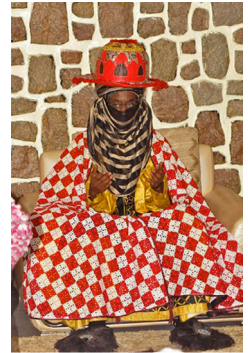


THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS MY FRIEND: THE NEW EMIR OF KANO AND THE 2015 NIGERIAN ELECTIONS

By Dr. Stephanie M. Burchard

On June 8, 2014, Kano State Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso announced the appointment of Sanusi Lamido Sanusi as emir of Kano. Sanusi succeeded his great-uncle Ado Bayero, who had held the position since 1963. Although largely ceremonial in function, the emir of Kano holds significant influence as the position is second only to the sultan of Sokoto in terms of spiritual leadership of Muslims in Nigeria. Governor Kwankwaso's decision to select Sanusi over others, including Bayero's son, [on the short list](#) of candidates given to him by other traditional Muslim leaders elicited immediate criticism, culminating in riots and the brief occupation of the emir's palace by police forces. Why was Emir Sanusi such a controversial selection, and what does Kwankwaso have to gain through the appointment of a man who once referred to him in print as a "[rural aristocrat](#)"? A look to the 2015 elections may provide some insight. [more...](#)



New Emir of Kano Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. (Source: AP.)

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After two years of transitional rule following a military coup in April 2012, voters in Guinea-Bissau recently chose Jose Mario Vaz, a former finance minister, to be the country's president. Despite initially rejecting the results, Nuno Gomes Nabiam, the primary opposition candidate, ultimately conceded the race to Vaz and vowed to respect the legitimacy of the new government. The elections were broadly considered to be [free, fair](#), and an encouraging sign for Guinea-Bissau's democratic development, but history shows that political instability in Guinea-Bissau often follows major shifts in political power. The post-election period is typically when elite-level power struggles play out between newly elected government officials and senior members of the country's most powerful institution—the military. Although there has been no obvious indication yet that this contest is occurring, it likely will. [more...](#)



A Guinea-Bissau soldier casts his ballot in the presidential runoff election at a polling station in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau, Sunday, May 18, 2014. (Source: AP Photo/Youssef Bah)

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About IDA

The Institute for Defense Analyses is a non-profit corporation operating in the public interest.

IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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New Emir of Kano Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. (Source: AP.)

On Friday, June 6, 2014, [Ado Bayero](#), emir of Kano for more than 50 years, died in his palace at the age of 83. Bayero was a well-respected figure who embraced Western education and modernity for Muslims in the North. A vocal critic of Boko Haram, he had survived an [assassination attempt](#) by the group in January 2013. Many speculated that his son or another member of his immediate family would be next in line, so some were surprised when his brother's grandson, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, was announced as successor.

[Riots](#) broke out almost immediately, and there are reports of several fatalities as protesters met with police forces outside the palace. There are [conflicting reports](#) as to who exactly was behind the protests, with some claiming the ruling party was responsible and others maintaining that supporters of the former emir's son were responsible. Further complicating the situation, it was [alleged](#) that the police, upon orders from the presidency, had descended on the emir's palace and refused to leave. Some believed that they had orders to [arrest](#) Sanusi.

Sanusi is a [well-respected](#) yet polarizing figure who has proven himself a thorn in the side of government for years. A banker by trade, the bespectacled and often bow-tied Sanusi served as the central bank governor from 2009 until February 2014. Appointed by former President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2009 to a 5-year term, Sanusi was suspended by President Goodluck Jonathan in February 2014—a few months shy of completing his tenure set to expire in June—for "[recklessness](#)." His suspension came shortly after he alleged that more than [\\$20 billion was missing](#) from state coffers and suggested that some of the money may have been [siphoned off](#) into private accounts. (The government is still investigating the missing funds.) Following Sanusi's suspension, the federal government then attempted to discredit him. He was accused of [financing Boko Haram](#) and had his passport seized. Sanusi in turn sued the federal government for wrongful termination. The case is still pending, and there are signs that he may be rethinking [his lawsuit](#), perhaps in a move to ease tensions with the government.

Sanusi has long been an outspoken critic of the Nigerian government. At a university [convocation](#) in 2010 he stated that lawmaker salaries were consuming too much (25 percent) of the federal budget. He was summoned to the Senate where he defended his remarks and refused to apologize. He has also been critical of the state government. In 2001, he wrote a scathing paper on then-governor of Kano Rabiu Kwankwaso, accusing him of relying on the rural elite and ignoring the needs of the people of Kano.

Why Kano?

Kano, the largest state in Nigeria, has an estimated 5.1 million registered voters, giving it the largest voter population in Northern Nigeria and the second largest in the nation after Lagos State. It also has a history of close and contentious elections between various elite factions. Kwankwaso previously served as governor from 1999 until 2003, when he was defeated by challenger Ibrahim Shekarau. At the time, Kwankwaso was a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), and Shekarau was a member of the opposition All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP). Shekarau was re-elected in 2007. In the 2011 election, Kwankwaso narrowly defeated Shekarau's candidate by a margin of less than 3 percent.

In 2013, Kwankwaso defected from the PDP to the All Progressive's Congress (APC), the new opposition party formed from the remnants of several other parties, including the ANPP. In response, Shekarau defected from the APC to join the PDP. There is no love lost between the parties and candidates—Governor Kwankwaso has gone so far as to [accuse President Jonathan](#) of wanting to kill him. It appears that Kwankwaso's selection of Sanusi may have been influenced by the mutual enmity the two share for the ruling PDP. It also seems that Kwankwaso's decision was in direct opposition to the candidate preferred by the PDP, which allegedly sent [premature congratulations](#) to former Emir Bayero's son.

Due to Kano State's sheer size and number of voters, events there will have an impact on the 2015 elections. It is believed that Kwankwaso is one of the front-runners to represent the APC as its presidential candidate in the 2015 election. Given the state's history of voting against the PDP candidate for president, it is unlikely that the majority of voters would vote for President Jonathan or whomever the PDP ultimately decides to nominate, but the magnitude of the vote available (more than 5 million registered voters and a history of high turnout) means the PDP cannot afford to ignore the state. It is true that the PDP may not need to win a plurality in Kano, but [every vote there helps the PDP's national cause](#) in terms of the aggregate vote. This also may explain why [Ibrahim Shekarau's](#) name was submitted to the Senate on June 4 in consideration of a ministerial position in Jonathan's cabinet. It is believed that Shekarau still holds sway among some voters in Kano.

Moving beyond electoral concerns, if Sanusi can rise above the politics surrounding his appointment, there is much good that he can do to assist the people of Kano in his position as emir. Sanusi is viewed as a progressive reformer not afraid to speak his mind. Many hope that as emir, Sanusi will [support Islamic education reform and promote development](#) in the region. And much like his predecessor, Sanusi has come out strongly against extremism. In 2012, he donated [100 million naira](#) (approximately \$600,000) to victims of Boko Haram. He is well positioned to provide spiritual guidance and direction to the country's estimated 70 to 80 million Muslims and act as a bulwark against the increasing [activity of extremists](#) in the Northeast of the country.

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A Guinea-Bissau soldier casts his ballot in the presidential runoff election at a polling station in Bissau, Guinea-Bissau, Sunday, May 18, 2014. (Source: AP Photo/Youssouf Bah)

Background

The country's last attempt at national elections in April 2012 ended when the military seized power following the first round of voting in which Carlos Gomes Junior appeared poised to win the runoff. The ensuing two-year transitional period has been characterized by major [international isolation](#) and the withdrawal of much financial and technical support to Guinea-Bissau. Thus, this vote was widely anticipated by international partners and citizens alike as an end to the damaging international isolation that has affected the country for two years.

The Election and the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

Jose Mario Vaz represents the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, or PAIGC, which has historically been the largest political party in the National People's Assembly. He is [57 years old](#), married with three children, a graduate of Portugal's Higher Institute in Economics, former mayor of Bissau, and former finance minister in the previous (overthrown) government. Nuno Gomes Nabiam ran as an [independent candidate](#) but enjoys the support of the [military](#), which is composed predominantly of Balanta—Nabiam's ethnic group. Nabiam is the former [chair of the civil aviation agency](#). With voter turnout at nearly [90 percent](#), Vaz won [41 percent](#) of the vote in the first round, and Nabiam received [25 percent](#). In the runoff, with voter turnout at [78 percent](#), Vaz won the election with 61.9 percent of the vote to Nabiam's 38.1 percent. International observers confirmed the electoral process was free, fair, and the results [legitimate](#). Citing fraud, Nabiam initially [rejected](#) the results, but in the spirit of peace and stability, he quickly conceded to Vaz.

Following the successful election, the United Nations Security Council voted to extend the mandate of the [UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau](#) (UNIOGBIS) for six months, or until November 30, 2014. Its initial mandate was to provide security during the transition period, but the [Security Council](#) determined that its continued support to Guinea-Bissau would be necessary to coordinate the work of UN agencies, funds, and programs that will facilitate the return of constitutional order in Bissau. In another show of international support to the new government, on June 2 the Secretary-General of Interpol made an [unprecedented visit](#) to Bissau.

Commitment to Reconciliation

In a [previous issue](#) of *Africa Watch*, IDA forewarned readers that political instability in Guinea-Bissau would likely occur if the military's preferred candidate, Nabiam, lost the presidential race. The military is an inordinately powerful institution in Guinea-Bissau, dating back to its role in achieving independence from Portugal in 1973. Since then, the military has become infamous for its meddling in national politics, effectively ruling the country through its surrogates. If a non-Balanta president fails to protect the interests of the generals—such as in safeguarding their role in facilitating [cocaine trafficking](#) or reducing the military's influence through security sector reforms—he or she runs the risk of being ousted and replaced by someone who will.

It was therefore an [encouraging sign](#) when Army Chief António Indjai publicly saluted president-elect Vaz. Likewise, it bodes well that Vaz [claims](#) he is committed to an “ongoing dialogue” with the army. It is also noteworthy that the incoming Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira and Alberto Nambeia, the leader of the Party for Social Renewal (PRS), the main opposition party, have agreed to work together for reconciliation. The two leaders are even reviving a bill to [accord amnesty](#) to the 2012 coup leaders. This idea was previously broached by the transitional government but ultimately rejected in the National Assembly as [detractors believed](#) it would perpetuate widespread impunity. If they ultimately succeed in passing the bill, it will either be a reflection of the price lawmakers are willing to pay for political stability or the result of the coercion by the coup leaders.

Looking Ahead

We will soon see if these modestly encouraging signs reflect genuine political will by civilian leadership to stop the pattern of instability that has characterized Guinea-Bissau for years or if structural challenges, namely the imbalance of power between the military and civilian leaders, will continue to impede democratic progress. The latest election was free and fair by all accounts, as most elections in Guinea-Bissau have been, producing a president who is broadly accepted to be legitimate. But when changes in political power shake out and settle down, will Vaz honor his duty to serve his country or will he succumb to the demands of the military brass?

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