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Wheels within Wheels: The Shifting Security Landscape of Nigeria

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WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS: THE SHIFTING SECURITY LANDSCAPE OF NIGERIA

Caroline Ziemke-Dickens, Betty Boswell

ABSTRACT: The United States Africa Command is poised to expand its partnerships with states in West Africa in an effort to build regional counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capacity. Resolving or containing the ongoing security crisis in Nigeria, triggered by the emergence of the violent extremist group Boko Haram, will be key to safeguarding regional stability in West Africa and the Sahel. While the crisis in Nigeria's North has the potential to destabilize the region, resolving the crisis will require strategies that address the complex set of factors that have given rise to the violence and limit the ability of the Nigerian government to respond effectively. This paper addresses five of the most important of these factors: the nature of the Nigerian political system, the severe and ongoing governance deficit, the ethnic and sectarian tensions created by Nigeria's system of internal citizenship, the securitization of identity in Nigeria's numerous ethnic and religious communities, and deep divisions within the Nigerian Muslim communities.

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after taking the helm as Commander, US Africa Command (AFRICOM), in April 2013, General David Rodriguez highlighted Boko Haram and Nigerian stability as a high-priority concern for the United States. AFRICOM is poised to expand its efforts to build a working partnership with Nigeria and develop West Africa's defensive and counterterrorism capabilities. Given the ongoing crisis in Mali, such vigilance in West Africa and the Sahel is warranted. Vigilance must be coupled, however, with longer term strategies that take into account the complexity of the "wheels within wheels" that drive the religious, ethnic, and regional tensions within Nigeria. That complexity gave rise to Boko Haram and goes far toward explaining the dynamics of its support base and the seeming inability of regional elites and Nigeria's national leaders to forge a working consensus on how best to address the threat. While the crisis in Nigeria is fueled to some extent by legacies of the fall of the Ghaddafi regime and the Mali crisis, its dynamics are fundamentally different and driven by internal factors that are both unique and complex. The most important of these are the nature of the Nigerian political system, a severe and ongoing governance deficit, the ethnic and sectarian tensions created by Nigeria's system of internal citizenship, the securitization of identity in Nigeria's numerous ethnic and religious communities (see Figure 1), and deep divisions within the Nigerian Muslim communities.
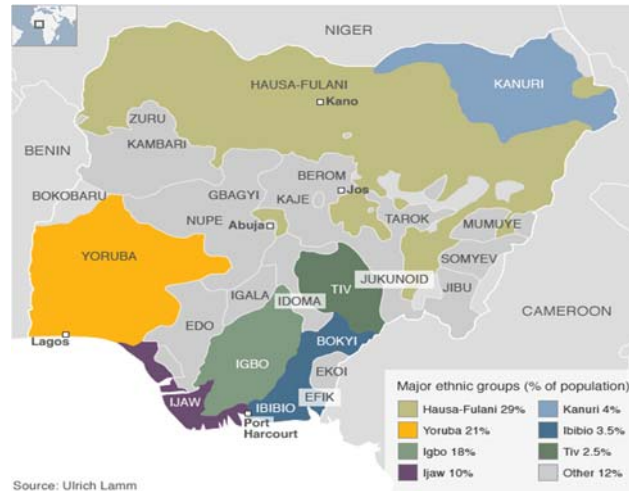
Figure 1. Major Ethnic Groups

In his 1996 jeremiad, *The Open Sore of a Continent*, Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka posed the question: "Are we trying to keep Nigeria a nation? Or are we trying to make it one?"[1] Prominent Nigerian public intellectuals are increasingly reopening the question of national unity in the most populous state on the African continent. Unity skeptics cite Nigeria's origins in an economic marriage of convenience between two British imperial administrations: the economically unviable North and the resource-rich, urban South. In the skeptics' view, Nigeria has never become more than a "geographic entity" forcibly held together by a small cadre of corrupt elites who have treated the nation's natural wealth as a "cash cow." To the skeptics, if the arbitrary conglomeration of ethnic and religious groups that make up Nigeria were ever politically viable, it is no longer. The nation has reached a crisis point that necessitates a dramatic change in the configuration of Nigeria. The unity skeptics fall into three broad categories.

The first, and on the surface most dangerous to Nigerian security and stability, are separatist and insurgent movements. Boko Haram is currently the most active and destructive of these, but there are signs that other groups—notably the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)—are growing restless as the government in Abuja fails to make good on promises it made in exchange for an on-again, off-again cease-fire. A series of 2012 attacks on oil pipelines and the killing of four police officers in Bayelsa State in early March 2012 have raised concerns that MEND is remobilizing and may be forging operational ties with pirates who have kidnapped foreign crews on Dutch-owned tanker vessels.[2] There is no indication that Boko Haram and MEND are forging operational or tactical connections, but even if they do not, the twin threat they pose will be a deadly distraction for a government already under severe strain.[3]

The second category is the growing number of regional and tribal leaders and public intellectuals who call for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC). SNC advocates, for whom Soyinka is a prominent spokesperson, maintain that a national conference of tribes and ethnic groups is the only way to replace regional, separatist "monologues" with a national "dialogue." The only long-term hope for Nigeria to realize its unfulfilled promise is the negotiation of a new Constitution that enshrines "True Federalism"—reflecting the rights and aspirations of all the groups that make up Nigeria's polity—to replace the current, corrupt system of *Ogas* (big men), patronage, and special privilege that serves only the interests of the entrenched political elites.[4] The SNC would, its advocates stress, provide a venue for addressing the grievances raised by Boko Haram and MEND, as well as Nigeria's numerous disaffected groups and regions, and forge a common roadmap for transforming Nigeria.[5]

The third category comprises the disintegrationists. They, like senior Nigerian statesman Dr. Uma Eleazu, are not opposed to the idea of an SNC, but see it primarily as a means to negotiate the disaggregation of an illegitimate federal system that provides little in the way of services or security for a citizenry that never had a say in how it would be governed. "Let us have a conference," Eleazu said in a recent interview. "[I]f we don't there would always be people who are going to challenge the existence of Nigeria. Nigeria is already a failed state; what remains is for it to disintegrate." In this way, he believes, Nigeria can re-emerge as a looser Confederation of willing members. At this point, Eleazu sees no recognition of a common interest around which the people of Nigeria might chose to stay united. If Nigeria dissolves "into confederation, [with] each [state] developing on its own line, the force of economic integration would bring us back together in the future."[6]

THE NIGERIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

When it gained its independence from Britain in 1960, Nigeria consisted of three administrative regions (see Figure 2). By far the largest was the Northern Region, which included the predominantly Muslim far north and the mixed Muslim-Christian Middle Belt. The Western Region included Nigeria's largest city, Lagos. The Eastern Region included most of Nigeria's valuable oil and gas reserves. In 1967, the military junta divided Nigeria's four administrative regions into 12 states in an effort to dilute the power of regional governors. The Eastern Region military government refused to accept the division and seceded, declaring the independent Republic of Biafra. The resulting civil war lasted three years and killed over 1 million people. Following the Nigerian Civil War, subsequent military juntas undertook additional administrative reforms in 1976, 1987, 1991, and 1996, ostensibly to ensure the fair representation of Nigeria's ethnic minorities. It is more likely that the intention was to further dilute regional and ethnic power centers. Since 1996, the Nigerian federal system has consisted of 36 states and 774 Local Government Areas (LGAs) (see Figure 3). The result is a system of governance held together largely through revenue sharing and characterized by complexity, patronage, and vast corruption that serves the ambitions of politicians and local elites but not the well-being of the population.

Figure 2. Nigeria political map 1960 (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 3. Nigeria political map today (Source: www.mapsofworld.com)

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Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has spent roughly 29 years under military rule. Nigeria's First Republic was overturned by a military coup in 1966. Military rule continued until October 1979, when elections ushered in the Second Nigerian Republic. Two more military coups, in 1983 and 1985, led to the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida. In 1993, Babangida annulled the results of Nigeria's first democratic elections in 14 years. In the ensuing political crisis, Babangida stepped down, to be eventually replaced by General Sani Abacha, who undertook a crackdown on political opposition. Moshood Abiola—who had won the 1993 election and declared himself President of Nigeria—was charged with treason and imprisoned. Following Abacha's death in 1998, his successor, Major General Abdulsalam Abubakar, presided over a transition to democracy. In February 1999, former military ruler Olusegun Obasanjo won the Presidency in an election that was riddled with charges of voter fraud and other irregularities.

With the return of democracy in 1999, the dominant People's Democratic Party (PDP), in an effort to mitigate the destabilizing forces of Nigeria's ethnic and religious diversity, entered into a "gentlemen's agreement" that power should be rotated between the majority Christian South and the Muslim North. The south had its "turn" under two-term President Obasanjo. When northern President Umaru Yar'Adua was elected in 2007—in a contest that observers nearly unanimously denounced as the worst Nigerian election ever—the assumption was that the North would hold the presidency for two full terms. President Yar'Adua's sudden death in January 2010 put the southern Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, at the helm and threw the power sharing agreement into disarray. Jonathan and his supporters argued that he was entitled to stand for a second term, that the south had honored its agreement, and that the premature death of Yar'Adua was just bad luck for the North.

President Jonathan's reelection in 2011, seen in the Muslim North as a power grab by southern Christians, brought long-standing North-South tensions back to the surface, leading to the resurgence of violent movements like Boko Haram in the North and escalating sectarian violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt. At the same time, northern leaders have thus far failed to agree on a consensus candidate to challenge Jonathan in the 2015 election. Civil society groups in the North are increasingly condemning members of their own political class, charging them with being more interested in "traversing every nook and cranny of the country in chartered jets for their own personal agenda instead of tending to the constitutional responsibility for which they were elected in the first place."[7]

Nigeria's already chaotic political landscape became even more so when in early 2013, a long-brewing political feud between President Jonathan and Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi, chairman of the National Governor's Forum, came to a head. In an unsuccessful attempt to oust Amaechi as a power rival to the president, Jonathan supporters announced the creation of a parallel PDP Governors' Forum. This move to splinter the powerful union of governors was perceived as yet another anti-democratic power grab.[8] The new organization was more broadly seen as a move to dilute the power of state governors, especially those critical of Jonathan's intention to run for a second full term in contravention of the gentlemen's agreement that the next president would be a northerner.[9]

The move backfired for Jonathan. Several governors, even among Jonathan supporters, expressed dismay at the inappropriate meddling by the president in the internal workings of the National Governor's Forum. As one put it, "The governor's forum is a bipartisan body....Why this partisan interest? Without the forum, governors can exist and relate with like minds, but the forum serves as a gauge for peer review for the overall interest of the federation."[10] For his part, Jonathan claimed that his intervention was a good-faith effort to heal a breach among the governors. According to a spokesman, "The president wanted to mediate as a father in this unsettling affair."[11] In late August 2013, seven governors, 22 senators, and former vice president Atiku Abubakar left the PDP

convention to organize a new party, the "New PDP." The splinter group organizers took this action after months of PDP infighting "to save the PDP from an evident implosion,"[12] they say.

The New PDP governors are northern, with the exception of Amaechi, an outspoken opponent of Jonathan. The majority of the New PDP's 22 senators and former Vice-President Abubakar are northern Muslims.[13] They are rallying around the promise of "restor(ing) the value of the founding fathers of the party."[14] The formation of this New PDP added a third party to the landscape heretofore dominated by the PDP. Earlier in 2013, three of the larger minority parties merged to form the All Progressives Congress—with an eye on the 2015 election.

Former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell characterized Nigeria's transition to democracy since 1999 as a series of "election-like events." There is no reason to assume the Nigerian elites' tendency to manipulate ethnic and religious differences will be set aside in the run-up to the next general election to be held in 2015.[15] What may be slowly changing is the traditional apathy of grassroots Nigerians. Campbell and other close observers of Nigerian politics see signs that Nigeria's voters are becoming more politically proactive:

> [E]lections are slowly promoting a more democratic culture. Today, the expectation, if not yet the reality, is that the chief of state will be a civilian who comes to office through a process that involves voting. If the transition to democracy is incomplete, that of military to civilian governance is further along.[16]

The dawning of grassroots political awareness traces back to the 16 January 2012 deal struck between Labor and President Goodluck Johnathan's government to partly restore fuel subsidies and end a crippling general strike. The grassroots "Occupy Nigeria" movement used social media to organize demonstrations and rally national and international support. In the words of one Nigerian blogger, "A new generation of Nigerian activists has come into their own" in the wake of the government's attempt to take away the only benefit most Nigerians were getting from the country's oil wealth.[17] In the view of the late Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe, the government erred in "contemptuously" mistaking a popular "posture of subservience, quietness, etc."—adopted to survive decades of systemic subjugation—for weakness.[18] Across the blogosphere, Nigerians increasingly express the view that "Nigerians have laid to rest the old lie that they are apathetic cowards and will accept everything from their government without complaining…. Finally, Nigeria has grown up."[19]

SEVERE AND ONGOING GOVERNANCE DEFICIT

The constant power jockeying between the president, his patronage network, and powerful state governors has led to a dysfunctional system characterized by fragile political coalitions between federal and state officeholders and elites. It is a system so preoccupied with the interests of the ruling elite as to be incapable of providing even basic services, let alone economic opportunity, to the vast majority of Nigerians. The problem is especially acute among the nation's youth. Nigerian social scientist Bukola Ayorinde of the University of Ibadan characterized the problem: "The blame for the rise of Boko Haram lies on the shoulders of the government. There is also a political factor, but poverty and hopelessness has made the sect and such groups seem attractive to young men. And now they are made to die for something they do not necessarily believe in."[20] Much of the grassroots rage that has led to violent unrest in Nigeria in recent years (including not only Boko Haram and Ansaru, but other insurgent groups like MEND) is fueled by the intricate patronage links

between federal, state, and local elites that has cost Nigeria an estimated $400 billion in oil revenue lost to corruption since independence.[21]

The overt symptoms of Nigeria's dysfunction—Boko Haram violence in northern Nigeria, sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians in the country's middle belt, violent militancy in the Niger delta—may mask one of the key threats to the country's long-term stability: the entrance of Nigeria's baby boom generation into the workforce, coupled with a growing education crisis across the nation, but particularly in the North. For the foreseeable future, the vast majority of Nigerians will be aged 25 or younger. The current median age in Nigeria is 19.2 years. By 2030 it will have increased only to 22.6 years, and it will not top 25 years until roughly 2040.[22] The overall literacy rate for young men aged 15–24 in 2007–2010 was 78 percent (65 percent for females). But secondary school participation during the same period was only 29 percent for boys and 22 percent for girls. Of those, less than half attended school regularly.[23] Then Minister of Education Kenneth Gbagi caused an uproar in 2010 when he proposed hiking tuition fees in Nigerian Universities on the grounds that "if Nigerians can afford to go overseas for education, then they should be ready to pay appropriately for the same in Nigeria" and that the government should no longer have to bear the "heavy burden" of providing education for Nigerians.[24] In the eyes of ordinary Nigerians who have little hope of sending their children to schools in the United States or United Kingdom, it is a burden that the government has abysmally failed to bear. The severe deficiencies in the education system have real security implications. Not only do they contribute to the growing pool or recruits for extremist groups, they also limit the quality and professionalism of recruits and junior-level officers in the security services who themselves often earn their positions through patronage rather than merit.

While the education deficit is a problem across the country, it is especially dire in the predominantly Muslim North. The 2010 Nigerian Education Data Survey, released by the Nigerian National Population Council in May 2011, revealed alarming regional inequities: less than 40 percent of children have basic literacy in the North (compared with at least 70 percent in Lagos State). Basic numeracy is 14 percent in Sokoto State (compared to 94 percent in Lagos). Students in rural areas must travel an average of an hour each way to attend schools that are often understaffed and underequipped—less than US$40 is spent per pupil per annum in the North (compared with US$110 in Lagos).[25] In announcing that a coalition of stakeholders in Borno State were launching a "Marshall Plan" for addressing the root causes of Boko Haram violence, Governor Kashim Shettima noted that over the past two years, "apart from the children of the elite, *there were no children of ordinary citizens in the whole of Borno North* [emphasis added] who were qualified to secure admission into the Universities."[26]

The relationship between the population and the government in the North has deteriorated during recent Joint Military Task Force (JTF) crackdowns aimed at rooting out and eliminating the threat from Boko Haram. Nigeria's JTF consists of Nigerian army and intelligence personnel and national and state police forces. On 8 October 2012, an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion struck a military patrol vehicle in Maiduguri, killing an army lieutenant and between one and three other soldiers.[27] In the hours following, security forces engaged in a rampage that left at least 100 homes and shops in ashes, dozens of civilian vehicles burned, and at least 30 civilians dead. JTF spokesmen denied any civilian casualties and implausibly claimed the widespread fires resulted from the initial IED explosion. An unnamed soldier who participated in the actions, however, told an Associated Press reporter in Maiduguri that the attack was retaliation for the dead soldiers: "They killed our officer! We had no options!"[28] The AP reporter, who saw the immediate aftermath, reported that he saw no weapons or any other indication that civilians killed were associated with Boko Haram. One resident reported that security forces armed with assault rifles and machine guns mounted on personnel carriers simply "shot everybody in sight." Later, a military truck dumped dozens of

civilian bodies in front of a Maiduguri hospital "like bags of cement." Another hospital was forced to turn away corpses because its morgue was already full. [29]

On a day-to-day basis, local populations in northern Nigeria encounter rank-and-file security forces that are undertrained, under-equipped, and on a hair trigger because they themselves are the most common targets of Boko Haram attacks. Because of corruption at virtually every level, very little of the N4.877 trillion (roughly US$31 billion) budgeted for security in Nigeria makes its way to support basic police operations.[30] Although security operations are one of the federal government's main budget priorities—comprising approximately 20 percent of the total Nigerian budget—the security forces remain in disarray. Local security forces are widely believed to be infiltrated by Boko Haram, usually through bribery. Some have been implicated in facilitating jailbreaks of Boko Haram detainees, and others are suspected of turning a blind eye to preparations for major bomb attacks, including the one against the UN office in Abuja in 2011 that killed 23 and injured 73.

In late 2012, international human rights nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) Human Rights Watch (October 2012) and Amnesty International (November 2012) issued independent reports documenting extensive violations of the rights and security of civilians in northern Nigeria at the hands of both Boko Haram *and* security forces. The heavy-handed treatment of civilian populations has undermined the government's campaign by lending credence to Boko Haram's narrative that it is struggling against a brutal, inept, corrupt, and unjust government. In the current atmosphere, civilians are unlikely to cooperate with security forces, even though they are desperate to see the end of Boko Haram violence.[31]

Neither the security forces nor Boko Haram militants show any trust of or respect for civilians in northern Nigeria. As one BBC correspondent described it, these citizens are "stuck in the middle between the bombs of Boko Haram and the bullets of the army."[32] Echoing this sentiment, a local engineer told Amnesty International, "We are in the middle of two things. If you take a look at your right or you take a look at your left both of them are deadly. It's a lose-lose situation."[33] Both security forces and Boko Haram kill civilians with relative impunity. Residents of the North are constantly harassed by house-to-house searches, property seizures, forced evictions, and house burnings. Arbitrary arrests, detention without charges, and enforced disappearances, especially of young men, are common.[34]

Civilians rarely see signs that the law-enforcement and justice establishments are working on their behalf to bring the individuals who victimize them—whether from extremist groups or security services—to justice. The other outlet for getting at the truth—the presence of objective, professional, investigative journalism—is also gradually disappearing as journalists, themselves caught between Boko Haram and government threats, are opting not to the cover violence for fear of retaliation. The government "discourages" journalists from publishing photos and detailed accounts of the aftermath of bombings, fearing photographs of the destruction will further alienate local populations and undermine the already frail credibility of the JTF. Boko Haram bombed *Thisday* newspaper's offices in Kaduna on 26 April 2012. Subsequent Boko Haram threats against other national and international media outlets—including *Voice of America Hausa* and *Radio France International*—have made journalists reluctant to cover the aftermath of bombings, investigate killings, or even report on the general security situation.[35] Journalists are routinely threatened, a few have been murdered, and they have no confidence in the security forces. As one said, "Being a journalist is very dicey. We are in a serious dilemma. Even the security man can shoot you. It's not easy to operate here."[36]

The dire state of JTF forces in the North undermines the credibility of the Nigerian government nationwide, especially as it regularly announces that the final breaking of Boko Haram is right around the corner. On 13 July 2013, the government announced, "Peace had arrived," with Boko

Haram agreeing to a cease-fire in the aftermath of a school massacre in which 46 students were killed in an early morning attack on a dormitory in Yobe. A day later, on 14 July, Boko Haram leader Abubaker Shekaku not only denied the cease-fire but called upon his followers to step up their attacks on schools: "Teachers who teach western education? We will kill them in front of their students and tell the students to henceforth study the Qur'an."[37]

When frightened parents pull their children out of school, the young boys become ripe recruits for the extremist groups.[38] There is already a deficit of trust in the government that grows deeper when the people see Nigeria's leaders "barricade themselves behind tall, reinforced concrete fences and bulletproof cars," moving around with "a fearsome retinue of guards, soldiers and police." As *The Daily Sun* columnist Okey Ndibe put it, the government seems oblivious that the people of Nigeria regard "their so-called security [as] a lie, a huge illusion. They don't reckon that the monster abroad in the land is growing stronger and fiercer by the day, and will soon lay siege on their doors."[39] In the eyes of civilians on the ground, especially in the North, the government is skilled at only two things: corruption and passing the buck.

The federal government's continued inability to bring anyone to justice for the killings that have become tragically commonplace in northern Nigeria has seriously, and perhaps irreversibly, undermined local confidence in the ability of the government or the JTF to bring the violence to an end. Communities are turning to vigilante groups armed with sticks, machetes, knives, and metal pipes to restore some semblance of security. These have been somewhat effective but represent a further collapse of national control and legitimacy in those areas.[40] As one Maiduguri resident told the BBC in July 2013, "When the situation became too bad to endure, we decided to find the Boko Haram members ourselves. . . .Whenever we see them, we arrest them and hand them over to the army." Some local JTF officials actually welcome the vigilantes. Their efforts, one said, have the potential to lay the groundwork for the positive civil-military collaboration necessary for the long-term success of the internal security operation."[41] Others, however, express concern that the vigilante groups are just government tools cynically designed to improve its image in the run-up to the 2015 elections and lay the groundwork for election violations:

> We are worried as this appears to be a regrouping for 2015. If this is about hunting down Boko Haram, why is it just starting now after the Islamists have either fled or have melted into the population? If the state government is sponsoring this effort, why now? And how do we disarm them after the emergence? If it is the military, how do we integrate them or disband them after the war?[42]

THE INDIGENE/SETTLER DICHOTOMY

The concept of "indigeneity" has its roots in Nigeria's colonial past, when some 250 different ethnic groups with little or no historical or cultural affinity were bound into a single administrative entity. It was born of the need to ensure the cultural survival of smaller ethnic groups that feared they would be overwhelmed by larger, more politically and economically powerful groups. Since independence, and especially in the four decades since the end of Nigeria's catastrophic civil war, Nigeria's lawmakers have struggled to counter the atomizing effect of the country's ethnic complexity by "ensuring that the federal government is broadly inclusive in everything it does, thereby promoting both 'national unity' and 'loyalty,'" across ethnic and religious communities.[43] This enforced "inclusiveness"—what Nigerians call the "federal character" principle—while perhaps noble in intention, has been a dismal failure in practice. In effect, it provides legal

legitimacy to overt discrimination that marginalizes large swathes of the population on residency grounds.

Two aspects of indigeneity are particularly problematic. First, while "indigeneity" is widely cited as a central constitutional principle, it is nowhere clearly defined. The federal constitution establishes legislative set-asides for indigene representatives, but leaves it up to individual states to define who is and is not an indigene. As a result, local officials have used residency status as a convenient tool for denying not just political access, but even basic services such as public education. to large numbers of citizens on the grounds that they do not meet some dubiously defined standard for residence. A Plateau State official told Human Rights Watch that no federal guidance is needed because "the Plateau State people know who is supposed to be an indigene and who is not."[44] In Jos, local officials have been known to deny certificates of residency to members of their own indigene communities if they "look" like settlers or belong to a minority faith. In principle, the Nigerian constitution protects Nigerians from "any disability or deprivation merely by reason or circumstance of his birth." In practice, millions of Nigerians who lack a certificate of indigeneity in their state of residence are deprived of any meaningful benefits of citizenship (which are few enough in any case). Little wonder, then, that few Nigerians attach much meaning to Nigerian nationhood.

A second aggravating aspect of indigeneity is the zero-sum nature of Nigeria's political culture, what some Nigerians call the "scarcity mindset." In a nation in which resources and opportunities are few, Nigerians believe they must secure as much benefit as possible "for ourselves and our children lest those outside come and take what is rightfully ours."[45] Nigeria's crisis of governance stifles economic development and intensifies the competition for government patronage, jobs, higher education, and political influence. In the North and Middle Belt, for example, the competition for access to post-secondary education has become acute, with some states charging prohibitively high fees for non-indigene students. Even in the public-education system, students from "settler" communities are relegated to inferior schools or denied access to public education altogether.[46]

The indigene/settler dichotomy is felt at the local level right across Nigeria, but its effects have been especially malignant in Plateau State in Nigeria's Middle Belt. The ethnic tensions between the largely Christian/traditional indigene Berom, Anauta, and Afizere (BAA) people and the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani settlers have deep historical roots. In the 18th century, raiders from the far North seized BAA and other local people for the trans-Saharan slave trade and later sought to subjugate and Islamize the populations of the Middle Belt. The British left the Christian and traditional tribes of the Middle Belt under the dominance of the Muslim North, an arrangement that continued until the first administrative reform gave the BAA effective political control of the new Plateau State. Successive waves of Hausa migration have resulted in a population in Plateau State almost evenly divided between Muslim "settlers" and non-Muslim "indigenes." In response to demands from the Hausa settlers around the capital city, Jos, General Ibrahim Babangida's military government created the Jos North Local Government Area in 1991, effectively giving the settlers a political voice and forcing the BAA to share access to traditional local chieftaincies. The result has been communal polarization and a protracted and escalating cycle of violence that continues to instill deep physical and psychological trauma among populations that that "have now experienced mass destruction of lives, property, relationships, economies, and institutions for a generation."[47]

The indigene/settler dichotomy is not unique to Plateau State, but it is rendered particularly incendiary by the socioeconomic realities in the region around Jos: the ongoing conflict between Muslim herders and Christian farmers (which has intensified with the desertification of the North); high youth unemployment, especially in urban Jos; and the politicization and securitization of communal identities that has led to increasing ethnic segregation.[48] Settler-Idigene disputes and cattle rustling continue to fuel regular incidents of tit-for-tat violence in Nigeria's volatile Middle

Belt. As long as the rustlers can operate with impunity, Fulani leaders warn, "there cannot be peace."[49] In recent years, an opportunistic pathogen—Boko Haram—has moved into the region, exploiting existing social and ethnic tension to further its own ideological campaign against Nigeria's federal government and further polarize Muslims and Christians. Nowhere is reform of the indigeneity concept more urgently needed than in Jos.

The Nigerian political consensus is shifting toward recognition that the residency rules must change to afford greater rights and access to settler communities, but how best to accomplish that is a matter for debate. At one extreme are those who favor abolishing indigene privilege altogether—at least as far as political access and government services are concerned. Instead, they advocate basing internal citizenship on longevity in a location, eliminating the phenomenon of millions of Nigerians "who cannot lay claim to any state as their own as they were born and bred in states other than those of their fathers."[50]

Others warn against precipitous change. Any reform must take into account the underlying cultural and ethnic sensitivities of privileged indigene groups (especially those that, like the BAA, are minority populations even in their home states) to avoid unleashing a "sense of siege" in ethnically diverse regions and "unwittingly create bottled up feelings and mark out members [of favored settler groups] as targets of misplaced aggression."[51] In this view, any effort to eliminate or redefine indigeneity must be preceded by an extended program of inter-communal confidence building at the grassroots. Only in this way will it be possible to reverse the "zero-sum" political culture and take meaningful steps to end impunity and identify and prosecute those—indigene and settler alike—who masterminded and perpetrated violence and killings.[52] Such a process will be dependent on effective and sustained federal, state, and local government and civil society participation.

Given the dysfunctional nature of Nigerian governance and the weak and polarized nature of civil society in Plateau State, there is little cause for optimism in the near term.[53] In such an environment, as recent events in Jos demonstrate, the resulting atmosphere of communal tension is likely to continue to provide a breeding ground for Boko Haram and other opportunistic players to further degrade Nigerian unity and human security and undermine the already weak legitimacy of the federal government.

SECURITIZATION OF IDENTITY IN NIGERIA

In an effort to shore up Nigerian national identity and strengthen central control, successive Nigerian regimes (both military and democratic) have echoed the British colonial strategy of "divide and rule." The government has encouraged the proliferation of local ethno-religious identity communities (from three states at independence to 36 today) and often manipulated the tensions between them. The unintended, and destabilizing, consequence has been the proliferation of local, often extra-legal security forces, operating outside the framework or control of the federal police and military. These forces are generally under the control of opportunistic local political elites who use them to consolidate their power and advance their own agendas.

Local populations, especially in northern regions, do not see themselves as stakeholders in the Nigerian nation. They do not see their communities receiving a fair share of the benefits of the country's wealth and furthermore feel that the federal government is unable to provide even basic services. As the rise of other separatist and insurgent movements in the South, such as MEND, makes clear, this phenomenon is not unique to the Muslim North. Having lost faith in the ability of

the Nigerian state and its political leaders to defend their interests and ensure their security, ethnic communities across the country are increasingly identifying with alternative power hierarchies built around ethnic or religious identities.[54] For their part, opportunist local political elites have a stake in promoting the notion that Nigeria's identity as a modern nation-state poses an existential threat to the deeper, more complex ethno-religious identities in which local communities invest so much of their sense of security.[55] When these communities see their identity and culture as defensible only by maintaining and hardening their separateness, local elites are able to hold federal interference in how they run their affairs at bay.

Religious identities have been growing increasingly radicalized across Nigeria, among both Christians and Muslims. One of the most rapidly rising religious movements in Nigeria is radical Pentecostalism that empowers individuals to take action against those responsible for Nigeria's "moral crisis"—including Muslims and corrupt political leaders.[56] While such movements do not necessarily advocate violence, they are instilling an increasingly divisive sense of the righteous "us" versus the corrupt and evil "them." This serves to further undermine an already weak sense of Nigerian national identity and common cause. Christian revivalist leaders exploit and fan the flames of sectarian tension. The Christian extremist group Akwat Akwop on 10 June 2012 declared "open season" on any Muslim Fulani found within their land. In early 2013, MEND threatened retaliation if Boko Haram expanded its operations into the south. Such threats and counter-threats heighten the openly hostile atmosphere between Nigeria's Christian and Muslim communities.[57] There are conciliatory voices on both sides of the Christian/Muslim divide. Nigerian Archbishop John Onaiyekan and Alhaji Muhammed Sa'ad Abubaker III, the Sultan of Sokoto, were nominated for the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize because of their campaign against the misuse of religion in Nigerian politics. In Nigeria's divisive political culture and atmosphere of escalating violence, voices of reason are too often drowned out.[58] Even more destructive in the long term may be the tendency of extremist religious movements to crowd out the space in which a genuine, effective national civil society actually capable of holding both officeholders and political party elites accountable might emerge.

DEEP DIVISION WITHIN NIGERIA'S MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Much of the territory that now makes up northern Nigeria was peacefully Islamized between the 11th and 17th centuries through contact with North African and Arab merchants and itinerate clerics. Most Muslims in the region follow one of two dominant Sufi brotherhoods.[59] The oldest, the Qadiriyya, incorporated elements of the indigenous culture and became integral to the identity and power of the dominant pastoral Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups. The second, Tijaniyya, emerged as the dominant sect among the rising class of wealthy urban traders and bureaucrats, many of whom were migrants from other areas. Over time, religious tensions emerged between the two sects that mirrored tensions between the two classes.

The political and religious elites in Nigeria's northwest trace their political lineage back to the Sokoto Caliphate. Sokoto conquered and consolidated the smaller Hausa emirates, including the Kanem Borno Empire in what is now the Boko Haram stronghold in the Northeast, between 1804 and 1808. Today's Sokoto leaders largely share the puritanical, reformist, anti-Western, anti-materialist Islamic worldview of religious leaders in the northeastern states (including the three states currently under the "state of emergency" declared in May 2013—Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa). Still, the bitter historical resentments of the former Kanem Borno leaders continue to

prevent an effective political consolidation among all of Nigeria's predominantly Muslim northern States.

Muslim army officers and politicians have often played a dominant role at the federal level. For the most part, they are not politically allied with local Muslim political leaders in the North, and they are certainly not products of the local Koranic education system. In the eyes of many local northeastern elites, the political and religious leaders of the northwest have become dependent on patronage from Abuja and are collaborators with the secular nationalist state.[60] As in other deprived, predominantly Muslim societies, the vast majority of young men in northeastern Nigeria (about 80 percent) receive their education from traditional Koran schools that produce virtually unemployable graduates. In every case since such movements began to surface in the early-1970s, the rank and file of the anti-nationalist, Islamic revivalist movements has come overwhelmingly from the seemingly endless supply of young, unemployed, and often unemployable boys and men in the cities and towns of the northeastern states. [61]

The long-standing tension between northern political and religious elites is beginning to be echoed in emerging rifts within the region's violent extremist groups. In January 2012, a militant group calling itself Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan (Ansaru) broke away from Boko Haram.[62] The group's name means "Vanguards for helping and protecting Muslims especially in Black Africa," and therein lies the conflict with Boko Haram. Abubabakar Shekau's Boko Haram has been responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocents—Muslim and non-Muslim alike. In the January 2012 YouTube video that introduced Ansaru to the world, its leader Abu Usamatul Ansar condemned the killing of innocent non-Muslims except in self-defense or in direct retaliation against those who attacked Muslims. Ansar also denounced the unprovoked killing of security forces. Ansar condemned Boko Haram suicide attacks conducted around Hausa-Fulani strongholds in the Kano area, further affirming the philosophical and operational breach between the two groups. Ansaru acknowledged that while they have different leadership, they share Boko Haram's long-term objective of creating a government of Sharia law. Yet Ansaru has not been hesitant to call Shekau's actions against Muslims "inexcusable."[63]

Until recently, Ansaru's tactics and operations remained distinct from Boko Haram's, with Ansaru engaging primarily in kidnapping and attacks against French interests, which they said would continue "until France ended its ban on the Islamic veil for women and abandoned its plans to intervene militarily in northern Mali." [64] Ansaru also seems to have closer ties to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), probably through Khalid al-Barnawi, a native of Borno state and one of the extremists the United States labeled a "global terrorist" in 2012 after he masterminded several high-profile kidnappings in northern Nigeria. [65] He is known to have trained in Algeria with AQIM and to have set up kidnapping training camps there.[66] Kidnappings have continued against Western interests, demonstrating a style some say was learned from AQIM's Mokhtar Belmokhtar.[67] Belmokhtar and al-Barnawi have been affiliated since at least 2005, when both were members of Salafist group *Groupe salafiste pour le predication et le combat*, so it is not surprising that the tactics being used are employed by AQIM and are those that al-Barnawi trained others to use.[68]

There are indications that the breach between Boko Haram and Ansaru may be narrowing. Boko Haram has diversified from its pattern of suicide bombings and criminal attacks against Nigerian government targets. In February 2013, it kidnapped a French family in Cameroon, indicating that it is adopting Ansaru's kidnapping for ransom tactic. Boko Haram has also expanded its reach into neighboring countries. Nigerian Boko Haram members have received training from AQIM in the Sahel.[69] Boko Haram has long used staging areas across the border in Cameroon, Nigerian security forces have seized weapons smuggled in from Cameroon, and a number of Boko Haram foot soldiers are known to be from Cameroon.[70] When gunmen raided a French Catholic priest's compound in northern Cameroon in early November 2013 and kidnapped him, a nun from the

community said she heard the kidnappers speaking English rather than the predominant French language. Anonymous sources have said the kidnapping was a joint effort between Boko Haram and Ansaru.[71]

All this may indicate that Ansaru members are returning to the Boko Haram fold. At the very least, they seem to be resolving some of their differences or are cooperating with one another when it suits their purposes. Perhaps the recent surge of security operations initiated by the Nigerian government to bring terrorism under control—including the state of emergency in three northern states and the severing of cell phone and satellite communication—has brought the factions together. If the two groups retreat from their former stronghold in the North and join with other Islamic factions with whom they fought and trained, a united front could give them an advantage they do not enjoy as individual entities.

CONCLUSION

So far, AFRICOM has treated Boko Haram, which has devastated northeastern and central Nigeria since 2009, as an internal Nigerian issue. The emergence of the Boko Haram splinter group Ansaru is changing the security landscape of Nigeria. Ansaru's guiding objective is "protecting lives and properties of Muslims, retaliation on any unjust or terrorist act against Muslims, and reestablishing the dignity and sanity of Muslims." Ansaru compares its relationship to Boko Haram with that between al-Qaeda and the Taliban—similar objectives, but different leaders and scope.[72] AQIM, al Qaeda's North African wing, has long sought an alliance with Boko Haram, but the latter, with its narrow domestic focus, has held the international jihadists at arm's length. A closer alliance between Ansaru and AQIM is, however, much more likely. Whereas Boko Haram's focus has always been on Nigerian targets—bombings and assassinations in north and central Nigeria[73]—Ansaru is looking beyond Nigeria's borders for both allies and targets. Its attacks are more sophisticated and less blunt—armed raids on government and international assets rather than suicide bombings— and as a result may be less likely to trigger local resentments that the Nigerian government has in the past tried to exploit (albeit to mixed effect) to isolate Boko Haram from local sources of support.[74] If AQIM succeeds in gaining influence within Ansaru, the nature of the group—and Nigeria and the region's security challenge—may change dramatically.

Nigeria's ongoing security crisis and its woeful military capacity have significant regional security implications. For example, Nigeria has traditionally been one of the largest troop contributors in African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions on the African continent. But in July 2013, Nigeria withdrew its troops from UN Peacekeeping missions in Mali and Darfur, ostensibly in protest over the appointment of Rwandan Major General Bosco Kazura as the commander of the Mali mission. At the time of the withdrawal, a Nigerian military source told Agence France Press that "Nigeria feels shabbily treated…we think we can make better use of those people at home than to keep them where they are not appreciated."[75] That all the returning troops were immediately redeployed to Northern Nigeria, however, means it is likely that the peacekeeping mission had overstretched Nigeria's capacity to address its internal security threat.[76] As one observer put it, "Abuja is torn between international glory and domestic security, and it appears that, this time, preference has been given to domestic security."[77]

As its regional connections expand, an already violent movement that has destabilized most of northeastern Nigeria has the potential to reach into neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Apart from the security threat, the State of Emergency in northeastern Nigeria and resulting border closures are having severe economic impact on border communities in these neighboring countries.

Often remote from centers of trade in their own countries, these communities have deep economic and social ties with Nigeria. The presence of large numbers of refugees from the violence in the North places further economic strain in border communities.[78] Preventing the spread of instability from northern Nigeria into the broader region will require cooperation among regional governments and thoughtful military and security strategies on the part of the Nigerian government. There is not much cause for optimism on that count.

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14. ABSTRACT

The United States Africa Command is poised to expand its partnerships with states in West Africa in an effort to build regional counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capacity. Resolving or containing the ongoing security crisis in Nigeria, triggered by the emergence of the violent extremist group Boko Haram, will be key to safeguarding regional stability in West Africa and the Sahel. While the crisis in Nigeria's north has the potential to destabilize the region, resolving the crisis will require strategies that address the complex set of factors that have given rise to the violence and limit the ability of the Nigerian government to respond effectively. This paper addresses five of the most important of these factors: the nature of the Nigerian political system, the severe and ongoing governance deficit, the ethnic and sectarian tensions created by Nigeria's system of internal citizenship, the securitization of identity in Nigeria's numerous ethnic and religious communities, and deep divisions within the Nigerian Muslim communities.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
AFRICOM, Boko Haram, Nigeria, MEND, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, SNC, Sovereign National Conference, New PDP, People's Democratic Party, AQIM, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

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