Nigeria

PROFILE

Key Features of Contemporary Nigeria

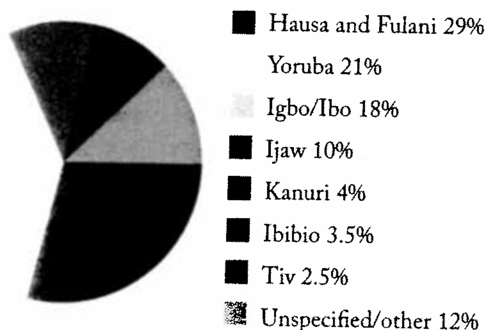
Population:	170,123,740 (estimate, July 2012)
Area:	923,768 square kilometers
Head of State:	Goodluck Jonathan (president, since 2010)
Head of Government:	Goodluck Jonathan (president, since 2010)
Capital:	Abuja
Year of Independence:	1960
Year of Current Constitution:	1999
Languages:	English (official), Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, many others
GDP per Capita:	$2,600 (estimated as of 2011)
Human Development Index Ranking (2011):	156 (low human development)

Sources: UN Human Development Reports, http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/; CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html.

Introduction

Nigeria is the largest country in Africa and has been subject to enduring interest among political scientists for several reasons. Of these, the two most important are that (1) it is a prominent example of the perils of oil dependence (Karl 1997) and (2) it has been the site of considerable inter-ethnic conflict. Indeed, these issues, discussed herein, are not unrelated. Also related are the relative weakness of Nigerian institutions, development problems the society has faced, and the lessons that Nigeria might offer about how political modernization can take place in a post-colonial society.

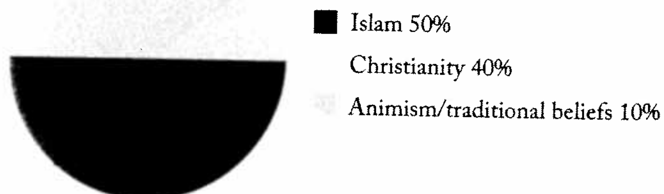
Yet Nigeria is much more than this. A country of great cultural diversity, Nigeria has provided the world with Nobel laureates and other artists, writers, and musicians. It is the largest society in Africa, and many believe that if it can overcome its history of underdevelopment and ethnic conflict, it would have great potential. Indeed, though there are many concerns, the country has been democratic for well over a decade, a source of considerable optimism.



Ethnic Groups in Nigeria

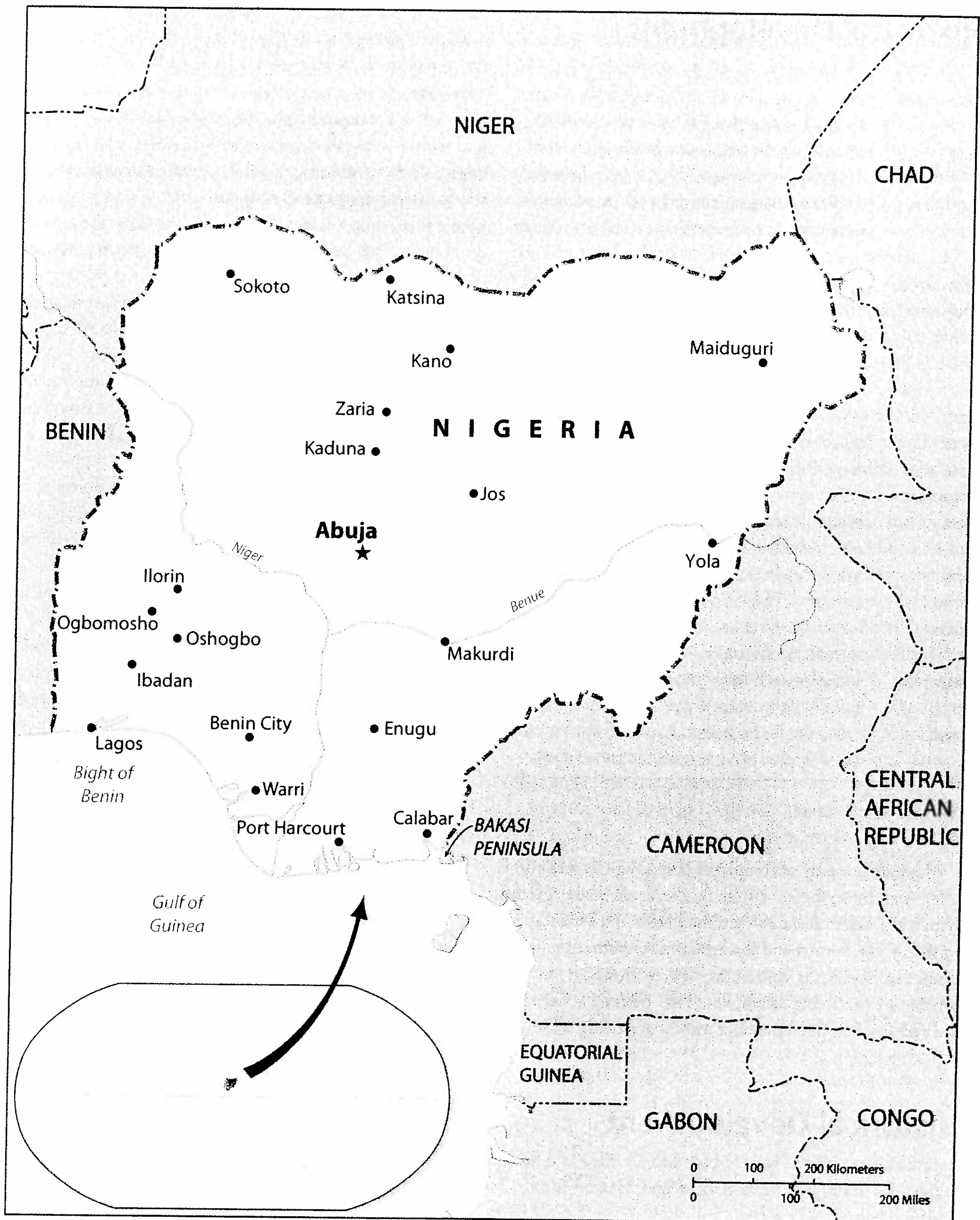
Note that the Nigerian population includes hundreds of ethnic groups, but these are the most numerous.

Source: CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html.



Religious Affiliation in Nigeria (estimates)

CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html.


NIGER
CHAD
Sokoto
Katsina
Kano
Maiduguri
Zaria
NIGERIA
BENIN
Kaduna
Jos
Abuja
Niger
Yola
Ilorin
Benue
Ogbomosho
Oshogbo
Makurdi
Ibadan
Benin City
Enugu
Lagos
Bight of Benin
Warri
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Calabar
Port Harcourt
BAKASI PENINSULA
CAMEROON
Gulf of Guinea
EQUATORIAL GUINEA
GABON
CONGO
0
100
200 Kilometers
0
100
200 Miles

Historical Development

Timeline

1500s–1800s	Period of slave trade along the coast of West Africa, including Nigeria; slaves are taken to the Americas.
1800s–	Period of initial establishment of British colonies in present-day Nigeria; Sokoto Caliphate governs many of the Hausa-Fulani groups in the north; smaller groups govern among Yoruba, Igbo, other groups in the south.
1850s–1900	Increasing colonization of Nigeria by Great Britain
1900–1919	Era of Lord Frederick Lugard, British administrator who establishes indirect rule using traditional authorities as intermediaries, and unifies colonies of Nigeria
1960	Independence from Great Britain
1966	Military coup overthrows civilian government.
1966–1975	Presidency of military leader Yakubu Gowon
1967–1970	Biafra War
1976	Assassination of military leader Murtala Mohammed (president, 1975–1976)
1979	Military leader Olusegun Obasanjo (1976–1979) turns power over to civilian Shehu Shagari.
1983	Military takes control again under Gen. Muhammadu Buhari.
1985–1993	Presidency of military leader Ibrahim Babangida; human rights abuses worsen.
1993	Military holds elections, but annuls them after apparent victory of businessman Moshood Abiola.
1993–1998	Presidency of Gen. Sani Abacha; corruption and human rights abuses reach their worst levels, with regular torture and execution of dissidents.
1995	Abacha regime executes political activist and author Ken Saro-Wiwa.
1998	Abacha dies suddenly in office, followed soon after by the sudden suspicious death of civilian rival Moshood Abiola.
1999	Nigeria returns to civilian rule under former general Olusegun Obasanjo.
2003	Obasanjo is reelected for a second term.
2007	Umaru Yar'Adua is elected president but is in grave health for most of his presidency.
2008–2011	Tensions worsen between northern Muslims and southern Christians.
2010	As many as one thousand people are killed in clashes between Christians and Muslims in the city of Jos and elsewhere in central Nigeria.
2010	Yar'Adua dies of natural causes; Vice President Goodluck Jonathan becomes president.
2011	Goodluck Jonathan is elected to full presidential term.
2011	Increased terrorist activity by Islamist extremist group Boko Haram, including deadly bombing of a UN compound in Abuja.

Nigeria's diversity encompasses both religious and ethnic difference. In terms of ethnicity, there are many groups, though the most prominent are the Hausa and Fulani in the north and the Yoruba and the Igbo in the south. In religious terms, the society is diverse as well, with about half the population practicing Islam, about 40 percent adhering to Christianity, and the remainder mostly practicing traditional African religions.

Historical Development

Before British colonial rule, Nigeria had a variety of different indigenous state structures (Falola and Heaton 2008). In northern Nigeria, where Islam had made its way from Arabia centuries earlier, there were relatively well-established states. Among the large population of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic groups—which today are the largest ethnic group in Nigeria—there were rather large and militarily capable units. In the south, where the Yoruba and Igbo peoples predominate in the southwest and southeast, respectively, people generally lived in smaller political groups such as villages or clusters of villages.

Interaction with Europe and the global economy took shape through early explorations by Europeans and the establishment of the slave trade along the coast of West Africa, including Nigeria. The Portuguese were the first to establish a trading post in the late 1400s and several other countries were later involved along the Nigerian coast. After

establishing authority through a combination of military intimidation and bargaining with local groups, European powers established a trade in which slaves were taken to the Americas.

The British ultimately became the principal force in Nigeria when in the 1800s the European powers undertook what came to be known as the "Scramble for Africa." The scramble was largely a land grab and a geopolitical contest between Great Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium, who staked their claims to dominate most of the territory on the continent; Germany claimed several territories as well, and Spain played a lesser role, with Italy staking claims only in the early twentieth century. These powers met at the Berlin Conference in 1884–1885 and divided the continent into colonial states. Many of the British colonies were in southern and eastern Africa, but Nigeria was the largest and most important colony in western Africa.

Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Britain increased the extent and depth of its colonization of Nigeria, slowly asserting authority over the vast land. This happened through a combination of military subjugation and negotiation with Nigerian leaders willing to collaborate with the British. The system came to be known as indirect rule (Falola and Heaton 2008: 110–116; Lange 2009; Dorward 1986: 402–404), because the British did not send large numbers of forces to occupy Nigeria, but rather sought to exert authority by using indigenous leaders as intermediaries with local populations; in a perversion of indigenous African forms of rule, this often involved the appointment of village chiefs and other customary leaders by the British administrative authorities. The system served the interests of the colonizers, but it set the tone for a long run of unaccountable government across much of Africa (cf. Mamdani 1996). By the time of the First World War, the Commissioner Frederick Lugard had established a form of indirect rule over nearly all of present-day Nigeria. He unified the northern and southern colonies into a single political unit, which formed the basis for today's nation-state, with its large size and its conflicts between regions.

As World War II came to an end, the European powers had increasing difficulty justifying their colonization in moral, economic, or political terms. Nationalists gained in prominence in most of the colonies (see discussion in Williams 1984 and Falola and Heaton 2008: 136–157), empowered in part by their learnings in Europe and the increasing recognition of the contributions Africans had made in the war. One of Nigeria's leading nationalists was Nnamdi Azikiwe, whose writings first became known in the 1930s. By the 1950s, it was clear that colonialism in Africa was on its last legs.

Nigeria achieved independence from Great Britain in 1960, alongside many neighboring countries who achieved independence from France that same year. It remained a dominion of the United Kingdom until 1963, meaning it remained part of the British Commonwealth and nominally considered the British monarch as a ceremonial head of state while retaining political independence and self-rule. The first post-independence government followed a British-style parliamentary system, but Nigeria became a federal republic in 1963, with the aforementioned Nnamdi Azikiwe as president. The principle of federalism was instituted, and the governing system divided power between the three regions of Nigeria: the Northern region, and the Western and Eastern regions in the southern half of the country.

Ethnic and regional tensions emerged early on, as the populous north came to dominate the parliament in vote split almost purely along regional and ethnic lines, and this resulted in a coup by elements of the military from the Igbo ethnicity in the Eastern region. The coup came to be known as the "Ibo coup." This characterization has been disputed, but the name stuck and signaled the increasing alienation of the Igbo from the northern Hausa-Fulani as well as the western Yoruba. Though the eventual military leader chosen as president, Yakubu Gowon, was from central Nigeria and was seen as a compromise selection, the tensions between Igbos and other groups worsened.

In 1967, the Nigerian Civil War (also known as the Biafra War) broke out, pitting the Eastern region and its Igbo majority against the federal government (Falola and Heaton 2008: 175–180). The conflict was over autonomy, with the Igbo seeking to establish the independent state of Biafra, but the hostility was lubricated by oil. Much of Nigeria's oil is found in the southeast, and the Igbo in the region argued that more of the resource should be turned into local development, rather than being redistributed to other parts of Nigeria. The federal government, meanwhile, wanted to retain the union but also the resources that oil guaranteed. After three years of bloody conflict in which over one million people died—mostly on the Igbo side—the federal government won the war, and Nigeria remained a single country.

The 1970s saw another succession of military rulers, with power passing to presidents Murtala Mohammed

(a northerner), who was assassinated, and then Olusegun Obasanjo (a southwestern Yoruba). Obasanjo ultimately proposed free elections and the establishment of a new republic, and turned power over to civilian leader Shehu Shagari, a northern Muslim. Shagari and the republic did not see out their term, however, as the military seized control again under General Muhammadu Buhari, citing extensive corruption and fraud under Shagari. Military rule continued under President Ibrahim Babangida, who ruled from 1985 to 1993, but governing conditions did not improve. In particular, corruption continued unabated despite the imprisonment of several high-ranking officials and the execution of violent criminals. While Babangida was initially popular, he came under pressure to redemocratize as a wave of democracy swept across Africa in the early 1990s.

The military held elections in 1993, but when prominent businessman Chief Moshood Abiola looked to be the victor, the military annulled the results. This paved the way for the presidency of military General Sani Abacha (for an overview of this period, see Falola and Heaton 2008: 229–234), who earned the dubious distinction of being the worst dictator in Nigeria's less-than-proud history of corrupt and authoritarian presidents. Corruption and human rights abuses reached their worst levels under Abacha. The regime stood accused of engaging in torture on a regular basis. It also executed dissidents, most notably the author Ken Saro-Wiwa and his colleagues, who had become prominent political activists of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, an environmental movement declaiming the degradation of air, water, and land in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta. During his reign, Abacha and his family were rumored to have accumulated several billion dollars in assets, though the exact amount squirreled away overseas has not been determined. In 1998, Abacha's rule came to a sudden end when he died in office. Rumors soon emerged that he was poisoned; the rumor gained in popularity when his death was soon followed by the sudden and suspicious death of Chief Moshood Abiola, presumptive winner of the 1993 elections.

After Abacha, a transitional military government under General Abdulsalami Abubakar moved to draft a new constitution, establish a new republic, and return Nigeria to civilian rule by 1999. In elections that year, former general and one-time military president Olusegun Obasanjo won the presidency handily. This Christian southerner selected a Muslim northerner as vice president and governed at the head of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which crafted a cross-ethnic coalition. Obasanjo remained relatively popular in Nigeria's challenging political environment and was reelected for a second term in 2003. He then ceded power in 2007 to another PDP president, the Muslim northerner Umaru Yar'Adua. Yar'Adua was ill for most of his presidency, and authority was largely exercised by Vice President Goodluck Jonathan after 2009. In 2010, Yar'Adua

Regime and Political Institutions

Regime	Federal republic, democratically elected since 1999
Administrative Divisions	Thirty-six states + Federal Capital Territory (Abuja)
Executive Branch	President
Selection of Executive	Direct election by national popular vote; runoff among top two candidates if none secures 50 percent in first round; to win in first round, candidate must also secure at least 25 percent of the vote in at least two-thirds of the states.
Legislative Branch	Bicameral Lower chamber: House of Representatives: Upper chamber: Senate
Judicial Branch	Supreme Court, appointed by president, confirmed by Senate
Political Party System	Multiparty, but with leading/dominant party Dominant party: People's Democratic Party (PDP)

died and Jonathan became president; he later won a full term of office running as an incumbent in 2011.

One political challenge that has emerged is the fact that Jonathan is a southerner. This has led some northerners to object that the south has had two turns at having recent presidents, with Obasanjo and Jonathan, while the north has had only one president in Yar'Adua, and that for less than one term. This is seen by some as breaking an unwritten rule that power should be systematically alternated between north and south to ensure stability. In this tense issue, it should be noted that Jonathan is a member of the Ijaw ethnic group, and not of the more numerous Yoruba or Igbo groups.

Ethnic and regional tensions have come to the fore again in recent years in Nigeria with a string of clashes between Christians and Muslims and with the emergence of Islamist fundamentalist groups. Much of the violence has occurred along the central belt of Nigeria, along the fault line between the Muslim-dominated north and the Christian-dominated south. In central states such as Plateau and Bauchi, more than one thousand people were killed in clashes in 2010. The city of Jos, capital of Plateau State, has been the biggest flash-point, but killings have happened in other cities, towns, and villages. Over these same years, the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram has emerged as a significant threat to stability, having coordinated and led deadly bombings and attacks of markets, police stations, polling stations, and international agencies in cities such as Bauchi and the capital Abuja. The group calls for stricter enforcement of Islamic Sharia law in Nigeria, where it is applied to some extent in the northern states, and for the outright rejection of modern education.

Nigeria's history thus includes long-standing tensions between ethno-regional groups, with religion overlapping this conflict. It also includes a long history of corrupt, inefficient, and ineffective government, though most indications are that this has slowly improved in the new republic since 1999. The continuation of these two basic issues shapes much of the rest of Nigeria's politics.

Regime and Political Institutions

According to its constitution, Nigeria now follows the policymaking processes that exist in many other presidential systems, and the system should sound familiar to students who are knowledgeable about American lawmaking. The legislature passes bills through both houses—the National Assembly and the Senate—and the president signs the bill into law or vetoes it. In the case of a veto, the National Assembly can override the president by a vote of two-thirds in both chambers. Laws are subject to constitutional review by the independent Supreme Court. And, as a federation, Nigeria has states that exercise considerable authority as well, in a way that is semi-autonomous from the central government. However, there are two features of Nigerian politics that draw the attention of most outside observers and that affect the making of law and policy. One is the pervasive corruption in the system, which has famously involved bribes to lawmakers and theft of state assets by political elites. Politicians have long received "kickbacks" on contracts and shared in the profits of companies that receive government favors. This is instrumental in lawmaking and is part of the "process." This has happened under both civilian and military regimes. The second issue of note is the role of ethnicity and potential ethnic conflict. On one hand, concerns about ethnicity have led national decision-makers to "balance" certain decisions and try to incorporate different regional groups into decision making, for instance through the structure of the leading People's Democratic Party. On the other hand, ethnicity and kinship also relate to the issue of use of state resources for personal gain. Political elites are expected to bring "rents" home to "their people." A common view has been that an ethnic group having a prominent representative in office means a chance to "eat" (or "chop" in Nigerian parlance) from the national plate.

Political Culture

For most observers, the watchword for Nigeria's political culture is *corruption*. The country routinely appears among the worst on lists by Transparency International when it ranks the most corrupt countries on earth. Politics has been plagued by corruption for decades, under military and civilian regimes alike. The phenomenon reaches from relatively low-level public servants, such as traffic police who stop cars on trumped-up charges looking for a small bribe, to presidents and other top officials. Former president Sani Abacha, a military leader, was rumored to have several billion dollars stashed away in international bank accounts from his four years in office when he died suddenly in 1998.

The issue of corruption is linked to the distribution of spoils to different groups. Groups of people in Nigeria

often view elected representatives from their group as being responsible for providing for an "extended family," and a whole ethnic group can sometimes be seen as just such an extended family. As the saying goes in west Africa, when a group has elected one of its own as a prominent public figure, then "*it is our turn to chop*," where, as noted before, to "chop" means to eat. A similar proverb is that a "goat eats where it is tethered," which means that people will make the best for themselves out of whatever resources they can reach; by extension, those working inside the state will use the state for the benefit of themselves or their extended families. Prominent books in the 1990s held that "Africa works" in its own way for those linked to power and that a common approach is the "politics of the belly" (Bayart 1993). This does not mean that Nigerian (or African) citizens approve of corruption and impunity. Rather, it is to say that the complex patron–client systems involve broader communities than just a handful of corrupt elites.

While corruption has been an enduring problem, this does not capture all of Nigerian political life. Nigeria features a great deal of mobilization, and the citizenry has often taken on the central government in various ways. The country witnessed significant movements for autonomy in the 1990s, not to mention a major civil war in the 1960s over regional autonomy. Many movements have emerged in the Niger Delta, the locus of much of Nigeria's oil that is also one of the poorest and most polluted regions of the country. Resistance there has ranged from non-violent citizens' protests to the emergence of armed separatist groups, as well as criminal gangs seeking profit from kidnappings or banditry.

While there are certain "Nigerian" political characteristics, there are also many different Nigerias, and the country is not a conflict-ridden den of thieves. There are at least three kinds of variation here. The first is across different institutions, some of which have reputations for working quite effectively. The Supreme Court, for instance, is relatively independent and reputable (Suberu 2008). So too is the new electoral commission that was responsible for holding free and fair elections in 2010, in a country where doing so is very challenging. This contrasts with the worse track records of many elected officials and other institutions. The second variation is across different states, some of which have developed reputations for effective governance, often under especially dynamic governors. These included Cross Rivers State for a time and Lagos State most recently. Tension and conflict also differ by state, being higher in the central-north of the country, along the fault line between Christians and Muslim populations, and in the Niger Delta. The final variation is change over time. There are some indicators that corruption in Nigeria is receding ever so slightly, while ethnic and religious violence may be worsening once again. Nigeria's politics are never static, but always shifting.

Political Economy

Nigeria has the lowest average income of all the countries profiled in this book, along with India. Yet the country is an economic giant by African standards, due to its large population and a petroleum industry that is the source of much of the nation's revenue. It is the second-largest economy in Africa south of the Sahara, after South Africa. Nigeria is thus seen as a particularly important country in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is also seen as representative of the continent with its poverty and other challenges.

The most important single sector in Nigeria's economy is petroleum extraction. Oil revenues account for over 90 percent of export earnings and over three-fourths of the government's revenues. This affects incomes and taxes: The country brings in large amounts of money and relies on natural resources rather than broad-based taxes to support government spending. Oil shapes the country's patterns of economic growth and inequality. In terms of economic growth, the country's performance depends in part on the international price for oil, though Nigeria's dysfunctional political economy has repeatedly resulted in the squandering of revenues when the price for Nigeria's main export is high. The squandering of resources links to the fact that oil revenues are distributed in very unequal and inequitable fashion. Oil-producing regions are some of the poorest in Nigeria, which has led to conflicts and demands for autonomy (as the boxes in this chapter note). Apart from regional differences, perhaps the most striking inequalities are between those individuals who are linked to the state patronage network and those who are not. State elites have siphoned off a large proportion of national revenues for decades, with top elites socking away millions of dollars while a large number of Nigerians live on less than a dollar a day. While patronage and corruption are not the only reasons for this, the state figures prominently in shaping the distribution of income. Nigeria's political economy thus relates to its political culture.

The running theme in Nigerian politics has been corruption and the misuse of state resources. In Nigeria and in

Africa more generally, the particular style of political economy has given rise to new terms, such as "neopatrimonialism" or "prebendalism" (Bratton and van de Walle 1997; Joseph 1987). The main implication of these terms is that those in state office view the resources of the state as available for their own personal use, rather than for public services. State officials at all levels make use of government funds to favor themselves and their own families, ethnic groups, or other favored constituents. The system views the officeholder as a "patron" and these recipients of resources as "clients," from which come the terms "patron–client relations" or "clientelism."

Apart from the extraction of petroleum (and now natural gas) and the rents these generate, Nigeria is a large and relatively advanced economy by African standards. The country does have a developed industrial sector, and it is the leading manufacturer in west Africa, though it is not a world leader in industrial technology: Many products are simple consumer goods such as processed foods and beverages, textiles, and basic household products. Agriculture, meanwhile, still employs an estimated 70 percent of Nigerians and accounts for over one-third of the GDP (CIA World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html). In urban areas, large numbers of Nigerians work in what is known as the informal sector, the largely unregulated part of the economy in which workers try to eke out a modest living without formal contracts or guaranteed wages. Among the many millions working in Nigeria's vast and dynamic informal sector are street vendors, hawkers, small merchants, and providers of a range of services, from messengers and couriers to mechanic shops on the side of the road to ambulant shoe shine workers. Finally, Nigeria is an African leader in communications, with major industries ranging from mobile phone networks to "Nollywood," the Nigerian film industry that distributes movies across Africa at a rate faster than Hollywood itself.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY

What Is a Weak State, and Can It Be Changed? The Case of Nigeria

CHAPTER 3, PAGE 66

Nigeria is one of the world's paradigmatic cases of a weak and dysfunctional state. It is seen as a direct contrast to more successful and stronger states in East Asia, such as South Korea or Taiwan (Evans 1995; Kohli 2004). But what does it mean to have a "weak state," especially in a country that has long been dominated by the military and has stood accused of repression and corruption? Are these not indicators that the state is overbearing, rather than weak? And if a state like Nigeria is weak, can anything be done to change it?

Weak states can be defined as those that fail to establish decision-making autonomy from actors in society. Weak states are not autonomous, but instead succumb to private interests. Their actions are permeated and infiltrated by private actors seeking special advantages, often called *rents*. These "special interests" can take a range of forms. They may be industrialists and investors that want preferential treatment to ensure their monopoly advantages or government contracts (see Bates 1982). Or they can be from the ethnic group of the president that expects government to shower favors upon the president's home region (Chabal and Daloz 1999). The use of public monies to serve private interests is a sign of permeable boundaries between the state and society itself. Where there is a lack of a clear distinction between public and private, it becomes possible to use public power for private gain, which results in a "criminalization of the state" (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999). If a state is "strong," by contrast, it has the ability to stand up to special interests and private actors on a regular basis in order to make decisions that benefit the whole of society more broadly.

The term "state capacity" is also often used in a similar vein. When a state lacks capacity, this does not mean the state is incapable of doing things such as engaging in theft, abusing human rights,

CASE STUDY (continued)

What Is a Weak State, and Can It Be Changed? The Case of Nigeria

CHAPTER 3, PAGE XXX

or rigging elections. Rather, a weak state with little capacity often does these things. It takes a state with strong capacity to implement more challenging and productive public services, like vaccination campaigns in remote villages, nationwide educational investments, or establishment of a rule of law. Thus, a strong state is defined by its ability to make autonomous decisions on behalf of society at large, not by its ability to resort to violence and crack down on dissent.

Some of the most important reforms for Nigeria's development would be improvements in governance and strengthening of the state. But can this be done? There are several impediments. Ending corruption and impunity, and making public officials more accountable to the citizenry, is a daunting task. The oil resource curse (see box on chapter 4) also compounds the problem. As suggested by a range of scholars, the easy money that comes with natural resources can weaken a state in certain contexts (see Karl 1997; Dunning 2008).

The answer to whether Nigeria can develop a strong state will draw different responses from comparativists with different theories of the state. Those more inclined to think that the state can be rationally engineered to work correctly will emphasize the political institutions that can be put in place and the incentives these will provide for actors to respond accordingly. Others who believe in the importance of individual actors will note that good performance of an institution like the state depends upon the people who comprise it; finding the right set of leaders and officials should turn an institution around in a relatively short period of time. By contrast, those with a more structural, cultural, or historical bent will emphasize that institutions are embedded in a set of conditions that make rapid change difficult: Nigeria is a highly unequal society with a long history of corruption at this point, and these will slow any change, preventing the development of a strong state "overnight."

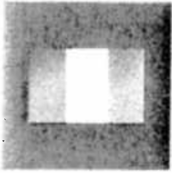
There is surely some truth in all of these elements when it comes to building a strong state: History and culture matter for how most individuals perceive the state and its possibilities, and thus condition outcomes strongly, but better designs and better leaders will contribute to more effective governance than poorly designed systems and weak leaders. And most analysts would not adopt extreme views that deny the importance of several factors: rationalists understand that culture matters, and culturalists understand that people respond to incentives, for example. Yet the analysis of which factors are most important will condition whether one thinks transforming the state is feasible in a given span of time, and what steps can be recommended to get there.

CASE STUDY

Why Are Natural Resources Sometimes a Curse? The Nigerian Case

CHAPTER 4, PAGE 88

Nigeria has the largest population and second-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, but it is not a success story. Instead, Nigeria—a major oil producer—is often held up as an exemplary case of the "resource curse." You would expect that discovering oil would be very good for an economy, and in some cases it can be, especially if the economy is already robust and diversified when oil is discovered. But often oil and similar high-value commodities produce unanticipated problems. The first is called the "Dutch Disease." Exporting oil brings in lots of foreign currency. The ready supply of, say, dollars means dollars are not seen as valuable relative to the national currency; the domestic currency rises in value, and this hurts other exports because these goods are expensive for foreigners in dollar terms. Along the same lines, the potential profitability of oil makes



Why Are Natural Resources Sometimes a Curse? The Nigerian Case

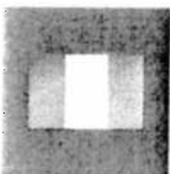
CHAPTER 4, PAGE 88

it a magnet for big capital investment, thus crowding out investment in other industries. Oil-producing countries thus often see other areas of their economies decline.

Equally important, the global price for oil is cyclical. Economies like Nigeria tend to see boom and bust cycles that prevent them from achieving development. High prices at one point in time can leave a country vulnerable to downturns in the price of its main export commodity. Nigeria boomed during the 1970s when oil prices were high, but declined during the period of low prices in the 1980s (Kohli 2004: 351). More recently, growth has increased again as oil prices have risen again, but Nigeria remains quite dependent on a single product.

Oil dependence also affects politics, and often for the worse (Karl 1997; Herbst 2000: 130–133). The easy access to oil money has a rather subtle effect: It stunts the growth of important relationships between the state and the society at large. Politicians can have incentives to make bad policy in oil-rich countries. "Easy money" from oil can make states such as Nigeria more likely to simply offer handouts to their "clients" and to the populace during boom times. States with substantial cash flows from oil often do not develop a capacity to tax the population. This may sound like a low-tax paradise, but without taxation, the populace is less likely to see the government as a set of institutions to be held accountable for its governing performance. Rather, citizens become accustomed to government simply distributing benefits. This can result in a destructive relationship between state and society, especially in oil-producing countries. Such a counterproductive relationship is not universal, but may be most likely in places such as Nigeria with high prior levels of inequality (cf. Dunning 2008).

In addition to domestic challenges, the politics of oil and natural resources also involves international actors such as oil companies. This is because developing countries themselves often lack technical capacity in areas that require advanced technology, and may also lack the capital needed for investment, at least at early stages. Such countries thus commonly rely on licenses to foreign companies, or the use of foreign advisors, or joint ventures between major multinational companies and relatively weak states (Kohli 2004). This leaves another form of dependence. The impacts of interactions with foreign actors are hotly debated, but in Nigeria low state capacity, partially dating back to weak state development under British colonialism, seems not to mix well with oil. In short, despite the enormous wealth that Nigerian oil has created for some, it has left the country with high levels of poverty and inequality, and with institutional problems that will make overcoming these challenges difficult.



Development, the Weak State, and Authoritarianism in Nigeria

CHAPTER 6, PAGE 157

Nigeria has had democratic elections—albeit with considerable imperfections—since 1999, but for many years prior to that its elected civilian governments were prone to overthrow by the military. Authoritarianism has thus been front and center in Nigeria's politics for most of the period since the country declared independence from the United Kingdom in 1960. In fact, before the present Fourth Republic (1999–present), civilian regimes were more the exception than the rule. Nigeria's First Republic (1963–1966) was declared when the country severed its ceremonial ties to the British monarchy, but it lasted less than three years before being displaced by a military coup. Over a decade of military rule followed (1966–1979) before the Second Republic was declared in 1979; it too had a short life, lasting just over four years to 1983. After another decade of military rule, a presidential election was held for what was supposed to be a Third Republic, but the

CASE STUDY (continued)

Development, the Weak State, and Authoritarianism in Nigeria

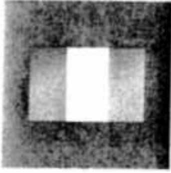
CHAPTER 6, PAGE 157

military annulled the results and after months of chaos in 1994, another military coup followed. Only the Fourth Republic has actually witnessed multiple elections and turnover from one civilian president to another.

Why have democracies repeatedly broken down in Nigeria and given way to authoritarian rule? One important theme links together the question of democracy and authoritarianism with the discussions from chapters 3 (on the state) and 4 (on political economy and development). Nigeria is a case study that illustrates how many issues in politics and economics are interrelated. Development, state strength and weakness, and regime type each shape one another, even if we sometimes must discuss them separately. Accounts of the collapse of both the First Republic and the Second Republic found that Nigeria's democracies suffered from a vicious cycle of a weak state bureaucracy, poor economic performance, and political instability.

A weak state can contribute to authoritarianism if the state becomes a tool of a particular group. In Nigeria, political leaders governed by dispensing patronage and favors to selected constituencies, including extended families and kinship groups, rather than by establishing clear rules and laws that applied uniformly to all. The bureaucracy became increasingly dysfunctional, the economy declined, and the state weakened further. Military leaders often sought to justify their overthrow of civilian regimes on the ground that only they were required to stop the rot, but the military itself performed little better when in power. In fact, a paradox in Nigeria is that the repeated attempts by the military to centralize power only seemed to weaken the state further. This is shown by the military's tendency to make poor policy decisions that failed to promote development and by the persistence of "neopatrimonialism," a style or form of rule in which the rulers treated the state as an instrument for their own private gain (see Kohli 2004: 329–331; Joseph 1987). For instance, the military ruler Sani Abacha was estimated by many news sources to have a fortune in the billions of dollars amassed overseas when he died in office in 1998. Nigeria never became a completely "failed state" like Somalia, where the central government holds virtually no authority, but it has for a long time been a state where corruption is ubiquitous and the economic decision making of politicians has been motivated by personal gain rather than development (Joseph 1987).

This does not mean that state weakness is the only factor that led to authoritarianism in Nigeria. Another major factor is demographics, especially ethnicity in different regions. Nigeria's population is starkly divided between the south along the coast and the north nearer the Sahara. In the north, the Hausa-Fulani people predominate, while the south is divided between large numbers of Yoruba in the west and Igbo (or Ibo) in the east, among other ethnic groups. The 1966 coup that toppled the First Republic was often called the "Igbo coup," since it was led mainly by Igbo officers against a northern-dominated military leadership, and Nigeria's disastrous civil war pitted the Igbo against other groups. Religion is another divisive factor (with Christians the majority in the south and Muslims the majority in the north), as is the level of development, with the south wealthier and more developed than the north. Taken together, these have produced imbalances and conflicts that have resulted in deep animosities between the regions, and these also contributed to democratic breakdown (Diamond 1988). Other factors that may have shaped authoritarian rule in Nigeria included the international politics of the Cold War. While the chief causes of authoritarianism can be debated, Nigeria is a clear example of how a weak state, a weak economy, and a weak democracy might go together.



Federalism and the States in Nigeria: Holding Together or Tearing Apart?

CHAPTER 7, PAGE 184

Nigeria is a crucial case in examining whether constitutional engineering and design, particularly with regard to federalism, can contribute to stability and democracy. Federalism has been essential to efforts to address one of Nigeria's leading political challenges: ethnic and regional divisions. As noted earlier, in the "Historical Development" section, the subject of federalism and autonomy came to the fore most dramatically with the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970.

A principal tactic of the central government to hold the country together has been to increase in the number of states, which have gone from an original three regions at independence to thirty-six today. This happened in a series of steps. Independent Nigeria began with three regions—Northern, Western, and Eastern—each of which was associated with a particular dominant ethnic group: the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo, respectively. The Mid-West Region was added in 1963. In the lead-up to the Nigerian Civil War (see also the box on the civil war that follows), the central government moved to reorganize the four regions into twelve states. The Civil War then pitted the Eastern Region against the rest of Nigeria, and after the rebels surrendered, the military government responded by creating seven more states in 1976, and two additional states in 1987. In 1991, President Babangida announced that the number of states would increase to thirty, and six more states were added in 1996 (Suberu 2001: xxiv–xxvi). The numbers thus went from three to four regions, then to twelve states and on to nineteen to twenty-one to thirty and finally to thirty-six states.

Why would subdividing the states and increasing their number matter for stability? The approach has been largely about ethnic arithmetic (see Suberu 2001). In Nigeria, the central government has used the creation of new states in an attempt to multiply the number of administrative divisions in Nigeria. The theory was that this would eliminate the big divisions between the largest ethnic groups as an important factor in Nigerian politics, and would substitute for this new administrative boundaries that citizens would focus on. At the same time, those living in the newly created states often favored the proposals for two reasons. First, the smaller ethnic groups in Nigeria sought their own states to avoid domination by the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo. Second, the creation of states in a particular area meant they would share in the distribution of the country's revenues. This gave incentives for many groups to favor new states, though at different times Nigeria's dominant ethnicities have opposed plans they believed would weaken them in the delicate balance of power.

Most new states were created by the military governments, rather than through public consultation, and the justifications have ultimately been about national stability (see Suberu 2001: 80). The creation of states in the 1960s was based on the idea of balance: No region should be able to dominate the federation. As the Civil War approached and the Igbo-dominated Eastern Region threatened to secede, the military in power gained some support from non-Igbos in that region by offering to grant them new states (ibid. 87–89). Similarly, a panel in the 1970s argued that Nigeria would not remain stable without further subdivision; this resulted in the nineteen states as of 1976 (ibid: 90–91). The logic played out in slightly different ways in subsequent divisions, but always with an eye toward governability. Beyond creating states, the federal government has taken a number of other steps that supports them, most notably guaranteeing substantial revenues to the state and local governments. At the same time, while creating these states, the central government has also attempted to centralize many powers.

As noted in chapter 6, giving different ethnic and regional groups their own authority and resources could either improve stability and increase the likelihood of democracy, or harm those prospects. It could help by allowing each group some say in its own affairs and some role in government, preventing winner-takes-all politics in national elections. Or it could draw such stark dividing lines between groups that it might give rise to secessionism or civil war. The Nigerian approach has been to give more small groups additional say, and to blur (or redraw) the lines between the large groups.

Has it succeeded? The evidence can be interpreted in different ways. On one hand, Nigeria has remained intact after the Civil War of the late 1960s, which is a non-trivial achievement in a society that is so fractured along ethnic, religious, and regional fault lines. On the other hand, the creation of new states has not ended ethnic or sectarian tensions. Politics in

CASE STUDY (continued)

Federalism and the States in Nigeria: Holding Together or Tearing Apart?

CHAPTER 7, PAGE 184

Nigeria is still centered around the division between the northerners and southerners that troubled the country at independence. The 2010 presidential election, for instance, had an electorate divided right across the middle of the country, with southerner Goodluck Jonathan winning all but one state to the south of the line, and his northern competitor Muhammadu Buhari winning every state to the north. The creation of states has created new divisions in Nigerian politics, but has not overcome the old divisions (Suberu 2001: 110). Nigeria still witnesses a spiral of intergroup conflict. Demands for more states or greater federalism are unlikely to mitigate conflict at this point, and may only serve to appease different groups clamoring for the resources that come with getting a state. Federalism might have changed the nature of conflict, but it has not necessarily stopped it.

CASE STUDY

The Presidency in Nigeria: Powers and Limitations

CHAPTER 9, PAGE 238

Over time, Nigeria's presidencies have seen their powers increase and decrease in different ways, and a brief comparison can provide insight into what has and has not changed in the country between military and civilian rule. Nigeria has elected civilian presidents since 1999, when a period of military rule came to an end. Prior to this, Nigeria had a parliamentary system in place from 1960 to 1966, followed by military rule for all but four years from 1966 to 1999, during which the country lived under several brutal and corrupt dictators, such as General Sani Abacha (1993 to 1998).

The civilian presidents since 1999 have included one-time military leader Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007) and current president Goodluck Jonathan, who assumed office upon the death of his predecessor Umaru Yar'Adua (2007–2010). They have earned better reputations for civil liberties than the military regime, and the presidents themselves have not stood directly accused of the titanic forms of corruption seen previously. While they have not eradicated abuses and corruption, they are widely viewed as an improvement upon military rule.

Despite some improvements, Nigeria's core governance problems persist under the new presidencies, and this shows how these challenges remain embedded in the political culture and society. As noted in several instances earlier in this profile, Nigeria is one of the most corrupt nations on earth despite some earnest presidential efforts to tame this problem; the presidencies have not proved capable of dramatic advances, but rather modest and incremental steps that will leave corruption endemic for some time to come. Corruption pervades much of the state bureaucracy over which the executive presides. For many years, positions in the bureaucracy have been seen as rewards for kin and supporters, for the salaries and more importantly for the corruption opportunities these positions provide. This form of patronage and clientelism remain prominent in Nigerian politics, part of the calculus of retaining power. Patronage and corruption cut both ways, giving the executive the opportunity to buy support but also a sense that it cannot control the actions of bureaucrats and as is much a prisoner of the system as a beneficiary of it.

The Nigerian presidency has formal powers attached to it, such as the power to assent to legislation or send it back to the legislature, where a two-thirds majority is required to pass a law without presidential assent. Yet there are also major limitations to presidential action, and some of these reflect the need to address Nigeria's other big challenge besides corruption: ethnic and regional tension. To be elected, the president is required to win a majority of the vote nationally, but also must win at least 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of the states. Formal and informal requirements hold that political parties should represent the nation's federal character, especially the division between the mostly

CASE STUDY (continued)

The Presidency in Nigeria: Powers and Limitations

CHAPTER 9, PAGE 238

Christian south and mostly Muslim north (see chapter 6).

The president is also not completely free to establish his own cabinet, though no written rules put it this way. The president is "expected" to choose a vice-president and ministers from the opposite region of the country to his place of origin. Also on this question of federalism, constitution and legal provisions require the federal government to send a large portion of its revenues to the states and local authorities (Suberu 2001). This latter point has important effects on governance: Because states and local authorities control so much of the national revenue, the quality of governance can vary a great deal from place to place across the country. Some states will govern better and others worse, and the president has less leverage over this than might be the case in other countries.

All presidents since 1999 have been the leaders of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and the party usually alternates presidential candidates from the north and south. The presence of the PDP means each president has commanded a majority and given the president a degree of partisan power as well. Yet this too cuts both ways; the entrenchment of the PDP makes it hard to shake up governance: Presidents must reckon with governors and legislators who have strong bases in their respective states. And, to close the circle, this means that patronage and clientelism persist.

With its persistent tendency for patronage and the need to balance the precarious relationship between north and south, Nigeria shows that social context greatly affects the environment in which presidents operate, regardless of constitutional powers. Presidents since the military leader Sani Abacha may be better than their military predecessors, but governance has not been fully cleaned up, nor will it be for some time regardless of good or bad presidential intentions.

CASE STUDY

The Nigerian Civil War or Biafran War: Nationalism and Ethno-national Conflict in a Post-colonial Society

CHAPTER 12, PAGE 325

Nigeria is an excellent example of a country where the state-linked national identity needs to compete with other, perhaps more deeply established, identities and interests that precede the rise of the national state (Falola and Heaton 2008). Of course, every case of state-sponsored national identity experiences this conflict to some extent—national identity can conflict with other identities like religion, ethnicity, clan, tribe, or locality—but the problem has often been acute in post-colonial situations where the state is left to create a nation out of groups that do not necessarily identify with each other.

Nigeria was a colony of Great Britain. It had been the site of many different social groups before colonialism, most notably the Hausa-speaking Islamic population of the northern region, the Yoruba of the west (many of whom practice traditional animistic religion), and the Igbo of the east (who are predominantly Christian). British colonialism drew all of these groups together and artificially constructed a political boundary around them. This issued in considerable tension that continues today.

The importance of British colonialism does not mean Nigerians had no agency in the creation of the Nigerian nation-state and Nigerian nationalism. Indeed, many important Nigerian intellectuals and political actors from at least the late nineteenth century sought to escape from British colonialism and to create an independent state (or independent states). But it is clear that the idea of "Nigeria" as a nation was not the single basis for national loyalty among these nationalists (Falola and Heaton 2008: 136–157). Some were Pan-African nationalists and hoped to craft an identity for a nation much larger than present-day Nigeria. Others had their strongest affiliation with their more

CASE STUDY (continued)

The Nigerian Civil War or Biafran War: Nationalism and Ethno-national Conflict in a Post-colonial Society

CHAPTER 12, PAGE 325

local group, expressing interest in, say, the Yoruba nation.

British colonial West Africa saw a relatively peaceful transition to post-colonial regimes. But in Nigeria, once the colonial authority was gone, jealousies and conflicts became more problematic. Ethnic, religious, and regional tensions—which had been present all along—spilled over into open violence and conflict (as noted previously). Two coups d'état in 1966 were related to these tensions, and the second of these issued in anti-Igbo violence. In 1967, the mostly Igbo eastern region declared itself the independent state of Biafra. The central government did not accept the legitimacy of this action, and a bloody civil war lasted until 1970. The central government was victorious, and the Igbo-dominated east remains to this day part of Nigeria. The war cost many thousands of lives directly, and produced many more deaths as a result of the economic dislocation and famine it generated, with estimates ranging from one to three million (Falola and Heaton 2008: 158). In terms of human life and suffering, it was catastrophic.

Some theories of ethno-national violence would stress the strong ethnic boundaries and, perhaps, religious markers of identity difference here. Others would stress the tit-for-tat nature of the conflict: Igbo people rebelled, this theory would suggest, because oppression from the north led them to draw the rational conclusion that they would be safer as an independent state. Instrumental theories would stress that Nigerian oil reserves are heavily concentrated in the country's southeast, noting that the stakes for both groups extended beyond ethnic conflict and rivalry, and concerned access to and control over Nigeria's most important natural resource and the basis for its economy and for the state's revenues.

Debates remain about how to classify or characterize events like this conflict. Proponents of the Biafran independence effort would likely classify these events as a political or even anti-colonial revolution, arguing that the central government was an oppressive external imposition from which they were attempting to liberate themselves. Others consider this conflict to be a civil war, since it took place within an existing nation-state, regardless of whether that state itself was constructed from the outside.

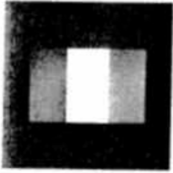
CASE STUDY

Religious Difference and Conflict in Nigeria: Disentangling Ethnicity and Religion?

CHAPTER 14, PAGE 369

As noted in the previous case study, Nigeria's boundaries and structure were shaped by European colonialism. The British brought together groups and regions that likely would not have been politically unified, at least not in the short run, if not for European involvement. This has often produced rivalries and tensions, the most notorious of which was the calamitous Biafran War described previously. The Nigerian state retained control over all of these groups, however, and does to this day, though the society has seen considerable ethno-religious conflict. One of the major questions of comparative politics highlighted by this case is how, if it all, we might disentangle ethnicity and religion in terms of their effects on politics. In other words, are these conflicts about religion or are they about ethnicity, or both?

Nigeria has attempted to address its diversity through federalism. In terms of religion, while the federal government maintains formal separation of church and state, religion finds its way into government at the state level (Fox 2008: 272–273). Sharia law is practiced in northern majority-Muslim states, though some of its more radical provisions have not been exercised. At the same time, people in non-majority-Muslim states are not subjected to these laws. In today's Nigeria, as noted earlier, it is estimated that about half of the population is Muslim and two-fifths Christian, with most of the



Religious Difference and Conflict in Nigeria: Disentangling Ethnicity and Religion?

CHAPTER 14, PAGE 369

balance professing a traditional animistic faith. Religious conflict remains common, and the government has struggled in its efforts to restrain it. Paradoxically, perhaps, inter-group violence has increased under non-military governments that have held power since 1999. To some, this suggests that federalism is not an effective solution, while others argue that this is a simplistic conclusion to draw on the basis of limited evidence (see Suberu 2001).

Ethno-religious violence in Nigeria is difficult to sort out, in part because it probably should not all be classified in similar terms. Conflicts in the area where Hausa-Fulani (predominantly Islamic) populations are contiguous with Igbo (predominantly Christian) involve both material interests and, sometimes, ethnic and religious dimensions. Some of the violence by minority ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, however, such as attacking oil pipelines, has little to no religious component.

Some of the most significant events in Nigeria's recent timeline have to do with sectarian or religious strife. As noted in the "Historical Development" section, conflict has emerged in many of the states and cities along the dividing line between the majority Muslim north and the majority Christian south. The city of Jos, for one, has witnessed numerous riots and clashes. The deadliest acts have been perpetrated by Boko Haram, a group of Islamist fundamentalists whose name means "Western education is sinful." They have claimed responsibility for numerous bombings and coordinated gun and grenade attacks in several states in central and northern Nigeria, most notably Plateau State and Bauchi State. Boko Haram bombed the United Nations compound in in the capital Abuja in 2011. This was followed by news reports that it seeks to collaborate and integrate more with al Qaeda and other related Islamic fundamentalist groups such as al-Shabaab in Somalia. In light of the tensions in Nigeria, is important to note that the relationship between instrumental, ethno-national, and religious militancy is potentially dynamic. Religious frames may come to be more or less important depending on the context.

Religion is a crucial element in the balancing act among Nigerian political elites, as with the People's Democratic Party. Current president Goodluck Jonathan is a Christian, and as such has met with some opposition from northern political actors. Yet one of the important questions is how these efforts at the top to manage the institutions relate to the identities, sentiments, and behaviors of people in society.

Research Prompts

1. British colonialism in Nigeria ended over fifty years ago. To what extent does the legacy of colonialism still affect the politics and economy of Nigeria today? How can we determine what contemporary outcomes are the result of historically distant factors like colonialism as opposed to more recent factors such as the events of the late 1990s?
2. Nigeria is used by scholars of development as a quintessential example of economic failure and underperformance. Viewing the history of Nigeria's political economy, does Nigeria's weak economic performance over the decades give more credence to proponents of market-led development or state-led development? What would be the recommendations from both market-led and state-led development advocates for Nigeria?
3. Compare and contrast Nigeria's development experience with one of the other developing countries mentioned in chapter 4: Brazil, China, or India. What do you learn from the comparison, and are there any comparative lessons that you can draw for why development does or does not happen?
4. Consider several of Nigeria's troubles—such as economic stagnation, corruption, or conflict—and select one issue of greatest interest to you. Examine to what extent Nigeria's challenge applies in another African country, and address how generalizable Nigeria's experience may be to the continent of Africa as a whole. In what ways is Nigeria distinctive (or "most different") from one or more other African countries, and in what ways is it comparable (or "most similar")? If you examine another