

Nigeria's Governance and Security Deficit



The mass kidnapping of schoolgirls by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram put an unwelcome spotlight on Nigeria. Though the attention is new, Nigeria's security and governance deficits are not, with implications for the country's domestic politics and regional influence. The United States and international partners have a role to play in assisting Nigeria, particularly in terms of improving security, but ultimately it is how Nigeria rises to the challenges it faces that will determine the course of its future. This special report reviews those challenges, and the responses to them, through recently published articles.

Compilation © 2014 World Politics Review LLC.

First published in 2014 by World Politics Review

World Politics Review
231 Front St, Suite 204
Brooklyn, NY 11201
www.worldpoliticsreview.com
(202) 596-9771

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Published in the United States of America

Cover image: Civilain militia member patrolling Maiduguri, Nigeria, May 11, 2014 (photo by Flickr user Jordi Bernabeu Farrús licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license).

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Domestic Politics

NIGERIA'S FAULT LINES THREATEN JONATHAN'S PRESIDENCY

BY ALEX THURSTON
APRIL 2, 2013

Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan became acting president in February 2010 following the incapacitation of his predecessor Umaru Yar'Adua. Elected in his own right in April 2011, Jonathan now stands near the midpoint of his first full term in office. His People's Democratic Party (PDP), which has won every election since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, dominates the executive and legislative branches of the federal government and governs 23 of Nigeria's 36 states. The advantages of incumbency and party dominance will likely assure Jonathan another term when Nigeria votes again in 2015. Yet insecurity, corruption and stalled policy implementation have provoked broad criticism of his performance, and the remainder of his term is likely to be characterized by high levels of political tension.

Jonathan's difficulty in reducing violence was on display earlier this month in the northeastern city of Maiduguri, Borno state, which Jonathan visited for the first time as president on March 8. Maiduguri is the nerve center of the Muslim militant group Boko Haram, whose name is a Hausa phrase that connotes opposition to Western education and culture. Boko Haram previously launched uprisings in 2003-2004 and 2009, before Jonathan became president. Since September 2010 the group has attacked numerous government, Christian and infrastructural targets and has become a central challenge for Jonathan's administration. Along with its splinter group Ansar al-Muslimin (Arabic for "The Defenders of Muslims"), Boko Haram has kidnapped foreigners, including a French family seized last month in Cameroon. The Nigerian military's Joint Task Force [has occupied Maiduguri](#) since June 2011, and has repeatedly claimed success in the fight against terrorism. But [its repressive tactics](#) themselves have partly fueled Boko Haram's grievances.

Within hours of Jonathan's departure from Maiduguri, [seven bombs exploded](#). Days later, two PDP officials [were killed in Borno](#). As a result, Jonathan's trip, rather than inspiring confidence in his ability to manage the crisis, [drew criticism from local residents](#) and [media commentators](#). Jonathan remains unpopular in the north, where he [received less than 20 percent of the vote](#) in many states, including Borno, in 2011. The trip heightened the contrast between Jonathan and an emerging coalition of opposition politicians, the All Progressive Congress, who [held their own meeting](#) -- without violence -- in Maiduguri on Feb. 28. Boko Haram thus threatens not only Nigeria's security but also the president's political fortunes.

Persistent corruption, both at the highest levels of government and in ordinary people's daily lives, has also sapped confidence in Jonathan, though it is a problem that predates his presidency. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index showed Nigeria [occupying roughly the same rank in 2009](#) -- 130th out of 180 countries -- [as in 2012](#) -- 139th out of 176 countries. Yet many Nigerians and outside observers believe that corruption is the core problem underlying the country's other challenges, from poverty to security, and many have seen Jonathan's failure to reduce corruption as a broader political failure.

Jonathan's recent pardon of Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, a former governor and Jonathan's political mentor who was convicted of corruption charges in 2007, sparked outrage and further undermined his anti-corruption credentials. Alamieyeseigha governed Bayelsa state from 1999 to 2005, with Jonathan as his deputy. In 2005, when Alamieyeseigha was arrested in London on money laundering charges and subsequently impeached, Jonathan became governor -- a turning point in the current president's political ascent. Some observers read in Jonathan's pardon of Alamieyeseigha a willingness to prioritize political relationships over accountability.

Bayelsa's location in the Niger Delta, the heart of Nigeria's oil production, highlights the gap between rich and poor in Nigeria. While politicians like Alamieyeseigha accumulate fortunes, many delta residents confront environmental degradation and grinding poverty. Militants there, demanding a greater share of oil profits for local communities, rebelled against the federal government from 2006 to 2009, when Yar'Adua extended amnesty to the rebels. Jonathan has continued the program, but it is [scheduled to end in 2015](#), and oil theft by disaffected residents and former militants who complain that amnesty has failed to provide jobs is rising.

Meanwhile, despite international praise for his economic team -- especially Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, a former World Bank official -- Jonathan has also struggled, and at times failed, to implement his economic agenda, which has been dogged by controversy. The administration advocates budgetary reform, even if it means economic pain for ordinary Nigerians. Critics charge that privatization initiatives and austerity measures will shrink the meager benefits citizens receive from the state while expanding opportunities for politicians to steal public money. In January 2012, Jonathan abolished subsidies on fuel, leading Lagos, Kano and other cities to erupt in protest. The administration [partly reinstated the subsidies](#), but the debate remains unsettled. Similarly, a bill meant to reform the oil industry has met countless delays. Many observers still expect it to pass. But [as one Nigerian journalist wrote](#), recent debate in the Senate over the bill "further exposed our delicate [regional] fault lines" -- the same fault lines that Jonathan has encountered in other domains, from his own election to the security crisis in the north.

The more Jonathan flounders, the more opposition he will face from within his party. Some northern PDP members resent him for disrupting an internal party agreement to rotate the presidency between the north and the south. Some southwestern members feel that Jonathan has excluded them as well, and that he favors members of his ethnic Ijaw group. The opposition's attempts at coalition-building give the PDP an incentive to preserve party unity, but regional rivalries and a multiplicity of big personalities within the PDP may produce a bruising nomination fight in 2015.

With two years left before Nigerians return to the polls, Jonathan faces an array of challenges, a host of critics and a list of unkept promises. In 2010 and 2011, Jonathan defied predictions of his political demise during his tumultuous journey from vice president to acting president to president. The PDP's structural dominance may ensure his victory in 2015. Yet security threats, corruption issues and a stalled legislative agenda will continue to consume much of his energy and limit his effectiveness. □

NIGERIA'S JONATHAN COULD PAY POLITICAL COST FOR RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

BY ALEX THURSTON
JULY 23, 2012

On July 7-8, Muslim Fulani herdsmen reportedly attacked Christian Berom farmers in Plateau state in Nigeria's ethnically and religiously diverse Middle Belt. The violence claimed more than 100 lives, including those of two elected officials, and [displaced an estimated 5,500 persons](#). On July 17, an apparent reprisal [targeted a Muslim school](#) in the state capital, Jos.

The [cycle of Muslim-Christian violence](#) (.pdf) in Plateau dates back to 1994. And though Nigerian authorities have depicted the conflict as primarily local, it aggravates the tone of Muslim-Christian relations across the country and embarrasses the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, which is attempting to restore security in Nigeria's majority-Muslim north. The fact that northern Muslim rebel sect Boko Haram claimed involvement in the latest round of violence in Plateau served to further nationalize the conflict.

A combination of factors drives the violence in Plateau. First is tension over livelihoods and land: Fulani pastoralists, driven south by desertification, want to use land that Berom farmers regard as their exclusive property. Meanwhile, in Jos, Hausa Muslim traders and other immigrants operate many of the city's shops, causing resentment among local groups that accuse the Hausa in particular of [refusing to integrate into the local culture](#) (.pdf).

Second, Nigerian government policies create intercommunal tensions by dividing residents of each state into "indigenes" or "settlers," affecting access to political power and economic advancement. [According to Human Rights Watch](#), however, ethnic and cultural discrimination can block settlers from gaining recognition as indigenes, even if the "settlers" have lived in a locality for generations.

Third is the politicization of religious and ethnic identities. Unscrupulous politicians and religious leaders use heated rhetoric to mobilize violence against other communities. The activation of these identities awakens a fourth factor: bitter memories of both recent and distant history. As recently as the 1980s, Hausa Muslims enjoyed greater political power in Plateau under Muslim military rulers. In the early 19th century, meanwhile, non-Muslims in what is now Plateau state resisted a jihad led by Fulani Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio. Finally, the violence is self-propagating. Attacks by one side give way to reprisals by the other, while the security forces' responses fail both to prevent new violence and contain its aftermath.

Most of the individual factors at work in Plateau are found elsewhere in Nigeria, and intercommunal violence occurs in other areas as well. But Plateau, due to its particular mix of politics, history, religion and economic grievances, is home to one of the worst ongoing conflicts in present-day Nigeria.

The conflict's severity and intractability contribute to national Muslim-Christian tensions, espe-

cially as some actors have an interest in amplifying and nationalizing the issue. For instance, Boko Haram has claimed responsibility for some of the recent violence. Such claims are not new: Boko Haram stated that it was behind church bombings on Christmas Day in Jos in 2010 and 2011. Given that the violence in Plateau began well before Boko Haram appeared, Nigerian officials [have cast doubt on these claims](#), smelling opportunism in the group's rush to take credit for incidents that could further its goal of exacerbating interreligious tensions in Nigeria.

Even if Boko Haram's claim is false, however, its rhetoric matters. [As former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell writes](#), the movement hopes to "incite all-out religious war." Boko Haram has exacerbated Christian-Muslim tensions in a number of localities already. In June, a Boko Haram church bombing in Kaduna State was followed by days of intercommunal riots.

For many Nigerians, the crisis in Plateau reflects negatively on the federal government. After the violence of July 7, the Northern Chapter of the powerful Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) [charged that federal condemnations of violence](#) in Plateau state had "become a mere slogan."

"We have lost confidence in the ability of the Special Task Force in Plateau to protect the lives and property of Christians in the state," CAN stated, referring to the military units that have been deployed in the state, but which have not succeeded in restoring order. Popular anger has also targeted the state's Christian governor, Jonah Jang. Indeed, some Nigerian elites charge that Jang has not only failed to stop the violence, [but actively perpetuates it](#).

But much criticism falls on the Jonathan administration. Jang himself, in September 2011, [pinned primary responsibility for the crisis on the federal government](#).

The killings in Plateau come at a bad time for Jonathan, who is keen to restore his reputation on security issues. In June, amid continued violence by Boko Haram and mounting criticism over his inability to crush the sect, the president fired his national security adviser (NSA) and defense minister. The new NSA, Col. Sambo Dasuki, conducted a tour of states affected by Boko Haram, including Plateau, just days before the attacks of July 7. One of the main purposes of Dasuki's tour was to reassure governors and residents of the federal government's renewed seriousness on security issues. But the recent violence undermines whatever goodwill toward the federal government that Dasuki had begun to rebuild in the north.

Jonathan has been in a similar political position before: He [sacked his NSA during a major flare-up of violence](#) in Plateau state in 2010. On July 18, the government [lifted a state of emergency](#) in Plateau and nearby states, promising to "put in place appropriate confidence-building measures to improve security in the affected areas." But changes in personnel and promises of new security strategies may no longer be enough to shield Jonathan from damaging criticism on security issues.

Despite the lifting of the state of emergency, the crisis in Plateau is not over. And amid increasing alarm about security in northern Nigeria and widespread dissatisfaction with the administration's decisions on economic issues such as the country's fuel subsidy, it may further weaken Jonathan's political position moving forward. □

NIGERIA'S FAULT LINES INHIBIT ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

An interview with Wale Adebaniwi

BY THE EDITORS

MARCH 12, 2014

Late last month, Nigerian central bank governor Lamido Sanusi [was suspended from office](#) after alleging that \$20 billion had disappeared from the state oil company. In an email interview, [Wale Adebaniwi](#), associate professor of African American and African studies at University of California, Davis and author of the 2012 book "[Authority Stealing: Anti-Corruption War and Democratic Politics in Post-Military Nigeria](#)," explained the state of anti-corruption efforts in Nigeria.

WPR: *What is the state of Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts under President Goodluck Jonathan?*

Wale Adebaniwi: It is appalling. And this is not surprising because, even before Jonathan became president, he served as a compliant deputy to one of the most corrupt governors in country, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, who jumped bail in the U.K. and was later found guilty and jailed in Nigeria. When he succeeded Alamieyeseigha as governor of the oil-rich Bayelsa state, Jonathan himself was the subject of allegations of rank corruption.

Since becoming president, Jonathan has taken specific steps to deepen the decadent paralysis that corruption has imposed on Nigeria. These include extending a state pardon to his former boss Alamieyeseigha, shielding his oil minister from several allegations of blatant corruption and, allegedly, running the national oil company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corp. (NNPC), as a money box for personal and political goals. This was the point that the governor of Nigeria's central bank, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, brought to his attention.

WPR: *What role has the Central Bank of Nigeria played in those efforts, both statutorily and under the personal direction of the recently suspended governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi?*

Adebaniwi: In a sense, you could say Sanusi was being mischievous in his letter to the president pointing out a "missing" \$20 billion the NNPC had failed to account for. Sanusi must know that given the way Jonathan has been running the oil industry, such a staggering amount of money could not have gone "missing" without some knowledge in the highest levels of the government.

Under Sanusi, the central bank has tried to reclaim its statutory role in the oversight of the economy. As a private banker for many years, Sanusi had watched the unconscionable conduct of some bank directors, as well as the bleeding of the country, and the betrayal of the trust of depositors and Nigerians in general, without the necessary intervention from the central bank. Sanusi came to office as governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria with a mission to reverse this trend. The apex bank, under his leadership, removed some of the bank directors engaging in unscrupulous practices, thus providing the impetus for relevant agencies to prosecute them. A conviction was secured in one high-profile case, while other bank directors have been using legal tricks to delay their trials. Meanwhile, these bank directors are connected to the arteries of political, economic, social

and religious power in Nigeria. It is therefore surprising that Sanusi lasted for so long in office. Sanusi's anti-corruption efforts at the apex bank made him more vulnerable because he was quite vocal, if not voluble. He was removed basically because he was threatening the ultimate source of graft and corruption for those in power—the NNPC.

WPR: What will Sanusi's ouster mean for anti-corruption efforts going forward?

Adebanwi: It is significant to the extent that it again confirms that Jonathan's is a very corrupt and unashamed government. Beyond that, it is "business as usual" in Nigeria. The country's ethno-regional, ideological and religious fault lines, among other factors, have made it impossible for a successful anti-corruption campaign to last. This is what happened to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) under Nuhu Ribadu, who was removed from the post in 2007. The late Afro-beat musician Fela Kuti called theft from the public by people in power "authority stealing," and it is more or less a part of what drives state policy in Nigeria. □

STRATEGIC POSTURE REVIEW: NIGERIA

ALEX THURSTON

NOV. 13, 2012

Nigeria is a diplomatic force within West Africa, a major participant in continental African politics and an important international actor. As the world's seventh-most-populous country, its 14th-largest oil producer and home to Africa's fifth-largest military, Nigeria possesses tremendous resources. Yet Nigeria's internal security challenges and political dysfunction constrain its role on the regional, continental and world stages.

Cyclical violence undermines the rule of law and entrenches intercommunal enmities. Pervasive corruption drains funding from services and infrastructure and saps public confidence in government. Policy implementation often proceeds haphazardly and generates backlash. Finally, "do-or-die" electoral politics, as former President Olusegun Obasanjo characterized the country's voting culture, heightens political violence and elevates political tensions.

Though predictions of the Nigerian state's impending collapse are exaggerated, Nigeria's foreign policy is often hampered by these and other domestic challenges. After being heavily engaged in regional affairs during Obasanjo's tenure from 1999 to 2007, Nigeria's regional role receded under his successor, President Umaru Yar'Adua, especially during Yar'Adua's severe illness in 2009-2010. President Goodluck Jonathan -- who took over during Yar'Adua's incapacitation, became president on the latter's death in May 2010 and won a full term in the April 2011 elections -- has begun to reassert Nigeria's role in regional efforts. However, Nigeria's internal ethnic, religious, regional and political divisions will pose obstacles to this renewed effort at leadership.

NATIONAL SECURITY ISSUES AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Nigeria faces five major national security threats. First, the Boko Haram uprising in northern Nigeria, which has undermined the rule of law, particularly in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Bauchi, [and has exacerbated Muslim-Christian tensions](#) at the national level. Second, localized cycles of Muslim-Christian violence in the Middle Belt, especially in Kaduna and Plateau states, which periodically overwhelm the capacities of local authorities to restore order. Third, electoral violence at the local, state and national levels, which subverts the integrity of electoral processes and claims hundreds of lives, [as was seen in the post-election rioting](#) that swept northern Nigeria in April 2011. Fourth, militant groups, criminals and pirates in the oil-rich states of the Niger Delta and offshore zones, which target the government, private companies and ordinary citizens, in addition to stealing oil and destroying infrastructure. Finally, strains on resources and environmental devastation, which sap Nigeria's capacity to feed and care for its citizens. Several of these threats have transnational dimensions.

Boko Haram emerged around 2002 in northeastern Nigeria as a Muslim sectarian community headed by Muhammad Yusuf, a former civil servant turned preacher who advocated against Western education and science and forbade his followers from working in secular government. In

2003-2004, Boko Haram members clashed first with local residents and subsequently with security forces in Yobe state. In July 2009, following tensions with local authorities and the arrest of sect members, the group launched an uprising that extended to Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Katsina and Kano states. A crackdown by security forces left more than 800 people dead, some due to brutality by police and soldiers against civilians. Yusuf died in police custody.

In 2010, Boko Haram re-emerged, staging a series of prison breaks and assassinating security personnel and local politicians in northeastern Nigeria. In June 2011, Boko Haram perpetrated a suicide bombing at the National Police headquarters in Abuja, followed by another suicide bombing at the United Nations headquarters in the capital in August 2011. Throughout 2011-2012, as the Nigerian military's Joint Task Force hunted the group's members and attempted to restore order in the northeast, Boko Haram expanded the geographical range and tactical diversity of its attacks, conducting bombings in Kano and Kaduna and attacking Christian churches, Islamic schools, cell phone towers and other targets. The sect's leaders now demand the implementation of Shariah across all of Nigeria, the release of imprisoned sect members and the departure of Christians from northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram poses both military and political challenges to the Nigerian state. Yet in dealing with the movement, the Nigerian government continues to rely on harsh crackdowns. These have failed to suppress the group, and abuses committed by security forces have fueled civilians' mistrust of authorities. Meanwhile, efforts at dialogue have failed, with potential mediators withdrawing and Boko Haram refusing to talk. Some observers fear that Boko Haram, if unchecked, [could spill into neighboring Niger](#), Cameroon and Chad. Others argue that the group has already established operational ties with al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Suspected members of the sect were arrested in Diffa, Niger, in early 2012. In October 2012, Niger and Nigeria announced plans to launch a joint border patrol force meant to prevent Boko Haram and AQIM from crossing the two countries' shared border.

Boko Haram has begun to increasingly target Christians, exacerbating historical Muslim-Christian tensions that remain high in Nigeria. Since the launch of the Fourth Republic in 1999, cycles of violence have taken hold in the religiously mixed Middle Belt region. Though often reductively characterized as interreligious in nature, these conflicts are compounded by a complex array of factors. The violence in Plateau state, for instance, involves struggles over land between pastoralists and farmers; contests over citizenship rights between "settlers" and "indigenes"; ethnic hatred between Fulani, Berom and other ethnicities; and the exploitation of religious rivalry by unscrupulous politicians. The federal government has repeatedly deployed the Joint Task Force to restore order in the state capital of Jos, and violence in Plateau and Kaduna states is a frequent source of heated national debate.

Religious and ethnic tensions in turn contribute to the problem of electoral violence. Throughout the Fourth Republic, national, state and local elections have often been accompanied by violence, whether during the campaigns, at polling stations, after the results are announced or during "re-run" elections ordered by the courts. At the state level, politicians often mobilize youth gangs to intimidate voters and opponents, a problem that has fueled criminal activity, especially in the Niger Delta. Meanwhile, violence, tampering and intimidation have undermined the integrity of elections, with the 2007 polls marking a low point: Observers from the European Union concluded that the contest was neither free nor fair. The 2011 elections received better ratings from outside observers, but in April 2011, following the re-election of Jonathan, himself a Christian from Bayelsa state in the Niger Delta, youth in 12 northern states rioted for three days, resulting in an estimated 800 deaths.

The pronounced dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which has held the presidency, a legislative majority and a majority of the country's governorships since 1999, contributes to perceptions that the political playing field is uneven. Jonathan's presidency, moreover, has disrupted "zoning" agreements within the PDP under which a northerner was expected to hold the

presidency for eight years after Obasanjo, a southerner, left office in 2007. (Yar'Adua was from the north.) If Jonathan stands for re-election in 2015, it could provoke bitter struggles during both the PDP primary and the general election.

The inadequacies of democratic processes are one factor in the emergence of militancy in the oil-producing Niger Delta region. Objecting to environmental devastation and the small share of oil profits that return to local communities, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) launched an insurrection against the Nigerian state from 2006 to 2009, kidnapping and killing oil workers while attacking military units and oil pipelines. After initially responding to the insurrection with military force, the Nigerian government initiated an amnesty program for militants in 2009. This program is meant to facilitate development and job training in the Delta, but critics have alleged that the program merely pays off selected commanders while ignoring the concerns of rank-and-file fighters. Some observers also fear that the amnesty program could prove unsustainable due to its expense, calculated at \$400 million for 2012, and that lingering grievances in the Delta could lead to renewed violence on a large scale.

While the amnesty program has reduced violence in the region, sporadic attacks have continued in MEND's name, including a bombing in Abuja during independence celebrations on Oct. 1, 2010. Militants as well as ordinary people also continue to steal oil, resulting in annual losses estimated at \$5 billion. Finally, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is rising, with 34 incidents -- including hijacked oil tankers and attacks on offshore oil installations -- reported for the first nine months of 2012, up from 25 in 2011. As a result, piracy has become an increasingly important concern, driving governments in the region to coordinate their responses. Nigeria began conducting joint naval patrols with Benin in September 2011, leading to a decrease of piracy in Beninese waters. But attacks off the coasts of Togo and Nigeria have increased.

The final threat to Nigeria's national security comes from climate change and environmental devastation, both of which help drive the country's internal conflicts. For example, desertification in northern Nigeria pushes pastoralists south into areas like Plateau state, contributing to the violence around Jos. And environmental damage from the oil industry is a core grievance among militants in the Niger Delta. Climate change and environmental devastation also threaten national security by reducing arable land, exacerbating hunger and helping to generate extreme weather events, such as the massive flooding that swept through much of Nigeria from July to October 2012. Climate change is also a transnational issue for Nigeria, in that desertification and drought in Niger and elsewhere in the region can bring economic and humanitarian refugees seeking relief and work inside Nigeria.

Nigeria's national security challenges impose tremendous burdens on the state in terms of lives lost, costs incurred and time spent containing violence and attempting to maintain order and legitimacy. The country's conflicts also intersect in dangerous ways. For example, Boko Haram's violence elevates Muslim-Christian tensions at the national level, feeds into local cycles of violence and draws threats of reprisal violence from militant Christians in southern zones. Furthermore, these interlocking crises damage Nigeria's three greatest assets: its economic potential (with billions of dollars lost each year, for example, in stolen oil and below-capacity production), its military might and its human resources. With much of its attention turned inward, Nigeria can only be a partial presence on the regional and continental stage.

FOREIGN POLICY

Since Nigeria achieved independence in 1960, a consistent focus of its foreign policy has been promoting peace, stability and unity in Africa. In the 1960s and 1970s, Nigeria took an activist stance in favor of the decolonization of Lusophone territories such as Angola and Mozambique, and was a consistent opponent of apartheid in South Africa. West Africa in particular has been a strategic priority, and Nigeria has been active in resolving crises in the region, including, as discussed below, by deploying peacekeepers.

Nigeria's relations with its immediate neighbors have generally been amicable, with the exceptions of border disputes with Chad and Cameroon. Nigeria does not have major refugee issues, although the close cultural linkages between northern Nigeria and southern Niger mean that many Nigeriens enter Nigeria seeking work and refuge from drought and conflict. The two countries enjoy close ties, however, and have institutionalized their efforts with a Joint Commission for Cooperation.

At times, Nigeria has cultivated strong relations with Arab nations, especially Saudi Arabia. Since the 1970s, when the numbers of Nigerian pilgrims on the hajj began to explode due to Nigeria's oil boom and the expansion of air travel, Nigeria has often sent between 50,000 and 100,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in any given year. Saudi Arabia has invested money into religious and human development projects in Nigeria, such as the construction of mosques and Islamic schools, and Saudi-based nongovernmental organizations, such as the International Islamic Relief Organization, operate in Nigeria.

Despite frequent and massive contacts between the two countries, however, Nigerian-Saudi relations have sometimes been characterized by ambivalence, with Nigeria objecting to the treatment of its citizens on Saudi soil and Saudi Arabia charging Nigerian visitors with impropriety. During the hajj in 2012, for instance, Saudi Arabia deported around 1,000 female Nigerian pilgrims who allegedly lacked appropriate male escorts. Although some of the pilgrims were later readmitted, the incident caused diplomatic tensions between the two countries. In solidarity with Arab countries and like many other African states, Nigeria broke ties with Israel after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, though diplomatic recognition was restored in 1992. Educational exchanges, in particular, have formed a pillar of Nigeria's relations with the Arab and Muslim worlds, with an increasing number of Nigerian students traveling to Egypt, Malaysia and elsewhere for training in technical fields, social sciences, Islamic studies and other disciplines.

Outside of Africa and the Arab world, Nigeria's three closest partners are the United Kingdom, the United States and China. Historical connections, bilateral trade that reached \$8.5 billion in 2011 and the estimated 800,000 members of the Nigerian diaspora who reside in Britain are the foundation of Nigeria's relations with the U.K. The British government is also a major aid donor, providing approximately \$280 million in aid to Nigeria in 2011. The U.K. Department for International Development's operational plan for Nigeria for 2011-2015 emphasizes the goals of improving governance in Nigeria, "unleashing" the country's economic potential, resolving internal conflicts and boosting investors' confidence.

The U.S. is another important partner for Nigeria, with an estimated 1 million members of the Nigerian diaspora living and studying in the U.S. Like Ethiopia and South Africa, Nigeria is viewed by American policymakers as a power in its region, and the Obama administration named Nigeria as one of its 13 "priority countries" in sub-Saharan Africa due to its human and economic resources. Although President Barack Obama has not visited Nigeria during his time in office, Nigeria frequently features as a destination for senior U.S. officials visiting Africa. In 2010, the U.S. and Nigeria created a Binational Commission, elevating relations to the kind of "strategic partnership" that Washington also has with South Africa and Angola. Issues the commission discusses include energy, governance and security. Nigeria is the United States' largest trade partner in Africa, with U.S. imports from Nigeria, primarily oil and natural gas, totaling nearly \$33.9 billion in 2011, and exports to Nigeria totaling \$4.9 billion.

Nigeria is also the second-largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in Africa after Kenya. The U.S. government allotted \$660.5 million for aid to Nigeria in 2012, with priorities including strengthening governance, fighting corruption and improving health services. The U.S. and Nigeria have also cooperated closely on some security issues, although the Nigerian government has objected to some U.S. policies, such as special screening procedures imposed on Nigerian travelers at U.S. airports in the wake of an attempted airplane bombing by Nigerian citizen Umar Abdulmutallab in 2009.

China has become an important trading partner for Nigeria and an important investor in Nigerian

industries and infrastructure. As of 2010, Nigeria was China's fourth-largest trading partner in Africa after Angola, South Africa and Sudan, and bilateral trade reached \$10.7 billion in 2011. Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Nigeria in 2004 and 2006, and senior Nigerian and Chinese officials regularly exchange visits. China has been particularly interested in Nigeria's oil sector: In May 2010, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation and the China State Construction Engineering Corporation signed a \$23 billion agreement to jointly build three oil refineries in Nigeria, though as of October 2012 none of these refineries had come on line. China has also worked to develop Nigerian infrastructure, for example by loaning Nigeria \$1.1 billion in September 2012 to finance airport and rail projects.

Despite deepening economic ties between China and Nigeria, there have been some tensions in the relationship. Nigerian workers have decried conditions at Chinese-owned businesses in the country, while Nigerian businessmen have complained that cheap Chinese imports undercut their ability to sell their goods. In May 2012, Nigerian immigration officials arrested 45 Chinese nationals in Kano on charges of trading illegally in textiles, one of Kano state's major industries.

The focus of Nigeria's foreign policy with regard to bilateral relations has been on attracting foreign direct investment. In particular, Jonathan has stressed the importance of foreign direct investment, estimated at \$9 billion in 2011, for fulfilling his government's 2011-2015 Transformation Agenda, intended to strengthen the economy, improve governance and promote human development, and its Vision 2020, intended to make Nigeria one of the world's top 20 economies by 2020. The Jonathan administration has promoted foreign direct investment through Nigeria's embassies overseas as well as through bodies like the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission, which strives to build public-private partnerships around infrastructure development, and the Bureau of Public Procurement, whose mission is to promote transparency in the public sector. Another critical factor in shaping the investment climate in Nigeria will be the Petroleum Investment Bill, which has been heavily debated at several junctures since it was first introduced in 2008, and which may be passed in 2013. Although Shell, one of the largest multinational oil companies operating in Nigeria, complained in September 2012 that the draft bill was unfair to investors, the bill's architects hope it will reform the oil sector, reduce corruption and boost government revenue.

In addition to its bilateral partnerships, Nigeria belongs to a number of multilateral organizations, including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the World Trade Organization and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which Nigeria joined in 1986. Nigeria joined the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1971. At the continental level, Nigeria was a founding member of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 and is a member in good standing of the OAU's successor organization, the African Union (AU).

Nigeria has often participated vigorously in the diplomatic affairs and crises of West Africa. Nigeria was a founding member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975, and in 1989, Nigeria, along with other West African states, signed the Protocol on Mutual Defense Assistance. In 1990, during the Liberian civil war, Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone established the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). This peacekeeping force was primarily comprised of and commanded by Nigerian forces, as Nigeria not only has the largest military in the region but is also the only country in the region with major sea and airlift capabilities. ECOMOG forces deployed to Liberia from 1990 to 1997, to Sierra Leone from 1998 to 1999, to Guinea-Bissau from 1998 to 1999 and to Cote d'Ivoire from 2002 to 2004. ECOMOG successfully restored peace in these West African countries, but has been criticized for logistical gaps and a lack of close communication with political representatives from ECOWAS.

Outside of the framework of ECOMOG, Nigeria contributed peacekeepers to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone from 1999 to 2005, to the ongoing United Nations Mission in Liberia established in 2003 and the African Mission in Sudan from 2004 to 2007. Nigerian peacekeepers have served outside Africa as well, for example in the former Yugoslavia. According to the U.S. State Department, 6,000 Nigerian peacekeepers were deployed in 12 U.N. missions as of April 2012.

In addition to Nigeria's role in providing peacekeepers, Nigerian leaders have served as mediators during regional political crises. For example, Obasanjo served as ECOWAS' special envoy to Cote d'Ivoire during that country's post-electoral crisis in 2010-2011, and he also led a joint AU-ECOWAS delegation to Senegal to address political tensions on the eve of that country's February 2012 presidential elections.

Given Nigeria's military and diplomatic might in West Africa, regional and international policymakers expect Nigeria to play a major role in the ECOWAS-led military intervention in Mali planned for 2013. The Jonathan administration has supported ECOWAS' parallel efforts to restore civilian rule in Mali and retake the country's Tuareg north from a loose coalition of Tuareg nationalist and Islamist militias. Jonathan visited Mali in October 2012, and in August he expressed both his hope for a negotiated settlement and his willingness to endorse the use of force to resolve the crisis. ECOWAS has proposed to deploy 3,245 soldiers in Mali, of whom nearly 700 would be Nigerians, an involvement that will test the Jonathan administration's effectiveness as a guarantor of stability in West Africa.

Nigeria's regional partners and international powers have greatly valued its leadership in peacekeeping operations. Nigeria's willingness to provide manpower and logistical support for such missions has reduced, though not eliminated, pressure on the United States, France and other external actors to intervene in West African crises. Yet Nigeria has at times over the years approached pariah status due to abuses by different regimes. Military ruler President Ibrahim Babangida's annulment of the 1993 presidential elections caused an international outcry. Under the rule of military dictator Gen. Sani Abacha from 1993 to 1998, Nigeria faced international isolation, with Abacha's imprisonment and execution of dissidents drawing sanctions from the United States and Nigeria's suspension from the Commonwealth from 1995 to 1999. Though the return of civilian democracy in 1999 improved international perceptions of Nigeria, the deeply flawed elections in 2007 reactivated international concern. A sense that Nigeria was flirting with disaster grew during the period of legal limbo surrounding Yar'Adua's incapacitation from late-2009 until May 2010. Despite the violence following the elections of 2011, observers generally rated the contest as credible, which repaired Nigeria's international image to some extent.

A final factor in shaping Nigeria's relations with other countries is Nigeria's complex political and demographic landscape. Divisions among regions, as well as among different religious constituencies inside the country, can affect how different communities react to the Nigerian government's foreign policy choices. For example, Nigeria's entry into the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in 1986 occasioned opposition from some Christians, who denounced the move as a form of top-down Islamization. Furthermore, in the context of growing transnational linkages among global religious communities within both Islam and Christianity, constituencies inside Nigeria increasingly react to events on the global stage. Examples include the global Muslim protests during the Danish cartoon controversy of 2006 and the anti-Islamic video controversy of 2012, both of which extended to parts of northern Nigeria. At the same time, foreign countries' engagement with constituencies inside Nigeria sometimes arouses the government's opposition. The recognition of the short-lived secessionist state of Biafra in southeastern Nigeria from 1967-1970 by the governments of Tanzania, Zambia and elsewhere caused diplomatic tensions between those governments and the government of Nigeria, as did support provided to Biafra by countries like Israel. More generally, the fractured nature of Nigerian society complicates the government's efforts at making foreign policy.

DEFENSE POLICY

Defense is a major priority for Nigeria. The federal government's \$31.3 billion budget for 2013 allocates 7 percent to defense, the second-highest expenditure after education. As of 2010, Nigeria's military expenditures ranked sixth in Africa, following those of Algeria, Egypt, Angola, South Africa and Morocco. According to the World Bank, Nigeria had 162,000 military personnel in 2010, making the Nigerian military the fifth-largest on the continent following Egypt (835,500),

Algeria (317,200), Morocco (245,800) and Eritrea (201,750). The U.S. State Department, in contrast, estimated the number of active-duty military personnel at 76,000, including 60,000 in two mechanized infantry divisions, 9,000 in the air force, 7,000 in the navy and 6,000 peacekeepers deployed overseas, as well as other divisions such as a composite airborne and amphibious unit, the Lagos Garrison Command and the Brigade of Guards, based in Abuja. The navy's assets, according to the State Department, include frigates, patrol boats and fast attack vessels, while the air force possesses helicopters, fighter aircraft, transport planes and training vehicles.

Outsiders have questioned the battle readiness of the Nigerian armed forces, particularly in the context of ECOWAS' planned intervention in Mali. Critics have alleged that Nigerian troops lack discipline and proper equipment. International watchdog groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have also criticized the Nigerian army in the context of its interventions against Boko Haram in the northeast. Soldiers have sometimes reportedly panicked during battles or bombings, opening fire on civilians or breaking ranks. In terms of cohesiveness, many Nigerians formerly perceived the senior officer corps as dominated by northerners -- with the exception of Obasanjo, the other six military heads of state between 1966 and 1999 were all northerners. Since 1999, the senior officer corps appears to have become more balanced in regional terms, though Yar'Adua was accused of promoting more northerners than southerners to the rank of general.

Since 2006, turnover has been rapid among senior defense and national security staff, with ministers of defense often serving less than two years. In June 2012, facing criticism over the government's handling of Boko Haram, Jonathan fired his minister of defense and his national security adviser, naming Col. Sambo Dasuki to fill the latter post and leaving the former post open as of November 2012. Furthermore, between August and October 2012, President Jonathan conducted a shake-up of senior military officers, replacing the chiefs of defense staff, naval staff and air staff, while retaining the chief of army staff. As with other government posts, appointments to national security and military posts strive to maintain regional and demographic balance. Dasuki's appointment in particular seemed intended to bring a member of the northern Muslim aristocracy -- Dasuki is cousin to the sultan of Sokoto, the pre-eminent hereditary Muslim ruler of northern Nigeria -- into a top national security position.

Nigeria has engaged in significant military cooperation with the U.S., in particular as part of the U.S. State Department's Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership, a framework launched in 2005 to provide counterterrorism training and facilitate cooperation among the militaries of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Chad. Yet Nigeria has also evinced skepticism about U.S. military activities in Africa. Yar'Adua opposed efforts to base the U.S. military's Africa Command (Africom) headquarters on the African continent in 2007, for example. As a nonpermanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Nigeria voted to authorize the imposition of a no-fly zone over Libya during that country's civil war in 2011, but although Nigerian authorities consistently defended that decision, they showed ambivalence about the subsequent NATO-led intervention in Libya. In March 2011, then-Foreign Minister Odein Ajumogobia charged that the international community had applied different standards to the conflicts in Libya and Cote d'Ivoire. One explanation for this ambivalence may be an attempt by authorities to take popular sentiment into account: Many Nigerian Muslims and Christians opposed the NATO intervention in Libya, and many Nigerian Muslims condemned the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Historically, the Nigerian military has played a major role in the country's politics. Beginning with the junior officers' coup of January 1966 and the senior officers' coup of July 1966, the military has ruled Nigeria for three periods: from 1966 to the handover to the civilian-led Second Republic in 1979; from the 1983 coup of Gen. Muhammadu Buhari (and the 1985 coup of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida) to the attempted transition to civilian rule in 1993; and from the takeover of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1993 until the inauguration of the Fourth Republic in 1999. The period of civilian rule since 1999 has been the longest unbroken stretch of civilian control since independence. The lack of coup attempts since 1999, including during the succession crisis sparked by Yar'Adua's absence

and incapacitation in 2009-2010, provides evidence that the military has renounced political involvement.

Yet at the same time, former military rulers and senior officers remain influential figures in Nigerian politics, including Obasanjo, who unsuccessfully attempted to secure an extra-constitutional third term as civilian president in 2006-2007, but remains a powerful presence within the PDP; Buhari, who was the main opposition presidential candidate in 2003, 2007 and 2011; and Babangida, a presidential aspirant and PDP member. Given that many of these senior military figures were born in the 1930s and 1940s, one important issue in Nigerian politics concerns the transition from the generation of Obasanjo, born in 1937, to the generation of Jonathan, who was born in 1957. The younger generation of Nigerian political leaders seems to be primarily civilians, which could indicate that the military's political influence is waning.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria's demographic and political weight will increase in the coming years, with the country's population set to pass 400 million by 2050 and its role as a source of peacekeepers in conflict zones in Africa and elsewhere expected to continue. Efforts to resolve diplomatic and military crises in West Africa, including a planned military intervention by ECOWAS in Mali in 2013, will likely rely heavily on Nigerian manpower and participation. Nigeria also has growing importance on the global stage. With proven oil reserves of more than 37 billion barrels and proven natural gas reserves of approximately 180 trillion cubic feet, Nigeria will continue to be an important player in global energy markets. Nigeria will, moreover, continue to attract massive foreign investment from rising powers like China.

Nigeria's internal problems, however, limit its capacity to carry out an effective foreign policy. National security threats, ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency in the north to Muslim-Christian clashes in central Nigeria to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea, consume government attention and resources, harm the country's economy and exacerbate divisions among its population. The fractured nature of Nigerian society, along with issues of corruption and weak governance, compound Nigeria's domestic challenges and hamper policy formulation. At the same time, Nigeria's challenges are, by virtue of the country's size and importance, also regional challenges, and Nigeria's porous borders expose neighboring countries to its own internal threats, with the potential spread of Boko Haram the latest example. The future success of Nigerian foreign and defense policy will depend heavily on Nigerian leaders' ability to address these challenges, while providing security for their people and managing the country's considerable resources in a fair and effective manner. □

THE PATH NOT TAKEN: CONFLICT AND IDENTITY IN NIGERIA

BY JENNIFER GIROUX, RAYMOND GILPIN
SEPT. 10, 2013

In the decades after its independence in October 1960, Nigeria periodically found itself at a series of crossroads. The 1960s were characterized by a devastating civil war and internal tensions that nearly drove the country apart; the 1970s saw a burgeoning oil and gas industry as well as governance achievements—notably efforts to develop a national identity and the adoption of a new constitutional framework that ushered in a government with an executive president at its center and, ultimately, a handover to civilian rule, albeit a short-lived one, in 1979. Indeed, in a large and complex country with a population consisting of more than 250 different ethnic groups, evenly divided between Christians and Muslims, finding common ground and allaying the fears of majority and minority groups was paramount.

At a regional level, the 1970 doctrine of a “Pax Nigeriana” provided the vision of Nigerian leadership throughout Africa and was followed by the 1975 Adedeji Report, which made the security of fellow African states a Nigerian foreign policy objective. For analysts at that time, examining Nigeria and assessing its trajectory yielded a mixed picture—largely hopeful, though tempered with considerable skepticism. Nigeria’s clear geostrategic advantages and natural resource endowments positioned it as a natural leader in Africa, particularly in the subregion of West Africa, but they were mitigated by the sheer volume and complexity of the country’s internal challenges. Over time, however, Nigeria’s postcolonial experience played out along the lines envisioned by the critics and skeptics, and it soon came to be characterized by corruption and poor governance, competition and conflict, rising inequality and an economy far too concentrated and dependent on oil and gas revenues.

Today, Nigeria seems to be at another key moment in its history. Internal divisions and tensions over ethnicity, regional power balances and more recently religion have been building over the past decade, creating outbursts of instability in various parts of the country. In some regions, violence has become chronic in the sense that it is a near-constant part of daily life and consciousness—expressed in the form of inter- or intracommunal disputes over resources and power; vigilantism; religiously and politically motivated violence; clashes between nonstate and government actors; and various acts of violent criminality such as oil theft, kidnapping and robbery. The rise of Boko Haram and the Islamist insurgency in the north have even led some to speculate that Nigeria [is en route to a civil war](#) reminiscent of the Biafran war of the 1960s, which sparked 2 1/2 years of violence and [resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1 million civilians](#).

And yet such dynamics and opinions are tempered by the fact that the Nigerian people have shown and continue to show tremendous civic resourcefulness and resilience, despite increased—and largely political—efforts to sow divisions. This is partly due to the fact that over time, a common sense of “being Nigerian” or “Nigerian identity” has formed—a feat not to be underappreciated in this culturally complex space. On a political level, the country has experienced repeated successful transitions of civilian rule since 1999, even if each election has come with issues of fraud and violence. In addi-

tion, while progress is extremely slow-moving, governance reforms have been undertaken, including a constitutional review and petroleum industry bill. Perhaps more important is the informal institutional innovation demonstrated by the activities of groups such as [the Enough is Enough Coalition](#) and the [PIND Foundation's Partners 4 Peace](#) initiative, to name a few. Such efforts at civic mobilization have tremendous potential and signal efforts to develop, from the bottom up, a culture of good governance and transparency, peaceful assembly and public accountability.

Given the current social and political turmoil in Nigeria, analysts of this dynamic country are constantly debating, examining and assessing its stability, much like they did in the 1960s. While most point to the common historical and developmental factors that have impeded growth and driven conflict, the early part of Nigeria's history is particularly relevant today. Obvious distinctions aside, there is the striking similarity that, once again, Nigeria finds itself at a crossroads—some may even view it as a precipice. Given its current challenges, both at the subnational and subregional level, Nigeria's future may appear to some as especially precarious, with the country likely to become increasingly fractured, if not torn apart. Although it is common to put Nigeria into such a box, characterized by crisis, doing so overlooks the small but significant bright spots that have held the country together and continue to push it forward, albeit slowly.

A CHALLENGING DOMESTIC TERRAIN

Nigeria's subnational conflicts have had myriad social and political costs. Domestically, insurgencies such as those experienced in the south between 2005 and 2006, and more recently in the north in 2009, as well as sectarian violence in the Middle Belt region, have been a major source of instability. They not only create environments of criminality and political violence but also often result in the deployment of government security forces, which are known for using indiscriminate violence and operating with impunity. This has had tremendous social costs, principally in the way that violence has impacted local norms and structures.

Politically, the environment is becoming increasingly tense and conflicted as the next presidential election—scheduled for 2015 but campaigning for which will begin in late-2014—draws closer.* In light of persistent violence, the government has [allocated more spending for security services](#), thus diverting money away from infrastructure projects, education and other public services. On top of this, an overstretched military and growing oil theft in the south, which costs the government an estimated \$6 billion annually in revenue, has led to elites and analysts questioning President Goodluck Jonathan's ability to govern the country. Exacerbating tensions, Nigeria's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) recently split into two factions, with the new splinter party having a distinct northern leadership presence. Naturally, this has raised concerns that Nigeria is moving closer to a fracture on north-south lines.

DISTINGUISHING THE DIFFERENT CONFLICTS

The subnational conflicts in Nigeria span a broad spectrum, and there are key distinctions among them. The crisis in the north is nested within a religiously motivated insurgency and shifting political context. In the past decade, 12 states in this region have instituted Shariah law, with three of those states—Kaduna, Niger and Gombe—restricting it to areas with large Muslim populations. The Islamic revival along with an accompanying Christian revival, both of which began in the 1970s, has given birth to religious and political extremism. In parallel to this trend, the national economy began to shift away from agriculture to heavy dependence on oil and gas development. As in the south for the people of the oil-rich Niger Delta, economic changes have had a detrimental impact on the north, where the decrease in cash-crop production eventually led to a crash in rural economies and a spike in unemployment.

Meanwhile, the Maitatsine movement, a jihadist movement that opposed modernization and Western civilization, also took shape in the 1970s and later became Nigeria's first violent extremist group. Like many of the various violent actors in Nigeria, Maitatsine used shared grievances, such

as economic and political marginalization, to mobilize local, mainly impoverished, communities and sow divisions. In a region where more than 70 percent of the population lives in poverty, young, unemployed and unengaged men were—and continue to be—particularly susceptible to indoctrination. It wasn't until the early 2000s that Boko Haram was formed in the northeast. A militant Islamist sect and largely local phenomenon, Boko Haram was similar to Maitatsine not only in its jihadism but also in the way that it was motivated by political exclusion, poor governance and corruption, and economic and social inequality. The group found a complicit, supportive population in the poverty-ridden north.

Since 2009, Boko Haram's deadly attacks have increased in frequency and spread to other parts of the country, creating fears that the movement could threaten areas as far south as Lagos or the Niger Delta. Over time, the group has also splintered, resulting in the formation of many other nodes of insurgency, one being the breakaway group Ansaru. As the threat has intensified, the government has responded by increasing its security presence, placing three states in the north under a state of emergency.

Further south, in the Middle Belt, sectarian violence has persisted and grown more destructive over the past decade. While many have classified this region's inter- and intracommunal violence as religiously motivated, and thus have often tried to link it with Islamist militancy in the northeast, the reality is that the violence in the Middle Belt is driven by tensions between "indigenes" and "settlers" who compete over land, resources and access to public services.

Meanwhile, conflicts in the Niger Delta region have been driven by socio-economic grievances connected to years of oil production that degraded the environment. Shortly after the 1979 civilian elections, the oil boom decade came to a halt, and Nigeria's economy went into a tailspin. By the 1990s, the Niger Delta was still underdeveloped, and the oil industry had left the labor-intensive agriculture and fishing sectors, which provided 50-79 percent of employment, severely damaged. As it had for the northerners, the extraction of energy resources soon became a curse for the residents of the Niger Delta and gave birth to various phases of social mobilization and protest that ultimately became a full-blown insurgency in 2005-2006.

During this time the region saw an increasing security presence, much like the north has, and similar local complaints of military and police abuses and brutality surfaced. An amnesty with Niger Delta militants, among them members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and its affiliates, was reached in 2009, just as things were heating up with Boko Haram in the north. This led to a dip in violence, but because the post-amnesty program has not led to sustainable improvements in development, violent criminality—largely oil theft and kidnapping with occasional politically motivated violence—has been on the rise. In fact, looking ahead, one cannot discount the potential for the Niger Delta insurgency to re-emerge. On the bright side, however, efforts are underway to encourage and incentivize peaceful activities in the region, as demonstrated by the efforts of the aforementioned Partners 4 Peace. But this is not an easy task. As an ex-militant group explained to the author during an interview in 2012, violence is perceived as the only way to make anyone listen to grievances.

DISTINCT CONFLICTS, COMMON DRIVERS

Despite these distinctions, it is also clear that Nigeria's subnational conflicts are woven together by common historical and developmental factors. These include economic factors such as poverty and inequality, but also issues related to poor governance, social responses to violence, and political manipulation and marginalization across all regions.

Certain economic policy reforms have generated some improvements, and annual GDP growth has averaged 8 percent over the past decade, largely driven by oil and gas revenues. Nonetheless, development has been uneven, and poverty remains endemic and static, registering 64 percent in 2004 and 63 percent in 2010. At the same time, inequality has risen, if not uniformly across the

country. In the north, household welfare indicators have stagnated, thus deepening feelings of marginalization, a key driver of conflict. Similarly in the “oil-rich” Niger Delta region in the south, economic grievances have also been a key conflict driver.

As mentioned above, however, though Nigerians in both the north and south share a sense of marginalization that is partly connected to certain economic realities, the crisis in the north is also driven by religious and political factors. In the past decade, and especially since the death in 2010 of President Umaru Yar’Adua, there has been a collapse and fragmentation of political and religious authority as well as elite bargaining and zonal agreements in Nigeria’s north. The insurgency in the Niger Delta, on the other hand, was born out of socio-economic and environmental grievances driven by abusive oil extraction practices, and in particular a call for a greater share of oil revenue.

Another key similarity in Nigeria’s different subnational conflicts is the way that many of them blur the boundaries between state and civil society. Corruption and poor governance has meant that key institutions have remained underdeveloped. This is particularly the case with public security services. Civic vigilantism, whereby nonstate actors, typically young men, organize to address local security issues, is thus a key feature throughout Nigeria. In the Niger Delta, this form of privatized violence or “vigilante rule” was rampant in the 1990s and 2000s, and it continues today. It typically involves youth associations or groups that are complicit with local elites, security forces and, in some cases, oil companies operating in the region. Other cases of vigilante rule can be found in the north, where vigilante groups, supported by the Nigerian armed forces’ Joint Task Force, have emerged to push back against Boko Haram and the various forms of Islamic militancy sprinkled throughout that region. However, this public backlash has intensified and complicated the security situation in the north, bringing about reprisal killings by Boko Haram that occur along with the other forms of violence that aim to send a political message.

Finally, political sponsorship and manipulation as well as aggressive government responses to local violence are key similarities that can be found across all of Nigeria’s subnational conflicts. While youth are the face of violence, they are directed behind the scenes by local elites and elders seeking power. From the Niger Delta to the northeast, youth are repeatedly targeted and mobilized for specific political purposes. Military forces, most of which lack professionalization and training and operate with impunity, are subsequently brought in to respond to violent outbreaks. The Council on Foreign Relations’ [Nigeria Security Tracker](#) illustrates this pattern of violent activity, in which Islamist violence provokes a brutal response from security services, which in turn increases local support for Boko Haram and decreases support for government. Indeed, military crackdowns in both the south and the north have been met with local resistance, reflecting the perception that the security forces represent another security threat rather than a protective body.

BEYOND BORDERS: SHIFTING TRANSNATIONAL THREATS AND CAPACITY CHALLENGES

Nigeria’s internal challenges cannot be viewed in isolation but must be appreciated in the subregional context. Not only is Nigeria a key player in peacekeeping missions for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union and the United Nations, but it also has the largest naval presence in the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria’s position as a regional power is not simply due to its commanding size, but rather is connected to the foreign policy vision articulated in the 1970s, when Nigeria established itself as a regional voice and leader, whose security and fate is intertwined with those of other African states. This vision has driven the country to play a prominent role in ECOWAS as a source of leadership, funding and logistics in various peacekeeping missions since the 1990s.

However, like its domestic situation, Nigeria’s role in the region also seems to be at a crossroads. Increasingly, its security forces, which are underpaid and poorly trained, are consumed with internal security challenges, impacting their ability to intervene in regional security matters that are becoming ever more complex. Though Abuja has insisted that it has sufficient military capacity

to both deal with Nigeria's internal security situation and remain a regional military power, the reality is that it recently began withdrawing troops from Mali and Darfur—a decision that is likely connected to the domestic situation and the ongoing fight against Boko Haram. Such capacity challenges warrant concern given the regional shifts in transnational threats. A growing illicit market, the presence of extremist groups like al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), persistent underdevelopment and poverty, socio-political tensions and conflicts between communities all tie into regional insecurity. Indeed, one could draw a regional comparison between the internal crisis in Nigeria and the crisis in Mali, in that both are a product of structural problems.

The recent events in Mali and political fragility throughout the region also offer a glimpse of the prominent role transnational threats will play in West Africa's future. As extremist activity has grown and expanded since 2005, so too have the drug-trafficking networks that stretch across this vast region. While such groups have clear ideological elements, there is also a fluidity and adaptive quality to their operations, alliances and even motivations. As occurred in the run-up to Mali's political crisis, the confluence of illicit trade, violent criminality and terrorism in the region will undermine already weak political regimes. Not only have state agents and political and business elites been a key part of the drug trade, but funds garnered from the illicit or gray economy have also provided significant financial support for extremist and criminal groups. The regional kidnapping industry alone, led by AQIM and MUJAO, has garnered an estimated \$40 million to \$65 million in ransoms in 2008-2012. Ransom payments of such a scale have made extremist and terrorist groups a major force in the region and attractive allies for local, corruptible elites.

OFFSHORE DIMENSION

Nigeria is an important regional player not just onshore but also offshore, in the Gulf of Guinea—a vast maritime area comparable in size to the Gulf of Mexico and critical to local and international shipping, particularly for major oil-producing countries. In the first half of 2013, the IMB Piracy Reporting Center recorded three times more incidents in the Gulf of Guinea than off the Somali coast, although these figures come at a time when incidents off the Somali coast have been on the decline due to various measures undertaken to contain the threat. The global economic costs of West Africa's maritime security threats [is estimated \(.pdf\)](#) to be between \$740 million and \$950 million, while the surrounding countries [are losing \\$2 billion annually](#) in revenue.

More recently, offshore threats in the Gulf of Guinea have been characterized by organized crime that includes hijacking and full-scale pilfering of oil tankers. In fact, the spike in tanker attacks has prompted Lloyd's Market Association to add the waters of Benin, Togo and Nigeria to the high-risk area where additional war-risk premiums are charged. To counter this threat, regional maritime security cooperation is being undertaken through the recently passed Gulf of Guinea Code of Conduct. The new code is based on an agreement among 22 states in the region to share and report relevant information as well as provide a coordinated approach to prevent illicit maritime activity, piracy and armed robbery against ships. But as long as oil prices continue to exceed \$100 per barrel, the black market for oil will continue to drive maritime crime in this region and be a powerful force for insecurity.

As the nation with the largest naval presence in the region, Nigeria plays a key role in tackling this problem and dealing with its onshore dimension. For one, the Niger Delta is at the center or hub of gang activity, where youth groups collude with criminal syndicates that come from the highest echelons of society. Moreover, many attacks take place in Nigerian territorial waters and close to shore, which calls for enhanced coast guard patrols and domestic efforts to investigate and prosecute criminal networks, including those affiliated with or connected to corrupt officials.

RESPONSES AND TRAJECTORY

Reflecting on the past 50 years of Nigeria's postcolonial history, [historian Jean Herskovits noted](#) that the various policies and efforts to develop the Nigerian state have been a combination of

“good intentions and unforeseen consequences” as well as “not-so-good intentions and tragic consequences.” The events unfolding in Nigeria today are the result of both of these forces. Unsurprisingly, rather than address the underlying issues that connect the various conflicts, the government has adopted a security-centric approach and thrown around the idea of a northern amnesty, which, if it ever occurs, will likely be similar to the Niger Delta program: a payment scheme that left ex-militants organized and the region in the same state of underdevelopment.

And yet, despite all of Nigeria’s continuing challenges, a social concept of the Nigerian nation has formed. The idea of “being Nigerian” has engaged and rallied civil society, not to pick up arms but rather to call for more transparency and public accountability. This was most recently demonstrated by the largely nonviolent protests that emerged to counter the government’s January 2012 removal of a popular fuel subsidy.

On a regional level, ECOWAS needs Nigeria, and in a way Nigeria needs ECOWAS, given that the organization is the embodiment of Nigerian foreign policy and regional diplomacy. In the face of complex and increasing threats across the region, ECOWAS members will need to deepen commitment and harness political will to ensure resources are available for future crises. More broadly, trans-Saharan cooperation is a necessary component for managing the terrorist and criminal threats that shape-shift across this space. The international community can encourage and support such cooperation, both onshore and offshore, as well as provide domestic support for political solutions and civil society engagement. In terms of the maritime space, the Gulf of Guinea’s new Code of Conduct is a welcome achievement for regional collaboration, but it will require persistent international assistance. The U.S., France, U.K. and other nations have already provided naval support, often in the form of training, but more efforts are needed to develop the monitoring and investigation capacities to track criminal and terrorist elements as well as carry out prosecutions.

The dire situation in Nigeria is not to be underestimated, but rather than view it as an existential threat, perhaps it should serve more as a wake-up call and point of reflection. Undeniably, significant reforms are necessary, but amid the stories of corruption in this relatively young country are portraits of strength and leadership that rarely get acknowledged. Indeed, scanning the 36 different Nigerian states reveals some notable bright spots where some of the country’s reformist local governments are successfully tackling complex problems that often fuel violent mobilization. A key example of this is Lagos state, which has demonstrated the political will to channel funds from its vibrant economy into infrastructure projects and poverty reduction. Through such commitment, poverty in Lagos has been halved in the past decade.

On a national level, a holistic approach is needed that includes short- and long-term objectives. On the one hand, this includes putting an end to the cycle of criminal political violence, not just that perpetrated by the Islamist insurgency but also that perpetrated by military forces in the region. A first step would be reforming the security services, by offering better pay and training while also rolling back impunity from legal prosecution for abuses. The professionalization of the Colombian military over the past 15 years, while far from perfect, shows that such an accomplishment is possible, but it requires political will and can also be aided by support from the international community. Mid- to long-term objectives would address the structural preconditions fueling Nigeria’s instability. This includes providing true pathways for engagement, particularly for the youth, and addressing issues of marginalization as well as the significant and myriad demographic, economic and political challenges that drive local grievances.

In the near term, Nigeria is likely to get even more tense given the fast-approaching campaign for the 2015 election and the turmoil within the PDP. While Jonathon is favored to win re-election, there is incredible political uncertainty, and all sides are resorting to traditional patronage politics as a hedge. And yet the country has an incredible opportunity to surprise the skeptics, using this crossroads as a moment to reflect on its journey thus far and continue to press forward. As in the 1970s, Nigeria once again has an opportunity to pivot onto another path, a new direction marked by policy reforms and development. □

NIGERIA'S REBEL GROUPS

An interview with Jennifer Giroux

BY THE EDITORS

JUNE 24, 2011

Last week, the Islamist group Boko Haram [bombed Nigeria's police headquarters](#) in Abuja, killing six. In an email interview, [Jennifer Giroux](#), a senior researcher at the Crisis and Risk Network at ETH Zurich, discussed Nigeria's rebel groups.

WPR: *Who are the main rebel groups in Nigeria, and what are their main objectives?*

Jennifer Giroux: Nigeria is a complicated case. One can delineate two types of rebel groups. The first operates in the south in the Niger Delta, where decades of poor natural-resource management has left the region in a state of low development, high poverty and significant environmental damage. The most recent and well-known group in this region is the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), an umbrella militant organization that was launched in 2005 with the goal of forcing the Nigerian government to address the myriad socio-economic grievances in the region. In particular, they are advocating for a greater share of oil wealth for the region's inhabitants.

The second operates in the north and is motivated by religious -- Islamist -- ideology. The main group in this regard is Boko Haram, an Islamist group with the stated aims of overthrowing the federal government and imposing Sharia law throughout the country. Historically, the rebel groups in the south have commanded more international attention; however, since a 2009 amnesty and the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2010, the groups in the north have carried out more acts of violence and have thus garnered more attention. In addition, their religious ideology presents fears of collaboration with al-Qaida.

WPR: *What impact will the recent elections in Nigeria have on these rebel groups?*

Giroux: President Goodluck Jonathan is a native of the Niger Delta and comes from one of Nigeria's ethnic minority groups, the Ijaw, which coincidentally have a powerful presence in the Niger Delta. Thus, his ascent to the presidency has for the time being dampened the efforts and interests of the region's rebel groups in remobilizing. Notably, many former militant leaders have applauded the fact that Jonathan brings the region significant political representation at the federal level and have stated that they will give him a chance to address their grievances.

A major challenge at the moment comes from the Muslim-dominated north, where the president lacks support. The region's inhabitants struggle not only with poverty but also a growing sense of alienation that could in turn fuel the efforts of the Islamist rebel groups generally and Boko Haram specifically. There have already been indications that this is happening, as seen in the mob violence that erupted in the north following the elections, as well as the destruction of palaces and religious leaders' homes by the region's conservative elite.

WPR: *What are the consequences for Nigeria of the conflicts, and what are the prospects for resolving them?*

Giroux: Nigeria is a major global exporter of oil products, with large natural gas reserves as well, and, given its size and resources, it is also a major regional player in African peace and security. In terms of the former, the U.S. relies on Nigeria for around 10 percent of its oil imports. At the height of MEND's campaign, from 2006-2009, the group was able to reduce oil output by 30 percent through sustained attacks on energy assets. Thus, conflicts in the south not only affect Nigeria's oil revenues, which it relies on heavily, but also global oil supplies. Furthermore, conflicts within the country keep the government from focusing on internal challenges -- including corruption, development, constitutional reform and so on -- while also diverting much needed resources from peacekeeping and mediation efforts in sub-Saharan Africa.

The prospects for solving Nigeria's conflicts are murky at this time. On one hand, as soon as the south achieved a period of stability, the north erupted in tremendous volatility that is becoming more and more difficult to contain. Jonathan's leadership is incredibly important, and, in the short term, while he is addressing the discontent in the north, he must also make concerted mid- to long-term efforts to address the broader economic and political issues that have kept this resource-wealthy nation mired in poverty and inequality. □

IN NIGERIA, MILITANCY RAISES SPECTER OF CIVIL WAR

BY DAVID FRANCIS

OCT 12, 2011

PORT HARCOURT, Nigeria -- On Oct. 2, Nigeria celebrated the 51st anniversary of its freedom from British rule. A large gala was planned in Abuja, the fast-growing Nigerian capital located in the center of the country.

But, days before the celebrations, Boko Haram, a Muslim extremist group based in the country's north, and the Movement to Emancipate the Niger Delta (MEND), based in the country's oil-rich south, both threatened to disrupt the festivities with violence. Boko Haram had already made it clear that it was capable of attacking Abuja on Aug. 26, when it exploded a bomb at the United Nations building there, killing 23. And just a week before the scheduled gala event, a bomb scare at the country's National Assembly sent lawmakers scrambling for safety.

MEND had long ago showed itself capable of such an attack. It is responsible for a string of bombings, kidnappings and killings against the Nigerian government as well as against oil companies in the south over the past decade. And [as Boko Haram has emerged](#), MEND has become even more active in an effort to reinsert itself into Nigeria's national conversation.

President Goodluck Jonathan, [whose re-election earlier this year](#) was followed by violent protests in the north, was faced with a choice. He could stand up to both MEND and Boko Haram by continuing with the festivities as planned. Or he could move the celebration to a more secure location, an indication that he did not believe Nigerian security forces could adequately deal with the threat.

Jonathan chose the latter, presiding over a small ceremony at his secure presidential villa.

His decision is a reflection of the state of fear and tension that currently hangs over Nigeria. Over the past three weeks, what emerges from travels around the country -- first to Abuja, then to Lagos and now to Port Harcourt -- is the image of a country at odds with itself. [The divide between the Muslim north and the Christian south](#) grows larger and more volatile by the day. Faith in the political process to right the wrongs that have blighted this country for decades is nonexistent. The only certainty people express is that the ending to the current phase in Nigerian history is going to be unpleasant and most likely violent.

Unlike southern Nigeria, which is rich with oil resources, the country's north is a vast desert wasteland where poverty is common, jobs are rare and hope for the future has largely evaporated. This sense of despair has helped to fuel a growing Muslim militancy, especially in Muslim schools where young boys are indoctrinated with radical Islam. Boko Haram started in one such school in the northeast state of Borno: The group's name roughly translates to "Western education is a sin."

It is unclear whether the group has ties to al-Qaida, as Jonathan has maintained. Though tenuous at best, the connection between the two groups has gained the attention of the United States, which is

now helping Nigeria to track Boko Haram's finances. What is clearer is that Boko Haram members have many of the same grievances as militants in the delta: lack of jobs, poor access to education and lack of medical care. Boko Haram is now asking for an amnesty similar to the kind offered to delta militants in 2009, which consisted of a payout by the government in exchange for a promise by the militants not to return to violence.

Meanwhile, the past decade was a volatile time in the Niger Delta, as militants kidnapped foreign oil workers, sabotaged oil company operations and fought with each other and the military. The 2009 amnesty quieted things down briefly, as many of the older leaders of groups such as MEND accepted the government's offer, with most of them since retiring to Lagos.

However, in interviews in and around Port Harcourt, militants still active here expressed a growing dissatisfaction with the outcome of the amnesty, which they claim was a failure: Few actually benefitted from the pardon; there are still few jobs available; the delta remains horribly polluted; and oil companies continue to act with impunity. The government, needing oil profits to survive, turns a blind eye to the persistent problems, which has led to an uptick in militant activities, including kidnapping and sabotage.

Adding to the dissatisfaction is a growing impatience with the government's focus on Boko Haram. Militants here believe the northern group is unorganized, unprofessional and betraying Nigeria by killing civilians. They agree with the group's grievances but condemn its methods. More than one militant said that Boko Haram would meet a quick end if it entered the country's south, as the Muslim group has threatened.

As a Christian from the Niger Delta, Jonathan inspired hope among many here when he assumed the presidency in 2009 [following the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua](#). Many assumed he would be the one to finally address the issues that have plagued this area. But according to interviews throughout Nigeria, Jonathan's time in office is viewed as largely ineffectual. Problems with the delta amnesty program are starting to emerge. Neither he nor his military appear capable of dealing with militants in the north and south. Corruption is still rampant. Oil wealth still has not reached the Nigerian people.

Jonathan's impotence in the face of these problems could have significant implications, as Nigerians have a long history of taking matters into their own hands and attempting to implement change with violent means when they feel that politicians have failed. Militants in the delta have done so for two decades. Now, militants in the north are learning that violence draws attention. If Jonathan does not act soon to address these groups' grievances, more violence is inevitable. And if the violence leads to a civil war between the north and south, the future of a united Nigeria is at stake. □

THE SHIFTING DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA'S NORTH

BY CATHERINE CHENEY

JUNE 12, 2012

Suicide car bombers [attacked three churches in northern Nigeria](#) over the weekend, killing at least 16 people and wounding dozens more.

The attacks, for which Boko Haram has claimed responsibility, sparked reprisal killings, while also focusing international attention on the religious tensions in the West African country split between a Muslim-majority north and a Christian-majority south.

[Zachary Warner](#), a research analyst in Africana Studies at Bowdoin College, told Trend Lines that it is important to understand these attacks as part of a broader battle for control of the public space, which includes social practices, morality and governance, in northern Nigeria and the country's "Middle Belt."

Warner called this "a fight over the very organizing principles of Nigerian democracy: Who should define them? Who is a legitimate voice in the discussion? And whom should the system serve?"

He added that Boko Haram's killing of civilians to assert its own view on these questions is nothing new. Pointing to the "repeated iterations of conflict" dating back to at least the early 19th century, however, he noted that "much of this has been infighting within the sizable Muslim community, with various factions claiming a particularly Islamic legitimacy."

But these dynamics are changing, Warner said. As growing Islamic consciousness is met with growing insecurity among Christians, there are new attempts to diminish Muslim control in northern Nigeria.

"The two are ironically similar projects," he said, explaining that both are about "constant spiritual renewal through new social practices and exegesis of respective holy texts, translating into a need to 'win' Nigeria for God or Allah."

Turning to [Boko Haram](#), Warner explained that the insurgency is very complex and not as well-defined a threat as it is often portrayed in the American media.

"Boko Haram . . . has come to mean a range of actions causing instability and violence in the north and Middle Belt," he said, explaining that street violence as well as international terrorist networks linked to al-Shabab and al-Qaida fall "under the same aegis of generalized insecurity that we call Boko Haram."

Warner said his sense is that support for Boko Haram is not widespread.

"Many resent the government, but they also don't want to go about their daily lives wondering if

any of their [relatives] will get killed in a suicide bombing. Elite politics is widely condemned, but Boko Haram is not seen as a viable alternative,” he said. “With no political option to throw their support behind, people tend instead to turn inward and seek refuge through increasingly new and dynamic forms of spirituality, which is one of the reasons why there has been such rapid change within both charismatic Christianity and reformist Islam over the past half-century in Nigeria.”

Warner said it is important to note that the conflicts in Nigeria are not just about religious tensions, but in fact concern a wide range of clashing identities, including ethnic, religious and regional differences.

“Because of this diversity, we have to be very careful to not essentialize this fight into a ‘clash of civilizations’ type of irreconcilable religious war,” he said.

The Nigerian government, he added, is doing little to address these tensions. So even if Boko Haram is eliminated, he said, the violence in Nigeria will continue.

“Mention is made of the need for peace, and elites call on religious leaders to preach peace, but the same problems -- political exclusion, economic stagnation, perceived religious illegitimacy, corruption -- go unaddressed,” he told Trend Lines. “The strongest steps toward peace are the federal government instituting a state of emergency in certain states, but these steps go in the entirely wrong direction.”

Instituting a state of emergency only militarizes what is “essentially a localized social conflict,” Warner said, and it increases state intrusion in the lives of the northerners, even when “the very problem is said to be such intrusion.”

Calling the conflict in Nigeria a “perversely violent” debate over “the very fabric of the nation,” Warner said outside actors, including the United States, are constrained by the fact that they “are generally agreed to have little role in the discussion.”

“Perhaps there’s room for us to help with economic development programs to alleviate the broader processes of exclusion in the north,” he said, “but consistent failure of the Bretton Woods institutions to deliver on poverty reduction and macroeconomic stability leave me skeptical as to such prospects, and of the scope for our involvement more generally.”□

Boko Haram

AN EVOLVING BOKO HARAM REQUIRES CAREFUL RESPONSE

BY CATHERINE CHENEY

JAN. 26, 2012

Boko Haram, the radical Islamist sect behind a recent surge of violence in Nigeria, launched a series of attacks Friday that left at least 185 people dead in Kano, the country's second-largest city. The attacks struck multiple security buildings as well as the regional police headquarters, and [were the deadliest yet](#) by the militant organization.

The group, which aims to overthrow the Nigerian government and impose Sharia law, [has grown increasingly violent](#), with its August 2011 bombing of the United Nations building in Abuja, the capital, as well as its attacks on churches raising alarm among international observers.

"Boko Haram is constantly evolving, in the way they carry out their attacks and in their tactics," [Elizabeth Donnelly](#), who manages the Africa program at Chatham House, told Trend Lines. "They have certainly grown in confidence over the past two years. . . . Kano is a major city in Nigeria, and so it is quite a statement to go in and carry out such a heavy attack."

The militant group, Donnelly said, has expanded from smaller acts of violence, mainly focused on police, to more devastating attacks that increasingly target Christians.

"It is possible that Boko Haram is working to intensify and play out any existing religious tensions and divisions in Nigeria, because any weakening of that societal fabric would play to their advantage," she explained. "If there is further communal violence in different areas of Nigeria, it will stretch the security services even further, which will make it easier for Boko Haram to operate."

Divisions along ethnic, regional and religious lines often erupt into violence in this country, where despite billions in oil revenues, most [live on less than \\$2 a day](#).

President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the country's south, first came to power in May 2010 after his northern Muslim predecessor, Umaru Yar'Adua, died unexpectedly. He has been criticized ever since for [failing to contain](#) the continuing violence.

Founded in 2002, Boko Haram gained international attention in 2009, when Nigerian security forces seized the group's headquarters and killed Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the sect. Despite the setback, the militants [regrouped under a new leader](#) in 2010.

"The police can't really make any headway on this at the moment, and clearly they do feel very threatened," Donnelly said. "The policy strategy in dealing with Boko Haram to date has been to attempt to crush the group. This has not worked, so quite possibly we will see a shift in strategy."

Alternative approaches could include starting a dialogue with Boko Haram or even offering the organization territory and limited autonomy. But Donnelly said that a lasting solution must include

other reforms. While the recent attacks in Nigeria have distracted the government from addressing poverty and inequality, those are the very issues that fuel frustration and further violence.

For example, in the poorer Muslim north, [which lacks the oil wealth](#) of Nigeria's southern states, a growing population of unemployed, undereducated young people angry over government corruption [may become ready recruits](#) for groups like Boko Haram.

Meanwhile, recent [concerns over possible collaboration with al-Qaida affiliates](#), as well as concerns that Boko Haram may spread, led Nigeria [to close its borders](#) with Cameroon, Niger and Chad, and have focused international attention on putting an end to the violence.

But Donnelly, responding to news that Nigeria [may begin joint military operations](#) with its regional partners, said any coordinated effort must be "carefully thought through."

"This is a complex group with complex politics," she said. "This is not just a terrorist group here. It goes beyond that. And so any international engagement needs to be carefully nuanced." □

ANY BOKO HARAM DEAL MUST ADDRESS NIGERIA'S STRUCTURAL INSTABILITY

An interview with Jennifer Giroux

BY THE EDITORS

APRIL 29, 2013

On April 24, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan [inaugurated a committee](#) charged with opening negotiations with militant group Boko Haram and preparing for a possible amnesty deal. In an email interview, [Jennifer Giroux](#), a senior researcher at the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich who specializes in conflict in energy-producing and transit regions, explained what the process might entail as well as the obstacles it faces.

WPR: *What would the amnesty proposal currently under consideration for Boko Haram involve?*

Jennifer Giroux: At the moment there is not an amnesty deal but rather the organization of resources to develop an amnesty framework. The government recently created two committees -- one to examine the proliferation of small arms and the other to engage key leaders of Boko Haram and identify the key elements of a possible amnesty agreement. Obviously disarmament will be part of any amnesty discussion; however, Boko Haram has more concrete demands, such as the release of incarcerated members. What the amnesty should involve, however, is another question. The north, where Boko Haram is active, is the poorest region in the country and is awash with youth who are flocking to urban centers where they are jobless and not engaged. There are certain demographic and political components of this crisis that cannot be ignored. Any amnesty proposal should have short- and long-term objectives that on the one hand seek to put an end to the political violence -- not just that perpetrated by the Islamist insurgency but also by military forces in the region -- and on the other hand develop and implement solutions to address the structural preconditions fueling instability. In this respect the amnesty can be viewed as opening a door to address the region's underlying issues.

WPR: *What lessons can Nigeria learn for this case from its amnesty for the southern Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)?*

Giroux: The situation in the north is very different from in the south, and yet the Niger Delta amnesty seems to be the model. The crisis in the north is nested within a religiously motivated insurgency and political context where there has been a collapse and fragmentation of political and religious authority as well as elite bargaining and zonal agreements. The insurgency in the Niger Delta was born out of socio-economic and environmental grievances, and in particular a call for a greater share of oil revenue. Both regions, however, share a sense of marginalization. Perhaps the most plausible lesson is to avoid creating an amnesty program that is simply a payment scheme to buy off insurgents. This has been the case in the Niger Delta, and hence low-level violence in the region has persisted. The peace there is tenuous at best. A holistic approach is needed that offers true pathways for engagement, particularly for the youth. This would include addressing issues of marginalization as well as the significant and myriad demographic, economic and political challenges.

WPR: *What are the major obstacles to a successful amnesty deal for Boko Haram?*

Giroux: There are three prominent issues. First, if we refer only to Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, the purported head, recently stated that it is the Nigerian government that should be asking for a pardon, not the other way around. Thus, it seems that at this stage it is not certain that there will be buy-in from Boko Haram. Second, the longer this goes on the more complicated it becomes. Boko Haram has splintered, resulting in the formation of many other nodes of the insurgency, one being the breakaway group Ansaru. Today, the insurgency is much more diffused and nebulous. If Boko Haram agrees to an amnesty, can Shekau truly speak for the splinter groups and guarantee their involvement? That remains to be seen. Third, the government cannot ignore the political dimension of this crisis -- with the 2015 presidential election approaching, tensions between Muslim and Christian communities will continue to grow so long as the insurgency persists. □

DON'T COUNT ON U.S. SECURITY PARTNERSHIP WITH NIGERIA

BY STEVEN METZ
MAY 29, 2013

Nigeria could be a dominant political force and engine for economic development in Africa and beyond. It has a large population with a highly educated professional class. Its proven petroleum reserves are the world's 10th largest. And its military is one of the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, with extensive experience in multinational peacekeeping.

Unfortunately, though, Nigeria's problems run as deep as its potential. It has suffered some of the most rapacious and persistent government corruption in the world. Nigerian leaders, both military and civilian, have stolen untold billions while the nation sinks deeper into poverty. Many Nigerians use their impressive entrepreneurial skill for crime rather than national development. Nigeria's ethnic and religious complexity often paralyzes the political process and makes it a spoils system for whatever group dominates the state. Its borders, like most in Africa, are porous and artificial, a legacy of colonialism rather than a reflection of cultural or social realities. And like much of Africa, the majority of Nigerians are young, many of them frustrated and angered by the lack of educational and economic opportunity.

Unsurprisingly, Nigeria faces widespread internal violence. Ethnic, religious and sectarian militias and criminal gangs are common. If that is not enough, there [are also organized insurgencies](#), most importantly the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the largest militant group in the crushingly impoverished Niger Delta, and Boko Haram, a jihadist militant organization seeking to create an Islamist state in Nigeria's northeast. Until recently MEND received more attention both from the Nigerian government and the international community, largely because it operates in the major oil-producing part of the country. But over the past few years, Boko Haram, with its expanding violence and jihadist ideology, has moved to the forefront.

Boko Haram began as a religious study group in the mid-1990s. After 2002, under Mohammed Yusuf's leadership, the group attempted to emulate the Taliban, running a low-level conflict with local police and villagers who resisted it and seeking to create a breakaway Islamic state. In 2009, security forces captured and executed Yusuf, but in 2010 Boko Haram re-emerged more violent and set on revenge against the government. It added car bombs, suicide attacks and the kidnapping of foreigners to its bag of tricks. By 2012 it had obtained some of the heavy weapons that spilled across Africa after the Libyan civil war. This combination of unrestrained radicalism and a growing military capability transformed it from a nuisance to a threat.

Earlier this month, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the three northeastern states where Boko Haram operates. Security forces launched a major offensive that included air attacks on insurgent bases. By the end of the month, Nigerian military officials said Boko Haram was in "disarray," its fighters having split into small groups, many of which fled to the remote areas of bordering Niger.

If history is any guide, though, the Nigerian government will not seize the opportunity its success has provided. Instead it will do what other nations facing insurgents have done after a military victory: conclude that the enemy is crushed and return to the way things were before, leaving unresolved the various political and economic factors that caused the insurgency in the first place. The government will not admit that it has deep structural flaws. It will not instigate a comprehensive program of economic development and political reform. It will not reorganize its security forces to focus on counterinsurgency and protection of the local population. It will not make concessions to and open negotiations with disgruntled local leaders who might be inclined to support Boko Haram. As a result, after a period of time, the insurgents will inevitably regroup, rearm and strike back.

Theoretically Washington could step in: Nigeria's economic, political and military potential should make it a prime candidate for a close partnership with the United States. The U.S. military has had a relationship with its Nigerian counterpart for many years, most of it designed to help Nigeria with peacekeeping operations. Recently some of the focus [has shifted to counterinsurgency](#). There are as yet unconfirmed media reports of [small deployments of U.S. military advisers](#) to Nigeria.

Chances are, though, this won't amount to much, as the obstacles to an expanded partnership outweigh the need for it at this point. The Nigerian military is highly resistant to outside advice, particularly when the advice is to make deep changes in the way it is organized and operates. And despite the repulsiveness of Boko Haram, selling the American public and Congress on expanded ties with the Nigerian military would be difficult [given its long history of brutality](#). An attack in April on the village of Baga demonstrated that this has not changed. And Americans are well-aware of the corruption ingrained in the Nigerian political system and would be loath to increase assistance to a nation that should be able to fund its own development with petroleum income.

But all is not lost. Neither Boko Haram nor MEND—should the insurgency in the Niger Delta heat back up—can control their home regions much less defeat the Nigerian state. Neither will ever march triumphantly into Abuja, the national capital. But both are the paradigms of modern insurgencies—fragmented networks capable of persistent terrorism and guerrilla attacks. They coalesce when the government's attention is elsewhere then disperse when under pressure. Both are deeply focused on criminal activities to raise funds, but both also have an immense pool of angry youth that provides potential recruits and allies.

Because of this, the recent pattern will continue. The government will launch a military offensive. The insurgents will hide. The government will believe it has won and fail to undertake deep reform. Then the insurgents will regroup and begin a new round of attacks. Boko Haram will also likely try to undertake terrorist attacks outside its home region, possibly in Abuja or Lagos, Nigeria's largest and most important city. It may even attack U.S. targets, as it has threatened. Boko Haram, and possibly MEND or some other nascent insurgent group, will continue to kidnap and attack foreigners. There may be large-scale humanitarian disasters, possibly refugee flows. All of this will make it even harder for Nigeria to become a stable, well-governed democracy.

But barring some miraculous transformation on the part of the Nigerian security forces or political leadership, there is little the United States can do. Despite U.S. national interest in Nigeria's stability and development, Washington's leverage is limited as long as Nigerian leaders believe they can handle their own problems and that their existing political and economic system is acceptable. In the short term, the only useful tack for the United States is to solidify its relationships with other West African states to attempt to keep the pathology contained and be ready for an expanded partnership should Nigerian leaders admit the extent of the challenges they face. □

BOKO HARAM RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF NIGERIAN COUNTERTERRORISM MEASURES

An interview with Jennifer Giroux

BY THE EDITORS

DEC. 6, 2013

This week, the Nigerian insurgent group Boko Haram [carried out a large-scale attack](#) on a military air base in the northeastern city of Maiduguri in which 24 attackers were killed, two air force personnel wounded and several military aircraft damaged. In an email interview, [Jennifer Giroux](#), a senior researcher at the Center for Security Studies at ETH Zurich who specializes in conflict in energy-producing and transit regions, explained Nigeria's counterterrorism approach and Boko Haram's resilience.

WPR: *Does Boko Haram's attack on the Maiduguri air base indicate an evolution in the group's military capabilities?*

Jennifer Giroux: This attack is not so much a signal of the group's tactical evolution but more so a sign of its persistence and abilities in the face of the government's counterterrorism approach to the northern insurgency. While the scale, location and target indicate a significant amount of planning and coordination, the political undertones are considerable. Namely, this attack seems to be more about sending a clear message to the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan: that despite the enormous resources invested in containing the insurgency, Boko Haram still has strength and reach. In fact, it's likely that as the next elections approach, there will be similar attacks—all of which will aim to discredit and question this administration's ability to manage the country's security issues.

WPR: *Has Nigeria's escalation of attacks on the group been effective so far?*

Giroux: Yes and no. It seems that the massive deployment of security forces in northeastern Nigeria and the declaration that Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states remain under a state of emergency have produced some achievements in disrupting the pace and movement of the insurgency. But, as this attack shows, this is a highly adaptive adversary—in response to the counterterrorist strategy, Boko Haram will evolve, potentially into new structures, or even usher in a new phase of the insurgency. The point is that Nigeria's counterterrorist approach has left the underlying factors that aid violent mobilization—namely, the significant social, economic and political grievances in the region—unaddressed. So what is the measurement of effectiveness? Is it simply eliminating Boko Haram, while leaving the underlying grievances on the back burner of public dialogue and accountability? Or rather should it be more about addressing the conditions in which violence has impacted northern Nigeria—and more broadly challenged the country?

WPR: *What are the risks for civilians as the fight intensifies?*

Giroux: The fighting in the north brings many consequences for the people in this region. Beyond the reports of casualties, violence has paralyzed economic and social life. Cities such as Maiduguri have been transformed into heavily restrictive areas since government forces have poured in.

Vigilante groups have formed, in some cases escalating hostilities. Needless to say, one finds that where the movement of violence is restricted, it shifts to other spaces—it adopts a type of fluidity. In turn, it is not simply the people, or civilians, that are at risk in the face of intensified violence but also the social fabric, structures and norms that bind communities together. □

U.S. CAN HELP WITH NIGERIA'S CONFLICT, BUT CANNOT OWN IT

BY STEVEN METZ
MAY 14, 2014

A year ago, as Boko Haram, the violent jihadist group from Nigeria's north, expanded its operations, I argued that even though the Nigerian government had launched what seemed to be a serious military offensive, it [continued to reject the sort of deep and serious reform](#) needed to undercut support for extremism. Hence the United States should avoid offering anything other than modest, indirect help.

Since then, Nigeria's security situation has eroded further. In the words of Navi Pillay, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, Boko Haram has become "increasingly monstrous." Approximately 500,000 Nigerians have fled the fighting between government security forces and the terrorists, some to other parts of Nigeria, others to neighboring nations. Bolstered by weapons [spilling out of Libya](#), Boko Haram has killed 5,000 of its fellow citizens and claimed responsibility for at least two bombings in Abuja, the national capital. In early May, it [kidnapped 200 girls](#) from a boarding school in Chibok, a town in Nigeria's Borno state. Abubakar Shekau, the movement's leader, has threatened to sell the girls—an act so extreme that even other jihadists [were appalled](#).

Tragically, Nigeria may not have hit bottom. Boko Haram might expand its operations, perhaps to Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, or to the petroleum-producing areas in the south. The government's inability to stop jihadist terrorism could inflame Nigeria's already tense religious situation and ignite a broader Christian-Muslim war that would pale the one raging in the Central African Republic. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Nigeria's other major insurgency, [has already declared a war](#) on Boko Haram as part of "a crusade to save Christianity in Nigeria from annihilation." It might back this up with action. Such an expansion of the conflict could cause the collapse of regional states or Nigeria itself.

Given this, is it time for the United States to reassess its approach and offer more help? To an extent this is already happening. [Public anger over the schoolgirl kidnapping](#) led Washington to [offer a small assistance package](#) of police and intelligence support. Still, the impediments to a more active American role in defeating Boko Haram all remain firmly in place.

The United States has limited direct national interests in Nigeria and is loath to take on another jihadist group while fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Qaida in Yemen and other terrorist movements like Somalia's al-Shabab. The Nigerian government [shows little sign of addressing its deep flaws](#) or fixing the corruption that leaves most people crushingly poor in a nation with immense petroleum and human resources. The government, while willing to accept assistance, [resists American advice](#). Nigeria's military, which was once one of the proudest, most experienced and effective in Africa, [has slid downhill](#) in recent years. It too is rife with corruption as officers pocket a portion of the pay intended for the already poorly paid troops, and money for supplies and maintenance gets "lost." It also [has a history of human rights abuses](#).

On top of all this, insurgencies like Boko Haram are wickedly hard to eradicate even if the government and security forces are effective. While rejecting Boko Haram's sociopathic violence, Nigerians in the north resent inadequate attention from the government. Boko Haram's call for greater piety resonates with many Muslims, even if they do not share its bloodlust. Northern Nigeria has an immense supply of angry, alienated young men with few or no economic prospects. It also has plenty of weapons. National borders in the region are porous at best, giving Boko Haram and other extremists de facto external sanctuary. And Boko Haram is self-financing largely through bank robbery, extortion and kidnapping.

This combination of mounting violence and structural impediments suggests that the United States should do more but with strict conditions and limitations. Expanded bilateral ties are not the answer: Nigerians certainly do not want to be seen as a junior partner in such a relationship, and the United States is unwilling to commit significant resources to it. Hence a viable solution must be multinational and local. The core of an effective response to Boko Haram and the conditions that gave rise to it must, of course, come from Nigeria itself and its neighbors, particularly Niger and Cameroon. But a multinational effort should also include European, American, Asian and Middle Eastern partners that can bring resources; Islamic nations that understand the dynamics and priorities of Muslims; and other African nations that understand the challenges of governance in complex, multiethnic, religious and sectarian nations. Local officials from Nigeria's north should be deeply involved in finding ways to improve security, perhaps through local self-defense militias, and in developing a long-term political, economic and security solution that does as much as possible to limit extremist violence.

The United States could orchestrate a multinational support group but would not need to dominate or even lead it. This is an instance where "leading from behind" makes sense, in part because a failed effort would be less damaging to U.S. national interests than large-scale entanglement. The key is strict conditionality. Nigeria may cling to the notion that it needs no help. If Nigerian leaders continue to resist serious change, the United States should wash its hands of the problem. And the United States must enter such a limited, conditional partnership with realistic expectations. Progress will be slow, at best two steps forward and one step backward. It will take a long time. This means that American politicians and commentators must resist the urge to use assistance to Nigeria as another venue for political posturing, whether blaming the Obama administration for not doing enough or for too much association with a deeply flawed partner.

Even this may not be enough. Nigeria may spiral even deeper into the abyss. So even while crafting a plan for limited, conditional action to try and salvage the situation, Washington should also be thinking through the nightmare scenarios. However bad Nigeria is today, it can still get worse. □

HELPING NIGERIA'S GIRLS WILL REQUIRE MORE THAN JUST SELFIES

BY HEATHER HURLBURT

MAY 12, 2014

Now that we've all taken our #BringBackOurGirls pictures, we can spend some time examining what the appalling tragedy in Nigeria, and the attention paid to it, explains about some 21st century realities. Doing so just might help other young women and communities, as well as our security. But first we might have to relinquish some tightly held ideas about who these girls are and what we can do for them.

Who are these girls of “ours”? They are Muslims who live in an area so poor, so neglected by Nigeria's government and so bypassed by its oil wealth, that high school-level education is not common and not free. While these girls' abduction made headlines, [International Crisis Group reports](#) that many boys and girls in the region must work as house servants or street hawkers to pay tuition for boarding school. Too many of the boys end up in street gangs. Too many of the girls end up sexually abused. Most fundamentally, if we represent them as “ours,” it is because they and their parents want something we have—high school education—so badly they are willing to risk their lives for it. But how would U.S. policy be different if they were really “our” children? How would policy be different if we spent the time it took to post a #BringBackOurGirls selfie on Facebook instead calling our members of Congress to tell them to pay the U.S. share of United Nations dues that fund girls' education? To lift bans that prevent U.S. NGOs from counseling those girls about how not to get pregnant or deal with the result of a rape? To stop cutting funding for U.S. diplomats, in Nigeria and other places, who can tell Americans these children's stories?

This is the face of terrorism. Understanding Boko Haram is as good a way as any to understand what the universe of al-Qaida imitators, wannabes and hangers-on is really like: The group is a threat not easily dismissed, made up of individuals who hate modernity and hide in a warped version of their faith, who are willing to kill innocents by the thousands and assault the moral underpinnings of the world we wish to live in. It is also a collection of impoverished misfits that raises funds \$12 at a time, can cause untold damage and pain, but poses no existential military threat to the United States, or to Americans in our daily lives.

Does it make sense, then, for the United States to declare war on Boko Haram, or include them in the war we have already declared and are continuing to wage against al-Qaida and its close affiliates, who are able to harm Americans and attempting to do so? No.

To be clear, Boko Haram does seem to have a faction of fighters with broader international aims; some members fought Western forces in Mali, and its leader has said that he aspires to be part of a global jihad. But terrorism isn't horseshoes—close doesn't count, and as best we can tell, Boko Haram has not sworn allegiance to al-Qaida's central leadership, nor has it carried out operations at the request of al-Qaida. Indeed, where al-Qaida “central” discourages killings of fellow Muslims, not to mention selling them for fundraising, and focuses on Western and American adversaries, Boko Haram actively encourages the idea that Nigerian Muslims who have grown too close to Western ideas are its primary target.

But does that imply that Boko Haram doesn't matter, or that this recent tragedy and the group's previous record of depredations are, though unfortunate, not a matter of concern for U.S. policy? Also no.

Nigeria is a major oil exporter, Africa's largest economy and a vital source of either stability or insecurity for its region and beyond. A Nigeria whose government is ill-regarded and cannot provide its citizens with a minimum level of security is bad for U.S. economic and regional security interests.

Moreover, whether we asked them to or not, whether the U.S. was supporting them or not, those young women and their families put their lives at risk for something they saw as a Western, perhaps even an American, ideal: advancement through education, and in particular, advancement for girls as well as boys. Those families—and, as we've seen from the outpouring of outrage throughout the country, much of Nigerian society—want to live in a world that is familiar and congenial to us, not in the medieval mores Boko Haram and its fellow fundamentalists want to return them to. For moral reasons and reasons of leadership, they deserve our support in that effort.

But what support? It's interesting to note that Nigerian civil society didn't ask the United States, NATO or the United Nations to rescue the girls. After it became clear that the government was downplaying what had happened and doing little or nothing to find and return the girls, activists risked arrest and violence to demand that their own government do a better job of protecting law and order.

The Obama administration moved to offer the Nigerians intelligence and to help them stand up a new counterterrorism unit, on top of the exchanges the sides have had in recent years as concerns about Boko Haram grew.

But repugnant acts like this kidnapping are too often intertwined with noxious levels of abuse and neglect by the authorities; any response that addresses one but not the other will fail. This is a story Americans have stubbornly refused to hear.

Nigeria's governmental corruption and troubled law enforcement are among the world's worst. Though more funding has gone to the military in recent years, the police are still terribly underpaid and are as often used as private security guards for senior officials as they are to protect regular citizens. Human rights groups have documented allegations of soldiers defecting to Boko Haram and senior officials being bought off or coerced by the group, and allege that as many people die in police custody as in terror attacks every year. It appears that the government was warned in advance of the kidnapping and did nothing; and it had no intention of doing very much after it.

This means that pumping more training, more weapons and more intelligence into Nigerian security services is by itself unlikely to serve the cause of stability and human rights. The Pentagon and intelligence community have had new resources to invest in Nigeria in recent years; by contrast, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the State Department—which can train police and lawyers, help raise judges' salaries and support civil society groups—have not.

The kidnapped girls of Nigeria, in short, can teach us that terrorism is all too real, but a "war" declared by Washington cannot defeat it. Nigerians need our help to do so, but victory won't be quick or solely military. So in the long run, maybe the important question is not whether those girls are "ours," but whether we will be theirs. □

WHAT'S KEPT NIGERIA FROM FINDING THE MISSING GIRLS

BY FRIDA GHITIS

MAY 8, 2014

More than three weeks have passed since members of the Nigerian terrorist group Boko Haram burst into a girls' school in the northeast of the country and kidnapped hundreds of girls. It took at least two of those weeks [before international attention turned to the crisis](#), and even longer for the Nigerian government to sharpen its response and accept help rescuing the girls.

Among the many questions surrounding the attack, one of the most puzzling is why Nigeria failed to react effectively for so long.

By the time Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan at last spoke publicly about the kidnapping, the captors and their hostages already had a head start long enough to have crossed borders and disappeared far into the jungle.

The government's initial neglect of the case was so complete that authorities don't even have a full count of the missing girls. Several different figures have been offered by police. By one account, more than 300 students at the Chibok Government Girls Secondary School were herded into trucks and buses by men dressed in military uniforms on April 14. It was only after the gunmen started shouting "Allahu Akbar" that the girls realized they were in the hands of the dreaded Boko Haram, an ultra-radical Islamist group loosely affiliated with al-Qaida, whose goal is to establish an Islamic caliphate in Nigeria. The group's name means, approximately, "Western education is a sin."

There is little doubt that the government's efforts to find the girls only started in earnest after local protesters managed to garner global attention, which then turned toward the Nigerian state. Local people say the sight of a CNN crew anchoring live reports from Lagos, along with protests in several Nigerian cities and in world capitals, helped concentrate Jonathan's mind.

The authorities' failure to stop the attack cannot be perfunctorily blamed on incompetence or ineptitude. Nigeria's military has proved itself in the past during international missions, and it includes many highly skilled officers. Still, like the rest of the country, the military is plagued by corruption, which can sap it of effectiveness at the lower levels while derailing it from its mission at the top.

Still, the principal problem is not the performance of the military but the priorities of the country's political leaders.

The government would much rather draw attention, within and outside of Nigeria, [toward progress on economic growth](#) and the country's investment potential, rather than toward lawlessness and a relentless insurgency.

As it happens, Nigeria was preparing to host the prestigious World Economic Forum in Abuja just as the global media started arriving to cover that much less flattering narrative.

Despite the government's hope for positive publicity, the story from Nigeria, which recently took the title of Africa's largest economy, was its gaping security failings.

The government's credibility is deeply eroded. The military has a history of reporting great battle-field successes that have never happened. A few years ago it announced a major victory, claiming it had killed Boko Haram's leader, Abubakr Shekau. On the day after the Chibok event, the military announced that all but eight of the girls had been freed. Both announcements were patently false. Most of the girls are still missing, and Shekau is alive.

The reality is that Nigeria's army has been fighting Boko Haram for half a decade without success. The campaign has been marked by brutality on both sides, the kind of tactics that turn a population against the government, even when the people despise the extremists. Nigeria would benefit from international assistance with surveillance and intelligence. But until now anti-colonial sentiment and fears over sovereignty made it reluctant to accept much more than cash, [which can be easily stolen](#), and often is.

But a more fundamental problem prevented quick action on the kidnapping. The government was not sure the event had really happened. First lady Patience Goodluck [accused protesters](#) of fabricating the story to tarnish her husband's image.

In fact, this incident and other Boko Haram attacks have become fodder for political battles between the opposition and the president.

Nigeria is about to enter campaign season, with presidential elections scheduled for February 2015. Jonathan has not announced his candidacy but is widely expected to seek re-election. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) has won every election in Nigeria's brief democratic history. As the political ground has settled, the opposition appears to have solidified into a more credible threat to Jonathan's re-election. Opposition parties have joined forces under the All Progressive Congress (APC) banner. The president and his PDP are worried about next year's vote.

Against this backdrop, both political blocs have been using the actions of Boko Haram for political gain, and both have viewed the latest crisis through the prism of politics.

The president may have genuinely doubted whether or not it was Boko Haram that carried out the attack, or whether it ever really happened. Those doubts were erased after Boko Haram's Shekau [released a wild, rambling videotape](#) vowing to sell the girls on direct orders from God. For the APC, the mayhem created by Boko Haram serves as evidence that the PDP is not governing effectively. For the PDP, the APC's willingness to use the story proves it will do anything to undermine the government.

In addition, the people of the northeast, one of the country's most impoverished areas and where Boko Haram operates, are not part of Jonathan's base. The president comes from the country's oil-rich, Christian-majority south. Initially, he had little to gain in terms of garnering votes in the state of Borno, where the kidnapping took place, and other surrounding areas plagued by the insurgency, which are predominantly Muslim. Even with a successful rescue he was unlikely to win political support there.

But the sudden prominence of the case and the fury engendered by the president's neglectful approach have completely changed the equation.

Now Jonathan stands to lose much more. The country and the presidency are now under a withering, sharply unflattering spotlight. The fate of the kidnapped girls initially seemed unrelated to the current government's fortunes. That has now changed dramatically, making it impossible for Nigeria's president to resist pressure to try to find the kidnapped students.

It took much too long for action, but now Nigeria's government has no choice but to do what it can to save the girls. □

TERRORIST DESIGNATION WAS UNHELPFUL AGAINST BOKO HARAM

BY KATHY GILSINAN

MAY 14, 2014

As the U.S. considers how to help Nigeria rescue some 276 schoolgirls [kidnapped by the militant group Boko Haram](#) a month ago, domestic political attention is turning to the question of what the U.S. could have done ahead of time. In particular, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has come under fire for declining to add Boko Haram to the State Department's list of designated foreign terrorist organizations, or FTO list. The implication is that the U.S. had an opportunity to prevent the kidnapping, and that the FTO list would have helped.

Secretary of State John Kerry did eventually add Boko Haram to the list last November, after what the New York Times [called at the time](#) “a spirited debate inside and outside the government” and “increasing pressure from Congress, particularly Republicans, to list the group.”

The FTO list has three basic membership requirements. To qualify, an organization must be foreign, must “engage in terrorist activity” and through such activity must threaten the United States. During the “spirited debate” about listing Boko Haram taking place in 2012, the group was certainly both foreign and terrorist, but it's not clear it represented a threat to the United States.

The group now known as Boko Haram formed around 2002 and soon began waging a series of attacks against the Nigerian government, military and civilians, with the aim of “purifying” the country, [according to a report](#) on the group from the United States Institute of Peace. It did not initially demonstrate much interest in attacking Western targets. It wasn't until nearly a decade later, in August 2011, that Boko Haram caught international attention with a suicide attack on the United Nations compound in Abuja that killed 23 people.

But even then it was not clear Boko Haram represented a threat to U.S. national security as such. “Senior politicians in Nigeria told me at the time the attack on the U.N. headquarters in Abuja was probably meant to internationalize Boko Haram's struggle—and it failed to do so,” says Carl LeVan, an Africa scholar and assistant professor at American University's School of International Service, in an email interview.

It's also important to note, [as Sadika Hameed and I did](#) in a co-authored commentary on the September 2012 FTO designation of the Haqqani Network in Afghanistan, that the relevant law at no point requires the secretary of state to designate an organization that unambiguously meets all three criteria. The law has built-in flexibility for the secretary of state to exercise discretion, precisely because FTO designation forecloses other options for dealing with a foreign terrorist group. The Congressional Research Service [has explained that](#) “competing priorities” regarding a group, such as a desire to negotiate or hold FTO designation in reserve as leverage, inform this calculus.

The relevant question then is whether FTO designation is the appropriate means to the narrow end of limiting a foreign terrorist group's ability to threaten U.S. interests. In the case of the Taliban,

for instance, which unlike Boko Haram easily meets all three statutory requirements for designation, the administration has evidently judged that it does not want to foreclose the negotiation option and so has left the group off the list.

With regard to Boko Haram, LeVan and a number of other Africa scholars [laid out the priorities](#) weighing against FTO designation in a May 2012 letter to Clinton. Not only would FTO designation elevate Boko Haram's international prestige, they wrote, it would actually make it more difficult to address the root causes of Nigeria's violence. "If economic development is to play a role in alleviating tensions in northern Nigeria, we should not hamper access by [the United States Agency for International Development] or private NGOs in providing aid and assistance in the region," they wrote. "Should Boko Haram be designated an FTO through this regime, it would be illegal for nongovernmental organizations to interact with members of Boko Haram even if the purpose of such contact was to persuade them to renounce violence."

Then-Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Johnnie Carson seems to have used similar reasoning. In addition to the possible recruitment boost Boko Haram might get from FTO designation, the move "might suggest that the United States was supportive of some of the harsh treatment meted out by Nigerian security forces carrying out human rights violations," [he told](#) Politico Magazine's Michael Hirsh.

In any event, Boko Haram had been on the FTO list for almost five months prior to staging the kidnapping in April. Legally, the listing made the group subject to travel bans and the freezing of its U.S. assets and made it a crime for U.S. entities to conduct business with it. But Boko Haram seems not to have done much business with American banks or individuals. "Boko Haram was not traveling here, and as far as I knew there was not anybody here who was identified as a supporter of Boko Haram," Carson told Hirsh.

Given the mismatch between Boko Haram's resources and the actual effects of FTO designation, it's clear why listing the group did not prevent the kidnapping or do much of anything else. "Given the Nigerian government's refusal to accept international assistance until protesters took to the streets last week, it's hard to say that the FTO designation has had much of a tactical impact," says LeVan.

In other words, though the question of Boko Haram's FTO designation is likely to remain a political football in Washington, the listing has done little to hurt the group in Nigeria, and might have limited U.S. options in the fight against it. □

Regional Role

NIGERIA-SOUTH AFRICA TENSIONS LEAVE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP GAP

BY CHRIS LANDSBERG

APRIL 18, 2012

Relations between South Africa and Nigeria have long resembled a rollercoaster without a safety bar. While Africa's first- and third-largest economies, respectively, have for long stretches shared a close relationship, it is one marked by volatility and tension. And during the past three years, this critical bilateral relationship has begun to wobble dangerously, finding itself today in need of urgent détente.

Nigeria has long seen itself as a leader in Africa, having played a championing role in the anti-apartheid struggle, while South Africa sees itself [an exemplar of both democracy](#) and the conduct of international relations. After a history of tensions due to the apartheid regime in South Africa and the dictatorship in Nigeria, bilateral ties reached a zenith between 1999 and 2008, when the governments of Thabo Mbeki in South Africa and Olesugun Obasanjo in Nigeria articulated grand continental ambitions, including the twin goals of stabilizing and democratizing Africa. Both governments came to the realization that the continent's marginalization and underdevelopment could only be reversed if countries like Nigeria and South Africa acted together in a kind of "Concert of Africa," a latter-day version of the 19th-century European hegemonic alliance system.

During this period, Nigeria and South Africa were pivotal in engaging the outside world, especially the G-8, in search of a strategic partnership between the continent and the industrialized states. They openly attempted to play a bridging role between Africa and the Global North, with the two countries' leaders considering this vital for the success of the newly re-formed African Union and its New Partnership for African Development. Increasingly, Nigeria and South Africa saw themselves as "problem solvers" in world affairs, particularly with regard to advancing African development, peace and security.

From 2005 onward, however, the relationship weakened due to tensions over how to respond to Zimbabwe in 2003-2004 and the contest for permanent African seats on the U.N. Security Council. After Mbeki and Obsanjo left office, the relationship between the two African giants went from bad to worse, and during the 2009-2012 period Abuja felt abandoned by Pretoria. By 2010, the tensions had become so serious that the two states cancelled celebrations of the South Africa-Nigeria Binational Commission, signalling that the two Africans pivots had become rivals.

The tensions in the relationship came to a head during the 2011 NATO war against Libya. Both countries, in their capacity as nonpermanent members of the U.N. Security Council, voted in favor of resolutions 1970 and 1973, which instituted punitive sanctions, an arms embargo and a no-fly zone over Libya. However, they were soon at loggerheads when South Africa accused NATO of abusing the U.N. mandate for regime-change purposes, refused to recognize the National Transition Council (NTC) as the legitimate representatives of the Libyan people and dragged its feet over unfreezing assets for the NTC. While Nigeria also criticized the NATO intervention following the UNSC votes, it soon aligned itself with the P-3 position, recognizing the NTC and going

along with the decision to unfreeze assets. Nigeria also encouraged other African states to follow its example instead of the South African position.

Beyond Libya, the two governments differed vehemently over how Cote d'Ivoire's electoral crisis needed to be resolved, with Nigeria opposing French and U.N. military intervention. Nigeria has also not taken kindly to South Africa being [the only African member in the BRICS formation](#) and the G-20, with the de facto status of African spokesperson that both confer. Along with other African states, Nigeria has felt that South Africa is not well-placed to represent the interests of the continent and that Pretoria's interests should not be conflated with those of the continent at large.

By the beginning of 2012, tensions once more boiled over when Nigerian Foreign Minister Olugbenga Ashiru openly accused South Africa of being xenophobic toward Nigerians after 125 Nigerians were deported home from South Africa. Ashiru angrily asserted that this move fueled "the irritation between our two countries," prompting Pretoria to issue an unprecedented apology.

Apart from their geopolitical disagreements, the countries' presidents are both embroiled in domestic fights for political survival, with South Africa's Jacob Zuma in an internecine battle with the African National Congress Youth League, and Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan under pressure to quell domestic unrest [sparked by his attempt to curb fuel subsidies](#), deadly conflict between Muslim and Christian groups [and Boko Haram terrorism](#). Against this backdrop, any idealistic hopes of facilitating and strengthening cooperation between the two countries in the areas of African peace, security and stability have taken a back seat. Worse still, the leadership struggles are playing out at a time when there is a desperate need for strategic leadership on the part of Africa's two anchor states.

South Africa and Nigeria need to restore their African Concert, for if they are strong Africa is strong, and conversely, if they are weak so is Africa. Since 2009, the relationship has deteriorated to the point that the two states are hardly on speaking terms. The two could begin by resorting to old-fashioned diplomacy to increase contacts and consultations over both bilateral and multilateral relations. It is imperative that these pivotal African states restore their entente cordiale and take the lead in restoring efficiency and effectiveness in the African Union and other continental organizations. □

CAN NIGERIA AND TURKEY SERVE AS REGIONAL POLICEMEN?

BY RICHARD GOWAN

JUNE 24, 2013

Can regional powers replace the U.S. and Europe in policing perennial trouble spots such as the Middle East and West Africa? Or are their own weaknesses going to create new problems for the West? Recent events in Turkey and Nigeria have illustrated the dilemmas involved. Both countries have faced very different internal security challenges in recent months. Nigeria has tried to extirpate the Boko Haram Islamist rebel group [with a major military offensive](#) in the northeast of the country. Turkey has made a mess of handling [widespread public protests](#) stemming from arguments over a popular park in Istanbul.

These episodes are hardly comparable in terms of their human costs. The Turkish crackdown has claimed a handful of lives. These fatalities were unnecessary, but the figures pale in comparison to the estimated 3,000 killed in Nigeria's battle with Boko Haram since 2010. Yet both cases have earned notably firm expressions of concern from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. Turkey has also been slapped down by the European Union. While basic human rights issues are clearly at stake, strategic concerns are also in play.

Western strategists have invested increasing hopes in these regional powers in recent years. The rise of Brazil, China and India may have more far-reaching implications for global order. But there has been a creeping recognition that these states are still surprisingly ill-prepared to handle problems such as the collapse of Syria or the rise of Islamists in Mali. There has been some excitement among U.N. experts that China is prepared to send 600 personnel to the new U.N. peacekeeping force in Mali, for example, but such a commitment remains a token gesture.

That leaves middleweight champions to handle security duties. In East Africa, for example, Ethiopia has played a major—if sometimes rather murky—part in managing Somalia and keeping the peace between Sudan and South Sudan. The Turks and Nigerians have developed even more prominent roles in their respective backyards.

In the Syrian case, the U.S. and its European NATO allies have worked closely with Ankara, and it has often been argued that a Turkish intervention could end the crisis. Turkish officials have been wary of military action, but they have played along with the West by talking up options including a humanitarian buffer zone in northern Syria or aid corridors since 2011. Western diplomats have also encouraged the Turks to help manage Iraq after the U.S. exit and prodded them to agree to a long-term stabilizing role in Afghanistan.

Nigeria, although not quite so central to Western interests, has found itself in a similar role as a go-to regional hegemonic power. Nigerian forces have previously deployed to stabilize countries such as Liberia. And after France intervened militarily to block an Islamist offensive in Mali, Nigeria deployed troops to assist. Unfortunately they only had supplies to last for a few days.

Despite these difficulties, Turkey and Nigeria have looked like natural allies for the West in their respective regions. Both are, at least on the surface, inclusive democracies. Both have substantial military capabilities, at least by regional standards. Both need to balance the riches of energy resources, including rents on oil and gas pipelines in Turkey's case, with threats from divisive ethnic politics and, in Nigeria's case, violent Islamist groups.

These compound challenges haven't made these new middle powers easy to work with. Prior to the Arab Awakening, Turkey wanted to carve out a distinctive role in the Middle East, partially distancing itself from the West. Gestures in this direction included trying to open a special channel with Iran and taking a tough line on Israel. Ankara further infuriated its Western partners with its dovish approach in the first days of the Libyan war. But Moammar Gadhafi's fall in Libya and the chaos in Syria have reset diplomacy between Turkey and its Western allies. Ankara has continued to move closer to the West as Syria has exploded. To reward and reinforce Turkey's new posture, NATO deployed Patriot air-defense missiles to the country in January 2013.

Nigeria has worked with the West not only to deal with crises in West Africa but also to legitimize Western policies elsewhere. It was a member of the Security Council in 2010 and 2011, and supported Western positions on crises including those in Cote d'Ivoire, Libya and Syria. Analysts believed that Nigeria was trying to replace South Africa—which was also on the Security Council in 2011-2012 but took an ever more tortured attitude to events in Libya and Syria—as the West's partner of choice in Africa.

But now these strategic relationships look tenuous. Nigeria's internal strife has international policymakers on edge. Even if Boko Haram can be crushed militarily, there is a growing recognition that the Nigerian government will need to spend time and money on sorting out its internal challenges rather than stabilizing its neighbors. And while Turkey will still be central to any settlement in Syria, the clashes that erupted in Istanbul mean that Ankara may struggle to devote itself to events on its southern border this year and possibly next. It has become obvious that the middle powers the West nominated as regional policemen need to improve their internal policing instead.

Nigeria and Turkey will remain central to Western strategic calculations in their regions. But there will be an increasing recognition that their internal problems may limit their external clout. The apparently easy option of outsourcing security duties to Ankara and Abuja may create as many difficulties as it resolves. □

NORTH AND WEST AFRICA SEEK TO JUMPSTART REGIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

BY LESLEY ANNE WARNER

MAY 14, 2014

Over the course of the past year, there has been a cascade of African-led initiatives to increase security cooperation in the Sahel and Maghreb regions. While such initiatives are a function of the enduring imperative for states there to develop a more robust regional response to counter nonstate transnational threats, such as al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other violent extremist organizations, Sahel and Maghreb states may yet struggle to let go of some of the baggage that had impeded previous regional cooperation efforts.

Prior to the 2012-2013 Mali crisis, mistrust among regional partners had hampered efforts to convince countries like Mali, Mauritania, Algeria and Niger [to increase cooperation against AQIM](#). As AQIM increasingly began to operate in northern Mali, for instance, some states in the region became concerned by allegations that the Malian government had an unspoken agreement with the group, whereby Mali gave AQIM free reign to operate in the north so long as the group shared revenues from illicit trafficking with the Malian government and its northern allies, and refrained from launching attacks in Bamako. Under the pre-coup government of President Amadou Toumani Toure, allegations that Mali's security and intelligence services would alert AQIM to imminent Malian-Mauritanian operations in the Ouagadougou forest had already created a disincentive for regional partners to share sensitive information with the Malian government.

In addition, the 40-year standoff between Algeria and Morocco [over the status of Western Sahara](#) has been another impediment to regional collaboration, as the dispute is the prism through which Morocco views its foreign affairs and through which Algeria views all Moroccan actions. Arguing that Sahelian security issues do not concern Morocco, Algeria [has refrained](#) from inviting Morocco to participate in regional counterterrorism efforts, such as the Algiers-based African Center for Studies and Research on Terrorism, which has convened countries in the region, with the exception of Morocco, in ministerial-level discussions of the threat posed by AQIM.

Nevertheless, some regional cooperation had already begun to take shape before the Mali crisis. In 2010, Mali, Algeria, Mauritania and Niger established the Joint Operational General Staff Committee in Tamanrasset, in southern Algeria, in order to facilitate a harmonized regional approach to AQIM and encourage closer communication and collaboration. Despite being staffed by combined military personnel, however, the military command center [was perceived as a paper tiger](#) with limited impact, [playing no significant role](#) in regional counterterrorism activity.

As a result, since 2013, three initiatives have attempted to fill the vacuum.

The Nouakchott Process was launched in March 2013 in cooperation with Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. [Its goals were](#) to facilitate security cooperation through intelligence-sharing, to improve border control and to operationalize the African Union's African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahel-Sahara

region. Members of the Nouakchott Process plan to assess the capacity-building needs of extant national and regional structures, and [are considering concepts](#) of operation for joint patrols and mixed units to more effectively address terrorism and transnational organized crime. Additionally, states in the region [seek to establish a secretariat](#) in Niamey to facilitate the coordination of the Nouakchott Process under the leadership of the African Union High Representative for Mali and the Sahel.

In February 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger established the “[G-5 du Sahel](#)” based in Mauritania. The purpose of this group is to better coordinate security and development initiatives across the region, including the management of the roughly \$11 million that the international community pledged to the region at the end of last year.

Most recently, military and defense chiefs from the Lake Chad Basin Commission countries—Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger, Nigeria and Libya—met in Yaounde in March 2014 [to discuss the creation of a multinational task force](#) for the region, to be headquartered in Borno state in Nigeria. Although a joint task force had been established in 1998, it was never fully operational, and previous efforts to make it operational had not gotten off the ground. The initial mandate of a revived Lake Chad Basin Task Force would be to address transnational threats in the region by conducting military operations to counter arms trafficking and impede the mobility of terrorist groups across state borders.

All of these efforts continue to face considerable obstacles. While many Maghreb states are undergoing periods of post-Arab Awakening transition, there [is still a significant difference](#) in the internal security capacity of North African states when compared with the Sahelian states. The military, police and judicial institutions of countries like Algeria and Morocco have been much more developed and professionalized than those of countries like Mali and Niger, leading to the perception on the part of Maghreb states that Sahelian states are not capable of pulling their weight.

Countries in the region also may not have the bandwidth to cooperate with regional partners due to other drivers of instability. For example, in the past decade alone, there have been rebellions in Niger and Mali between 2007 and 2009, in Chad in 2008, and in Mali again in 2012. In addition, there have been unconstitutional seizures of power in Mauritania in 2005 and 2008, and in Niger and Mali in 2010 and 2012, respectively.

While some of the challenges to regional security cooperation are bound to remain, these recent initiatives nevertheless demonstrate a heightened recognition in the region that a collective, home-grown response to terrorism may reduce the region’s dependency on Western intervention. Should they mature from statements of intention into actual actions, such regional cooperation initiatives could provide focal points for bilateral, regional and international organizations to plug into, potentially adding legitimacy to U.S.- or European-initiated approaches to the region. □

NIGER, NIGERIA STEP UP COOPERATION AGAINST BOKO HARAM

BY JACOB ZENN

OCT. 31, 2012

On Oct. 18, the foreign ministers of Niger and Nigeria signed a defense pact in Niger's capital, Niamey, establishing joint border patrols along their 930-mile border. The pact also envisions infrastructure projects, including road construction and potential rail links to connect the two countries, as well as renewed efforts to re-demarcate the border. President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger announced the deal [in a French-language Twitter post](#) on Oct. 24, declaring that, from now on, "whoever attacks Niger, attacks Nigeria."

In the communiqué launching the pact, both countries' heads of state, Issoufou and Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, expressed their concern about the danger posed to the subregion by international terrorism, "namely al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Boko Haram and other weapons- and drug-trafficking criminal organizations that constitute a significant threat to the peace and stability within the whole of the West African region."

The conclusion of the defense pact took on heightened urgency amid fears that Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria are crossing over into southern Niger to escape the Nigerian security forces' crackdown on the group. [Under Operation Restore Sanity](#), launched in September, Nigerian security forces conducted a series of night raids and house-to-house searches in major northern cities, uncovering weapons and ammunition stockpiles, arresting more than 200 Boko Haram members and capturing or killing five high-ranking commanders.

As a result of the crackdown, Boko Haram members are likely to retreat to other parts of northern Nigeria or flee into Niger and Cameroon, as they did during similar crackdowns in 2004 and 2009. At the height of the operation, on Sept. 27, Niger arrested five members of a Boko Haram cell in Zinder, southern Niger's largest city located just 150 miles from northern Nigeria's commercial capital, Kano. This was the first time since January that Boko Haram members had been arrested in Niger, and it came amid reports of Boko Haram members, some of them government officials, [training at camps in Niger](#) or [transiting the country](#) in order to join insurgents from AQIM, Ansar Dine and the Movement for Oneness and Unity in Jihad, who control northern Mali in a loose coalition.

Talks on the just-signed defense pact began in 2008, about two years [before the Boko Haram insurgency took root in Nigeria](#). Boko Haram is based in northeastern Nigeria's Yobe and Borno states, both of which border Niger, but has now spread to all corners of the majority-Muslim region of northern Nigeria. In July, for instance, the group carried out attacks in Sokoto state in northwestern Nigeria, 900 miles from its main area of operations in Borno state, but just 160 miles from Niamey.

The Taliban-inspired insurgency's goal is to "dismantle" the Nigerian government and replace it with an Islamic state. [The group's most common targets](#) are government offices and police stations;

political and religious leaders who disagree with Boko Haram's goals and tactics; "non-Islamic" institutions, such as beer and poker halls; and Christian churches. In a noteworthy development, however, on Oct. 20, two Boko Haram members [assassinated a Cameroonian mayor](#) who had been meeting with a Nigerian security official in Borno state over border security issues. This was the first time that Boko Haram had targeted a foreign official for cooperating with Nigeria to suppress the insurgency.

Previous crackdowns on Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria have also had a harmful impact on border trade. In January, for instance, following a Christmas Day bombing by the group of a church outside of Abuja, Nigeria closed off Borno state's borders with Niger and Cameroon. As a result, border trade in the already impoverished region was shut down, further weakening the local economy while strengthening one of the pull factors -- lack of economic opportunity -- that draws locals from Niger, Cameroon and Nigeria to join the insurgency. Boko Haram [offers \\$30 for each security officer](#) that its members kill and \$60 if militants can steal the officer's weapon, while bank robberies have reaped hundreds of thousands of dollars in revenue for the group and its militants.

The breadth of the new defense agreement between Nigeria and Niger is therefore crucial, as it envisions not only joint patrols to prevent Boko Haram members from exploiting the border region, but also infrastructure development to improve transportation links. This will help shore up the local economy in northern Nigeria and southern Niger, which has suffered as a result of the insecurity caused by Boko Haram as well as [from the introduction of cheap Chinese goods and textiles](#) in local markets.

The main obstacle to implementation of the pact will be funding, an issue that was not addressed in the agreement. This is where Western governments have a key role to play. In August, when U.S. Secretary of State Clinton met with Jonathan in Nigeria, she discussed the problem of weapons and explosives smuggling along the Niger-Nigeria border and the potential for Boko Haram to destabilize other countries in the subregion. Other State Department officials suggested that the United States could help Nigeria to monitor and [identify the individuals who are supporting Boko Haram](#). Any logistical and financial support provided by the West must also address the underlying factors driving instability in the region, including building up local economies as part of a regional counterterrorism strategy.

The success of this and other regional security initiatives will also depend on the willingness of countries in West Africa to overcome their mutual suspicions, particularly regarding Nigeria. In the past, Nigeria's Francophone neighbors feared that any regional security initiative would bolster Nigeria's hegemonic ambitions in West Africa. For now, however, the threat from Boko Haram and the crisis in Mali seem to have overridden these concerns. □

WEST AFRICA TURNS LIMITED RESOURCES TO ADDRESSING PIRACY IN GULF OF GUINEA

BY JAMES M. BRIDGER

JULY 9, 2013

Maritime crime and disorder have plagued the Gulf of Guinea for decades, as weak and corrupt maritime security regimes emboldened thieves, smugglers and traffickers to exploit the littoral realm. The bountiful vessels serving Nigeria's oil fields have presented a particular brand of pirates with a lucrative array of targets. With piracy no longer confined to Nigerian waters, however, West and Central African states have now recognized piracy as a regional crisis, as highlighted by a June 24-25 summit in Yaounde, Cameroon, to address the issue.

"No country can withstand the growing challenges individually. That is why we agreed to put our efforts together to end the illicit activities in the Gulf of Guinea," [proclaimed Chadian President Idriss Deby](#). This shared concern brought representatives from 22 states together to draft a Code of Conduct concerning the prevention of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illicit maritime activity. The new code is based on agreements credited with reducing piracy off the Horn of Africa and in Southeast Asia, but the economic, political and security environment of the Gulf of Guinea presents a unique set of challenges.

Nigerian piracy declined significantly after a 2009 government amnesty offered cash and security contracts to Niger Delta militants in exchange for them laying down arms against the state and foreign oil companies. While [incidents of vessel robbery](#) and [kidnapping](#) have again risen in the Niger Delta, the more worrying development is the hijacking and full-scale pilfering of oil tankers that has spread across the Gulf of Guinea. Operating out of western Nigeria, criminal syndicates with high-level political and economic patrons are targeting specific tankers for hijacking, offloading their cargo to secondary vessels and then selling the product on a lucrative black market. This new modus operandi first appeared off the coast of Benin in late-2010 and subsequently spread to Togo and Cote d'Ivoire.

The spike in tanker attacks [has prompted Lloyd's Market Association](#), a London-based group of insurance underwriters, to add the waters of Benin, Togo and Nigeria to their high-risk area where additional war risk premiums are charged. In total, [the Oceans Beyond Piracy](#) (.pdf) think tank estimates that West African piracy inflicted between \$740 million and \$950 million in direct costs on the global economy in 2012, while [a recent symposium of regional experts](#) contends that the surrounding countries are bleeding \$2 billion annually in lost revenue.

West Africa has now reached a tipping point, like East Africa and Southeast Asia before it, where the geographic expansion of pirate activity demands a coordinated response. The original model is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), an organization drafted by 16 states in 2004 [that is credited](#) (.pdf) with reversing the spike in Asian piracy that coincided with the 2009 global economic downturn. ReCAAP subsequently served as the baseline for the creation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, an agreement signed by 20 African and Arab states to combat Somali piracy that has succeeded in harmonizing

piracy laws, resulting in a higher percentage of arrested pirates now being tried and prosecuted in regional courts.

Influenced by these previous agreements, the Gulf of Guinea's new Code of Conduct calls on signatories to: share and report relevant information; interdict vessels suspected of engaging in illegal activities; ensure those committing such acts are apprehended and prosecuted; and facilitate the care and repatriation of seafarers subject to illegal activity.

Most notably, the West and Central African leaders agreed to create a regional maritime security center, based in Cameroon, that will facilitate the sharing of maritime intelligence and research among governments. Such a center is desperately needed as upward of 60 percent of pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea go unreported, obstructing regional authorities from knowing who the gangs are and where they operate.

The low economic and security capacity that characterizes much of West and Central Africa will be a major obstacle for the new counter piracy regime. The smaller states are attempting to hold the line with a handful of dilapidated patrol boats, while even Nigeria, which boasts the region's largest navy, only has an estimated 28 percent of its ships operational at any given time. In terms of force multiplying, Nigeria has engaged in joint patrols with Benin since 2011, but there is little indication that these types of operations will encompass additional states.

To address this security deficiency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is establishing a trust fund that will allow donor states to offset the cost of capacity-building programs in the Gulf of Guinea. The U.S. and Norway have been notable supporters of the IMO's ongoing programs in the region, and the European Union would do well to coordinate its new maritime security capacity-building project through the same channels as well.

What further international support the agreement will receive is unclear. At the summit, Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara called on the international community "to show the same firmness in the Gulf of Guinea as displayed in the Gulf of Aden, where the presence of international naval forces has helped to drastically reduce acts of piracy." One must be careful about reading this statement as a call for foreign naval deployment, however. The Code of Conduct explicitly references the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states and that of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other states.

The fact that internal conditions within Nigeria have enabled the growth of organized piracy in the Gulf of Guinea highlights the limitations that a security-centric organization will face in combating the crime. Moreover, the implementation of many aspects of the Gulf of Guinea's new Code of Conduct remains uncertain. However, the agreement is a welcome starting point. Insufficient maritime security capacity, a dearth of reporting and information sharing and the absence of regional cooperation all helped Nigeria's gangs extend their reach into neighboring waters. It is only by regional states addressing these issues collectively that they will be rolled back. □

BETTER INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION NEEDED TO COMBAT RISING WEST AFRICAN PIRACY

BY JAMES M. BRIDGER

APRIL 2, 2013

Nigeria is no stranger to maritime disorder. In the mid- to late-2000s, the political and criminal insurgency waged by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) [cost the country an estimated \\$1.5 billion](#) in lost annual revenue through oil theft, attacks against petroleum infrastructure and piracy. A measure of peace arrived in 2009, when the government in Abuja introduced an amnesty program that provided skills training and cash stipends for some 26,000 former militants and rewarded their leaders with lucrative security contracts.

By 2011, however, a new kind of maritime crime was emerging in the region: the short-term hijacking of oil tankers and subsequent theft and black market sale of their multimillion-dollar cargos. Though the syndicates responsible are based in Nigeria, the first tankers targeted were in the waters of neighboring Benin, [where at least 20 such vessels were attacked in 2011](#) (.pdf). The following year the new piracy model had moved to the littoral of Togo, where the International Maritime Bureau recorded 15 similar attacks in 2012. The pirates have now extended their operations further westward [into the waters of Côte d'Ivoire](#), where two tankers have already been hijacked and pilfered this year.

While large-scale cargo theft is new to the region, the Niger Delta has also witnessed a resurgence in kidnappings. In the past four months, six vessels have been boarded and 24 expatriate sailors taken hostage for ransom. Meanwhile, [the use of hijacked vessels as offshore motherships](#) has allowed pirates to conduct attacks up to 90 nautical miles from the coast, well outside the range of local security forces.

Those behind this new wave of piracy and oil theft have dropped the political and social grievances associated with MEND and are now functioning as a highly lucrative criminal enterprise. Pirate gangs [are reportedly "sponsored by powerful people,"](#) including Nigerian government officials and oil industry executives, who provide financing and information about the cargo, route and security detail of targeted vessels. Further internationalizing the Nigeria-based operations are nationals from neighboring countries [recruited for their local knowledge](#) and political connections, and alleged Lebanese and Russian criminal interests that [help facilitate the black market sale of stolen cargo](#). In this sense, piracy is entwining with other forms of transnational organized crime in West Africa, including weapons trafficking, human and drug smuggling and illegal fishing.

The resulting maritime insecurity is fast becoming a developmental crisis for the Gulf of Guinea's littoral states. The U.S. consul-general in Lagos, Nigeria, Jeffrey Hawkins, recently remarked that [the deteriorating maritime security environment has become](#) "a major disincentive for foreign direct investment and a major burden to ships which have to travel through the region in convoy."

In terms of national response, Nigeria's Joint Task Force [has a mandate to suppress piracy, oil theft and pipeline vandalism](#) in the Niger Delta. While these operations [have had some success at](#)

destroying illegal refineries and seizing vessels carrying stolen oil, they face a number of impediments. The campaign against Boko Haram and other jihadi splinter groups in northern Nigeria draws precious military resources away from naval forces, meaning that joint maritime operations usually amount to intermittent sweeps, rather than a continuous patrol presence. Even when suspected pirates are captured, they are rarely prosecuted, as the JTF lacks the authority to do so. Most importantly, entrenched corruption in the security services, judicial system and at all levels of government shields the kingpins of the “oil mafias” from arrest and trial.

Outside of Nigeria, the level of maritime security capacity is even lower, as neighboring states have only a handful of patrol boats among them. The Economic Community of West African States is positioning itself to develop a regional maritime strategy but “is hampered by political tensions and distrust of neighboring states toward Nigeria,” according to a recent International Crisis Group report. Only Nigeria and Benin have thus far engaged in joint patrols.

Recognizing the threat posed to regional peace and security, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 2018 (.pdf) in 2011, which called on the international community to assist littoral states in the Gulf of Guinea through “information sharing, coordination improvement and capacity building.” The U.S. has taken the lead in this endeavor and now runs two annual multinational training and information-sharing exercises in West Africa as part of the Navy’s Africa Partnership Station (APS) program. The European Union recently launched a similar initiative, the Critical Maritime Routes in the Gulf of Guinea Program, which will use a nearly \$6 million budget to help train regional coastguards and establish an information-sharing network. Individual states with interests in the region, such as the U.K., France and China, have also provided training, equipment and vessel procurement on an ad hoc basis.

These types of initiatives are commendable, but a crisis of multinational concern requires a more holistic approach. For international partners, there needs to be a greater emphasis on providing training in investigative police work, intelligence gathering and judicial procedure. Multiple plans to develop a regional intelligence-sharing center need to be better coordinated, and with haste, as very little is currently known about how many attacks occur or where the gangs responsible for them operate.

Intelligence sharing, multilateral naval patrols and agreements on hot pursuit into neighboring waters are impeded by local sovereignty concerns, but Southeast Asia’s Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia provides a model of how these issues can be overcome and the benefits of doing so.

Finally, one cannot forget that crimes at sea are a manifestation of political and economic conditions ashore. For Nigeria in particular, economic development in coastal areas, transparent management of the oil industry and anti-corruption efforts are as important to fighting piracy as naval patrols and should be supported by the international community with the same vigor. □

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