Policy actions and programmes

- Implement Party Compliance Certification: ballot access and public resources contingent on transparent primaries, audited accounts, and gender-balance targets.

- INEC grants certification for access to simplified nomination and direct public resources only to parties that meet minimum internal democracy standards (transparent primaries, audited accounts, gender balance targets). Parties failing to meet standards face graduated sanctions (suspension of public funds, restricted primary recognition).

- Provide technical assistance to smaller parties for compliance—training on member registration, primaries administration, and financial reporting.

- Enforceable timelines for internal primaries to reduce post-primary defections and negotiated swaps.

Responsible stakeholders: INEC (certification), parties (compliance), civil society (monitoring), and donors (capacity).

Expected outcome: Stronger party roots, reduction in elite-led switching, clearer choices for voters.

5. Civic Engagement, Media and Civil Society Support

Problem addressed: Low turnout, weak civic sanctioning of defections, and a constrained media environment reduce accountability.

Policy actions and programmes

- National civic education and voter mobilisation programme targeted campaigns in states with low turnout; school-based civic curricula; rapid fact-checking capacity during election cycles.

- Strengthen legal protections for election reporting and support independent observation networks.

- Media Freedom and Protection measures: strengthen legal protections for journalists covering elections; support independent public interest broadcasting to reduce information asymmetries.

- Rapid response election observation network: fund and capacitate local observer groups for real-time incident reporting and litigation follow-up.

Responsible stakeholders: INEC (civic materials), Ministry of Education (curriculum), civil society and media organisations (delivery), and National Human Rights Commission (protections).

Expected outcome: Higher turnout; stronger social sanctions against opportunistic switching; better-informed electorate..

This policy option is realistic and practical, as it builds on existing instruments, namely INEC's existing authority (finance manual, party handbook) and the National Assembly's competence for statute.

Fiscal and Implementation Considerations

The EIPRP has moderate fiscal implications. Most interventions rely on strengthened regulation and enforcement rather than significant new expenditure. Primary cost drivers include specialised electoral tribunals, expanded INEC compliance capacity, and civic education and observation initiatives. These costs can be accommodated through reallocations within existing electoral budgets and targeted donor-supported governance programmes.

Reform sequencing roadmap for EIPRP

Short term (0–12 months)

Reform	Classification	Indicative Cost	Political Feasibility
Political Officeholder Fidelity & Recall Act	Statutory (first step)	N0.2bn–N0.6bn (legislative drafting, public consultations, legal drafting, initial tribunal design)	Medium – plausible if framed as procedural clarity; risk from incumbents benefiting from status quo
Fast-track Electoral Tribunal for Defection Disputes	Statutory + Administrative	N1bn–N4bn (court infrastructure, staffing, IT case management, outreach)	Medium–Low – judicial independence & political resistance possible; mitigants: donor support, tight timelines
Party-Finance Disclosure Regulations	Statutory + immediate INEC regulatory steps	N0.3bn–N1.0bn (regulatory drafting, IT portals, compliance templates, training)	Medium – resistance from party elites; phased thresholds & capacity support improve viability
INEC Compliance Unit	Administrative /statutory authorisation	N0.5bn–N1.5bn p.a. (staff, IT, audit contracts)	Medium – feasible with donor support; depends on statutory backing & referral to anti-corruption agencies

Medium term (12–36 months)

Reform	Classification	Indicative Cost	Political Feasibility
Conditional Public Funding & Matching Grants	Statutory + budgetary allocation	N5bn –N15bn p.a. (depends on per-party baseline and matching formula; a modest start can be scaled)	Medium – smaller parties likely supportive; incumbents may resist unless a fair design is implemented
INEC Multi-Year Funding & Capacity Upgrade	Statutory (budget /appropriation reform)	N40bn –N120bn over 3 years (major line item: secure digital register, logistics, staffing); INEC has signalled substantial budgetary needs and requested large uplifts.	Low-Medium – requires fiscal prioritisation & cross-party consensus; donor co-financing mitigates friction
Civic Education & Rapid-Response Observation Networks	Administrative /programme funding	N2bn –N6bn (media campaigns, training, observation technology, rapid litigation funds).	Medium-High – broad public & donor support; depends on continuous funding & legal protection for observers

Long term (3–7+ years)

Reform	Classification	Indicative Cost	Political Feasibility
Ballot Access Certification Linked to Intra-Party Democracy	Statutory + INEC regulatory; some constitutional clarity may be needed	N1bn –N3bn p.a. (for compliance administration and capacity grants to small parties)	Low-Medium – politically sensitive; success requires phased implementation & visible fairness
Electoral Justice Systemic Reforms	Prefer statutory first; constitutional for entrenched autonomy	N0.5bn –N2.0bn (process costs, commission of inquiry, stakeholder consultations); fiscal impacts mainly indirect (institutional redesign)	Low for constitutional amendment; Medium for statutory measures; sequential path recommended

Recommendations

The following recommendations are matched to a policy theme from the Electoral Integrity and Party Resilience Package (EIPRP)

1 Enact the Political Officeholder Fidelity and Recall Act to enforce anti-defection rules and voter-triggered recall mechanisms.

The Act defines clear seat-forfeiture triggers for mid-term party switching, establishes a 60-day independent electoral tribunal for defection disputes, and provides a voter-triggered recall mechanism for executives who defect.

Lead stakeholder: National Assembly; INEC; Judiciary.

2 Enact the Party Finance Disclosure Act

Requiring quarterly reporting, audits, and conditional matched public funding; a Party-Finance Compliance Unit inside INEC; and conditional matched public funding for parties that meet internal-democracy and transparency benchmarks

Lead stakeholders: INEC, National Assembly, Auditor-General, EFCC/ICPC.

3 Guarantee INEC's financial independence and strengthen state-level operational capacity

Secure INEC's financial independence through a statutory multi-year funding mechanism and fund a nationwide programme to deploy a secure digital voter register and regional office modernisation to reduce local capture and administrative disputes.

Lead stakeholders: National Assembly; INEC; Auditor-General.

4 Require INEC party compliance certification, for ballot access and public funding, and public grants linking certification to transparent primaries, audited accounts, and gender-balance targets, while supporting smaller parties to meet the standards through capacity grants.

Lead stakeholders: INEC; political parties; civil society; donors.

5 Expand civic education, voter mobilisation, media freedom, and independent civil society observation to improve accountability

Launch a national civic-education and voter-mobilisation programme, strengthen legal protections for election reporting, and fund a rapid-response civil-society observation network to boost turnout and create voter sanctions against opportunistic switching

Lead stakeholders: INEC; Ministry of Education; NHRC; civil society; Media.

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Conclusion

Nigeria retains a multiparty façade, yet prevailing institutional incentives increasingly concentrate power. Elite defections and high-profile endorsements in 2025 have reshaped legislative and executive balances, magnifying incumbency advantages and marginalising opposition parties. This tilt toward party predominance is the predictable outcome of permissive rules, weak enforcement, and incentives that reward political mobility over party coherence. When elected mandates can be renegotiated at will, accountability collapses and voter confidence—already fragile—erodes further.

The consequences are clear. Without decisive reform, Nigeria risks entrenching a political order in which elections continue but meaningful competition contracts. Legislative compliance will rise, independence will fall, and opposition parties will remain formally present yet operationally marginal. Public participation will weaken as citizens see diminishing evidence that their choices shape governance outcomes. Dominant-party consolidation unfolds not through a single authoritarian act but through incremental institutional decay and the steady narrowing of alternatives.

Reversal is possible only through a coordinated reform effort that directly addresses the incentives driving defections and institutional drift. The Electoral Integrity and Party Resilience Package (EIPRP) provides a unified framework: credible anti-defection enforcement, transparent party finance, multi-year INEC funding, minimum thresholds of internal party democracy, and strengthened civic oversight. Fragmented or piecemeal reform will not alter political behaviour at scale.

Resistance is inevitable, particularly from those who benefit from existing asymmetries. Yet the cost of inaction is steeper: a democracy in which representation is negotiable, oversight is weakened, and institutional trust continues to deteriorate. A deliberate, sequenced reform agenda can restore competitive balance, reinforce institutional credibility, and ensure political authority flows from rules rather than personal bargains. The window for corrective action remains open—but it is narrowing. Policymakers who value stability, legitimacy, and the long-term health of the republic must treat these reforms as urgent, not optional.

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Tinubu Unveils 32-Man Ambassadorial List

Nigeria's president on November 29 forwarded 32 names — including high-profile figures like Femi Fani-Kayode, Reno Omokri and former electoral-commission boss Mahmood Yakubu — to the Senate for confirmation as ambassadors. The group splits between 17 non-career diplomats (often former politicians or public servants) and 15 career officers. If approved, they will be posted to strategic countries such as China, India, UAE and South Africa, or multilateral missions including the United Nations, UNESCO and African Union. The appointments mark a renewed push to re-staff Nigeria's global diplomatic presence after a long freeze.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/11/full-list-fani-kayode-omokri-30-others-tinubu-nominated-as-ambassadors/amp/>

President Tinubu Declares Nationwide Security Emergency

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on November 26 declared a nationwide security emergency, unveiling sweeping measures that include the largest police and military recruitment drive in recent years. The move also comes

as Nigeria grapples with a resurgence of violent attacks across several states.

Under the new directive, the Nigeria Police Force has been authorised to recruit an additional 20,000 officers, raising its ongoing recruitment drive to 50,000 personnel.

The Nigerian Army also received approval for expanded enlistment to reinforce troops across various theatres of operation.

<https://leadership.ng/president-tinubu-declares-nationwide-security-emergency/>

Nigeria Gets New Defence Minister

President Bola Tinubu on December 4, sworn in General Christopher Musa as Nigeria's Minister of Defence, marking a major step in the administration's effort to overhaul the country's security architecture. The ceremony took place on Thursday at the Presidential Villa in Abuja, a day after the Senate subjected Musa to a five-hour screening session before confirming his appointment.

Musa, who was the country's immediate past Chief of Defence Staff was abruptly retired on October 24 after spending 34 years in service.

<https://telegraph.ng/news/2025/12/04/tinubu-swears-in-general-christopher-musa-as-defence-minister/>



Federal Government Inaugurates New Education Board

The Federal Government on November 29 inaugurated a new Governing Board of the Nigerian Research and Education Network (NgREN) and its digital services arm, the Tertiary Education Research Applications and Services (TERAS), as part of renewed efforts to modernise Nigeria's research ecosystem and deepen data-driven governance.

NgREN, Nigeria's national research and education backbone, provides high-speed connectivity, shared digital resources, and collaboration infrastructure for universities and research institutions, while TERAS powers the digital applications that support research, data exchange, and virtual learning across the tertiary education system.

The new Board was inaugurated by the Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa, alongside the Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani, during the Nigeria National EdTech Strategy Mid-Term Co-Creation Workshop held with support from the Mastercard Foundation and the World Bank Group.

Members of the Board included the Athena Centre as the sole civil society representative.

<https://thesun.ng/digital-learning-fg-appoints-athena-centre-to-ngren-board/>



Cameroon Opposition Leader Dies in Detention

Cameroonian opposition leader Anicet Ekane, president of the African Movement for New Independence and Democracy, died on December 1 in detention. He was arrested on October 24 in the wake of the post-electoral crisis that trailed the presidential election of October 12.

His lawyer, Emmanuel Simh, claimed he died “in a situation of deprivation of liberty”.

A prominent figure of the nationalist left in the 1990s and a critical voice of the Cameroonian political system, Anicet Ekane was detained at the Secretariat of State for Defence, where the authorities accused him of supporting Issa Tchiroma Bakary, who had declared himself the winner of the election and had denounced the re-election of President Paul Biya.

<https://fr.apanews.net/news/cameroun-deces-en-detention-danicet-ekane-president-du-ma-nidem/>

Benin’s Main Opposition Party to Participate in Legislative Elections

Benin’s Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA) announced on December 1 its decision to allow five political parties to participate in the next legislative elections. Among the parties admitted is the main opposition party, the Democrats, whose files for the municipal and presidential elections had recently been rejected.

The election will take place on January 11, 2026. It was the last chance for the main opposition party to participate in one of the three elections scheduled for 2026 after the rejection of its files for the presidential and municipal elections.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20251201-b%C3%A9nin-les-d%C3%A9mocrates-principale-parti-de-l-opposition-autoris%C3%A9-%C3%A0-participer-aux-1%C3%A9gislatives>

Nigerien Customs Seizes Large Shipment of Explosives

Nigerien customs services on December 1 seized a large shipment of explosives probably intended for criminal networks, in a security context marked by the jihadist threat that strikes the country as well as its neighbours, Mali and Burkina Faso.

According to Niger’s General Directorate of Customs, its Niamey-Route Customs Office intercepted 8,567 sticks of dynamite concealed in imported goods. This is the second large-scale seizure carried out by this same structure since the beginning of 2025.

Niger, like Mali and Burkina Faso, is facing repeated attacks by jihadist groups linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State organisation. This persistent insecurity had motivated

the coup d’état of July 26, 2023 that brought General Abdourahamane Tiani to power. The three countries have since formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) to coordinate their response against terrorist movements.

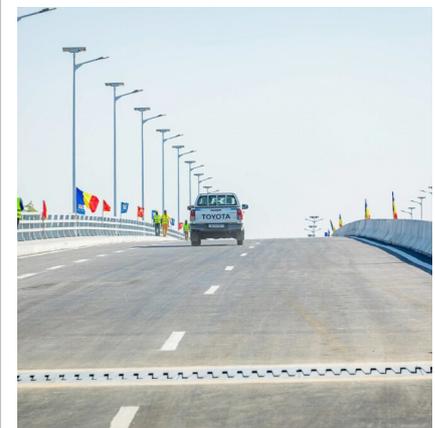
<https://fr.apanews.net/news/niger-saisie-de-8-567-batons-de-dynamite-par-les-douanes/>

Chad Builds 3rd Bridge in Capital N’Djamena

The Chadian Prime Minister, Allamaye Halina, inaugurated the new double-lane bridge in N’Djamena on December 1, 2025.

Built over the Chari River, the new bridge in N’Djamena, called the “Bridge of Refoundation”, an imposing structure constructed by a Chinese company, is the third to serve the capital. At 320 metres long, it has six lanes, making it the first widest bridge in the country. Its construction began in 2019 and was expected to be completed within 18 months. However, the outbreak of Covid-19 and other political events impacted the course of the work, extending the duration of the work.

<https://fr.apanews.net/news/tchad-inauguration-dun-3e-pont-a-ndjamena/>



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