Nigeria



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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 1

Country Overview 1

- Country Overview 2
- Key Data 5
- Nigeria 6
- Africa 7

Chapter 2 9

Political Overview 9

- History 10
- Political Conditions 11
- Political Risk Index 114
- Political Stability 129
- Freedom Rankings 144
- Human Rights 156
- Government Functions 158
- Government Structure 160
- Principal Government Officials 166
- Leader Biography 167
- Leader Biography 168
  - Foreign Relations 175
  - National Security 191
  - Defense Forces 195

Chapter 3 197

Economic Overview 197

- Economic Overview 198
- Nominal GDP and Components 201
- Population and GDP Per Capita 203
- Real GDP and Inflation 204
- Government Spending and Taxation 205
- Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment 206
- Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate 207
- Data in US Dollars 208
- Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units 209

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS 211
World Energy Price Summary 212
CO2 Emissions 213
Agriculture Consumption and Production 214
World Agriculture Pricing Summary 217
Metals Consumption and Production 218
World Metals Pricing Summary 221
Economic Performance Index 222
Chapter 4 234
Investment Overview 234
Foreign Investment Climate 235
Foreign Investment Index 238
Corruption Perceptions Index 251
Competitiveness Ranking 262
Taxation 271
Stock Market 272
Partner Links 272
Chapter 5 273
Social Overview 273
People 274
Human Development Index 276
Life Satisfaction Index 279
Happy Planet Index 291
Status of Women 300
Global Gender Gap Index 303
Culture and Arts 312
Etiquette 312
Travel Information 313
Diseases/Health Data 323
Chapter 6 330
Environmental Overview 330
Environmental Issues 331
Environmental Policy 332
Greenhouse Gas Ranking 333
Global Environmental Snapshot 344
Global Environmental Concepts 355

International Environmental Agreements and Associations 369
Appendices 394
Bibliography 395

Chapter 1

Country Overview

Country Overview

NIGERIA

With a population of around 150 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. It is also one of the world's largest oil producers. British influence and control over Nigeria grew through the 19th century, and in 1914 the area was formally united as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. The country gained independence from Britain in 1960. Ethnic tensions led to two military coups in 1966 and a three-year civil war followed. Subsequent years saw continued political instability and 16 years of consecutive military rule, until a new constitution was adopted in 1999, resulting in a peaceful transition to civilian government. The country continues to experience longstanding ethnic and religious tensions. The government has been facing the daunting task of reforming a petroleum-based economy. Because of long-time political instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure and poor macroeconomic management, billions of dollars of wealth generated from oil have apparently benefited a few in the country while offering little to improve the life of the vast majority of the population. More than half of Nigeria's population still lives in poverty.

Editor's Note:

The extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, launched an uprising in mid-2009 and was responsible for much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the country of Nigeria in recent times. Indeed, Boko Haram has a record of attacking security and political personnel manifested by its litany of targets. In more recent times, Boko Haram has expanded its target list as it has attacked Christian churches and killed worshipers, often during church services. For its part, Boko Haram is a militant Jihadist entity, which seeks to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria.

The government of Nigeria has throughout claimed that it was committed to dealing with the national security threat posed by Boko Haram. In truth, however, members of the military have been linked with the terrorist group, while the Nigerian authorities have proved themselves to be largely feckless and ineffectually in the fight against Boko Haram. In fact, the impotence of the Nigerian government in fighting Boko Haram was displayed fully in August 2014 when Boko Haram declared dominion over an Islamic state in northeastern Nigeria, and as it has continued to dominate the Nigerian military as of the start of 2015.

While "Boko Haram" is the popular name of the extremist Islamist entity, its official name title is

"Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad," which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term, Boko Haram, means "Western education is sacrilege" or "Western education is a sin" in the Hausa language; however, the group is not only against Western education but also against Western culture, modern science, the wearing of regular Western clothing such as shirts and pants, as well as the act of voting in elections.

There have been signs that Boko Haram poses a threat not only to Nigerians -- many of whom are fellow Muslims -- but also to the wider community, and anyone deemed to be of a pro-Western persuasion. Of note was the fact that in 2011, a Boko Haram suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja killed at least two dozen people. More recently -- in 2014 -- there was a series of attacks and abductions of high-profile figures in neighboring Cameroon. It was apparent that Boko Haram was taking advantage of the porous border between Nigeria and Cameroon, essentially making Boko Haram a regional threat to security.

The United States has designated Boko Haram as a terror organization and placed a $7 million bounty on the leader's (Abubakar Shekau's) head. Although there has been no direct national interest for the United States in being further involved in the Boko Haram threat in Nigeria, recent statements by Shekau threatening to confront the United States and the West suggest that Boko Haram's regional agenda may be expanding to a wider Jihadist orientation.

Indeed, the head of the United States Africa Command, General Carter Ham, has said that evidence points to a relationship of some sort between Boko Haram and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in northwest Africa, as well as al-Shabab in Somalia, which is itself aligned with the notorious terror enclave, al-Qaida. But as of 2015, Boko Haram had explicitly declared its allegiance to the notorious terror group, Islamic State. Following the mode of that terrorist entity, Boko Haram was carrying out cross-border attacks into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, seemingly with an eye on establishing its own African equivalent of the Middle Eastern extremist Islamist caliphate. It was clear that Boko Haram was now a regional menace.

It was to be seen if the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in the spring of 2015 would augur the start of a more concerted effort and a more effective campaign to defeat Boko Haram.

Meanwhile, as Nigeria confronted the threats posed by Boko Haram and Ansaru, it was also enduring ethno tribal violence -- often with religious overtones. At issue were tensions between semi-nomadic Muslim herdsmen from the Fulani (sometimes referred to as Peule) tribe and Muslim farmers from the Hausa tribe, as well as conflict between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers.

It should also be noted that militants in the Niger Delta have been responsible for a spate of attacks in recent years -- many against foreign oil companies -- and motivated by demand for greater control over local oil reserves. At issue for militants and sympathetic locals has been the fact that

despite the vast oil wealth, the beneficiaries are rarely the impoverished residents of the Niger Delta. Militants have, thus, taken up arms and been responsible for attacks against the region's oil infrastructure. They have also carried out various forms of violence and kidnappings. Most of the kidnappings have targeted foreign workers employed by multinational corporations; however, both the number of extremist enclaves, as well as the tactics employed, increased around 2007. Since 2009 when the Nigerian government offered amnesty to militants, attacks in the Niger Delta have become a less frequent phenomenon. Concomitantly, oil input has increased as well. An incident in 2012 showed that the Nigeria's oil-producing region of the Niger Delta, nonetheless, remained a dangerous place.

Key Data

Key Data	
Region:	Africa
Population:	183528800
Climate:	Varies;equatorial in south, tropical in center, arid in north
Languages:	English (official) Hausa Yoruba Ibo Fulani
Currency:	1 naira (N$) = 100 kobo
Holiday:	Independence Day, 1 October (1960)
Area Total:	923770
Area Land:	910770
Coast Line:	853

Nigeria

Country Map



Africa

Regional Map



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Chapter 2

Political Overview

History

Before the colonial period, the area that makes up modern Nigeria had an eventful history. More than 2,000 years ago, the Nok culture in the present Plateau state worked iron and produced sophisticated terra cotta sculptures. Linguistic evidence also shows that the Nigeria-Cameroon border area is the most likely origin of the Bantu groups of languages that now pervades most of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the centuries that followed, the area that is now Nigeria gave birth to a number of advanced and influential societies including Hausa city states and kingdoms of Katsina, Kano, Zaria and Gobir in the northern region, Yoruba city-states and the kingdoms of Ife, Oyo and Ijebu in southwestern Nigeria, the southern kingdom of Benin and the Igbo communities of the east. In the northern cities of Kano and Katsina, recorded history dates back to approximately 1000 C.E. In the centuries that followed, these Hausa kingdoms and the Bornu e mpire near Lake Chad prospered as important terminals of trans-Saharan caravan routes.

In the southwest, the Yoruba kingdom of Oyo was founded around 1400 C.E. At its height, from the 17th to 19th centuries, it attained a high level of political organization and extended as far as modern Togo. In the south-central part of present-day Nigeria, as early as the 15th and 16th centuries, the kingdom of Benin had developed an efficient army, an elaborate ceremonial court, and artisans whose works in ivory, wood, bronze and brass are prized throughout the world today.

In 1500 African peoples were a minority of the world's slave population. However, by the end of the 17th century they had become the majority. In the 17th through 19th centuries, the region was drawn into the web of the rapidly growing slave trade and other forms of trade with the European world. As many as 12 million of the 18 million slaves taken from Africa during this period hailed from the western part of the continent. The kingdoms and city-states of Nigeria were among the hardest hit.

The consequences of slavery are still being felt. The slave trade fostered wars not only between Africans and Europeans, but also between different African political and ethnic groups. It encouraged raiding, the exploitation of the weak, and the growth of sub-imperialism. Rulers or societies that were reticent about routine participating in this system were eventually dominated by African elites, backed by European power. The power of such elites, in fact, was developed and

advanced by adherence to the slave trade system and its underpinning of imperialism.

In the early 19th century, the Fulani leader, Usman dan Fodio, launched an Islamic crusade that brought most of the Hausa states and other areas in the north under the loose control of an empire centered in Sokoto.

When the slave trade was abolished in the 19th century, trade in agriculture between Africa and Europe grew. However, the patrimonial relationships that grew during the slave trade remained in place. As a result, many of the societies that came to dominate further entrenched their positions. Following the Napoleonic Wars, the British expanded their trade with the Nigerian interior. In 1885, British claims to a sphere of influence in that area received international recognition, and, in the following year, the Royal Niger Company was chartered. In 1900, the company's territory came under the control of the British government, which moved to consolidate its hold over the area of modern Nigeria. In 1914, the area was formally united as the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria.

Administratively, Nigeria remained divided into the northern and southern provinces, as well as Lagos colony. Western education and the development of a modern economy pr oceeded more rapidly in the south than in the north, with consequences felt in Nigeria's political life ever since. Following World War II, in response to the growth of Nigerian nationalism and demands for independence, successive constitutions legislated by the British government moved Nigeria toward self-government on a representative, increasingly federal, basis.

Nigeria was granted full independence in October 1960, as a federation of three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern) under a constitution that provided for a parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution, each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. The federal government was given exclusive powers in defense and security, foreign relations, and commercial and fiscal policies.

In October 1963, Nigeria altered its relationship with the United Kingdom by proclaiming itself a federal republic and promulgating a new constitution. A fourth region (the Midwest) was established that year.

Note on History: In certain entries, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used. A full listing of sources is available in the Bibliography.

Political Conditions

Background

From the outset, Nigeria's ethnic, regional and religious tensions were magnified by the significant disparities in economic and educational development between the south and the north. Smaller ethnicities, especially those from oil-producing regions, challenged the hegemony of the three larger ethnic groups. They argued that such a federal system robs them of access to the mineral and oil wealth in their own lands. As a result, the increase of regional powers led to secessionist movements by minority groups who felt they would be excluded from the benefits of membership.

Coups and Conflict: 1960s to 1980s

On Jan. 15, 1966, a small group of army officers, mostly southeastern Igbos, overthrew the government. They also assassinated the federal prime minister and the premiers of the northern and western regions. A federal military gov ernment assumed power under the leadership of Gen. J.T.U. Aguiyi-Ironsi.

The new regime, however, was unable to quiet ethnic tensions or produce a new constitution acceptable to all sections of the country. In fact, its efforts to abolish the federal structure greatly raised tensions and led to another coup in July 1966, with Gen. Yakubu Gowon named the new head of the federal military government. The massacre of thousands of Igbos in the north prompted hundreds of thousands of Igbos to return to their homeland in the southeast, where the military governor of the Eastern region, Lt. Col. Emeka Ojukwu, emerged as the leader of an increasingly strong Igbo secessionist sentiment.

In a move that gave greater autonomy to minority ethnic groups, the military replaced the four regions with twelve states. Ojukwu rejected attempts at constitutional revisions to quiet Igbo fears and insisted on full autonomy for the east. Finally, in May 1967, he declared the independence of the Eastern region as the "Republic of Biafra." The ensuing civil war was bitter and bloody, ending in the defeat of Biafra in 1970. Following the civil war, reconciliation was rapid and effective. The country turned to the task of economic development. Foreign exchange earnings and government revenues increased spectacularly with the oil price rises of 1973-74.

On July 29, 1975, Gen. Gowon was overthrown in a bloodless coup by a group of military officers who accused him of delaying the promised return to civilian rule and allowing his government to become corrupt and ineffective. The new head of state, Gen. Murtala Muhammed replaced thousands of civil servants and announced a timetable for the resumption of civilian rule by Oct. 1, 1979. Muhammed also announced the government's intention to create new states and to construct a new federal capital in the center of the country.

Gen. Muhammed was assassinated on Feb. 13, 1976, i n an abortive coup. His chief of staff, Lt.

Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, became head of state. Obasanjo adhered meticulously to the schedule for return to civilian rule, moving to modernize and streamline the armed forces and seeking to use oil revenues to diversify and develop the country's economy. Seven new states were created in 1976, bringing the total to 30, plus the Federal Capital Territory with the new capital, Abuja.

A new constitution was published on Sept. 21, 1978, and the ban on political activity was lifted. Five political parties were formed and competed in a series of five elections, held July 7 to Aug. 11, 1979. A northerner, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was elected president. All five parties won representation in the National Assembly.

In August 1983, Shagari and the NPN were returned to power in a landslide victory. The elections were marred by violence, and allegations of widespread vote-rigging and electoral malfeasance led to legal battles over the results.

Four months later, on Dec. 31, 1983, the military overthrew the Second Republic. Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari emerged as the leader of the Supreme Military Council (SMC), the country's new ruling body and the constitution was suspended. Buhari charged the civilian government with economic mismanagement, widespread corruption, election fraud, and a general lack of concern for the problems of Nigerians. His government became increasingly authoritarian and proved unable to deal with Nigeria's severe economic problems.

In a peaceful coup on Aug. 27, 1985, the SMC's third ranking member, Army Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, replaced the Buhari government. Babangida cited the misuse of power, violations of human rights by key officers of the SMC, and the government's failure to deal with the country's deepening economic crisis as justifications for the takeover.

Although he did not reinstate the constitution, during his first few days in office President Babangida restored freedom of the press and released political detainees being held without charge. He announced stringent pay cuts for the military, police and civil servants and proceeded to enact similar cuts for the private sector. Imports of rice and maize were banned. Later, imports of wheat and many other products were also banned.

President Babangida opened a national debate on proposed economic reform and recovery measures. The public response convinced him of intense opposition to an economic recovery package dependent on an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan and an apparent preference for self-imposed austerity.

President Babangida promised to return the country to civilian rule by 1990; this date was later extended until January 1993. In early 1989, a constituent assembly completed work on a constitution for the Third Republic . In the spring of 1989, political activity was again permitted.

In October 1989, the government decreed the establishment of two "grassroots" parties: the National Republican Convention (NRC), which was to be "a little to the right," and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), which was to be "a little to the left." Babangida rejected other parties and they were not allowed to register.

The 1990s

In April 1990, mid-level officers attempted to overthrow the Babangida government. The coup failed and 69 accused coup plotters were later executed after secret trails before military tribunals. The transition resumed after the failed coup. In December 1990 the first stage of partisan elections was held at the local government level. While turnout was low, there was no violence, and both parties demonstrated strength in all regions of the country, with the SDP winning control of a majority of local government councils.

In December 1991, gubernatorial and state legislative elections were held throughout the country. That same month, Babangida decreed that previously banned politicians would be allowed to stand in primaries scheduled for August 1992. These were canceled due to fraud, and subsequent primaries scheduled for September were also canceled. All announced candidates were disqualified from again standing for president once a new election format was selected. The presidential election was held on June 12, 1993, with the inauguration of the new president scheduled to take place Aug. 27, 1993, the eighth anniversary of President Babangida's coming to power.

In the historic June 12, 1993, presidential elections, which most observers deemed to be Nigeria's fairest, early returns indicated that wealthy Yoruba businessman and regional ethnic leader Chief M.K.O. Abiola would win a decisive victory. On June 23, however, Babangida, using se veral pending lawsuits as a pretense, annulled the election. This action threw Nigeria into turmoil.

Over 100 persons were killed in riots before Babangida agreed to hand over power to an "interim government" on Aug. 27, 1993. Babangida then had second thoughts and attempted to renege on his decision, but without popular and military support he was forced to hand over power to Ernest Shonekan. Shonekan was to rule until new elections, scheduled for February 1994. Although he had led Babangida's Transitional Council since early 1993, Shonekan was unable to tackle Nigeria's ever-growing economic problems.

With the country sliding into chaos, Defense Minister Sani Abacha quickly assumed power by a bloodless coup and engineered Shonekan's "resignation" on Nov. 17, 1993. He dissolved all democratic political institutions and replaced elected governors with military officers. Abacha promised to return the government to civilian rule but refused to announ ce a timetable until his Independence Day address on Oct. 1, 1995.

Following the annulment of the June 12 election, the United States and other nations, including European partners, imposed various sanctions on Nigeria. They included restrictions on travel by government officials and their families, the suspension of arms sales and military assistance, and the imposition of additional sanctions as a result of Nigeria's failure to gain full certification for its counter-narcotics efforts. In addition, direct flights between Nigeria and the U.S. were suspended in Aug. 11, 1993, when the secretary of transportation determined that Lagos' Murtala Muhammed International Airport did not meet the security standards established by the United States Federal Aviation Authority (FAA). However, the most significant international relationship of Nigeria, the export of oil, remained intact and both European (Shell) and American (Mobil and Exxon) companies continued with business s as usual with the Abacha regime. As a result, many viewed the sanctions as a nominal statement of little consequence.

Given Nigeria's economic troubles, many Nigerians initially welcomed Abacha's takeover. However, disenchantment grew rapidly. A number of opposition figures united to form a new organization, the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), which campaigned for an immediate return to civilian rule. The government arrested NADECO members who attempted to reconvene the Senate and other disbanded democratic institutions. Most Nigerians boycotted the elections for delegates to the Constitutional Conference, which were held from May 23-28, 1994.

On June 11, 1994, using the groundwork established by NADECO, Abiola declared himself president. He was charged with treason and immediately went into hiding. He re-emerged and was promptly arrested on June 23. With Abiola in prison and tempers rising, Abacha convened the constitutional conference o n June 27, but it almost immediately went into recess and did not reconvene until July 11, 1994.

On July 4, the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) called a strike demanding that Abacha release Abiola and hand over power to him. Other unions then joined NUPENG's strike, which brought economic life in the Lagos area and much of the southwest to a standstill.

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), the country's umbrella labor organization, threatened to call a general strike on July 19, if the government did not release Abiola and the other political detainees. The NLC called off the strike on July 16, after the government assured the labor federation it would release Abiola and the other political detainees.

On Aug. 5, 1994, a government attempt to grant Abiola bail failed when it imposed "conditions" on his release. The NLC leadership insisted this was a temporary setback and the government would drop its case aga inst Abiola on August 16. When the government continued the trial and kept Abiola in custody, many in the NLC called for a renewal of the general strike.

On Aug. 17, 1994, the government dismissed the NUPENG, NLC and PENGASSAN leaderships,

placed the unions under appointed administrators, and arrested NUPENG Gen. Secretary Frank Kokori and a number of other labor leaders. Although striking unions returned to work, the government arrested opponents, closed media houses, and moved strongly to curb dissent.

Plans were made in mid-1994 for the creation of a National Constitution Conference to draft a new constitution for the political transition. In May, elections for the 273 delegates were held. Violent demonstrations were widespread later in the month as Abiola attempted to implement a new government, and the date set for the end of military rule passed. In September, Abacha more than doubled the size of his cabinet when he appointed 14 more senior m ilitary officers.

A timetable that set the creation of a new constitution by March 1995, as well as elections for 1996, was proposed in late 1994. Abacha attempted to revive the economy by implementing reforms that were intended to gain the support of the IMF and World Bank. In early 1995, Abacha attempted to eliminate dissent within his ranks by dissolving the Federal Executive Council and arresting more than 150 military officers; 80 were allegedly executed. Several members of the previous government were arrested in connection with the alleged coup.

A draft constitution was presented in June 1995 and the transitional timetable was to be announced in October. Prior to the October announcement, a new 'coup' was unveiled which resulted in the arrest of more than 40 officers. The transitional schedule was then extended from one to three years, with elections to be held in October 1998.

The 1990s brought about renewed claims of oppress ion by minority cultures in Nigeria. Ethnic communities in oil-producing regions began making ownership claims to the rich resources derived from their land. They challenged the right of the federal government to extract resources without the payment of rents and royalties. There were several reasons for the local assertion at this time. First, the derivation principle was eliminated as an index of revenue allocation. Whatever small benefits local populations reaped from oil extraction were lost. Second, new units of local government were created and the leadership was exclusively from one of the three large ethnic groups. Third, development of the Delta region, the richest in oil, was slower than the rest of the country. Fourth, oil companies imported labor from other parts of the country, leaving the Delta region with the country's highest unemployment rate.

Ken Saro-Wiwa began a movement called the Survival of the Ogoni People in the early 1990s. The Delta Minor ities Forum was formed making an impassioned plea in 1994 for the federal government to rectify what they viewed as regional exploitation. Specifically, they wanted the federal government to give local leadership to local ethnic groups and pay rent for oil extraction. The federal government viewed Ken Sawo-Wiwa as an agitator. His destruction of Shell oil facilities in protest was termed terrorism by the government. In October 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists were executed for the murder of four local leaders. Human rights organizations decried this act as the worst form of scapegoat and oppression of free speech. The

executions brought international condemnation, and European Union, United States and South African diplomatic representatives were withdrawn.

A national electoral commission was established in December 1995. In January 1996, after the previously announced implementation date had expired, Abacha announced the constitution would not be implemented until the transitional period ended in 1998. The registration process for political parties began in July with only five of the 15 registrants approved. Local elections held in March 1997 were deemed fair, with the United Nigerian Congress Party (UNCP) securing the majority of seats.

In a decree issued in April, however, Abacha reserved the power to replace any mayor he decided did not act in accordance with "national interest." Following this statement, 22 pro-democracy groups formed the United Action for Democracy (UAD). The UAD demanded that Abacha not contest the elections, the release of all political prisoners, and the formation of a 'government of national unity.'

In July 1997, the transition timetable was amended; state assembly elections would be held in December 1997, and the National Assembly would be elected in April 1998. The gubernatorial elections were rescheduled to take place in August 1998, contemporaneous with the presidential elections. The UNCP dominated the state assembly elections, taking 65 percent of the 970 seats.

In December 1997, after the appointment of new Federal Executive Council, another coup attempt was thwarted, resulting in the arrest of several former cabinet ministers and many military officers. Over the next several months, significant pressure was put on the political parties. As a result of this pressure, all five registered political parties nominated Abacha as the sole candidate for presidential elections. This move, however, did not result in the intended outcome of Abacha maintaining his power. In June of 1998, Abacha was found dead in his private quarters, presumably a victim of a heart attack. Shortly thereafter, the former Defense Minister, Abdulsalam Abubakar became the interim head of state.

Abdulsalam Abubakar took power on June 8, 1998. Abubakar was received with international appeals to move towards democracy by releas ing all political prisoners, including Abiola, and restore civilian rule. At the end of June, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan met with Nigerian Foreign Minister, Tom Ikimi, to encourage the government to set its course for democracy. Abubakar and the provisional ruling council met to form a new electoral commission and a council of state. He set the date for the transition of the elected government for May 1999, with elections to be held in early 1999. Abubakar also repealed trade union restrictions implemented by Abacha

A month later, on July 7 - the eve of his release -- Chief Abiola died in prison at the age of 60. An autopsy revealed Abiola had died of a heart attack. Although he died in the presence of a visiting U.S. delegation, many still suspect foul play on the part of the Abubakar government. The people

of Nigeria, who had elected Abiola president in the subsequently annulled elections of 1993, had been eagerly awaiting Abiola's release. News of his demis e led to riots, which resulted in several deaths. The death of Abiola led to the centrality of Abubakar's power. Though he cancelled the August elections, the suspicions placed upon Abubakar led to significant pressure on him to schedule a new return to civilian rule.

Abubakar appointed a transitional cabinet of 31 ministers in August 1998. Most of the ministers that served under Abacha were replaced. Abubakar immediately began efforts to help the people recover from the years of political oppression under Abacha's regime and to implement measures to bring an end to widespread government corruption. An investigation into corruption under the Abacha regime was initiated in September 1998. Ismail Gwarzo was the first one to be implicated under the investigation, accused of embezzling more than $250 million. In November, it was determined that $1.3 billion had been stolen during Abacha's rule. This number more than doubled when the investigation later revealed that $2 b illion, supposedly used for debt repayment to Russia for a steel plant, had been stolen.

In addition to the anti-corruption campaign, human rights investigators were invited to Nigeria in September 1998. In a report released in November, the U.N. announced that human rights abuses had dramatically declined under Abubakar.

In October, a draft constitution committee was established, including representatives from several regions of the country. Due to the secrecy of the constitutional proceedings, concerns that military control or Islamic Sharia law were being implemented were common. When the new constitution was unveiled in January 1999, however, it was generally accepted because of the increased authority granted to local and state governments.

The new budget, on the other hand, did not receive a favorable reception. When it was announced in January 1999, it was revealed that revenue would drop 50 percent due to oil prices, which doubled after eliminating price fixing in December. The budget also required the repeal of the new minimum wage introduced in September. However, the dual exchange rate (that had gave different rates to privileged people under the Abacha regime) ended.

Elections of 1999

In August 1998, Abubakar began preparations for general and presidential elections. After the appointment of an election commission, local, parliamentary and presidential election dates were set for 1999. Political party registration began in August. In September, General Olesugun Obasanjo, the first military ruler of Nigeria to hand power to a civilian government, announced that he would be running for president for the People's Democratic Party. Voter registration began in October.

In November, requirements for the registration of political parties for parliamentary and presidential elections were announced. Political parties were eligible for national elections if they were able to secure five percent of the vote in at least 24 of the 36 Nigerian states in the local elections. Even in the early stages of the electoral process, irregularities were observed. It was revealed that, in October, party representatives were attempting to bribe officials to obtain more voting cards and other irregularities were reported in the voter registration process.

The People's Democratic Party dominated the local elections in December 1998 and won state elections in 20 of the 36 states. The PDP also won the majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Some irregularities were noted in the elections although they were determined to be insignificant.

In January 1999, in preparation for the presidential elections, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) announced it would be presenting a joint candidate with the All People's Party (APP). However, their inability to decide which party would provide the candidate revealed the weakness of the AD/APP alliance. The National Electoral Commission rejected the merger, but allowed the alliance to nominate a joint candidate. Former Minister of Finance Olu Falae was chosen as the presidential candidate for the AD/APP.

Despite a shaky start, Obasanjo was clearly the favored candidate throughout the presidential campaign both for foreign investors and Nigerian civil society. As a man of many faces, he was the perfect compromise candidate. As a traditional chief he could relate to other traditional rulers. As a soldier he could win the support of the military. As a former prisoner convicted of an attempted coup, he could be seen as a champion against the old system, and as a former head of state he could be viewed as someone who has the domestic and international experience to fight change.

Obasanjo was completely absent from the hour-long televised debates with Olu Falae, thereby giving his opponent somewhat of a head start. However, Falae's support dwindled rapidly when infighting in the APP caused several members to switch their support to Obasanjo. Dr. Olusola Saraki, who had hoped to be the presidential candidate for the APP, led the group. Obasanjo won the presidency as discussed below.

Presidential elections were held in Nigeria on May 29, 1999. Olusegun Obasanjo won with 62.8 percent of the vote. While these elections were a milestone in Nigerian history and a significant step for the country down the road towards democracy, international monitors, including former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, reported some irregularities in the elections, especially concerning the discrepancy between the number of votes counted and low turnout reported by monitors. Both sides were implicated in this activity but it was determined to have had little effect on the overall outcome of the elections. Falae appealed the results of the election, accusing Obasanjo of belonging to a secret society, being corrupt and ineligible for the presidency because he was holding a public

office at the time of the elections. The appeals were rejected in April and Falae subsequently withdrew his complaint.

Elections were greatly criticized by Nobel Peace Prize winning-writer, Wole Soyinka, for being a contest of financial resources and political pandering rather than a representation of a substantial step in the direction of democracy. Wole Soyinka returned to Nigeria in October after four years of exile under Abacha, but refused to answer the calls of his supporters to enter politics.

Obasanjo immediately set the task of appointing a cabinet. Of the 49 selected, only three were approved by the legislature. Obasanjo was accused of favoring his Yoruba region despite having appointed representatives from nearly every state. A cabinet was sworn in at the end of June 1999. The cabinet included many elements from former military regimes.

The Government from 1999-2002

Since assuming power in May 1999, Obasanjo has made efforts to reform the government and economy to address the long-neglected needs of Nigerians. The greatest challenges faced by the Obasanjo administration following the election included his own bid for re-election at the 2003 poll, the looming constitutional crisis, power shortages, corruption, ethnic conflicts based on oil revenues, and regional conflicts based on contrasting views of Islam in politics. These issues are discussed following.

Looking Toward the Elections

On Feb. 11, 2001, the committee of his People's Democratic Party (PDP) responded to allegations that they were considering dropping him as their candidate by stating categorically that they would stand behind him. There was not much doubt that he would continue to win the support of his home Yoruba region. However, his prospects of maintaining his constituency in the north were somewhat tenuous. Some speculated that former military leader Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, largely responsible for Obasanjo's coming to power, might run himself thereby drawing the northern vote. However, Babangida responded by stating that this would amount to politic al cannibalism and that he would work to maintain Obasanjo's popularity in the north. If he made good on this promise then it was likely few regional leaders would risk their lines of political power to challenge Obasanjo's reelection. The three states seeking to institutionalize Shari'a (Islamic law) at the expense of the secular rule of law were to put forward their own candidate, but could not possibly win the necessary support in the south.

In October 2000, a conflict between an extremist Yoruba organization, the Odua People's Congress (OPC) and Hausas from the center of the country erupted in Lagos. At issue was the effort to

replace the Hausa leader in a central Hausa region with a Yoruba chief. This sparked great disdain toward the president as he was seen as having backed the efforts to spread the influence of his own Yoruba leaders. In three days of conflict nearly 100 people died. The Nigerian Army took over the streets of Lagos and a curfew was installed until peace could be restored. Whether these events were the first of others to come, and whether they would serve as a challenge to popular northern support for the president's electoral bid remained to be seen.

For their part, Igbos were likely continue to be split in their support for Obasanjo. In 1999, he won the ire of many Igbo by creating the Interim Management Committee of the Petroleum Trust Fund without any representatives from the southeast. In February 2001 Gov. Orji Kalu vented significant frustration at the president, arguing that he has intentionally sought to marginalize the Igbo for his own political gain.

The nature of Obasanjo's vision of Nigerian nationalism assured that he would fail to win support in the Delta region. The minority Ogoni and Ijaw groups assert a normative right to govern their own resources. They seek a highly decentralized system in which citizenship is based at the sub-national or ethnic level rather than at the level of the nation-state. Semi-sovereign status, it follows, should be defined by ethnic boundaries at the lowest level. Obasanjo's highly centralized version of federalism would never allow for such a compromise. As a result, the Niger Delta conflict was expected to remain one of the most pressing well into the 2003 electoral season and beyond.

Party-factioning also plagued the president's re-election bid. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) was in crisis for most of 2001. The President-General of Aladura Churches Worldwide, Dr. Olapade Agoro, went so far to claim in early November 2001 that the on-going PDP crisis was a result of President Obasanjo's desire to run for a second term. However, the November 2001 convention of the PDP appeared to have waylaid some of the differences. The party was to stand behind his candidacy in unison and reach out towards disaffected members.

While President Obasanjo was the candidate of choice, he has been viewed by many as not being capable of fully removing his uniform in the name of democracy. One commentator went so far as to say that "Obasanjo is the most Machiavellian politician in the country today." While perhaps an overstatement, he was not presenting himself as the compromise candidate akin to his positioning in 1999. At that time he was the Yoruban candidate from the south with a northern pedigree -- respected by all but the most radical of the Islamic north. By the early 2000s, the south wanted more from its candidate, while the nort h was threatened by his centralizing tendencies. At the close of 2001, there did not appear, however, to be any other truly viable candidate on the horizon.

The Looming Constitutional Crisis

A new constitution was introduced in May 1999. Because it was written under the auspices of the

military directorate but introduced in a time of democratic transition, the constitution was controversial from the outset. Obasanjo was accused of implementing the constitution without due democratic process. The constitutional committee was largely made up by those close to him and did not include many of his opponents or their representatives. It allows for a federal system and a division of powers into the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government similar to the American system. However, the presidency is vested with a great deal of authority.

A number of specific provisions have challenged the viability of the constitution. For instance, Article 162 (2) of the constitution allocates states a greater percentage of revenues derived from their lands. The percentage was raised from the three percent under former President Abacha to 13 percent. This change is most critical in the Niger Delta region where despite the fact that the bulk of the country's oil is mined there, it remains one of the country's poorest regions. President Obasanjo promised to improve public services for the Ogoni people and help fight the pollution caused by oil companies in the region. Yet, while the royalties received by the people of the Delta region have increased four-fold, it has failed to stem the crisis as the minority Ogoni and Ijaw peoples see this not as an issue of royalties as much as an issue of property rights. Compounding the issue is President Ojasanjo's refusal to abide by the constitutionally stipulated 13 percent and instead gives only s even percent back to the region.

Another significant challenge to the constitution has come from the Islamic northern states. In September 1998, several were killed when the government clashed with Shi'ite Muslim activists rallying for the release of their leader, Ibrahim el Zak-Zaky, who had been imprisoned under Abacha. The group, the Muslim Brotherhood, want the introduction of Sharia law and reject all secular authority. Zak-Zaky was released in December 1998. Zak-Zaky organized rallies in mid-1999 demanding the release of other Islamic prisoners. The 1999 constitution allows the establishment of a Shari'a (Islamic) Court of Appeals in Islamic states. This move was made in an effort to stem the rising tide of Islamic discontent and actuation of Islamic law throughout the regional governments of the north, but it has not had the desired effect. Attempts were made to improve the situation through the convening of a panel of Muslim and Christian leaders in April 2000 with the intent of bringing together the Islamic and state codes. However, in June 2000, Kano state declared Shari'a the valid law across the state abrogating the reconciliation process. The state of Jigawa followed suit in August 2000.

In November 2001 the governors of Nigeria's 36 states came together to jointly write a letter to President Obasanjo stressing the need for him to "bring down the tension associated with socio-political events in the country." Notably, the socio-political events referred to the electricity difficulties and the inter-ethnic conflicts. The immediate fear for the president was that the regional differences would galvanize resentment and lead to a constitutional crisis ahead of the 2003 elections. The president set up a National Assembly on the Electoral Bill to address differences over electricity, but many of the issues, including the crucial issue of the enactment of Sharia as state laws in northern states, remain largely unaddressed.

The Electoral Bill created a huge controversy in December 2001. It was revealed that a number of additional clauses, which had not been in the Bill that the legislative body originally passed, had been added to the Bill that President Obasanjo signed into law. The first controversial clause revised the order of elections so that presidential elections would be held before local council elections. The second clause declared that new political parties could not be registered as political parties unless they could win 15 percent of the local elections in every state in two-thirds of Nigeria. This would effectively mean local council tenure would be extended by a year and that there would be no new political parties until 2007. State governors and opposition leaders claimed the insertion of these clauses was democratic sabotage that would pave the way for Obasanjo to remain in power under a one-party state. The 36 state governors challenged the constitutionality of the revision to the local council elections clause (the first controversial clause). In March 2002, the Supreme Court rejected the clause as unconstitutional. The Court's ruling has been seen as a triumph of democracy.

Utilities

Since coming to power in May 1999, Obasanjo's mission has been to revive Nigeria's ailing economy and rid the country of corruption. He has accelerated the privatization of the previously owned state enterprises. The international community has praised Obasanjo's privatization efforts most notably in the energy sectors. For instance, the Houston (U.S.) based Enron Corporation invested $147 million into the electricity sector formerly controlled exclusively by the government. AES has also bought options to trade with Enron in the sector. The combined AES-Enron independent power project, as it is called, began to see result in January 2001.

By March 20 01 Enron released 90 megawatts into the Lagos electrical system with the intention of increasing it to 270 megawatts by May 2001. As this was done in conjunction with the national grid of 800 megawatts, the increase was significant. The goal of the National Electric Power Authority was to do away with power outages in Lagos by December 2001. While significant advances have been made, this goal was not being met.

As early as June 2001, President Obasanjo expressed displeasure with Enron and accused the company of poor performance and bad faith. With Enron's having its difficulties back home in the United States, and the citing of the Enron Nigeria Barge Ltd. by investors as an example of the company's bookkeeping skullduggery, the future of the electricity project was unclear. New goals included addressing the 40 percent of the country that was yet to be electrified. With the demise of Enron, however, it was clear that Nigeria's power and utilities industry would have to be developed in another way.

Corruption

Transparency International (a global, non-governmental organization funded by government institutions and business foundations with a membership of over 75 countries) has long since held Nigeria as one of the world's most corrupt countries. Shortly after taking office, Obasanjo suspended all contracts granted under the military regime and launched a campaign against corruption. An anti-corruption bill introduced in June 1999, outlined specific contract procedures and punishments for corrupt officials. It eliminated middlemen from crude oil sales and last minute oil prospecting rights handed out by his predecessors as political patronage. He has also implemented severe penalties for civil servants convicted of corruption. More than 90 military officials were implicated for corrupt practices in June 1999. Later in the month, new guidelines were introduced for oil company contracts. A Nigerian human rights panel was also established to investigate abuses.

In December 2000 President Obasanjo formally warned all of those engaged in corruption that they would be uncovered. He specifically challenged top functionaries. However, his critics view him as backing down from the fight against corruption by not challenging the elected leadership. They argue that he talks more than acts against the roots of systemic corruption. In January 2001 opposition leaders accused Obasanjo of intentionally allowing senators to act above the law to line their own pockets. While Obasanjo denies this, Transparency International still ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country in the world in 2000.

Obasanjo came into power with inherited problems, but he has compounded them. He inherited foreign debts, uncompleted development projects, ethnic crises, low development, poverty, threats to nationalism, a restless civil society and an economy in disarray. However, he has been accused of poor management of information, exacerbating a communication, ambiguity in policy pronouncements, and ministerial arrogance. Most importantly, he has sought to guarantee national unity in a country deeply divided by nationalistic differences.

Obasanjo made steps to fight corruption by establishing the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission in 2000. In 2002 the Commission was investigating a top judge for accepting bribes and governors of two Nigerian states. There have been some questions as to the constitutionality of the Commission for which the Nigerian Supreme Court is in the process of reviewing.

Ethnicity and Oil

The relationship between ethnicity and oil in Nigeria has created one of the most volatile conflicts the new democratic government must overcome, and would be a significant consideration in the country's elections.

With 478 distinct languages, and over 250 ethnic groups, Nigeria is one of the most heterogeneous countries in the world. The principal ethnic divides affecting the political sphere are generally thought to be the Hausa-Fulani northerners in contrast to the Yoruba of the southwest and the Igbo of the southeast. These lines are certainly deeply scored by religion, lfinguistic origin and historical trade route differences.

In the months leading up to the 1999 elections, many informed observers questioned whether a unifying leader could even be possible in Nigeria. Obasanjo won strong international support because he could draw on more sources of domestic power than any other candidate for office. As a former general he held the esteem of the military. As a northerner he held the support of the Hausa-Fulani, and as a born-again Christian he could at least be acceptable to the Yoruba and Igbo south. While his success at maintaining the peace between these cavernous divides has been a tribute to his personal attributes and leadership abilities, Nigeria still has a long way to go before it builds institutional bridges.

Yet even as Obassanjo has been successful at quelling inter-ethnic violence between the principal regions, his tenure has been marred by some of the worst ethnic conflict in the history of southeastern Nigeria. At the heart of the crisis is the poverty facing the people in the Niger Delta in the face of extreme regional oil wealth.

Far from a new problem, the issue of citizenship dates back to the creation of the colonial state. In 1914 the new colonial state seconded all rights to oil resources by passing the Mineral Act. This act gave the state the right to grant land leases to British nationals. In 1938 a consortium of Shell and D'Arcy Exploration Parties (later Shell-BP) won the first large commercial license for exploration. They chose the Niger Delta region for that exploration. With great success in drilling, in 1956 Shell-BP ran a pipeline from the region to Port Harcourt and began exporting oil to Europe two years later. In 1963, after Nigerian independence, it expanded the pipeline, zigzagging across the Delta region from oilfield to oilfield, eventually connecting with the pipeline running to Port Harcourt. At no point was there compensation for the environmental loss, land loss or resource loss to the people who lived in the Delta region. From 1960 until 1966 the oil proceeds were divided 60 percent for the state of derivation, 20 percent for the federal government and 30 percent to a distributive pool that was shared among the whole of the Nigerian population. While the Nigerian government argued that the derivation was to the benefit of the resource region, the Ogoni and Ijaw people objected to their lack of representation in the Delta state nexus of power.

The first intergovernmental level disputes of the independence era began during the 1967-1970 civil war. The four political regions of the country each asserted a greater claim to the oil revenues. In November 1969 the Nigerian government signed the Petroleum Decree nullifying all concessions and granting itself rights to exploration. As part of this decree the Nigerian government has rights to all petroleum "in, under, or upon any lands of the country; all petroleum under the territorial waters of Nigeria; all land forming part of the continental shelf of the country." In 1971 the government

set up the Nigerian National Oil Corporation to produce and market the oil. Once again, the lion's share of exploration rights was sold to Shell-BP. In 1975 the derivation percentage was reduced to 20 percent. By the end of the Babangida era in 1993 the derivation share fell to three percent.

The reduction of the derivation from 20 percent to three percent in the early 1990s sparked Ken Saro-Wiwa to lead the movement for the survival of the Ogoni people. Saro-Wiwa, an established writer with an international reputation, won international attention by focusing Ogoni claims on the issue of citizenship. He argued that the formation of the Nigerian state came as a derivation of the colonial state and thus did not necessarily represent the identity of the people. Further, he argued that the principal that guarantees the independent identities of the dominant Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo nations within the Nigerian federal system should extend to all ethnic groups with an established nationalistic identity regardless of size. If each of these three nations should be allowed to assert rights over their land, why should the Ogoni and Ijaw people be allowed additionally? On what human rights observers argue were trumped-up charges, Saro-Wiwa and his eight other leaders were arrested for the murder of local leaders and put to death in 1994.

The intensity of the conflict continued to grow through the 1990s. In 1994 the Delta Minorities Form made a formal list of grievances to the Nigerian government. When this failed, in December 1998 the Ijaw youth organization issued the Kaiama Declaration giving an ultimatum to the federal government and oil companies to vacate Ijawland by the end of 1998. When this went unheeded, it started a splintering effect of extremist Ogoni and Ijaw youth groups who regularly sabotage the oil pipelines-more than 2,000 people were killed by oil-related ethnic clashes in 2000.

There are six primary causes for the change in Delta posture. First, the derivation was lowered in the early 1990s to three percent. Although it has since been raised to 13 percent, the peoples of the Delta region do not see this as adequate compensation. Second, the new units of government, including those that govern the oil derivation monies, fail to include Delta leadership. The people of the Delta region see this as favoring the three large ethnicities at the expense of the smaller ethnic groups. Third, despite the great oil wealth, poverty in the Delta region is more widespread than anywhere else in the country. Fourth, oil companies commonly import labor from other parts of the country. Therefore, unemployment in the Delta region is higher than anywhere else in the country. Delta residents fail to see a positive secondary impact of the oil industry. Fifth, the first of the oilfields from 1956 were recently capped, giving rise to the fear that the oil will run out before the Delta region sees any profit from it. Sixth, for most of the oil-drilling period there has been little or no environmental safeguards. There has been significant environment degradation caused by oil related activities. Between 1976 and 1986 there were at least 3,000 spills. It is estimated that the 10 years that followed had an even greater number. As a result, not only has a significant portion of arable lands been destroyed, the health of the residents of the region also has deteriorated. The first significant legal ruling on the matter in favor of the people of the Delta region did not come until September 2000 when a Nigerian court ordered Exxon Mobil to pay $47 million in compensatory damages for an oil spill from the company's facility.

This is an issue of federal-local identity. The government sees oil as the country's most lucrative natural resource. Nigeria is currently the world's sixth largest oil exporter. The oil profits, however, are not funneled back to the people of the region by way of infrastructure development. The majority of the Ijaw, Itsekiri, and Ogoni are people who live without roads, electricity or running water. They view the taking of oil as robbery by the Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. In part, this has caused intra-communal conflict as Ijaw and Itsekiri have taken up arms in reaction to land and oil rights. In addition the Ijaw have been fighting government forces, demanding a greater share of wealth for the people in the impoverished region. The Ogoni people have been waging a battle against the pollution of their lands by oil companies and demanding autonomy for several years.

Even more dangerous than the intra-ethnic and direct attacks on government, however, is that the residents of the Niger Delta region have launched continual pipeline attacks. In December 1998, 700 people were killed in a pipeline blast. On July 25, 2000, another 200 were killed in a similar blast. On July 10, 2000, six villages were covered in oil and set ablaze from a pipe blast, burning an estimated 300 people alive. Some of the blasts are impromptu attempts by bandits to both disrupt the oil supply and to open up the pipeline to oil theft. However, according the Nigerian Vanguard Daily, the blasts are now more often highly organized by a southeastern-based oil cartel that is well armed and well trained.

In 2001, Nigeria entered a new phase of oil exploration with the commencement of offshore deep-water drilling (in over 6000 feet of water). Most of this oil's potential lies in the water off the Niger Delta region in Ikijaland. This is likely to further invigorate groups bent on sabotaging attempts by the central government to increase oil proceeds.

The United States and European partners have tried to help support the growth of Nigerian nationalism while asserting local rights. It is at least in part due to these pressures that Obasanjo agreed to increase the derivation to 13 percent as reflected in the 1999 constitution. However, by the end of 2001 the government increased the derivation to only 7 percent. Further compounding matters is the president's inaction in light of an October 2000 investigation in which investigators searching for the $3 billion in oil monies stolen by the late Gen. Sani Abach between 1993 and 1998 established that the money was deposited in 3 0 major banks in Europe and the United States. Neither the banks nor the governments thought to be assisting in the search reported this discovery to regulators. Generally, this development is viewed as an illustration of the lack of will by Western governments to crack down on corrupt transfers. As a result, these Western powers have lost a lot of credibility in the negotiating process.

Resolving this issue will take more than the implementation of the 13 percent derivation. At a June 2001 meeting a south-south sub-committee of the National Assembly concluded that the derivation should be raised to 50 percent. Yet, even this would not resolve the issue. Resolving the crisis will require that the government of Nigeria address the issue of national identity and land rights at a

fundamental level. Given the ever-increasing oil proceeds, this is something the Nigerian government has been ill prepared to do.

The Significance of Islam

Beyond the ethnic and oil divide, Nigeria has been faced with a growing religious divide, which has also influenced the election process.

The north is predominantly Muslim and the south is predominantly Christian. There is not a history of an Islamic state in Nigeria, but Islam has surged forward through state-level judicial and legislative challenges. In 1999 five northern states instituted governments run by Shari'a (Islamic religious law). The first state to initiate an Islamic sub-state was Zamfara in October 1999. The demonstrations in favor of the Shari'a in Zamfara in October are thought to have drawn several hundred thousand people. While the north is still split on whether Islam should guide the government, it seems to hold mass support. Once the Shari'a is put into place, it is difficult even for Muslims in favor of a secular state to erode the laws as this would be seen as an act against God. Obasanjo can trace the recent resurgence of the Shari'a debate to a speech on Oct. 1, 1999, when he highlighted the country's moral dissatisfaction and called for change. This was seen by some state governors as a willingness to accept the Shari'a.

In July 2000, Obasanjo revoked the right of the local governments to build states based on the Sharia. He stood with Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who is himself is a Muslim against the implementation of Shari'a (Islamic law) as common law, in stating that the Shari'a will erode the democratic gains the country has made. In late February 2000, clashes between Muslims and Christians in Kaduna led to an estimated 400 people being killed.

The fear of the administration has been that the heightened tensions that have already emerged between Muslims and Christians will be exacerbated at the national level if a debate between the acceptances of the Shari'a versus the acceptance of common law is allowed to foster. For their part, the governors of the northern provinces have argued that what they are looking for is not to erode democracy but to strengthen it. They have argued that a duel system of laws and judicial accountability for Muslims and non-Muslims will allow for a greater expression of religious freedom. Critics of the implementation of the Shari'a note that the older generation is not in support of it. It is predominantly being imposed by a younger generation of former military rulers. These critics believe Shari'a is being used not as a tribute to God, but as a political and cultural tool for the north to fight against the rise of southern power.

In late 2001, ten of Nigeria's 36 states have adopted the Shari'a as a system of laws. Christian organizations have challenged Islamic law as unconstitutional. While most states argued that religious freedom should be respected but it should remain separate from the rule of law, Rivers

has threatened to declare itself a Christian state governed by Christian law in protest.

For his part, Obasanjo is in a difficult position. He cannot be seen as cracking down on religious freedom only in the north because, as a Christian and Yoruban, he will be accused of favoritism. Yet, the implementation of Shari'a calls for significant changes in the rule of law that challenge secular human rights laws and laws of due process. The Shari'a as state law is not compatible with the secular law of a nascent democracy.

Viewing Obasanjo as taking little action, Yoruba and Igbo state leadership made moves to increase the institutionalization of the Shari'a as a direct threat to democracy and have warned of retaliatory action. Then, in March 2002, the Nigerian Government severely criticized Shari'a law, calling some aspects of the law unconstitutional and warned that it discriminated against people. This statement coincided with the international community's uproar over a Nigerian Muslim woman who was, at the time, appealing her sentence of death by stoning for committing adultery.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America, the issue of Islam in Nigeria has seen increased urgency. In some states, posters of Osama bin Laden have become hugely popular. They have come to symbolize a growing dissatisfaction with United States-inspired secular democracy in Nigeria. As a result, over 500 people died in the northern town of Jos in the month following the attacks. It appeared clear that at least a portion of this fighting was fueled by the September 11, 2001 attacks. Yet, even while these events have proved to further galvanize Christian and Muslim interests, they have also demonstrated a significant Intra-Islam divide in Nigeria. Radical Islam in Nigeria is being faced with a more acquiescent, peace-seeking Muslim public. As such, it has been leading some analysts to go so far as to say that the real divide in Nigeria today isn't Christian-Muslim but rather Radical-Moderate.

In November 2002, 200 people died in violence between Christians and Muslims in the northern city of Kaduna, while hundreds more faced charges in courts for their participation in riots and bloody protests that ensued. In addition to the 200 people killed, more than 1,000 were injured and over 10,000 were dislocated and made homeless, as a result of the chaos. As well, more than 20 churches, eight mosques, and a number of hotels, were also destroyed. The chaos was sparked by a newspaper article about the Miss World pageant, which was to be held in Nigeria in late 2002. When the sectarian violence spread to the capital city of Abuja, the pageant was relocated to London.

In the months leading up to the contest, the Miss World pageant to be held in Nigeria had gained political attention when some contestants refused to attend the event. Their refusal was in protest of the aforementioned Nigerian woman who had been sentenced to death by stoning for adultery, in accordance with Muslim Shari'a law. Legal rulings in accordance with Islamic dictates are prevalent in the north of the country, however, in this case, international outcry emerged over the harshness of the ruling. Although the Nigerian government stated that it would not allow the death

sentence to be carried out, the government was in a difficult situation as it had to garner support from the Muslim north in order to win the next election. Interfering with the legal authority of a regional Islamic ruling would not be well-received by the people of that region, or by the country's Muslim population.

Election 2003

In parliamentary elections in Nigeria, early results suggested that President Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party (PDP) enjoyed strong support. In the south and west of the country , the PDP made some notable gains, although the party lost a number of seats in the north. Official results were not immediately available, however, a PDP parliamentary majority was predicted. Voter turn-out was reported to be high; the election process was largely free of problems and violence, although questions of fraud arose in Port Harcourt, the surrounding River States, while the oil-producing city Warri reported the destruction of polling stations by militant factions.

In presidential elections held a week later, President Obasanjo appeared headed for overwhelming victory in Nigeria's first civilian-run presidential elections in about 20 years. Early election results suggest that Obasanjo has garnered 61.2 percent of the votes cast, while Muhammadu Buhari, the closest contender, garnered 32.7 percent of the votes cast. Buhari's party - All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) denounced the results as illegitimate and promised mass action as a result. Obasanjo , as a Christian, held the support of the south and west of Nigeria. Buhari, a Muslim, enjoyed strong support from the Islamic-dominated north.

Obasanjo's re-election victory was marred by accusations of fraud, vote-rigging, intimidation and other electoral violations. Observers from the European Union said that the elections were "marred by serious irregularities" and reported widespread ballot box stuffing and other instances of electoral fraud in some 13 states. Various United States-based observers also reported incidences of ballot stuffing, vote-rigging, fraud and intimidation. These problems, however, appeared to be limited to some polling stations in the south and east of Nigeria, and were not reported across the country. Commonwealth observers were more positive in their assessment and said that although there was intimidation of voters and an erosion of proper electoral processes in some states, most of Nigeria had experienced a largely successful election.

The election also involved isolated incidences of violence with eight opposition supporters killed in the central state of Benue, and six opposition supporters killed in the Niger Delta.

Ultimately, the goal of this election was to transition one elected civilian administration to another for the first time in two decades. The results of the aforementioned parliamentary election, in combination with the results of the presidential election, seem to have resulted in the consolidation of the PDP's political power.

Post-Election Considerations

Whatever obstacles laid ahead, the return to civilian rule of law in Nigeria has been hailed as a major achievement for the Nigerian people. The extent to which the government maintains stability and peace will be determined by its ability to improve the quality of life of all the poor Nigeria masses. Military takeover still remains a threat to the nation. Currently, Obasanjo has managed to implement reforms thanks to his charismatic authority. Nevertheless, while his military background and religious neutrality has lent him a great deal of goodwill, many regard him as a one-nation Nigerian. This brings him under attack from all many directions for being an ethnic chauvinist. To Yoruba nationalists he has sometimes been regarded as a traitor of sorts; to Hausa nationalists he has been seen as a closet supremacist; and to the minority ethnic group of the Niger Delta, he has been viewed as a centralizing force, bent on robbing them of their God-given resources.

Obasanjo's challenge for the duration of his time in power (an issue yet to be determined definitively) will be to put into place strong institutions for the support of the young and fragile democracy. This step is crucial, as it will educate Nigerians about their rights and responsibilities. As stated in his inaugural speech years prior, President Obasanjo asked of Nigerians to do for the country what they expect the country to do for them. The establishment of an institutionalized presidency will free him from suspicion that he is acting predominantly in his own interest as a Nigerian nationalist.. Furthermore, it will lend him more of the credibility necessary to address the greatly divisive ethnic, economic and religious problems facing the country.

Obasanjo must also answer his critics who say while he has done well at institutionalizing elections and associated civilian authority, he has done poorly at expanding the freedoms of democracy. Amnesty International, for instance, has argued that oppression of minority people continues unabated. Others argue that the press, far from acting as a guarantor of transparency and accountability, acts to serve as an agent for stability. It fails to challenge the military, or to inform or educate the electorate. Though independent, scholars have argued that the media/press acts as an agent of the government rather than an agent for democratic change. In this way the Nigerian press undermines rather than facilitates democracy.

In line with his policy of economic growth, Obasanjo has formed meaningful relations with the Western governments. The United States and Europe made no secret of their support for him during the elections and they have rewarded his victory in economic and political support since his victory. Perhaps more importantly he has renewed relations with government of South Africa. These are all indications that Obasanjo has taken the first tentative steps towards successful democratic consolidation in a country where military rule has been the norm.

Political Developments from 2003 through 2005

The democratic process of elections notwithstanding, Nigeria has still to contend with questions about its human rights record. In December 2003, the United States-based Human Rights Watch reported that violence and intimidation is still used by the government against its opponents.

In other developments, Nigeria made international headlines in 2003 when it agreed to accept Liberian President Charles Taylor in asylum after Taylor resigned from his post -- thus essentially helping guarantee that Taylor would effectively escape international prosecution for war crimes.

Also in 2003, the government ended subsidies on fuel, effectively raising the prices by 15 percent. The National Labor Congress (NLC) responded by threatening a general strike. In response, the government cancelled the price change. In February, the government sought a ban on general strikes in response to fuel price hikes but it was rejected by the Abuja Appeals Court and sent to the High Court. In June, the NLC held another strike in response to a fuel price hike. Once again, the price was cut. This time Obasanjo announced that the NLC would be broken up. He also followed through with legislation that limited the power of unions. In addition, the legislation makes membership in the NLC voluntary. Obasanjo said the changes were intended to make the unions more democratic.

Central and northern Nigeria were plagued by ethno-religious violence throughout 2004. A group called the Taleban (complete with a leader dubbed Mullah Omar) clashed with police in the northeastern Yobe state in early 2004. Eighteen people died, including two police officers. The Taleban has stated it wants to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria. In September, a group of 40 calling themselves the Taleban appeared in the state of Borno and killed seven. Police reportedly tracked down and killed 27 of the group.

Fighting between the Fulani and Tarok in the central Plateau state in early 2004 sparked a chain reaction of violence between Christians and Muslims throughout central and northern Nigeria. The violence between the Muslim Fulani herdsmen and the Christian Tarok farmers was just the latest flare-up in ongoing hostilities between two groups.

Forty-eight were killed in violence in February 2004 in the town of Yelwa. Most of the victims were Tarok who were killed in a church where they sought refuge. Three more died the following month in violence in Tarok and Langtang villages. Tarok farmers retaliated in May by sweeping through Yelwa burning houses and killing, by some estimates, at least 200 people. Several hundred police were sent to the area to attempt to keep the violence under control. A demonstration against the killings in Yelwa in the northern state of Kano spiraled into violence with reports of between 10 and 600 killed. Tens of thousands of people were displaced by the violence in both Yelwa and Kano.

In a controversial move, Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in the Plateau state and replaced the governor with retired General Chris Ali. Several newspapers criticized the move by saying that most of the state was peaceful. Christian and Muslim leaders held a conference in August to discuss the tensions. Violence also escalated in the northeastern state of Adamawa in the town of Numan. Seven were killed and three mosques were burned to the ground.

Violence also flared throughout the Delta region in 2004. In Warri, 30 people were killed in clashes between groups of Ijaw and Itsekiri. Government forces were immediately dispatched to intervene. Port Harcourt was plagued by violence between rival militias. The militias were believed to have been paid by local leaders who used them to intimidate their political rivals. After the elections, the groups were involved in banditry and oil theft. Ongoing clashes between groups in the city prompted the government to send forces to quell the violence. One group emerged as the most prominent - and the most ambitious. The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) is led by Mujahid Dokubo Asari. Asari has stated that the goal of the NDPVF is complete autonomy for the Ijaw people and control over the oil resources in the area. The group funds its activities by stealing oil from pipelines in the Delta swamp, refining it, and selling it.

Violence between the militias and armed forces escalated to such an extent that energy and petrochemical giant Shell evacuated 250 of its staff from Port Harcourt. Amnesty International (AI) estimated that 500 were killed in August 2004 and September 2004 alone. AI claimed that most of these were civilian victims of the government forces. In October 2004, Asari met with government officials and declared a truce pending discussions of possible profit-sharing of oil resources for the Ijaw people.

Violence also permeated the local election of 2004 from the run-up until the declaration of the winners. In March, the head of the electoral commission and a ruling party candidate were both murdered. A total of 17 people were killed before the election started and 50 more were killed across the country during the elections. The ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) won the local elections in 25 of the 30 states. Claims of rigging were heard around the country.

Meanwhile, in April 2004, several military officers were arrested in a clamp-down after what was termed a "security breach" by the Nigerian government. The security breach was widely interpreted as an attempt to overthrow President Obasanjo. Soldiers were forced to remain in barracks and all leave was canceled while authorities investigated the matter. Hamza al-Mustapha, former head of security for Sani Abacha, was implicated in the security breach. He had been removed from prison by police a week earlier. He has been held pending trial for the 1996 attempted assassination of the former head of internal affairs under Sani Abacha. Police turned Mustapha over to the court. Opposition leader Buba Galadima of the Nigerians United for Democracy was also linked to the attempted coup. The week before, Galadima organized mass demonstrations in Abuja and Lagos calling for the resignation of Obasanjo for rigging the 2003 elections.

In May 2005, Nigerian President Obasanjo fired two appeals court judges on allegations of corruption. Around the same period, the government's Code of Conduct Bureau accused three state governors of improperly holding foreign accounts. These decisions came two months after the president started an anti-corruption program when he fired two of his own cabinet minister and compelled the resignation of the president of the country's Senate. President Obasanjo said he was determined to remedy Nigeria's image as one of the world's most corrupt countries. He hoped that by instituting a hardline approach in dealing with offenders, he would be able to convince creditors to cancel the country's debt.

In August 2005, Nigeria announced the winners of several new oil exploration contracts, which center on terrain stretching from Lake Chad in the north-east to the Gulf of Guinea in the south-west. Nigeria's open oil rights bidding process was open to oil companies from the United States, Asia, and Europe. In the end, the Nigerian government awarded 27 oil blocks to various multinationals, consortia, and the national oil companies of Norway and Brazil. The various winners were expected to pay "signing bonuses" of between $1 billion and $2 billion (USD). Firms across the globe have been particularly interested in Nigeria's oil prospects given the untouched nature of the exploration plots at stake, and also because of the rising price of crude oil.

At home in Nigeria, however, the escalation of gas prices -- the corollary of the rising price of crude -- resulted in a public outcry and calls for strike action.

In September 2005, the governor of Nigeria's oil-rich state of Bayelsa, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, was arrested in the United Kingdom by the special Economic Crimes Unit of the London Police. He was subsequently released on bail. Nigerian authorities said that his detainment was due to an investigation into allegations of money laundering. Apparently, an investigation had been underway by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of the governor for more than three years. Under Nigerian law, Alamieyeseigha has benefited from immunity from prosecution while in office. Outside Nigeria, however, such immunity does not apply.

Also in September 2005, two oil pumping stations were closed in Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta region, following threats by militant groups. The second closure occurred after over 100 armed men stormed a flow-station, reported sources from the Chevron oil company. Chevron said it had closed its stations in response to the imminent threat posed by militants. The increase in tensions occurred after the arrest of militia leader Mujahid Dokubu-Asari, who had been fighting for more control of oil resources for the Ijaw people of the Niger Delta. A leader of the group, Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, meanwhile threatened to blow up the stations occupied by multinational energy companies unless Asari was released. Militants also warned foreign oil-workers against staying in the area. To date, the Niger Delta remains one of Nigeria's least developed and most impoverished regions, although it accounts for most of the oil produced in the country. Note: Nigeria is Africa's largest oil-producer.

On Oct. 22, 2005, a Nigerian airline flying from Lagos to Abuja crashed, killing all 118 passengers and crew on board. Reports stated that several senior government officials were on the flight, including a member of parliament and a general. A national mourning period was declared by President Olusegun Obasanjo.

In other developments, Stella Obasanjo, the wife of President Obasanjo, died on Oct. 23, 2005, following surgery in Spain as a result of medical complications. Stella Obasanjo was the president's "official" wife.

Political Succession

Meanwhile, throughout 2005, tensions emerged within the ruling party. These tensions occurred between President Obasanjo and Vice President Atiku Abubakar in conjunction with the question of succession. Following a second term in office, the constitution makes clear that a new president must assume power.

The Obasanjo-Atiku ticket won in the 1999 and 2003 elections largely because the vice president was able to deliver Muslim votes in the north. As the president's second term drew nearer to its close, Vice President Atiku made his view clear that he should be the ruling party's candidate in the 2007 election. While such an assumption seemed reasonable under the circumstances, those within the party loyal to Obasanjo were discussing the possibility of a constitutional change which would allow the president a third term in office. As such, the vice president's ambitions stood in the way of such a move and led to intra-party conflict.

By August 2005, loyalists of Obasanjo called on Vice President Atiku Abubakar to resign if he could not back President Obasanjo.

In December 2005, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar vowed not to become involved in any plot to undermine the country's democratic government. Atiku Abubakar's statement came after the publication of a media report which exposed an alleged plan to frame him for treason over a false coup plot. The report complicated an already-strained relationship between the vice president and President Obasanjo who have been at odds about which of them would contest the 2007 presidential elections. Nevertheless, the vice president took the opportunity to make clear that he would not be used as a pawn in any unsavory actions against the democratically elected leader of the country. To this end he said, "Anyone purporting to drag my name or office into anything contrary to this oath [of office] should be regarded as mischief-makers who do not wish our country well."

But by April 2006, Vice-President Atiku Abubakar expressed his public opposition to President

Olusegun Obasanjo's move to change the constitution to remove the two-term limit. In response, Nigeria's government urged the vice-president to resign. A presidential spokesman said that if Vice-President Atiku Abubakar was not content with his place in government, he should resign from office. In response, the vice-president made a counter-call to the president to resign "for breaking the constitution" -- presumably a reference to the possibility of removing term limits.

While President Obasanjo never stated that he wanted to remain in office, the proposed constitutional changes would have made it possible for him to do so. The situation appeared to have fueled a growing power struggle between the president who may wish to hold on to power for a while longer, and a vice president who may believe that his time has come to claim the reins.

In May 2006, the Nigerian Senate put an end to speculation that President Olusegun Obasanjo might be able to run for a third term in office. On May 16, 2006, the Senate rejected a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow a president to seek more than two terms. Despite efforts by proponents of the third term bid to garner support of two-thirds of parliament, the Senate unanimously voted to discontinue proceedings related to the proposed constitutional amendment. As such, when President Obasanjo's second term in office ends in 2007, elections were to be held to choose a new president.

In June 2006, efforts to extend President Obasanjo's tenure led to a split within his own party. This development came even after the Senate threw out a proposed constitutional amendment (discussed in the previous paragraph) to accomplish this end only a month prior. The latest effort by some members of President Obasanjo's ruling party to amend the constitution, allowing Obasanjo to run for a third term, was opposed by members of the same party. Many of these individuals may have been aligned with Vice-President Atiku Abubakar who has said (as suggested above) that he was against a constitutional change and wished to run for office himself.

The result was a mix of intra-party divisions and hostility, previously manifest by president and vice-president respectively calling on one another to resign, and now, with riot police sealing the offices of the ruling party in an effort to stave off violence.

In September 2006, the Vice-President Atiku Abubakar had been suspended on the basis of corruption allegations. For his part, Abubakar said that his suspension had been politically-motivated.

December 2006 saw political turmoil in Nigeria after Vice President Atiku Abubakar attended an opposition convention. The move laid bare the power struggle among the two highest ranking political executives in the West African country -- President Olusegun Obasanjo and his second in command.

There had been increasing calls for Abubakar to resign in 2006 following his increasingly overt indications that he intended to pursue the presidency in forthcoming elections. His decision to attend a convention for the opposition Action Congress was regarded as unacceptable by the ruling People's Democratic Party. As a result, the ruling party responded by expelling Abubakar from its ranks and compelling his removal from government.

For his part, Abubakar warned that he intended to take legal action over the decision to force him out of office. To this end he said, "The 1999 constitution, which is the ground norm of our democracy, does not give the president power to either declare the office of the vice-president vacant or to withdraw the rights and privileges of the vice-president."

The ruling People's Democratic Party countered Abubakar's claims by pointing to constitutional rules, which require that the vice-president must belong to the same party as the president.

Meanwhile, also in 2006, President Olusegun Obasanjo allowed six ministers to leave his cabinet in order for them to be able to pursue elective office in 2007. Then, in the fall of 2006, President Olusegun Obasanjo inaugurated Joy Ogwu as the country's Foreign Affairs Minister and Thomas Aguiyi-Ironsi as the Minister of State for Defence.

Regional Conflict in 2006

Tensions increased in the Niger Delta in mid-January 2006 when Ijaw militants reportedly kidnapped four foreign oil workers. The incident involved an attack on a Royal Dutch Shell pumping station near the port city of Warri, leading to the decision by the oil company to withdraw over 300 oil workers. President Olusegun Obasanjo called on the kidnappers to refrain from harming the hostages and established a committee tasked with ensuring their "prompt release." The militants also claimed that they had attacked oil platforms run by Total and Agip, however, the two companies denied that any such attacks took place.

For its part, the Ijaw group, called the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), noted that its objective was "to prevent Nigeria from exporting oil." They demanded specifically the release of separatist leader Mujahid Dokubu Asari, who has been held on charges of treason, and more broadly, more benefits for the Ijaw people of the country's oil wealth. Significantly, the group warned that more such attacks were in the offing if their demands were not met. These developments appeared to have an impact on the increased price of oil at the time of writing in January 2006.

Several people were killed, including security forces and civilian workers, when gunmen stormed the offices of the Italian oil company, Agip, in the southern Nigerian city of Port Harcourt on Jan. 24, 2006. Apart from the physical assault, the gunmen also robbed a bank on the campus of the

Agip Industrial Area before making their escape. It was the latest in a spate of attacks against international oil interests in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. It was not known whether or not this incident was related to the kidnapping of Shell Oil workers earlier in the month.

By the close of January 2006, the four hostages were released. Then, in February 2006, the government of Nigeria, led by President Olusegun Obasanjo, announced it had organized a team tasked with negotiating the release of several more foreign oil workers who were seized by militants in the Niger Delta. The hostages, including three Americans, two Thais, two Egyptians, one Filipino and one worker from the United Kingdom, were abducted on Feb. 18, 2006 as they worked on a pipeline for a United States engineering company which had been subcontracted to the Shell energy company.

While previous kidnappings in the Niger Delta have ended with the release of hostages following some sort of agreement, the frequency of such incidents, as well as the level of organization, has intensified in recent times, ultimately leading to a 10 percent to 15 percent fall in the export of Nigerian oil. Notably, for example, Shell had to suspend activities at its Forcados export terminal, following damage to the facilities there during attacks on Feb. 18, 2006.

For its part, the group responsible for the attacks and kidnappings, the aforementioned Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, said it had not yet decided on the fate of the hostages. Still, the group promised further attacks including the firing of rockets against tankers. Indeed, the group claimed that it had attacked another facility as well as a military vehicle on Feb. 20, 2006. Such actions could also impede the exportation of oil, which in its own way, is a key objective of the group. The leadership of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta has made clear that it seeks to stop the government from allowing oil to leave the region since oil revenues rarely benefit the local Ijaw people.

It also noted that the attacks of Feb. 18, 2006 were carried out in retaliation for a series of helicopter strikes by government forces. The government claimed the military strikes had been carried out in order to prevent the smuggling of stolen oil. However, the militant group countered by promising to use all possible means to prevent the removal of oil produced on local land for which they have no control, and which has resulted in limited poverty alleviation for the local Ijaw people.

In early March 2006, six of the nine hostages were released unharmed. Reports emerged at that time that the federal government was planning to use force to ensure the release of the three remaining hostages. Those reports were also linked with revelations that the Nigerian House of Representatives Committee on Defence and the Ministry of Defence apparently met and agreed on the use of force to permanently flush out militants in the Niger Delta. The government has held the view that the actions of the militants have threatened the economic interest of the country.

In mid-May 2006, violence in Nigeria 's oil capital, Port Harcourt, left six policemen dead. The police declined to state whom they suspected of the killings while there was no immediate claim of responsibility. Around the same time, more than 150 people died in an explosion at a pipeline near Nigeria 's former capital city of Lagos. First responders at the scene on Atlas Creek Island reported to have seen the bodies of several victims, all of whom had been burnt beyond recognition. It was unknown whether the blast was an actually planned attack or if it had occurred accidentally while some tried to steal gas from the pipeline that serves the Atlas Cove depot and provides supplies to the south-west of the country. Earlier in May 2006, three foreign oil workers were kidnapped and an American businessman was shot to death in the Niger Delta.

For several months, the country was plagued by attacks carried out by militants in the Niger Delta (discussed above) demanding that locals have more control over oil resources and reap more benefits from oil revenues. As such, speculation about those responsible for the most recent attacks quickly became associated with the actions of regional militants. Although the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta restated its threat to carry out attacks against oil installation in the region, it denied responsibility for these recent cases. The group did, however, claim responsibility for two car bombings in the spring of 2006. The group also dismissed President Olusegun Obasanjo's promise of more jobs and a new highway, warning that such offers failed to address their central demands for control over the region's oil wealth.

Meanwhile, oil production in Nigeria was negatively affected. Some reports suggested that production in May 2006 had decreased between 20 percent to 30 percent.

The latter part of 2006 saw no reprieve from the conflicted situation in the Niger Delta.

Other Developments in 2006

In other developments in 2006, one of China's largest state-run oil and gas producers, CNOOC, agreed to buy a 45 percent stake in a Nigerian offshore oil and gas field for $2.3 billion (USD). The stake would cover the OML 130 field, which is owned by South Atlantic Petroleum. Discovered only a few years prior, it is located in deep water near the Niger Delta and needs billions of dollars in investment before coming on stream a few years down the line.

On Aug. 14, 2006, Nigeria was scheduled to hand over control of the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. The development came following a 2002 decision by the International Court of Justice to grant sovereignty of Bakassi to Cameroon, thus mandating the withdrawal of Nigerian troops. The ruling was made on the basis of a 1913 treaty between the former colonial powers, the United Kingdom and Germany.

Following mediation by the United Nations, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said in June

2006 that his country would abide with the ruling that would affect the predominantly Nigerian peoples of the contested Bakassi area. But tribal chiefs in Bakassi were against Nigerian assent on the issue and were trying to seek a court injunction to stop the move. Then, only days before the official ruling was set to go into effect, the Bakassi Movement for Self Determination -- a group of several hundred residents -- declared their independence. Tony Ene, the interim head of the movement, asserted: "The people have declared their own republic, known as the Democratic Republic of Bakassi. We will no longer have anything to do with Nigeria, since Nigeria does not want anything to do with us."

Meanwhile, in the domestic sphere of politics, the president was advancing his anti-corruption campaign in August 2006. He said that a list of all politicians involved in corruption would be released to the public. As noted above, one of the main political casualties of the anti-corruption campaign was Vice-President Atiku Abubakar. For his part, Abubakar said that his suspension on the basis of corruption allegations was politically-motivated.

Developments in 2007

A cabinet shuffle was carried out in January 2007. See "Government Officials" for details.

In early April 2007, a week before presidential elections were set to take place, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo expressed his commitment to a peaceful transition of power. The president's vow to "clamp down" on those who sought to undermine the election came after the group, Human Rights Watch, warned that voters in Nigeria would have to contend with intimidation and even violence. To this end, Human Rights Watch accused the government of complacency as it pointed to pre-election violence, which resulted in the deaths of dozens of people.

The election to choose a successor to Obasanjo would mark the first democratic transfer of power in Nigeria since the attainment of independence in 1960. Obasanjo was re-elected in 2003, however, as discussed above, that election was regarded as being illegitimate by several opposition parties, who made accusations of fraud, vote-rigging, intimidation and other electoral violations. With that recent history in mind, Ibrahim Biyu, the director of voter education at the Independent National Electoral Commission, said a lot of work had been done to prevent vote rigging in the future.

The electoral system notwithstanding, attention in the pre-election period was also focused on whether Vice President Atiku Abubakar would be permitted to contest the presidential poll. The final published list of eligible candidates did not include Abubakar, on the basis of prevailing corruption charges against the vice president, noted above, which would have to be dropped to allow him eligibility. The vice president's fate in this regard was yet to be determined by the Supreme Court after two inconclusive previous rulings by lower courts. As aforementioned, Vice

President Atiku Abubakar gained notoriety following a breach with President Olusegun Obasanjo, which resulted in calls for his expulsion from the ruling party, as well as demands for his resignation from office.

Clashes in Kano in the north of Nigeria left twelve policemen and one civilian dead in the third week of April 2007 -- just before the scheduled election. Islamic militants attacked a police station in what was presumably a revenge attack following the shooting death of a radical Islamic cleric days earlier. In the aftermath of the clashes, nine Islamists were captured by the authorities, along with a cache of weapons.

The situation augured a state of rising tensions and unrest on the eve of the presidential election. Indeed, 18 political parties called for the postponement of the election, as well as the annulment of recent state elections, which the opposition said were fraudulent, and the disbanding of the country's electoral commission. But a spokesperson for the Independent National Electoral Commission noted that the first request -- the call for delaying the election -- could not be legally met.

On election day in April 2007, the candidate of the ruling party, Yumaru Musa Yar'Adua won an overwhelming victory with 70 percent of the votes cast. The second place finisher, opposition candidate, Muhammadu Buhari took 18 percent, while Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who was now himself an opposition candidate, secured seven percent. Other candidates received five percent of the remaining vote share.

International observers characterized the election as being below international standards and rampant with irregularities. Among the accusations were claims of polling stations opening late or not at all, missing ballots, and even vote-rigging in some cases. The opposition and many Nigerians decried the deeply flawed election process, as well as the questionable outcome.

With strong dissatisfaction expressed about the election, there were grave fears about the outbreak of violence. As such, in the volatile state of Kaduna, a prohibition on street protests was instituted. Nevertheless, Nigerians took to the streets elsewhere in the country, such as the Muslim north, to protest against the irregularities that plagued the election, as well as the perceived illegitimacy of the results.

In the aftermath of the election, Nigeria's opposition parties responded by again denouncing the election results as fraudulent and unfair, and a week later demanded a new poll. For his part, the election winner, Yar'Adua called for reconciliation at the national level, and urged those dissatified with the result to seek recourse through the country's courts.

Meanwhile, the vice president was suffering from his own woes, quite separate from his election

defeat. At issue was the impending decision by Nigeria's Code of Conduct Tribunal on whether or not Abubakar should be tried for graft despite his constitutional immunity against criminal prosecution.

In early June 2007, six Russian workers were kidnapped from an aluminum facility in Nigeria. Russian authorities said that the abduction took place in the town of Ikot Abasi, where their local Nigerian driver was shot to death in the incident. Those responsible were unknown. Days earlier, up to eleven people were captured in two abduction incidences. In the same period, two oil workers from the Philippines were held hostage for a few hours in southern Nigeria on before being released. That act appeared consistent with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which has often followed abductions with releases, in an attempt to draw attention to its cause of gaining some of the financial benefits of the oil-rich Niger Delta.

Meanwhile, MEND announced a ceasefire in early June 2007, saying that it would stop its attacks on oil installations for one month, in order to give newly inaugurated President Umaru Yar'Adua time to consider how to enact "positive and realistic measures towards a just peace in the Delta." It also announced the release of six hostages in a measure of self-proclaimed goodwill, however, it did not state that it would cease abductions on a wholesale basis.

In the third week of June 2007, Nigerian trade unions said they would call off their general strike, which had been aimed at protesting the rise in fuel or gas prices, as well as a value-added tax, and the sale of two oil refineries. The price of fuel or gas in Nigeria has been a particularly sensitive issue, since the average Nigerian sees few benefits from the country's oil wealth. Thus, the looming strike evoked strong concerns about the security situation in the country, as well as possible effects on the economy and productivity of the oil-rich African country. However, such concerns were now averted, given the fact that talks between the unions and government officials yielded some degree of an agreement. To that end, union leaders accepted a government plan in which fuel or gas prices would be frozen for at least one year. In this way, newly-elected President Umaru Yar'Adua was able to claim his first political success since coming to power.

Recent Developments

Militants in the Niger Delta have been responsible for a spate of attacks in recent years -- many against foreign oil companies -- and motivated by demand for greater control over local oil reserves. Militants have been responsible for attacks against the region's oil infrastructure, as well as violence and kidnappings. Most of the kidnappings have targeted foreign workers employed by multinational corporations, however, both the number of extremist enclaves, as well as the tactics employed, have increased in recent times.

One group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), often followed

abductions with releases, in an attempt to draw attention to its cause of gaining some of the financial benefits of the oil-rich Niger Delta. In June 2007, MEND announced a ceasefire, saying it would stop its attacks on oil installations for one month, in order to give newly inaugurated President Umaru Yar'Adua time to consider how to enact "positive and realistic measures towards a just peace in the Delta."

However, at the start of 2008, a new group, the Niger Delta Vigilante Movement, carried out attacks in the oil city of Port Harcourt. The attacks by gunmen on two police stations, a night club and a hotel in that city left more than a dozen people dead. Militants in the area have been responsible for a spate of attacks in recent years -- many against foreign oil companies -- and motivated by demand for greater control over local oil reserves.

In July 2008, Nigerian militants in the oil and gas town of Bonny in the Niger Delta threatened to behead outsiders from the region. Just weeks before this dire warning, the group attacked soldiers and killed nine people, including one woman who was pregnant. Another attack by militants on a Navy houseboat at Bonny Island left five people dead. Residents appeared to be taking the threat of violence seriously and resulted in thousands fleeing the area. Meanwhile, the British government was said to be offering assistance to its Nigerian counterpart in bringing an end to the instability in the region. While this was welcome news for many in Nigeria, those residing in the Niger Delta feared it was a harbinger of military action.

In early August 2008, the Nigerian military carried out a raid in the village of Agge in the oil-rich Niger Delta. A spokesperson for the Nigerian military said that troops were searching for militants who they believed to be responsible for an attack on a military camp in Bomadi only days before. In that attack, 11 soldiers were killed and a gunboat was stolen. The Nigerian military said that during the raid on Agge, troops managed to recover surface-to-air missiles, presumably used to carry out attacks against government and multinational interests in the region. The Nigerian military also denied claims by locals that soldiers fired gunshots indiscriminately in the village, killing women and children. However, the militant group, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which operates in the region, issued a statement that reflected the claims of the locals. MEND's statement read: "Shots from heavy caliber machine guns were being fired as they were approaching the community not considering the safety of innocent victims of stray bullets." spokesman Jomo Gbomo said.

Riots plagued the Nigerian town of Jos in late November 2008, resulting in the deaths of at least 200 people, although some of the Nigerian authorities estimated an even greater death toll. The riots in Jos were sparked by accusations that the election in Plateau state, which was won by the Christian-backed governing party, the People's Democratic Party, was fraudulent. This accusation on vote rigging quickly took on religious and tribal tones when members of the Muslim Hausa community and Christian ethnic groups became ensconced in violent clashes. More than 500 people, many of whom the police said were carrying weapons, were arrested in conjunction with

the violence. The result was not only bloodshed but the destruction of homes, mosques and churches. The fighting appeared to have come to an uneasy end when the police and military instituted a curfew.

The latter part of the year saw militants in the Niger Delta step up their attacks on oil installations and intests. They said their attacks were retaliation for the offensive operations on their strongholds by the Nigerian military. Indeed, the period saw militants in the Niger Delta carry out a spate of attacks, mostly on individuals associated with multinational oil corporations in the region.

The move led in early 2009 to the decision by the main militant group, MEND, to abandon a cease-fire following an army strike on an allied group.

By mid-2009, faced with the threat of ongoing destabilization of the Niger Delta, Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua unveiled a proposal for a 60-day amnesty for militants operating in the Niger Delta. "I hereby grant amnesty and unconditional pardon to all persons who have directly or indirectly participated in the commission of offences associated with militant activities in the Niger Delta," President Yar'Adua said. The proposal, which was intended to bring an end to attacks by militants wanting a greater share of the region's oil resources, was approved by Nigeria's Council of State. Explaining its utility, President Yar'Adua said, "I am hopeful and confident that by the end of this year, we will have a secure and stable environment in the Niger Delta."

Included in the residential pardon were provisions for a rehabilitation program, as well as additional education and training for militants willing to put down their arms and re-enter society. It was yet to be seen if the militants -- particularly those of the largest militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), would be willing to participate in the amnesty program. Indeed, before the president's announcement, MEND claimed responsibility for an attack on an oil pipeline owned by Royal Dutch Shell.

Days of successive violence by Islamic militants in Nigeria left hundreds of people dead in July 2009. At issue were the attacks by Islamic militants armed with guns and machetes on police, government offices and even random civilians. The spate of violence and bloodshed motivated the Nigerian authorities to boost security across the northern part of the country. Indeed, the Nigerian police and military were instructed to contain the violence. As well, the Nigerian military established road blocks and imposed dusk-to-dawn curfews in the states of Yobe, Kano, Borno and Plateau. Clashes between the Nigerian security forces and the militants ensued in the following days, ultimately leading up to a full assault on the militants' compound. The death toll at the end of the ordeal was now as high as 700, according to some estimates.

The restive region of northern Nigeria has been plagued by a disturbing combination of poverty, as well as ethnic, religious and cultural tensions. As noted above, in 2008, Plateau state was hit with

a similar spate of religious violence between Christians and Muslims, which left over a hundred people dead. This particular eruption of violence in 2009 was blamed on youth belonging to the Boko Haram group, who have railed against Western-style education, culture and science as un-Islamic. The group has been known locally as "Taliban" and seeks the overthrow of the Nigerian government in favor of a government adhering to Islamic Shari'a law.

Days after the violence erupted and subsequently was quelled, an Islamic sect leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was reported to have been killed. His death was becoming a source of controversy as a military commander said that Yusuf was alive when he was captured. The military commander's assertion gained credibility when BBC News published a photogrpah of Yusuf shown alive,handcuffed and surrounded by Nigerian security forces. This assertion gave rise to speculation that he may have been executed in an extra-judicial manner while in police custody.

Nigeria's Information Minister, Dora Akunyili, acknowledged in an interview with BBC News that Yusuf's death was "a big issue to the good people of this country because Nigeria believes in the rule of law, Nigeria believes in fundamental human rights being respected." Akunyili also promised that there would be an investigation into the matter, but called for the commendation of security forces who managed to "stop this killing and destruction in just a few days." She had earlier noted that Yusuf's death was "positive" for Nigeria since the country was faced with an Islamist extremist in the mold of Osama Bin Laden. While her views have been criticized as intemperate, many locals were reported to be happy that Yusuf was dead and were trying to resume normal life in the area.

The government's case against Yusuf was not, however, helped by emerging reports that it had been warned well in advance of the actual eruption of violence that his group [Boko Haram] posed a grave security risk to the region.

At the start of October 2009, the government of Nigeria was trying to negotiate a peace deal with the militants who have operated in the oil-producing region of the Niger Delta. The government has been working to end to the violence plaguing the country's oil industry, since such activity has prevented Nigeria -- the world's eighth-largest oil exporter -- from pumping more than two-thirds of its production capacity. For its part, militants operating in the Niger Delta have used violent means to press their case for a larger share of the region's oil wealth and greater overall autonomy.

Months earlier in mid-2009, faced with the threat of ongoing destabilization of the Niger Delta, Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua unveiled a peace proposal aimed at the militants who have launched attacks on oil installations, in a bid to garner a greater share of the region's oil resources and increased autonomy, as noted above. Central to the deal being advanced by the government was an unconditional 60-day amnesty to the militants, augmented by grants of money and education, in exchange for disarmament.

As the 60-day amnesty approached expiration, the peace efforts were somewhat stymied as a result of complaints by the main militant group, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger

Delta (MEND). The group argued that the amnesty process put forth by the government, with an end aimed at disarmament, "lacked integrity." That said, MEND did not entirely step away from the peace process but, instead, named a negotiating team that included Nobel Prize-winning writer Wole Soyinka and two retired senior military officials.

Meanwhile, a leading Nigerian militant leader, Ateke Tom, was reported to have agreed to halt fighting in the region and accept the unconditional pardon being offered by President Umaru Yar'Adua. Ateke Tom, whose 2,000 fighters have links to MEND, have carried out attacks on oil installations in recent years. He was the first of three factional leaders to accept the amnesty offer. Days later, another prominent militant leader from the eastern part of the region, Farah Dagogo, did the same and led his supporters in laying down arms. Of particular significance was Government Tompolo's statement that his group was going the route of disarmament and had agreed to the government's amnesty deal. Tompolo was the leader of the main rebel faction in the western Niger Delta. Overall the government was able to seize almost 3,000 weapons and claim some degree of success from its amnesty overture.

Nevertheless, by mid-October 2009, despite the success of the government's amnesty in gaining disarmament from several leading Niger Delta militants, Nigeria's main militant group, MEND, instead ended its three-month old ceasefire and promised to resume its attacks against the country's oil and gas industry. MEND threatened that the next phase of its armed campaign in Nigeria's oil region would be more devastating than ever before. Indeed, MEND issued a warning as follows: "In this next phase, we will burn down all attacked installations and no longer limit our attacks to the destruction of pipelines." The statement continued, "We will fight for our land with the last drop of our blood regardless of how many people the government of Nigeria and the oil companies are successful in bribing." Previous actions by MEND have managed to curtail oil production significantly, however, the decision by key members of the militants' leadership cadre to lay down arms has meant that MEND has, itself, been weakened.

Special Report

Nigerian at the center of foiled terror attack on U.S. Airliner

Summary:

Yemen's al-Qaida connection has become the focus of geopolitical anxiety in the aftermath of an attempted bombing of a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day. A Nigerian national charged with attempting to bomb the aircraft said he received explosives and training from al-Qaida in Yemen. Fears of terrorist attacks emanating from that country have led to increased anti-terrorism support for Yemen.

The Foiled Attack:

On Dec. 25, 2009, a Nigerian national on a flight from Amsterdam in the Netherlands to Detroit in the United States attempted to carry out a bomb attack. The Christmas Day incident occurred when Northwest Airlines Flight 253, carrying 278 passengers and 11 crew, was less than half an hour from arriving at its destination.

The incident ensued when the suspect, identified as 23-year old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, tried to ignite an incendiary device, and burnt his leg in so doing. No one else was hurt in what United States officials described as a failed terrorist attack. Passengers on the aircraft described a scene of panic in the cabin after they detected smoke and flames. There were some suggestions that the attempted bomb attack was thwarted when one passenger, Dutch tourist Jasper Schuringa, jumped across several rows of seats to tackle the suspect, and other passengers then helped to fully subdue him. Water, blankets and a fire extinguisher were used to put out the fire. A report by the Associated Press noted that the lives of the passengers and crew about Flight 253 were actually saved because the explosive device failed to detonate due to an apparent malfunction. Nonetheless, Schuringa was hailed as a hero for his quick reaction to the unfolding crisis aboard the flight.

The aircraft was soon cleared for emergency landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport where Abdulmutallab was taken into official custody and treated for the aforementioned burns at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. While there, United States District Judge Paul Borman officially charged Abdulmutallab with placing a destructive device on an aircraft, and attempting to destroy a passenger jet by detonating a bomb. According to the Associated Press, Abdulmutallab was asked in English if he understood the charges being brought against him and responded, "Yes, I do." Abdulmutallab's lawyer later said he had been transferred to a federal prison in Milan, Michigan.

Abdulmutallab reportedly told United States authorities that he was acting on behalf of the notorious terrorist enclave, al-Qaida. Indeed, ABC news reported that Abdulmutallab told authorities that he spent one month being trained by al-Qaida in Yemen. Abdulmutallab also apparently explained that he acquired the explosive powder from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, which he attached to his leg and mixed in a concoction with liquid chemicals, with the intent of causing an explosion. Subsequent media reports indicated that the highly explosive substance was pentaerythritol (PETN) -- the same substance used by the failed show bomber, Richard Reid, exactly eight years earlier in December 2001, when he attempted to bring down a flight from France to the United States. CNN reported that the amount of PETN in this 2009 case was certainly enough to destroy the aircraft, presumably killing all those on board.

Counter-terrorism authorities in the Netherlands confirmed that Abdulmutallab first boarded a KLM flight in Lagos, Nigeria, bound for Amsterdam. It was not known at the time of writing if Abdulmutallab had the explosives attached to his body when his originating flight departed from

Nigeria at the very start of the journey. In fact, the logistical details were complicated by the revelation that Abdulmutallab actually flew from Ghana to Nigeria on a one-way ticket. Nevertheless, once Abdulmutallab arrived in the Netherlands, he transferred to the Northwest flight headed to the United States. According to the Justice Department in the United States, Abdulmutallab at that point had "a device attached to his body" when he boarded the flight in Amsterdam bound for Detroit. He presumably was allowed to board that flight because he had a valid United States visa.

There were serious questions being raised regarding the ease with which the transportation of explosives was able to elude detection. It was possible that security conditions in Nigeria helped in this regard. That is to say, the Lagos airport has long held the dubious distinction of being one of the least efficient travel centers in the world, where lax security runs rampant, largely as a result of widespread corruption. On the other hand, later evidence showing the explosives had been carried in a specially-made pouch within the alleged bombers undergarments would suggest that detection would be almost impossible using a regular magnetometers, and would require more intrusive body scanning techniques.

Accordingly, security at airports worldwide was expected to increase. For his part, United States President Barack Obama ordered that air travel be subject to heightened security measures. Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration in the United States warned that additional screening procedures would be implemented, however, they declined to specify particulars, suggesting that the intent was to preserve the element of surprise for obvious security reasons. Certain international aircraft carriers, though, such as Air Canada and British Airways, noted on their websites that passengers on international flights would be subject to much more intense security, and would be prevented from accessing carry-on luggage or getting up from their seats at certain points during flights. Delays, particularly on trans-Atlantic flights, were being anticipated.

White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs announced that a review of air safety was underway. On one front, there would be an investigation into the systems in place for detecting explosives before passengers board flights. On another front, there would be an examination of the terrorist identification protocols, in light of the revelation that Abdulmutallab was already listed in a broad terrorist database and yet allowed to board a flight. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano explained in an interview with CNN that despite the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father had warned the United States' embassy in Nigeria that his son might have jihadist inclinations, it was not sufficient actionable information to have moved him to the terrorism "no fly" list. The actual criteria for inclusion in these various databases -- some overseen by the Director of National Intelligence and some by the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- was not made known to the public.

Nevertheless, the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father -- a well-known Nigerian banker -- had gone to such lengths to notify United States officials of his suspicions, along with revelations that

Abdulmutallab had purchased a one-way ticket from Ghana using cash and was carrying only one carry-on piece of luggage, were matters expected to be subjects of grave critique in the coming weeks. Typically, such actions would be flagged as suspicious and indicative of a possible terrorist threat and so Secretary Napolitano's assurances that flying was still "very, very safe" were unlikely to go unchallenged. However, despite the perception of breaches in the air transport security system, preliminary examinations in the Netherlands -- where Flight 253 originated -- found that existing security procedures were correctly followed. The obvious conclusion, therefore, has been that current security technology does not facilitate the easy detection of explosive devices and substances. Indeed, as indicated above, most passengers in airports have to pass through only magnetometers, which detect metal and not explosives. Accordingly, there was likely to be intensified focus in the future on equipping airports with "puffer" machines that detect explosive powder residue, manual hand swabs to the same end, bomb-sniffing dogs as well as body scanners.

Meanwhile, attention was on Abdulmutallab himself, who was born into a life of relative privilege. He once studied engineering at a prestigious school in the United Kingdom, but his Islamic views had caught the attention of his own family, including his father, Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. Indeed, media reports suggested that he was estranged from his family, actually losing touch with them in the months he may have been living in Yemen. The official Saba News Agency in Yemen subsequently reported that Abdulmutallab had, in fact, been living in that country from August 2009 to the start of December 2009 while he attended the Sanaa Institute for the Arabic Language (SIAL). Nigerian authorities suggested that Abdulmutallab used surreptitious means to re-enter Nigeria before departing on the trip that would span three continents.

The United States government has been reticent about drawing conclusions about a global terrorist plot in this case. Nevertheless, this attempt to carry out an in-flight bombing on Christmas Day appeared to be in keeping with al-Qaida's latest terrorist directives. The NEFA Foundation published an October 2009 al-Qaida article calling for operatives to use "small explosives" to kill "apostates" and Westerners at airports and in aircrafts. Moreover, Abdulmutallab -- the man at the center of the Christmas Day attempted terror attack -- has expressly conjured up al-Qaida in his interrogations with authorities. Finally, a Yemen-based branch of the network removed some prevailing doubts about the orchestration of the failed terrorist attack by claiming responsibility.

Latest Developments

In early 2010, attention in Nigeria was focused on President Umaru Yar'Adua's ability to lead the country while he recovered from a heart condition at a hospital in Saudi Arabia.

President Yar'Adua had been away from his post and, significantly, from the country itself for several months. During that period, he did not hand over power to his deputy -- Vice President

Goodluck Jonathan -- in accordance with the constitution. This failure to ensure that presidential power was being wielded by someone at the helm resulted in an infuriated outcry across Nigeria, and led to four court cases on the matter. In one such court case, a federal high court in the capital city of Abuja ruled that Vice President Jonathan could legally exercise all the powers of the presidency, if the actual president was absent from the scene. It noted that the vice president could not be officially designated "acting president" unless the president legally enacted that transfer of power.

For his part, President Yar'Adua said in an interview with the BBC that he expected to return to Nigeria as soon as his doctors deemed it possible. Nevertheless, on Jan. 22, 2010, the Nigerian Federal High Court in Abuja gave the Executive Council of the Federation two weeks to prove that ailing the president Umaru Yar'Adua was, indeed, capable of performing his duties. Meanwhile, the court empowered Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to perform executive duties in the absence of President Umaru Yar'Adua.

By Feb. 6, 2010, BBC News had reported that President Yar'Adua would hand over power to his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, who was already acting president. While no precise timeline was offered, it was expected that there would be no delay in the transition of powers, in order to prevent a power vacuum.

While that official transition was yet to occur a week later, the two chambers of parliament passed parallel resolutions sanctioning the role of Goodluck Jonathan as Nigeria's acting president. Accepting his new role, Acting President Jonathan said, "I am deeply humbled and honored by this great call to duty. I am fully aware of the responsibilities reposed in me, and I want to reassure all Nigerians that this is a sacred trust, which I shall discharge to my fullest abilities." Acting President Jonathan, who was from the oil-rich Niger Delta region which has seen a stream of attacks by militant rebels, also promised to continue efforts to bring peace to the region through the ongoing amnesty program.

Despite the clear imperative to ensure that the country did not suffer from a power vacuum in the absence of President Yar'Adua, there were some critics charging that a resolution by the National Assembly could not constitutionally enshrine him with presidential powers and warned of court challenges to come.

By Feb. 24, 2010, ailing President Umaru Yar'Adua made an unanticipated return to Nigeria. He said little about the details behind his absence from the country, effectively exacerbating the climate of confusion plaguing the political scene in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the president confirmed in a statement that acting President Goodluck Jonathan would continue to stand at the helm of the country's affairs. Yar'Adua said, "Vice President Jonathan will continue to oversee the affairs of state." The president also expressed thanks for Goodluck Jonathan's stewardship of Nigeria during his absence.

Earlier, on January 30, 2010, an already fragile and short-lived cease-fire between the government and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta rebel group (MEND) came to an end. Rebels from MEND said that they were ending their cease-fire and would resume attacks on targets of Nigeria's oil industry. As reported by the Times of Nigeria, MEND officials said: "It is sufficiently clear at this point in time that the government of Nigeria has no intentions of considering the demands made by this group for the control of the resources and land of the Niger Delta to be reverted to the rightful owners, the people of the Niger Delta." MEND officials also charged that the Nigerian government was offering stakes in regional oil ventures as a way of dividing loyalties between groups in the Niger Delta region.

Meanwhile, in late January 2010, the central Nigerian town of Jos -- the capital of Plateau state -- was the site of brutal sectarian violence. Indeed, clashes between Muslim and Christian cadres left hundreds of people dead, thousands injured, and thousands more displaced as a result. The provincial government instituted a temporary curfew, while the federal government, led by Goodluck Jonathan, deployed a heavy troop presence in the streets, aimed at restoring calm and security. That calm and security was likely to be tested by the discovery of hundreds of bodies found stuffed in wells and sewage pits. Human Rights Watch demanded that Vice President Goodluck Jonathan carry out a criminal investigation into what appeared to be a massacre.

More than a month later at the start of March 2010, the same central Nigerian town of Jos was hit by another wave of violence, which left more than 100 people dead as a result of religious conflict. Several villages were targeted in overnight attacks when gangs of men with machetes and guns arrived in their midst. In the village of Dogo-Nahawa, eyewitness accounts details the men firing guns to draw people out of the houses, and then hacking them to death. An aid worker from the charity, Stefanus Foundation, Mark Lipdo, said that the village of Zot had been practically wiped out. He lamented the fact that the majority of the victims were elderly or children, since they were unable to quickly flee. In response, Acting President Goodluck Jonathan placed security forces in the region on high alert.

By March 8, 2010, authorities in Nigeria said that communal violence in the region had left at least 500 people dead. Acting President Goodluck Jonathan said the country's security services in northern Plateau State and the wider region should be on "red alert" to deal with the climate of conflict and violence. As well, the human rights group, Human Rights Watch, called on the Nigerian authorities to prosecute those behind the aforementioned massacre in Dogo-Nahawa. Nevertheless, on March 17, 2010, at least ten people were dead as a result of an attack on a mainly Christian village close to Jos.

The location of Jos in Plateau lies at the crossroads of the predominantly Muslim north and the largely Christian south. The city itself has been divided along religious lines, with tensions exacerbated by the prevailing system of stratification between Hausa-speaking Muslims settlers and Christian indigenes. With this complicated socio-cultural landscape, Jos had seen religious violence

before, as evidenced by the bloody ethno-sectarian riots that erupted in 2008. At that time, several hundreds of people were killed while homes, mosques and churches were destroyed.

It should be noted that in addition to the violence unfolding around Jos, Nigeria was also being plagued by unrest elsewhere in the country. On March 15, 2010, two car bombs exploded in the city of Warri, which is known as a center of the country's oil industry. The city was the site of negotiations between officials over a proposed amnesty for armed militants in the oil-rich Niger Delta.

In mid-March 2010, Nigeria's acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, dissolved the country's cabinet. According to Information Minister Dora Akunyili, the decision announced following a cabinet meeting as follows: "Today, the acting president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, dissolved the Federal Executive Council." That cabinet had been formed by President Umaru Yar'Adua, who was sidelined from the political sphere for several months due to illness. Since then, his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, was afforded presidential power in order to prevent a power chasm from consuming the country. The decision by Acting President Jonathan to dissolve the government, and to later appoint a new government, was viewed as a move to place his own stamp on the presidency. A list of new cabinet ministers would have to be submitted to the National Assembly.

On May 5, 2010, Nigerian President Umaru Yar'Adua died at the official residence in the capital city of Abuja, following a protracted illness. The late president was survived by a wife and seven children and came from a distinguished political family. He founded a political association that laid the foundation for the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Yar'Adua entered elected office in 1999 when he contested and won election as governor of the state of Katsina 1999 and was re-elected in 2003. He campaigned on the basis of personal accountability and transparency, and in 2007 became the country's first university-educated President.

His tenure in office, however, has been characterized by a lack of results and worries over his health. As discussed above, there have been prevailing rumors of Yar'Adua's ill health emanating from a kidney ailment since 2000, which gained steam in 2007, but reached an apex in late 2009 when he was flown to Saudi Arabia for treatment of acute pericarditis. He was not seen in public since that time.

In early 2010, as aforementioned, attention in Nigeria was focused on President Umaru Yar'Adua's ability to lead the country. The Nigerian Federal High Court soon empowered Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to perform executive duties in the absence of President Umaru Yar'Adua. Then, by February 2010, the two chambers of parliament pass parallel resolutions sanctioning the role of Goodluck Jonathan as Nigeria's acting president. Critics charged that a resolution by the National Assembly could not constitutionally enshrine him with presidential powers. However, upon his return to Nigeria, ailing Yar'Adua at the time confirmed that acting President Goodluck

Jonathan would continue to stand at the helm of the country's affairs.

Now, with the death of Yar'Adua, Goodluck Jonathan would now officially be the president of Nigeria, his practical functions of the position to date notwithstanding. Hailing from the oil-rich Niger Delta region, which has seen a stream of attacks by militant rebels, Goodluck Jonathan has promised to continue efforts to bring peace to the region through the ongoing amnesty program. Goodluck Jonathan was formally inaugurated into office as president of Nigeria on May 6, 2010. Days later on May 11, 2010, President Goodluck Jonathan said that general elections would be held in 2011, dispelling rumors that he planned to postpone them. Until then, presidential priorities would include electoral reforms, improved electricity generation, improved security, low level infrastructure development, and tackling youth unemployment.

Soon after his inauguration, President Goodluck Jonathan began his official role as Nigeria's leader with promising news as militants in the country's oil-rich Niger Delta expressed support for him. The militants who have wreaked havoc by attacking oil installations and kidnapping oil workers in the past were already stepping into a more conciliatory mode a year earlier when they expressed interest in the government's proposed amnesty. Now, however, they were moving even further in the direction of constructive engagement by making it clear that they embraced the new president, who himself had roots in the region. That being said, the militants made it clear that there were three major issues that needed to be resolved. These three issues were put forth during negotiations with an aide to the president and were as follows: (1) preserving the Niger Delta's natural environment, (2) respecting the peoples' right to exist, and (3) acknowledging that equal rights for all regions including the Niger Delta. A spokesperson for the militants said that these three agenda items could be understood collectively as "sustainable development" of the Niger Delta.

On September 18, 2010, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan on Saturday declared his intention to contest the 2011 presidential election as the candidate of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). This official declaration came days after the president informally made the same announcement via his Facebook page on the Internet. Of course, President Goodluck Jonathan's candidacy would be contingent upon his selection as the party's candidate at the national convention, which was scheduled to be held on October 23, 2010.

On October 1, 2010, as Nigeria celebrated its 50th Independence anniversary, the capital of Abuja was rocked by double bomb blasts that left about a dozen people dead and several more people injured. Nigeria's main militant group the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for the explosions. The attacks ensued as visiting heads of state from other countries were in Nigeria to mark the Independence Day celebrations. Thus, observers noted that this type of violence could well negative affect Nigeria's security credentials, given the proximity of the heads of state to the attacks. Indeed, the bombings were only walking distance from the independence anniversary celebration venue.

Nigerian police said that the former leader of MEND, Henry Okah, had been arrested in South Africa in connection with the attacks on counterterrorism charges; however, Okah's attorney, Ulrich Roux, insisted that his client "knows nothing of any of these bombings."

MEND soon expressed regret about the "avoidable loss of lives" during the bomb explosion, saying that the "irresponsible attitude of the government security forces" led to the deaths of several individuals. To that end, MEND said that government security forces were given five days prior notice, which -- in the view of MEND -- was used to pursue Okah instead of securing the area. The statement read as follows: "The security forces were also warned one full hour to the first bomb blast ahead of the general alert sent to the media and told to steer the public from all parked cars which was not done." MEND also asserted in an online statement that Okah was not behind the attack, despite his arrest in the South African city of Johannesburg. The statement noted, "Okah has never been involved in any MEND operations but has always been blamed for every attack which is strange to us."

Meanwhile, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan was discounting MEND's claim of responsibility for the attacks, instead insisting that a "small terrorist group that resides outside Nigeria" was behind the bombings.

On December 2, 2010, the government of Nigeria said it intended to bring charges against former United State Vice President Richard "Dick" Cheney in an alleged bribery scandal. The charges have involved the company firm KBR, a subsidiary of the energy company Halliburton, where Cheney served as chief executive officer before becoming vice president in 2001. In 2009 in the United States, KBR pleaded guilty to charges of bribing Nigerian officials with $180 million at a time when the firm was an affiliate of Halliburton. Accordingly, KBR agreed to pay fines of about $580 million. While KBR and Halliburton no longer share a corporate connection, and even though Halliburton has insisted that it was not involved in the case centering on KBR, both companies and their principal officers still remain in the line of fire as other countries, including Nigeria, France and Switzerland, conduct their own investigations. Given that context, Nigeria was now moving against Cheney and Halliburton. Ironically, Nigeria has itself been condemned for an atrocious record of corruption; however, current President Goodluck Jonathan -- up for election in 2011 -- has emphasized an anti-corruption political platform. Note that by mid-December 2010, Nigeria's anti-corruption police had dropped the charges against Cheney. The decision to withdraw the charges was made following overtures by former President George H.W. Bush and former Secretary of State James Baker. According to Femi Babafemi, a spokesman for the anti-corruption entity, "There was a plea bargain on the part of the company to pay $250m as fines in lieu of prosecution."

At the close of December 2010, at bomb attack at a marketplace bar close to some military barracks in the Nigerian capital of Abuja left several people dead. The bar -- located in the

Asokoro district -- had been a popular venue for civilians and soldiers alike. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan condemned the attack and placed the blame on an Islamic extremist group called Boko Haram, who had claimed responsibility for an attack in the northern part of the country on December 24, 2010. President Goodluck Jonathan connected the two attacks, which he described as "evil" as follows: "Basking in their nefarious success in Jos on Christmas Eve, they have once again knifed at the heartstrings of a nation decked out in gaiety, celebrating New Year's Eve."

In late January 2011, a dispute over a billiards game left four people dead and sparked sectarian clashes between Christians and Muslims in the Tafawa Balewa region of central Nigeria. As well, several buildings -- including mosques and homes -- were set ablaze. The region is located in close proximity to the city of Jos, between the predominantly Muslim north and the mostly Christian south; it has seen much sectarian violence over the previous decade. Authorities in Nigeria said this particular fracas began over a dispute over money between the Christian owner of a billiards hall and a Muslim player. The disagreement was seemingly resolved via mediation; however, the billiards table was set on fire later. Christian youth blamed Muslims for that initial incident, spurring retaliatory acts of violence and vandalism. Police erected roadblocks and began patrols in the city, with an eye on restoring law and order.

By the start of February 2011, around 35 people died in aforementioned Jos, spurring the military to issue "shoot to-kill" orders for those deemed responsible for stoking the violence. As before, conflict had broken out between Christians and Muslims and seemed to have been triggered by the death of a leading candidate for the governorship of Borno state. Borno Police Chief Mohammed Jinjiri Abubakar characterized it as "a political assassination." Blame rested on the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram, which had launched an uprising in mid-2009 and was responsible for the much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the region. Indeed, Boko Haram (which means "Western education is sacrilege" in the Hausa language) has a record of attacking security and political personnel and claimed responsibility a bombing in Jos on Dec. 24, 2010.

The second week of February 2011 saw further violence in Nigeria -- this time in Lafia in the north-central Nasarawa state. President Goodluck Jonathan was in Lafia on a campaign trip, ahead of forthcoming elections (discussed below). President Jonathan, a southerner and the candidate of the ruling People's Democratic Party, was touring several northern states. The president was endorsed by a coalition of 24 political parties, operating under the aegis of the Grand Patriotic Alliance, while he was in Nasarawa. But the scene turned disturbing when protesters lobbed stones at the president's convoy, prompting the arrest of a candidate for Nasarawa governor from an opposition party. This action appeared to have upset residents as they became embroiled in clashes with the police, who fired tea gas and gunshots into the air to disperse the crowds. The fracas resulted in closure of shops, banks, and other businesses.

In conjunction with the sectarian violence discussed above, there were heightened anxieties about

the stability of the political scene ahead of elections set to take place in April 2011. Indeed, the pre-election scene turned deadly in Nigeria at the start of March 2011 as a bomb exploded at a political rally close to the Nigerian capital of Abuja, leaving at least three people dead and more than 21 others wounded. The explosion occurred during a gathering of the governing People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Suleja, ahead of national elections to be held a month later. According to authorities, Babangida Aliyu, the PDP candidate for whom the rally was taking place, was not hurt in the attack. Nigeria has seen a spate of violent attacks in the months leading up to those elections. No group claimed immediate responsibility for this particular incident; however, opposition parties had earlier accused the PDP of impeding their own campaign rallies in pre-election season. Specifically, several opposition parties said that they were being prevented from obtaining permits for rallies.

It should be noted that in addition to the threat of sectarian violence and political tensions, another challenge in Nigeria has been the tribal insurgency in the oil-rich Niger Delta.

Elections of 2011

Special Report: Primer on Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Nigeria

Key Dates:

April 2, 2011 and April 9, 2011; delayed with parliamentary vote taking place April 9, 2011 and presidential election on April 16, 2011

Summary:

President Goodluck Jonathan wins re-election; ruling party sees losses in parliament; post-election landscape marked by violence and riots in north of the country

In Detail:

Parliamentary elections in Nigeria were set for April 2, 2011. At stake were the 109 seats of the Senate as well as the 360 seats of the House of Representatives in the bicameral legislative body. The dominant party on the Nigerian political scene has been the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which won all three elections since the end of military rule in 1999. Those victories, though, were not without blemishes; indeed, there have been longstanding claims of vote rigging and other forms of electoral fraud associated with elections in Nigeria.

With a presidential election also set to take place in Nigeria on April 9, 2011, attention in the first part of 2011 was primarily focused on the potential field of contenders. Among them was incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, whose party's primary election resulted in giving him

overwhelming support and the nomination in mid-January 2011. Jonathan had a clear victory over his main Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) challenger, former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, and would therefore be positioned to contest the main presidential vote. President Jonathan, a southerner and ethnic Ijaw from oil-rich Bayelsa state, was now the candidate of the ruling PDP, had been endorsed by a coalition of 24 political parties, operating under the aegis of the Grand Patriotic Alliance.

There has been a de facto practice of alternating between northerners and southerners in this country, which is marked by tribalist, ethnic, and religious divisions. Yet to be seen was the matter of how southerner, President Goodluck Jonathan, would fare at the polls in 2011, his alliance to the dominant People's Democratic Party (PDP) notwithstanding.

One of President Jonathan's rivals for the country's top post would be Nigeria's former anti-corruption chief, Nuhu Ribadbu, who won the nomination of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) at that party's national convention. Also contesting the presidential election would be Nigeria's former military ruler, Muhammed Buhari, the candidate of the Congress for Progressive Change, who won the nomination of that party in the first week of 2011.

Other candidates in the running included: Akpona Solomon(National Majority Democratic Party); Ambrose Awuru (Hope Democratic Party); Chris Nwaokobia (Liberal Democratic Party); Chris Okotie (Fresh Democratic Party); Dele Momodu (National Conscience Party); Ebiti Ndok (United National Party for Development); Ibrahim Shekarau (All Nigeria Peoples Party); Iheanyichukwu Nnaji (Better Nigeria Progressive Party); John Dara (National Transformation Party); Mahmud Waziri (People for Democratic Change); Nwadike Chikezie (Peoples Mandate Party); Pat Utomi (Social Democratic Mega Party); Peter Nwangwu (African Democratic Congress); Rasheed Shitta-Bey (Mega Progressive Peoples Party) and Yahaya Ndu (African Renaissance Party).

On March 31, 2011, Pat Utomi of the Social Democratic Mega Party (SDMP) withdrew from the presidential race, saying that there was too much division among the opposition ranks. Utomi, who had actually participated in a presidential debate, said that he had been in talks with the presidential candidates of the Congress for Progressive Change (Buhari), Action Congress of Nigeria (Ribadu), and All Nigeria Peoples Party (Shekarau), and that there was no success in the effort to close ranks around a single opposition candidate to oppose incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan. Significantly, there was no progress on harmonizing the candidates' manifestos into a single vision.

Meanwhile, the election landscape was becoming more tense as the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) accused opposition parties of orchestrating election chaos. In an interview with the media, the acting national chairman of the party, Dr. Haliru Bello Mohammed, referenced a statement by the head of the Progressive Change (CPC), saying it was an indication of trouble to come. At issue was the CPC assertion that if its candidate, Buhari, polled less than 80 percent, the election would be viewed as fraudulent. Mohammed of the PDP said, "I was surprised because anybody who knows this country and who knows the spread of the candidates, will know that

there is no way Buhari can win this election. Buhari's stronghold is in a few states, even in the north. He does not have national spread. So, where are the votes coming from, to say that he will get 80 percent?" He continued, "For a politician to say that he does not recognize any winner other than Buhari, that means they have a plan, if anybody emerges as winner, that they will perpetrate violence to create a stalemate."

With an eye on avoiding mass violence and ensuring that the elections took place in a secure manner, military troops were deployed to the streets. As well, the Nigerian National Council of State (NCS) warned against participating in ethnic and religious violence during the elections, noting that the government would arrest and prosecute people deemed to be a threat to national security. Nevertheless, the pre-election period was marked by violence, with at least 20 people being killed in just the two weeks prior to the scheduled election day.

Note that April 2, 2011 passed without the parliamentary elections taking place in Nigeria. Successive delays meant that the projected date for the elections to take place would now be on April 9, 2011. At issue was the fact that on the scheduled voting day of April 2, 2011, neither staffers nor elections ballots were to be found at polling stations across the country. The delay at the parliamentary level would also impact the presidential election, which was itself scheduled to be held on April 9, 2011, but was now likely to be postponed as well. The new date for the presidential contest was expected to be April 16, 2011.

Because of Nigeria's history of rigged elections, many voters in the West African country expressed suspicion about the sudden date changes and accused those in power of trying to politically influence the outcome. The delays certainly did not reflect well on the electoral officials, who had been charged with reforming the flawed system a year prior. Indeed, the successive delays called into question the credibility of much-anticipated elections in Nigeria. That being said, the election authorities insisted that the request to reschedule the parliamentary elections had come from a variety of political stakeholders (not one bloc) and, indeed, had the support of all the political parties.

Ahead of the new date for the parliamentary elections -- April 9, 2011 -- a bomb blast at a polling station in the northern state of Borno left several people injured. While there was no one group claiming responsibility for the violence, the state capital of Maiduguri has been the site of attacks by members of an extremist Islamic militant group called, Boko Haram, which has targeted politicians and security personnel.

This bout of violence aside, voters went to the polls on election day and unofficial results released by the Independent National Electoral Commission indicated that the opposition made significant gains in Nigeria's National Assembly at the expense of the ruling party. In the Senate, the opposition -- including the main opposition Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) -- was in the lead against the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the Labour Party, the Democratic Peoples Party (DPP),

and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) respectively were on track for representation in the upper house, where the PDP had enjoyed an overwhelming majority going into the election. In the House of Representatives, the opposition was making even more impressive inroads; as with the upper house, the main beneficiary was the ACN, although the CPC, the ANPP, and the Labour Party won seats and representation. Ultimately, though, the PDP retained control of the National Assembly, despite the gains by the opposition in the polls. Apart from the opposition gains in these elections, the parliamentary vote was marked by its positive assessment by international observers as having gone off in a free and fair manner.

Now attention was focused on April 16, 2011 and the presidential contest. On that date, millions of voters went to the polls to cast their ballots in the presidential election. Nigeria was not without election-related violence; one woman was reported to have been killed in the restive central city of Jos on election day, while there were two bombs that exploded in the north-eastern city of Maiduguri. There were also dozens of deaths in the pre-election period. That being said, voting was reported to have gone off in a smooth manner with few incidences of irregularities reported. In the past, Nigerian elections had the dubious distinction of being marred by fraud, corruption, and violence.

After casting his own ballot, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan hailed the 2011 elections in his country as a "new dawn in Nigeria's political evolution." He continued, "If the ballot paper means nothing then there is no democracy… Nigeria is now experiencing true democracy where we the politicians have to go to the people." At the time, there were no election results available, though the president expressed confidence about his victory. President Goodluck Jonathan did, however, note that were he to lose the election, he would most certainly leave office in keeping with the ideals of a democratic and peaceful transition of power.

Regional officials released results once the polling stations had closed, with all indications pointing to likely re-election victory for President Goodluck Jonathan. Indeed, President Goodluck Jonathan appeared to have secured almost twice the number of votes as his main rival, General Muhammadu Buhari. A Christian from the oil-producing Niger Delta, Goodluck Jonathan enjoyed a commanding lead in the southern part of the country although Buhari, a Muslim from the North, put forth a strong challenge.

By April 18, 2011, the country's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) confirmed that President Goodluck Jonathan -- the candidate of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) -- had won an outright majority of the vote. The incumbent president garnered the requisite 25 percent of the votes cast in two-thirds of Nigeria's 36 states in the first round, thereby avoiding a second round. Indeed, the results were showing Goodluck Jonathan with twice as many votes as Buhari, while Ribadu was far behind. Accordingly, Goodluck Jonathan had won the presidential election and was set to become Nigeria's fourth democratically-elected president. INEC Chairman Attahiru Jega said, "Goodluck E. Jonathan of the PDP, having satisfied the requirement of the law and scored the highest number of votes, is hereby declared the winner and is returned elected."

Initial reports from international election monitors offered positive assessments of the elections, noting that they could well be regarded as Nigeria's first credible elections in years. In fact, the process of confirming the veracity of the election results has been a laborious process, relying on inspections of individual ballots and scrutiny of computer records. The appointment of a new Election Commission Chairman, Professor Jega, has been credited for moving Nigeria in this direction with increased democratic transparency and accountability.

That being said, the post-election landscape in Nigeria was marked by an outbreak of violence in the northern part of the country, which clearly was not supportive of the victory by Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner. Supporters of Buhari, from the Muslim north, were launching large and violent protests across the northern part of the country, claiming that the election results were rigged and not a true reflection of the intent of voters. Government forces were deployed to areas rocked by violent protests to try to quell the post-election unrest there, even going so far as to impose curfews and arresting thousands of people. These efforts did little to assuage many inhabitants of the region who were terrified of being harmed in the crossfire of violence and fled the area. According to the Red Cross, tens of thousands of Nigerians in the north were fleeing their homes in fear. Already several hundreds of people were reported to have died -- many of them burned to death in churches or their homes. Both President Goodluck Jonathan and his main election rival, General Buhari, appealed for calm. Thus far, those calls have gone unheeded as unemployed and uneducated youth took to street fighting to express their discontent. Yet to be seen was the matter of whether or not the situation in Nigeria would disintegrate into a full-fledged ethno-religious crisis.

Note:

As of May 2011, the main opposition party, the ACN, said that it would not participate in a government of national unity, arguing that such a move would be anti-democratic. National Chairman of the ACN, Bisi Akande, said governments of national unity were formed in the past in Nigeria when the country was plagued by ethno-religious and tribalist conflict. He said that as a peaceful democracy, Nigeria should have no need of such coalitions and that his party simply did not win enough seats to form a government. Akande said, "I cannot see the need to join the ruling party after elections, when we contested and lost then we would go behind the doors to accept [cabinet] positions, that does not make sense."

Miscellany

In January 2012, millions of Nigerians deserted offices, businesses, and markets to participate in a general strike. It was apparent from the empty streets and highways that the strike could very likely paralyze the economy of Africa's most populous nation state. The mass action was ordered by the

country's major labor union, the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC), in order to register the public's outrage over the government's decision to end a fuel subsidy. For his part, President Goodluck Jonathan said that the measure -- part of the move to deregulate the petroleum industry -- was needed for the economic health of the country. Accordingly, he urged Nigerians to make the necessary sacrifices for the sake of the country. It should be noted that such sentiment would likely evoke only limited resonance among the ordinary Nigerian people who would have to endure the doubling of fuel prices.

By the middle of the month, President Goodluck Jonathan announced a sizable reduction in the price of fuel. The move appeared to have been made in response to the public's outcry over the end to the fuel subsidy, which included mass strikes, as discussed here. Specifically, the president wanted to avoid the continuation of the paralyzing labor union strikes, which were plaguing the nation. Acknowledging that Nigerians would suffer economic hardship over the loss of the fuel subsidy, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan had opted to "shift ground" by offering the fuel price reduction instead. Still, the president insisted that his government intended to go forward with its plans to deregulate the downstream petroleum sector of Nigeria's economy.

Special Report: Violence Plagues Nigeria

At the end of June 2011, a bomb attack at a beer garden in the northeastern Nigerian town of Maiduguri left at least 25 people dead and dozens more wounded. The attackers arrived at the crowded tavern in the Dala Kabompi neighborhood on motorcycles and opened fire indiscriminately, and then hurled bombs that exploded leaving many victims burned beyond recognition. Blame was placed on the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram.

On Aug. 26, 2011, around 20 people died as a result of an apparent suicide car bombing at the United Nations headquarters in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja. Dozens of other people were injured in the attack. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon "utterly condemned" the attack and characterized the bloodshed as "an assault on those who devote their lives to helping others." He also observed that the United Nations offices and personnel internationally existed as "soft targets" for those seeking to do grave harm.

The extremist Islamist group, Boko Haram, wasted little time in claiming responsibility for the attack. Only a few months prior in June 2011, Boko Haram was blamed for an attack at a beer garden in the northeastern Nigerian town of Maiduguri, which left at least 25 people dead and dozens more wounded, as well as an attack on police headquarters in Abuja earlier. As well, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a bombing in Jos on Dec. 24, 2010, another attack in Jos at the start of February 2011.

On Nov. 5, 2011, the Islamist militant extremist sect, Boko Haram, carried out a string of bomb

attacks in Nigeria, leaving more than 100 people dead. The attacks began with bombings in Damaturu -- the the capital of the northeastern Yobe State. Members of Boko Haram stormed the state office of the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Nigerian Police in Damaturu with explosives and bombed the Yobe State Command office of the Nigeria Police. The violent assault continued with additional bombs exploding at the Housing Estate. Many of the victims at these sites were policemen on duty. The Police Commissioner was forced to postpone a news conference as attempts were being made to contain further attempted acts of violence. However, the targets of attack were not limited to the police. As many as ten churches were also bombed and at least one church -- St. Mary's Catholic Church -- was burned to the ground by members of Boko Haram. The parish priest at St. Mary's Catholic Church was forced to take refuge at a police station. Additional attacks were reported in the nearby commercial town of Potiskum. The sectarian element of the situation appeared to have sparked street gun battles between Muslims and Christians.

Despite the proximity of Damaturu and Potiskum to the Boko Haram stronghold of Maiduguri, the terrorist attacks were nonetheless a shocking development on the Nigerian scene. Whereas Maidugi has been subject to almost daily attacks (bombings, shootings and murders) at the hands of members of Boko Haram, Damaturu and Potiskum have traditionally been more peaceful terrain, not subject to the scourge of terrorism. Given the unprecedented nature of these November attacks, residents of Damaturu were said to be traumatized by the relentless volley of gunfire and bomb explosions in the area. But the spirit of fear and anxiety was not likely to end quickly. Indeed, United States authorities were warning that Boko Haram could well target luxury hotels frequented by foreigners in the Nigerian capital.

The overall scenario evoked a rebuke from the United Nations Security Council, which read as follows: "The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations is criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of its motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed, and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group." The United Nations Security Council also demanded that those responsible for the attacks be brought to justice, urging members of the international community to cooperate with Nigeria in its efforts to apprehend members of Boko Haram.

Explosions rocked the state of Yobe and Kaduna in December 2011. The explosions appeared to be bombs that were detonated prematurely and , indicated that the extremist militant Islamic entity, Boko Haram, was planning to carry out a series of attacks in Nigeria. Boko Haram, which has been in an ongoing fight with Nigerian authorities, has sought to transform the country into a strict Islamic state. Accordingly, Boko Haram has been responsible for no shortage of attacks in Nigeria, that could well classify it as a domestic terrorist entity. In 2011, a series of brutal attacks, which included the bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Nigeria, had demonstrated Boko Haram's violent and extremist agenda.

Days ahead of Christmas 2011, Nigerian security forces raided a suspected Boko Haram hideout in the northern state of Yobe. Fierce and lengthy gun battles and fighting between Nigerian security forces and the Islamic extremist militants followed, ultimately leaving as many as 70 people dead. Separately in the the city of Maiduguri, there was further bloodshed as a result of clashes between security forces and Boko Haram militants.

But the scenario took a particularly disturbing turn by Christmas day when a series of bombs exploded across the country -- two of which targeted Christian worshipers at church services on Dec. 25, 2011. One attack took place at St. Theresa's Church close to the Nigerian capital of Abuja, and left 35 people dead there alone. Another bomb exploded at the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Church in the city of Jos. Located in Plateau state in the center of the country, Jos has become a flashpoint city rife with tensions between northern Muslims and southern Christians. That bomb in Jos was followed by another fatal gun battle that left at least one policeman dead. There was also a spate of explosions in Damtauru -- the state capital of the northern state of Yobe -- which yielded further deaths. One of the explosions in Damaturu was a suicide car bomb attack on a convoy of the State Security Service. In total, over 40 people died in violence perpetrated by Boko Haram on Dec. 25, 2011.

Given the evidence pointing toward planned attacks by Islamist extremists discussed above, the culprits behind these latest bombings were believed to be Boko Haram militants. The militant group, Boko Haram, soon put an end to the speculation about its culpability by claiming responsibility for the Christmas Day attacks. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, condemned the violence and declared the attacks to be an "unwarranted affront" on the collective "safety and freedom" of the Nigerian people. President Jonathan also promised that those responsible would be brought to justice. That being said, the relentless barrage of brutal attacks by Boko Haram raised anxieties about an expanding ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria, with domestic terrorism by Boko Haram posing a serious threat to national security.

As December came to an end, and as Nigeria welcomed 2012, President Goodluck Jonathan -- under pressure to take strong action in the interests of national security -- vowed to crush Boko Haram. He also declared a state of emergency in parts of the country particularly hard hit by attacks from the militant Islamic group. The measure would affect areas of the Yobe and Borno states in the northeastern part of the country, Plateau state in central Nigeria, and Niger state in western Nigeria. As well, international borders in these affected areas were temporarily closed to prevent cross-border security threats. Moreover, the Nigerian military would deploy a special armed forces unit, which would be tasked with counter-terrorism responsibilities.

Despite these actions by the president, in the first week of 2012, Nigeria was hit by fresh attacks by Islamic militants. The new wave of violence targeted Nigeria's Christian communities in the town of Mubi in Adamawas state; gunmen opened fire on members of the Christian Igbo group during a town hall meetings, killing close to 20 people. Separate attacks were reported in Adamawa's capital of Yola and in Gombe, with further deaths reported there. As well, police in

Potiskum in Yobe state were engaged in a fierce gun battle with Islamist militants believed to be members of Boko Haram there.

Boko Haram was quick to claim responsibility for the attacks, with a particular faction of the extremist Islamists warning the southern Nigerians -- most of whom were either Christians or animist -- would be expressly targeted in attacks in the future if they did not vacate the predominantly northern part of the country. In response, members of the Igbo ethnic group living in northern Nigeria were reported to be fleeing the region. But at the broader level, the threat posed by Boko Haram augured alarming ethnic and sectarian conflict in Nigeria and raised the possibility that President Goodluck Jonathan would have to extend the state of emergency to other states and intensify other national security measures.

On Jan. 20, 2012, Kano -- the second largest city in northern Nigeria -- was hit by a series of coordinated gun and bomb attacks. In once case, a suicide bomber rammed a car packed with explosives into the area's police headquarters, which shared a wall with a vocational center utilized by the wives of police officers. In another incident, gunmen stormed the headquarters of the Bompai State Police Command engaged policemen there in a lengthy battle. There were also multiple explosions at the headquarters of the secret police, known as the State Security Service (SSS), at a lorry park in the Sabon Gari area, and at the police station in Yarakwa. Gun battles were additionally reported at an immigration office in the area. In total, there were more than 25 bomb explosions across Kano, along with several gun fights. The death toll in these brutal attacks exceeded 160 victims, with scores more injured. Some medical expert, though, warned that the death toll could well increase to past 200.

Two days later, at least ten Christians died in the northern state of Bauchi in another spate of attacks. Most of the deaths occurred during pre-dawn attacks in Tafawa Balewa, a flashpoint town in Bauchi. However, two Christian churches were also bombed in the state capital.

The militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, claimed responsibility for all of these acts of brutal violence. Only a month prior, Boko Haram carried out a series of attacks that targeted Christian worshipers at church services on Dec. 25, 2011. Despite the decision by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in parts of the country particularly hard hit by attacks from the militant Islamic group, and to deploy a special armed forces unit tasked with counter-terrorism responsibilities, the country was again plagued by attacks in the first week of 2012. Again, Nigeria's Christian community was the target and Boko Haram warned that southern Nigerians -- most of whom were either Christians or animist -- would be expressly targeted in attacks in the future if they did not vacate the predominantly northern part of the country.

Now, as January 2012 was entering its final week, and as the country continued to be hit by this spate of violent attacks, the Nigerian authorities moved to close its borders with Niger and

Cameroon, and imposed a 24-hour curfew in Kano. As well, President Goodluck Jonathan dismissed the policechief -- Gen. Hariz Ringim. President Goodluck Jonathan additionally issued a statement condemning the violence and warning the Boko Haram militants that they would "face the full wrath of the law."

As he inspected the damage from the Kano attacks, the president said, "A terrorist attack on one person is an attack on all of us." But his words and the latest security measures did little to quell the increasing fears that Africa's most populous nation and the continent's biggest oil producer was slipping into a religion-driven state of civil war.

On Jan. 26, 2012, Nigeria's foreign minister was accusing Boko Haram of acquiring training and weapons from an al-Qaida sect. Speaking at a a meeting of west African officials in Mauritania, Foreign Minister Mohamed Bazoum said expressed confidence about a relationship between the Boko Haram and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa. He said, "There is no doubt, the two organizations are connected and they have the same objective of destabilizing our region." Accordingly, the officials agreed to intensify their efforts to go after militant extremist Islamic entities with violent agendas.

By the start of February 2012, more than 100 foreign nationals were arrested in Nigeria. Authorities said that the suspects were citizens of Niger, Chad, Mali, and countries in northern Africa, and that they were suspected of being members of Boko Haram. Nigerian authorities also arrested the leader and official spokesperson of Boko Haram, arguing that the move would weaken the leadership of the group and could assist in tracking down other key players within the violent and brutal enclave. Concurrent with these arrests was the call from Islamic leaders in northern Nigeria for members of the extremist Islamic enclave to end its campaign of violence. Islamic leaders additionally urged Boko Haram to enter into dialogue with the federal government.

Such calls were not about to easily find resonance with Boko Haram. On Feb. 6, 2012, northern Nigeria was hit by another spate of attacks. The flashpoint areas of Maiduguri and Kano were affected. In Maiduguri, a market was among the targets of attacks, while gunmen launched an attack on a police station in Kano.

Then, on Feb. 20, 2012, multiple bomb attacks in Nigeria's northeast city of Maiduguri left several people dead in an area of the Baga market. Nigerian authorities said that militants from the extremist Islamist sect, Boko Haram. had stormed the marketplace area and opened fire on the people there. Security forces were able to intervene and safely detonate a number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) discovered at Baga, effectively averting further violence. The attacks appeared to be aimed avenging the arrest of a member of Boko Haram the previous week.

On Feb. 26, 2012, a suicide bomb attack targeting a Christian church in the flashpoint central Nigerian city of Jos left at least eight people dead and more than 35 others injured. Among the dead was the suicide bomber himself, along with his accomplice, who apparently charged the

Church of Christ as worshippers gathered in prayer.

This attack -- a week after the Maiduguri attack discussed above -- was also attributed to Islamist militant group, Boko Haram. Angered by the bombing, Christian youth responded by engaging in revenge attacks. President Goodluck Jonathan condemned the violence and urged unity in a country increasingly plagued by religious violence. In a statement, he said: "Those who seek to divide us by fear and terror will not succeed. The indiscriminate bombing of Christians and Muslims is a threat to all peace-loving Nigerians."

At the start of March 2012, Human Rights Watch released a report in which it accused the extremist Islamist sect Boko Haram of targeting schools in its brutal campaign of violence in Nigeria. Human Rights Watch made note of the dozen schools attacked or destroyed in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram. As stated by Zama Coursen-Neff, the deputy children's rights director at Human Rights Watch, "Boko Haram's attacks on schools represent a new and reprehensible development since the group began its campaign of violence in 2009." An apparent spokesperson for the militant Islamist entity, was cited by Human Rights as saying that the attacks on schools were in retaliation for the arrests of Muslim clerics by members of the Nigerian security forces.

Meanwhile, Christian churches continued to be targeted in a relentless assault. On March 11, 2012, at least three people died in a suspected suicide car bombing at a Catholic church in the volatile central Nigerian city of Jos. Some accounts suggested the death toll was as high as ten victims. The area of Jos -- located on the border between Nigeria's predominantly Muslim north and the country's Christian and animist south -- has been plagued by continuous violence at the hands of the Boko Haram militant Islamic group. That being said, there was no immediate claim of responsibility in this case. Only weeks prior, though, Boko Haram militants bombed another Jos church, leaving a trail of bloodshed at that time.

A week later, the northern city of Kano was hit by violence when suspected Boko Haram members riding motorcycles opened gunfire on a group of people playing cards at the Freedom Radio junction. Two people died and a third person was injured as a result.

On March 21, 2012, a spokesperson Boko Haram made it clear that the proverbial door for negotiations with the government of Nigeria was no longer open. In an interview with the Daily Trust, Abul Qaqa said that that Boko Haram "would never listen to any call to lay down our arms." He continued, "We would never respect any proposal for dialogue. In fact, we have closed all possible doors of negotiation." Further, Abul Qaqa said that Boko Haram intended to continue its campaign of violence until it achieves its objective of establishing an Islamic government in Nigeria.

In April 2012, a series of car bombs in the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna left at least 16 people dead and several more wounded. Officials warned that the death toll could be as high as 38. The explosions in Kaduna occurred in high traffic areas including restaurants, churches, and a hotel.

The location of Kaduna -- on the fault ethno-religious fault line between Nigeria's Christian south and Muslim north -- as well as the timing of the attacks on Easter Sunday, collectively pointed toward the Islamist militant group Boko Haram as the likely culprit. Indeed, Boko Haram overtly warned of attacks they intended to carry out during the Christian celebration of Easter. It should be noted that on the same day, a bomb exploded in the central city of Jos, yielding several casualties.

Kaduna was again hit by violence in the same month when an explosive device went off, killing a police bomb squad officer. After an initial explosion, a Nigerian bomb disposal unit was dispatched to the scene to check for further bomb threats. There, a bomb disposal officer died when an explosive device he was trying to defuse went off. The explosive device was hidden behind an electricity pole in the residential area of Ungwar Sarki within Kaduna. Other unexploded devices were uncovered in the same area. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility for planting the devices, attention resided on Boko Haram as the likely source.

As April 2012 came to a close, the relentless wave of violence in Nigeria at the hands of Boko Haram saw no relief as suicide bombers targeted the offices of the Nigerian "This Day" newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna. The first bombing ensued in Abuja as a suicide bomber rammed a vehicle into the gate of the building, killing himself and two security guards. A similar bombing in Kaduna also resulted in three deaths. The spate of terrorist violence did not end there as 16 people died as result of a joint gun and bomb attack at Nigeria's Bayero university in Kano on April 29, 2012. That attack ensued as Christian worshipers participated in Sunday services and caused a stampede as people in the area tried to flee the scene. A manhunt was said to be going on to search for the attackers who were able to escape.

On the last day of the month -- April 30, 2012 -- there was a suicide attack on the convoy of the Commissioner of Police in Nigeria's northern Taraba state. The death toll in that case was approximately a dozen with 20 others wounded, according to the Nigerian Red Cross. Consistent with the attacks on the newspaper offices in Abuja and Kaduna, the suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden motorcycle into the convoy as the police chief was en route to the office.

While there was no official confirmation in the case of all of the attacks, they were nonetheless attributed to Boko Haram. The militant Islamist terror enclave clearly was now extending its reach well beyond the predominantly Muslim north to more central locations, including the capital of Abuja. This movement by Boko Haram was a particularly distressing development for Nigerians who were now subject to almost-weekly terrorist attacks.

In June 2012, Nigeria was hit by a spate of attacks, which were carried out by the Islamist terror enclave Boko Haram. At the start of the month, a suicide bomb attack on a church in Bauchi City killed 12 people. Then, on June 9, 2012, a suicide car bombing outside police headquarters in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri left at least five people dead, and a dozen others injured.

After the explosion, security forces stormed a suspected hideout of Boko Haram militants, sparking a fierce gun battle. A day later on June 10, 2012, gunmen opened fire on worshipers during religious services at churches the state of Borno, killing a number of people and wounding many others. In the central city of Jos, a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a church, killing several people and wounding scores more. Although no one claimed immediate responsibility after the June 10, 2012, attacks, suspicion fell on Boko Haram, which has a record of targeted churches in their Islamic extremist campaign of terror.

On June 17, 2012, the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna was hit by violence when a series of explosions ensued at churches in the Wusasa and Sabon-Gari districts of Zaria, as well as in Kaduna City. At least a dozen people were killed and scores more were injured as a result of the attacks. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blasts, Kaduna has long been a target of attacks by Boko Haram. In recent times, Sunday church services have been the preferred target of attack by the extremist Islamic group, which has been unapologetic in its use of terrorism to achieve its goal of establishing Shari'a Islam in Nigeria, and in its fight against Christians in the country.

On July 7, 2012, close to 40 people died in attacks on Christian villages close to the city of Jos in Plateau. Most of the victims were members of the Christian Berom community or members of the attacking forces. Then, on July 8, 2012, two politicians in Jos died while they attended a funeral for the scores of victims killed in the rage of ethno-sectarian violence the day before. Nigerian authorities said that both cases of violence in the state of Plateau were likely carried out by the same people. Although the blame was initially placed on Muslim herdsmen from the Fulani tribe, members of that ethno-sectarian group denied any responsibility for the bloodshed. That being said, the region has been subject to communal violence between the two groups -- Christian Berom and Muslim Fulani -- for some time over the fight for who should rightfully control the land in Plateau state.

About a week later on July 13, 2012, a suicide bomber killed five people at a mosque in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri. The attack occurred just as Friday prayers came to an end. While there was no conclusive evidence about the target of the attack, the explosion did occur close to the palace of the Shehu of Borno -- one of Nigeria's most respected Muslim leaders. Shehu Umar Garbai el-Kanemi, who was among those returning from prayers, escaped injury along with Deputy state governor Zanna Umar Mustapha. Although a youth was identified as the actual suicide bomber, suspicion fell on the terrorist group, Boko Haram, as being the mastermind behind the attack, since the extremist militant group has in the past assassinated Muslim leaders. Moreover, in 2011, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for assassinating the Shehu Umar Garbai el-Kanemi's younger brother in Maiduguri -- one of its strongholds.

On Aug. 4, 2012, Nigerian gunmen stormed a Dutch shipping vessel off the country's coast. The attack in the area of the Niger Delta left two Nigerian sailors dead and others injured. As well, four

foreign nationals from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Iran were kidnapped.

On Oct. 16, 2012, the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram, carried out multiple attacks against military targets in Nigeria's northern city of Maiduguri. The locations , which included a school and radio tower, have at times been used by the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) in the city. There were reports that members of Boko Haram used rocket-propelled grenades to carry out some of the attacks and there were reports of explosions across the city; however, a more conventional gun shooting of a traffic officer at a military checkpoint also occurred. Earlier in the month, the group went after mobile phone masts in northern Nigeria, claiming that mobile phone companies were helping security and intelligence agencies to monitor its activities.

Days after the most recent Maiduguri attacks, another wave of attacks by Boko Haram extremist Islamists ensued in northeastern Nigeria. About two dozen people were killed and several buildings were destroyed, seemingly as a result of homemade bombs, in Potiskum, to the west of Maiduguri. Once again, the sound of extended gunfire and several explosions were heard by those on the ground. But as before, the attackers also used more conventional means of violence with several bodies subject to either gunshot wounds or throats being slit. Included in the dead was a police sergeant and a prison warden.

As October 2012 was drawing to a close, a church in northern Nigeria was hit in a suicide bomb attack. On Oct. 28, 2012, a suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden vehicle into St. Rita's Church in Kaduna during Catholic mass. Several people were killed and dozens more were wounded as a result of the brutal attack. Members of the church choir were among the dead. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan said his government would "redouble" its efforts to deal with the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram -- the likely culprit. President Jonathan said the Kaduna attack was the latest manifestation of an "unfortunate and unacceptable trend that threatens the peace and stability of our nation." Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility, Boko Haram has targeted churches in its campaign of terror.

On Nov. 25, 2012, suicide bombers attacked a church inside a military barracks in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna. About a dozen people died and more than 30 others were injured as a result. According to BBC News, the suicide bombers charged the barracks in a surprise attack. One suicide bomber drove a bus that was rammed into the church wall where it exploded; the other suicide bomber was driving a car which exploded outside the church. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, the Nigerian military said that it suspected the extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, as being behind the deadly attack.

A week later on Dec. 2, 2012, Islamic militants went on a murderous rampage targeting Christians in the Borno state of Nigeria. At least ten people died in the village of Chibok as the killers slit the throats of their victims and burned down their homes, according to witness accounts on the ground. As was the case in Kaduna, blame rested on Boko Haram.

Update on Nigeria's conflict-ridden landscape and political developments --

In the second part of February 2013, northern Nigeria was subject to the most significant kidnapping in recent memory. Several foreign nationals were abducted in the incident and a security guard was shot to death

.The police commissioner for the Bauchi state, Mohammed Ladan, said in an interview with the media that gunmen began their assault by launching attacks on the local police station and the prison in the town of Jama'are. The assailants were repelled by security personnel but not before they destroyed two vehicles. The assailants then moved on to a workers camp at a construction site belonging to the Lebanese firm, Setraco. They killed a security guard and abducted a number of expatriate employees from the workers' camp of the construction site located in the Bauchi state in the northern part of the country.

Among the expatriate workers who were abducted were at least two Lebanese nationals, one Italian national, one Greek national, and one citizen of the Philippines. There were also reports that a British citizen was among the kidnapped individuals and that a woman and a girl were among the Lebanese nationals taken hostage.

The kidnapping of foreign workers has become common fare in the oil-rich Niger Delta region in southern Nigeria, with assailantsmaking a career in the abduction business. Indeed, energy companies and other transnational entities pay ransoms to secure the release of their abducted employees, making the kidnapping of expatriate workers quite a lucrative exercise. At the same time, militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), have often used abduction of foreign nationals to draw attention to their demands for greater benefits from the country's oil revenue, along with greater respect for the region's ecology and peoples. (See "Editor's Note below for more information about MEND.) But although there were some isolated incidents in recent years, the abduction of expatriates in the northern part of the country has not generally been a common occurrence. Indeed, this kidnapping scenario in northern Nigeria in February 2013 was an anathema of sorts.

Northern Nigeria's security challenges have emanated from Islamist extremists in that part of the country. A spate of brutal attacks on Christians has turned northern Nigeria into something akin to a war zone, with bloodshed becoming regularized fare, thanks to the activities of an extremist Islamist terror enclave, known as Boko Haram. (See "Editor's Note" below for more information about Boko Haram). While there was no claim of responsibility from Boko Haram in this case, because of the ongoing ethno-religious conflict raging across northern Nigeria, suspicion rested on Islamist militant groups of some sort.

The day after the attacks, killing, and kidnappings, it was not Boko Haram but Ansaru, another Islamist militant entity, that claimed responsibility. Largely unknown on the geopolitical landscape, Ansaru emerged in mid-2012 when it carried out an attack that culminated in the kidnapping of a French national. It should be noted that Ansaru appears to have undertaken less hard-line tactics that the likes of Boko Haram, which has a lengthy record of bloodshed. (See "Editor's Note" below for more information about Ansaru). Following the attack on the Setraco construction site in February 2013, Ansaru dispatched an email to the news media declaring that it had "the custody of seven persons." Clearly, the extremist militant entity had officially moved into the abduction business.

The central motivation for the kidnappings by Ansaru remained somewhat hazy in the period immediately following the attack. That said, the aforementioned email statement by Ansaru offered some clues. Ansaru said that it had taken its actions "based on the transgression and atrocities shown to the religion of Allah by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali." That stance seemed to be a clear reference to the presence of foreign troops in those two countries to rid of Islamic extremists in the form of the Taliban and al-Qaida affiliates. Ansaru warned governments across the world not to act in a manner contrary to its instruction saying: "It is stressed that any attempt or act contrary to our conditions by the European nations or by the Nigerian government will endanger the hostages."

In March 2013, less than a month after several foreign nationals were abducted from a construction site in Nigeria, reports were emerging that the hostages had been killed. Ansaru -- the militant Islamic entity that was responsible for the abductions -- released photographs via an online post showing the bodies of the dead hostages. Ansaru also made it clear that the foreign nationals from Italy, Greece, Lebanon, and the United Kingdom had been killed in retaliation for an apparent attempted rescue operation by Nigerian and British military forces.For its part, the government of the United Kingdom said the presence of British warplanes in Nigeria had nothing to do with a rescue attempt of the hostages in the northern part of the country and was due to involvement in the international campaign to rout out Islamic militants from Mali. The government of Italy echoed this claim with the foreign ministry declaring in a statement: "There was never any military attempt to rescue the hostages by any of the governments concerned." But regardless of the details, the result was not only Nigeria's worst hostage taking incident in recent history, but also the tragic loss of life.

United Kingdom Foreign Secretary William Hague confirmed that a British construction worker was likely to be among the victims, and railed against the brutality of the violence saying, "This is an unforgivable act of pure, cold-blooded murder, for which there can be no excuse or justification." The government of Italy also issued a confirmation and condemnation of the violence.

Meanwhile, days after the kidnapping in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram returned to the forefront as

they were suspected as being behind the kidnapping of a French family in Cameroon. By the start of March 2013, Boko Haram released online videotaped footage, via "YouTube," depicting seven members of the French family -- two men, one woman and four children -- sitting between apparent members of Boko Haram.

A spokesperson for the extremist Islamist entity said the French nationals were taken hostage as retaliation against France for waging war against Islam, and saying they would only be released if the Nigerian government released all female Jihadists in its custody, and only if Cameroon released all male Jihaidists. The spokespersons warned that the French nationals would be killed if these actions were not taken, saying: "Finally, I say to you, fulfill all of these things, and if you leave one thing from them we will slaughter those we took, we will slaughter those we took."

With the country being subject to attacks by various militant entities for several years, the Nigerian Army announced its plans to establish a special task force to deal with emergency security situations in the country. The need for such a special task force was vital in a country plagued by crime, ethno-religious strife, kidnapping, and terrorism.

As reported by Pan African News, Lieutenant-General Azubuike Ihejirika, announced the venture at the Nigerian Army Training Center in the northern town of Kontagora in mid-February 2013. The army chief said, "The Special Force is important to both the Army Headquarters and the nation in the sense that, if there is a situation whereby there is an emergency, we have a force you call upon and deploy immediately whether it is internal or external." Up to 600 soldiers trained in counter-terrorism would be employed to respond to emergency cases.

The Nigerian military has made a habit of setting up special task forces on an ad-hoc basis to confront the security challenges in the country. Whether or not this latest venture would see success in addressing the threats posed by crime, ethno-religious strife, kidnapping, and terrorism in Nigeria was yet to be determined.

In the last week of April 2013, as many as 185 people died -- including women and children -- as a result of violent clashes between Nigerian military forces and the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. The violence took place in the Baga region of Nigeria's northern Borno state. Most of the deaths occurred as people got caught in the crossfire of violence, although some deaths were attributed to a massive fire that erupted as the town was being razed.

To that latter end, thousands of houses were destroyed and hundreds of residents suffered from horrific burn injuries. Brigadier-General Austin Edokpaye -- the commander of the Military Task Force -- placed the blame for the fire on Boko Haram fighters, explaining that their use of weaponry had caused the blaze. He said: "We lost an officer during the attack on our men on patrol. We've received an intelligence that some suspected Boko Haram members usually pray and hide arms at a particular mosque in town. It was around that mosque that our men were attacked

with several of them injured and an officer died. When we reinforced and returned to the scene, the terrorists came out with heavy firepower, including RPGs which usually has a conflagration effect." Of course, Boko Haram had a different view and said that the military was behind the fire. Regardless of who was responsible, it was clear that Nigeria remained plagued by the blight of brutal violence as a result of Boko Haram's ongoing uprising.

At the start of May 2013, around 40 people died and scores more were injured in Nigeria's Taraba state as a result of sectarian violence between Christians and Muslims at a funeral. The clashes erupted as the funeral procession for a traditional leader passed through a Muslim area of Wukari town. The funeral attendees in the procession were from the ethnic Junkun group who are predominantly Christian. The flare-up was the latest manifestation of conflict between the Christian ethnic Junkun and the collective Muslim Hausa and Fulani community over land rights. This incident illustrated the ongoing tensions between the Nigerian Muslim population, who live mostly in the northern part of the country, and the southern population that tends to be made of Christians and traditional animists (and a syncretistic blend of the two).

In mid-May 2013, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency for three states regarded as strongholds for Islamic militants. He also ordered the military to launch an assault on the Islamic extremist enclave, Boko Haram. Militants from Boko Haram have not simply carried out a violent uprising -- they have also sought to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law in Nigeria -- a goal that runs counter to the sovereignty of the nation state, which is home to Christians, Muslims, animists, and a wide array of ethno-linguistic groups.

President Goodluck Jonathan said in a speech broadcast in the national media that the state of emergency would apply to the states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa in response to the alarming increase in attacks by Islamic militants, many of whom were aligned with Boko Haram. The president addressed the threat posed by Boko Haram saying, "What we are facing is not just militancy or criminality, but a rebellion and insurgency by terrorist groups which pose a very serious threat to national unity and territorial integrity." President Goodluck Jonathan continued, "Already, some northern parts of Borno state have been taken over by groups whose allegiance is to different flags and ideologies." He also asserted that Nigera would stand firm "against those who threaten the sovereign integrity," saying, "Our will is strong, because our faith lies in the indivisibility of Nigeria." Meanwhile, officials from the Nigerian military confirmed that as many as 8,000 troops would be deployed as part of an assault against Boko Haram. That assault would be include air strikes on strongholds in remote parts of Borno state, as well as offensive operations in the state capital of Maiduguri.

Note that in the last week of May 2013, the Nigerian army was claiming that its joint ground and air assault had successfully destroyed several terror training and meeting camps in the northern part of the country that were used by Boko Haram. While there was little independent verification of the claims by the Nigerian military, Brigadier General Olukolade displayed photographs of

buildings at a news conference that he said were hospital facilities and dormitories at the Boko Haram camps. He also furnished pictures of what he described as bomb-making equipment. In an interview with BBC News, Olukolade said: "These camps were mini-enclaves from which the insurgents planned their operations and from there they attacked neighboring communities, going to municipalities and returning there." He continued, "Most of their planning and activities was co-ordinated from these camps."

Meanwhile, with an eye on managing the political ramifications of his hard-line moves against Boko Haram, President Goodluck Jonathan ordered the release of all females associated with Boko Haram who were held in detention. The defense ministry characterized the decision as a good faith effort aimed at improving the possibility of reconciliation in the future.

But at the start of June 2013, the government of Nigeria officially banned the two Islamic extremist groups plaguing the country. President Goodluck Jonathan declared both Boko Haram (discussed above) as well as Ansaru to be terrorist groups, meaning that all activities of the two entities would now subject to the Terrorism Prevention Act. According to that anti-terrorism act, "any person who knowingly, in any manner, directly or indirectly" gives aid or support to Boko Haram and Ansaru would be jailed for a minimum of 20 years. To date, as many as 2,000 people died at the hands of Boko Haram and Ansaru.

On July 6, 2013, at attack by suspected Islamist extremists on a school in a northeastern town in Nigeria left around 30 students and one teacher dead. The attack ensued in the town of Mamudo in Yobe state and was distinguished for its particular level of brutality. Indeed, some of the victims were burned alive, according to witnesses, while others were shot to death as they tried to escape. The attackers reportedly arrived at the school with fuel, which they intended to use to incinerate the school along with its inhabitants. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, the Islamic militant terror entity, Boko Haram, has run roughshod over this part of Nigeria and suspicion naturally fell its way in this case. The fact that Boko Haram has had a special interest in targeting schools in its campaign of terror, only served to bolster the view that Boko Haram was responsible. Since 2010, scores of schools in Nigeria have been attacked by Boko Haram due to its view that education is objectionable. Indeed, the very name "Boko Haram" denotes the words "Western education is sacrilege" in the Hausa language of the region.

In the latter part 2013, Nigeria continued to grapple with the national security threat posed by extremist Islamic terrorist in the northeastern part of the country. The contours of the scenario were somewhat different, though, as the Boko Haram Islamic terror group was now taking aim at vigilante groups daring to protect the civilian population in their midst.

Going back to mid-August 2013, Islamist extremist terrorists attacked a mosque in northeastern Nigeria and killed at least 44 worshippers. The victims were shot to death during morning prayers at a mosque in the town of Konduga located in the Borno state, which has been rocked by violence

at the hands of the militant Islamic terror group, Boko Haram. As local vigilantes tried to call for help in Konduga, four of them were themselves killed by militants. In a separate but (likely) related incident, a dozen people were killed in a village close to Maiduguri -- the capital of Borno state. As such, all of these attacks were being attributed to the work of Boko Haram.

Although Boko Haram tends to target Christian churches and schools, because of the assistance being provided by local vigilantes to Nigerian forces in fighting the terror group, it was possible that they were now being subject to attack. There were suggestions that Boko Haram believed that the local vigilantes were praying at the mosque that was subject to the brunt of the bloodshed. As noted by a government official in an interview with Agence France Presse, "We believe the attack was not unconnected with the cooperation residents are giving to security operatives in identifying and arresting Boko Haram members in their midst." Stated differently, it was conceivable that the attack on the mosque was a warning to Muslims against cooperating with the joint task force aimed at stemming the tide of violence, as well as retaliation for those who already had stood against Boko Haram. Meanwhile, Muslim imams in the area were saying that Boko Haram was targeting them because they do not subscribe to the same extremist ideology of the terror group.

At the close of August 2013, suspected Boko Haram militants ambushed a group of 100 individuals believed to be part of a vigilante group in northeastern Nigeria. At least two dozen people were killed in the ambush, and about 35 others were missing, after Boko Haram militants disguised in army uniforms launched a vicious assault on the vigilantes close to the town of Monguno in the volatile Borno state.

It should be noted that vigilante groups have emerged in Nigeria in response to the relentless spate of brutal attacks by Boko Haram and other extremist Islamist entities in the region. Despite the Nigerian military's effort to snuff out the likes of Boko Haram, extremist Islamists have continued to terrorize local residents, thus forcing locals to defend themselves from the violence. But as this ambush close to Monguno has shown, Boko Haram was now targeting such vigilantes -- essentially carrying out revenge attacks against the local vigilante groups for daring to act against them.

On Sept. 6, 2013, the Nigerian military hunted down and killed as many as 50 Islamist militants in northeastern Nigeria following a raid on Boko Haram terror camps. Army spokesperson Sagir Musa explained that the action was taken in response to deadly attacks by militants on towns, such as Gajiram, only days before that left between 15 and 20 people dead. In a separate incident, Islamic militants opened fire on people in Bulabilin Ngaura, to the southeast of Maiduguri, killing another five people. Musa said, "Troops pursued the terrorists to their camps and destroyed them with air support."

Only days after this supposed victory for the Nigerian military against Boko Haram, the emerging conflict between Boko Haram and anti-extremist vigilantes flared once again as the two sides

became embroiled in deadly battles in the restive Borno state in the northeastern part of the country. Approximately 20 people died in those clashes with the vast majority of the dead being vigilante members attempting to defend the town of Benisheik from the Islamist extremists. According to reports, Boko Haram militants ambushed the vigilantes from the trees above, using sophisticated, to kill the vigilantes. The Nigerian military had a very different account of the situation, claiming that soldiers had been dispatched to the battle site and the "attack was repelled," however, surviving vigilantes told BBC News that there were no Nigerian troops to assist them.

In the third week of September 2013, Boko Haram carried out yet another act of brutality in Nigeria's Borno state. This time, the militants disguised themselves in military checkpoints, set up fake checkpoints outside the town of Benisheik, and then ambushed people, shooting them to death and razing dozens on buildings in a cruel rampage of terror. More than 90 people died in this incident. Kashim Shettima, the state governor, described the attack as "barbaric and un-Islamic."

On Sept. 29, 2013, Boko Haram's rampage of terror took a particularly nefarious and blood thirsty turn when suspected Boko Haram terrorists attacked a college in northeastern Nigeria and killed scores of students. According to international news media reports, the terrorists invaded the dormitory of students at the College of Agriculture in Yobe state and exterminated the young people while they slept. The terrorists also burned classrooms to the ground. While Boko Haram has targeted Christian churches in its pro-Islamist campaign, it has also taken aim at educational institutions, due to its belief that education is an anti-Islamist concept. In fact, the very name "Boko Haram" takes aim at Western education, casting it as a sin. (See "Editor's Note" for details.)

Noteworthy was the fact that even as information about these atrocities by Boko Haram was being disseminated, there were emerging reports that the group's leader may have been killed. The reports indicated that Abubakar Shekau might have died during a gun battle with Nigerian military forces in Borno state, which has been "ground zero" of the epidemic of bloodshed at the hands of Boko Haram. The claim was being made by the military-led Joint Task Force (JTF), which had the objective of nullifying the threat posed by Boko Haram. A statement read as follows: "Intelligence reports available to the Joint Task Force Operation Restore Order (ORO) revealed that Shekau, the most dreaded and wanted Boko Haram terrorists leader, may have died." The JTF also suggested that Shekau was killed in the rough period between late July and early August 2013.

If this claim was verified, it would certainly signify a victory for the Nigerian authorities, which have long been challenged by the relentless national security threat posed by Boko Haram. It should be noted that videotaped footage purportedly released by Shekau in mid-August 2013 has conflicted with the JTF's claims of killing the Boko Haram leader. Further videotaped footage purported to show a very much alive Shekau surfaced in late September 2013. As such, there remained no confirmation of the elimination of Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau.

On Oct. 20, 2013, the extremist Islamic terror group, Boko Haram, appeared to have carried out its latest attack in an ongoing campaign of violence and bloodshed in Nigeria. In this attack in Borno state, militants disguised in army uniforms ambushed motorists at checkpoints, ordered them out of their cars, and then either shot or hacked their victims to death. While Boko Haram did not immediately take responsibility for the brutal and shocking assault, most witnesses on the scene blamed the militant Islamic terrorist entity, pointing to the constant wave of attacks by Boko Haram in Borno. The witnesses also noted that the assailants wore beards -- a common penchant among Boko Haram terrorists -- whereas army troops are generally clean-shaven. It should be noted that the assailants were able to carry out their bloody rampage and escape easily afterwards on motorcycles.

On the other side of the equation, on Oct. 23, 2013, Nigerian authorities said that military troops eliminated 37 Boko Haram Islamist terrorists in a combination of air strikes and ground assaults on a terrorism base camp in the remote area of Alagarno. Then, in the last week of October 2013, the Nigerian military carried out a ground and aerial assault on a Boko Haram terrorist training camp in Borno state, leaving at least 75 extremist militants dead. The Nigerian military also said that it had successfully destroyed the terrorist camp there.

In the last week of October 2013, Islamic extremist Boko Haram militants audaciously attacked a hospital in the northern Nigerian city of Damaturu, located in Yobe state, stealing a stash of drugs before escaping in an ambulance. A vicious battle with security forces followed and spread to other parts of the city. Several police and military buildings were burned to the ground in the fracas.

It should be noted that Yobe state neighbors Borno state where the lion's share of Boko Haram's brutal terror attacks have taken place. Despite its close proximity to Borno, Yobe has -- until this time -- been relatively calm in recent years.

At the start of November 2013, the extremist Islamic terror group, Boko Haram, continued its rampage of terror with a brutal attack on a wedding convoy in the northeastern part of the country. The attack occurred along the dangerous road between Bama and Banki in the ever-volatile Borno State and left more than 30 people dead including the groom. Most of the victims appeared to have been shot to death, according to witnesses on the scene.

Note that in mid-November 2013, the United State officially designated both Boko Haram and Ansaru as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists." Both militant extremist Islamist entities have carried out acts of terror in Nigeria, leading to the deaths of thousands of people over the years.

In a statement, Lisa Monaco, the homeland security and counterterrorism adviser to United States President Barack Obama, declared: "By cutting these terrorist organizations off from U.S. financial

institutions and enabling banks to freeze assets held in the United States, these designations demonstrate our strong support for Nigeria's fight against terrorism and its efforts to address security challenges in the north." She continued, "We encourage Nigeria to pursue a comprehensive counterterrorism approach that uses law enforcement tools effectively, creates economic opportunity, and ensures that human rights are protected and respected."

Split in Nigeria's ruling PDP party leads to formation of "new PDP"

At the start of September 2013, following a long and drawn-out internal power struggle, Nigeria's ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) split into two factions. The conflict came to a head during a national convention in the capital city of Abuja to elect officers to fill vacancies in the party's National Working Committee. The outcome of that convention was the decision by a cabal of angry PDP politicians to walk out of the convention, declare they were leaving the PDP, and then announce the formation of their own breakaway political grouping. Seemingly, with an eye on accentuating the fissures within the party, the splinter group decided to name itself the "new PDP."

Among the breakaway faction were a number of state governors, the former national secretary of the PDP, the former acting national chairman of the party, Kawu Baraje, who was named as the chairman of the "new PDP," and and the former vice president of the country, Atiku Abubakar, who was named to be the leader of the new party.

Speaking of the party split and the need to form the "new PDP," Abubakar said that he and his associates who left the original PDP had done so because "a party we conceived in 1998 to be a rallying point for all Nigerians, to be a source of unity, to be a party that would fulfill the aspirations of Nigerians, has today been dragged down by people who don't even understand what party politics is."

It was to be determined if the split in the PDP would influence the outcome of the next general elections, set to take place in 2015. Of particular concern was the matter of whether or not the original PDP would be able to hold onto control of the presidency and the bicameral parliament as it has since 1999.

Latest Developments (2014)

In mid-January 2014, a car bomb exploded close to a marketplace in the north-eastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri. The apparent terrorist attack in the capital of Nigeria's volatile Borno state left at least 17 people dead. Suspicion for the attack rested on the Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram, which soon claimed responsibility. Indeed, Boko Haram has for several years been carrying out a campaign of terror in Nigeria as it tries to achieve its goal of establishing Islamic rule

in northern Nigeria. In a separate incident in the same period of mid-January 2014, Islamic militants launched an attack in at a market in the village of Kayamula in Borno state. That attack left five people dead.

As January 2014 came to a close, Boko Haram struck again. This time, the targets were two villages in northeastern Nigeria -- Kawuri and Waga Chakawa -- and approximately 75 people in total were killed. In the village of Kawuri village in Borno state, the Islamic extremist terrorists bombed a busy marketplace with explosive; they also set all the homes in the village on fire. More than 50 people died in the Kawuri attacks as a result. In Waga Chakawa in Adamawa state, the target was a church and the victims were church worshippers. The assailants again used bombs to attack the church and opened fire on the congregation. It should be noted that Boko Haram was able to successfully carry out this horrific bloodshed despite the fact that the two states (along with the state of Yobe) were placed under emergency rule in 2013.

In February 2014, suspected Islamic extremist terrorists from Boko Haram were said to be responsible for a raid on a Nigerian village that led to the murder of scores of people. The gunmen were reported to have rounded up and abducted several men from the village of Izghe in the volatile Borno state and shot them to death. The assailants then went from home to home in the village and murdered anyone unlucky enough to be found in their homes. This particular cadre of victims were either shot to death or had their throats slit. There were also reports of hacking deaths. Bodies were found strewn in the streets of Izghe. Officials from Borno state said that the death toll for the terror attack that went on for several hours exceeded 100 victims.

The attack came a week after an ambush by Boko Haram terrorists on soldiers that left nine dead, and an attack in the town of Konduga that left 40 people dead. The Konduga attack (also in Borno state) resulted in the town being largely razed to the ground. Militant Islamists from Boko Haram disguised in military uniforms were named as the likely culprits.

In the aftermath of these incidents, the governor of Borno state, Kashim Shettima, demanded that increased troops be deployed to the state to combat Boko Haram. Shettima gave credit to the military for its efforts fighting Boko Haram as he said, “The Nigerian army and the Nigerian police force are doing their best given the circumstances.” However, he also noted that “Boko Haram are better armed and better motivated.”

On Feb. 25, 2014, the state of Yobe in northeastern Nigeria was the site of vicious violence as Boko Haram militants launched an attack on a boarding school, killing close to 30 people. The attack took place during an overnight raid on the school's dormitories, followed by the killing of the victims and the burning of the school to the ground. All of the victims were male teenage students; the militants spared the female students, instructing them to instead set aside the pursuit of education and to get married instead. Governor Ibrahim Gaidam from the state of Yobe condemned the brutal attack and demanded that the government provide more troops to go after

the Boko Haram terrorists. He further blasted the Nigerian authorities via a statement that read as follows: "It is unfortunate that up to five hours when this massacre took place, there were no security agents around to stop or contain the situation." He continued, "I have also been informed that the military here in Yobe state lack adequate number of troops on the ground."

It should be noted that Boko Haram has often targeted schools due to the extremist Islamists' objections to Western education. Indeed, a similarly horrific attack on a college ensued in September 2013. More recently, in the first part of 2014, Boko Haram carried out the assassination of a prominent northern Nigerian Islamic scholar, Sheikh Mohammed Awwal Albani, for daring to characterize their tactics of murder and brutality as un-Islamic.

By the start of March 2014, Boko Haram's rampage of violence and bloodshed continued with twin explosions in the city of Maiduguri; more than 45 people died as a result. Only 30 miles from Maiduguri, a separate attack ensued as dozens of gunmen opened fire on the farming village of Mainok, killing close to 40 people and leaving the village burned to the ground. The attack in Mainok was reminiscent of many of Boko Haram's latest attacks on persons or communities they view as being supportive of the government.

On March 3, 2014, Boko Haram's vicious campaign of terror continued as militants stormed the village of Mafa in Borno state -- only 30 miles from Maiduguri. As civilians tried to flee the scene, they were shot to death. Indeed, as many as 30 people were killed. The militants accentuated their brutality by throwing explosive devices into occupied homes. Meanwhile, officials in Borno said that soldiers abandoned their posts and did nothing to help the villagers.

On March 14, 2014, hundreds of Boko Haram militants launched an audacious attack on an army barracks in the Nigerian city of Maiduguri. Some sources in Nigeria indicated the attack was intended to result in the release of Boko Haram terrorists being held at that Giwa military compound. The army was able to repel the attack and inflict heavy casualties on the Islamic extremist assailants; however, there were suggestions that several Boko Haram terrorists were freed in the melee.

Maiduguri was again the target for yet another audacious assault by Boko Haram at the start of April 2014. Boko Haram, continued its rampage of violence and bloodshed with a bombing on the outskirts of the north eastern flashpoint city of Maiduguri in the restive Borno state. More than 20 people died in the attack, six of whom were believed to be Boko Haram militants. The attack was sparked when a Boko Haram suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden vehicle near a checkpoint in Borno state. That explosion occurred just as soldiers were repelling the assailants' attempt to ram other explosives-laden vehicles into a gas station. A gun battle with soldiers ensued as a result.

Special Report: Boko Haram abduction crisis in Nigeria

Summary

Weeks after the initial attack at a school in Nigeria, which resulted in the kidnapping of female students and the college library being burned to the ground, the world has become transfixed by the campaign of terror by the militant extremist group, Boko Haram. This particular attack in the town of Chibok was regarded as a "classic" Boko Haram assault since (1) the Islamist militant extremist entity is highly opposed to Western education, and (2) it has often targeted institutions of higher learning. But this incident had the additional distressing element of involving the abductions of more than 200 female students, all aged between 16 and 18 years old. Boko Haram soon took responsibility for the mass abductions, while reports emerged that the girls were "sold" to Boko Haram militants for the price of $12. Parents of the female students railed against the government of Nigeria, which had done little to rescue the girls. That frustration was set against the broader discontent with the Nigerian government for failing to effectively end Boko Haram's brutal rampage of violence and bloodshed that has been ongoing for years. Meanwhile the plight of the girls has taken on global proportions with people around the world shocked and horrified to see the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, boasting about the pleasure he takes in the act of killing, while proclaiming that the abduction and sale of young girls was the work of God. Revulsion over the Boko Haram leader's statements has spurred the United States and the United Kingdom to offer their assistance to the government of Nigeria in locating the girls. But observers have pointed to the manifold resources expended to find the missing Malaysian Airlines jetliner and compared it unfavorably to the lack of resources expended on finding more than 200 schoolgirls. In the background of these developments has been also the matter of international jurisprudence. Given Abubakar Shekau's admission of mass murder, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, the international community must ask why international levers of powers have not yet been used to begin an investigation against AbuBakar Shekau and other members of Boko Haram for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

In Detail

In mid-April 2014, the rampage of violence and bloodshed by the Islamic extremist terror group Boko Haram was ongoing as another spate of attacks plagued the northeastern part of the country, leaving as many as 135 civilians dead. In one case, a bombing attributed to Boko Haram killed 75 people on the outskirts of Abuja; it was first attack on the Nigerian capital in two years. In another attack in mid-April 2014, the target was a teacher training college at Chibok where several people were killed, female students were kidnapped, and the college library was burned to the ground. While Boko Haram did not initially issue a formal statement of responsibility, this particular incident could well be regarded as a "classic" Boko Haram assault since (1) the Islamist militant extremist entity is highly opposed to Western education, and (2) it has often targeted institutions of higher learning.

In September 2013, Boko Haram carried out a nefarious and blood thirsty assault on a college in northeastern Nigeria and killed scores of students. According to international news media reports, the terrorists invaded the dormitory of students at the College of Agriculture in Yobe state and exterminated the young people while they slept. Then in February 2014, the state of Yobe in northeastern Nigeria was again the site of vicious violence as Boko Haram militants launched an attack on a boarding school, killing close to 30 people. The attack took place during an overnight raid on the school's dormitories, followed by the killing of the victims and the burning of the school to the ground. All of the victims were male teenage students; the militants spared the female students, instructing them to instead set aside the pursuit of education and to get married instead. Governor Ibrahim Gaidam from the state of Yobe condemned the brutal attack and demanded that the government provide more troops to go after the Boko Haram terrorists. He further blasted the Nigerian authorities via a statement that read as follows: "It is unfortunate that up to five hours when this massacre took place, there were no security agents around to stop or contain the situation." He continued, "I have also been informed that the military here in Yobe state lack adequate number of troops on the ground."

The attack on the teacher training college in Chibok flared again by the third week of April 2014 when, after a vigorous social media campaign, the world finally took notice of the fact that more than 200 female students had been abducted and remained missing weeks later. Approximately 40 of the girls were able to escape -- with no assistance from Nigerian military forces, according to a teacher from the school; however, the rest of the girls -- aged 16 to 18 years -- remained unaccounted for and presumably in captivity. The general consensus was that Islamic militants took the girls to the Sambisa forest close to the border with Cameroon.

Parents of the schoolgirls were shocked and grieving, with pictures of wailing mothers soon being broadcast in the media. The community was in a state of outrage over the fact that the Nigerian authorities had done little to secure their release. A particular cause of consternation and ire was the fact that President Goodluck Jonathan had not even referred to the mass abduction of the 200 schoolgirls in his public remarks for weeks. Meanwhile, the story of the abducted schoolgirls was gradually entering the consciousness of the global community, which had, to this point, largely ignored the horror of 200 young girls being kidnapped by Islamic extremists. There was also international condemnation of the fact that the government of Nigeria had been largely ineffective in dealing with this Islamist terrorist threat.

As April 2014 came to a close, there were emerging rumors that the Nigerian schoolgirls may have been taken abroad -- perhaps into Cameroon and Chad - while there were other suggestions that the girls had been sold as "slave wives" to militants. That suggestion was not farfetched since Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, in 2013 threatened to abduct women and girls and subject them to such treatment. In fact, part of the group's belief system included the ancient Islamic notion that females captured during war were to be treated as slaves and sexually

exploited.

Meanwhile, Boko Haram continued to carry out its usual campaign of violence, this time in the form of yet another bombing on the outskirts of Abuja. That particular explosion left further victims, this time numbering around 20 in total.

By the start of May 2014, the news was grim and included further rumors emanating from international media that a few of the girls died of snakebites. Another bit of disturbing news came in the form of reports that the girls were being been "sold" for the bride's price of $12 to the very members of Boko Haram who abducted them.

Of the limited positive information available was the news that a deal was in the works to faciliate the release of some of the girls; however, there was no confirmation of this plan. Around the same time, it was reported that the Nigerian authorities were prepared to deploy four army battalions to the area where the girls were believed to be held, with plans afoot for an offensive into the Sambisa forest.

Meanwhile, former United Kingdom Prime Minister Gordon Brown called for international military assistance in tracking down the abducted girls. In an interview with the Guardian newspaper, Brown said, "We could provide military help to the Nigerians to track down the whereabouts of the girls before they're dispersed throughout Africa -- like air support, for example, if that was thought necessary." Of course, in truth, if the girls had been taken from Nigeria via porous borders into Chad or Cameroon, the chances of actually finding the girls was quite low. In fact, now the news was emerging that another eight girls had been abducted by Boko Haram -- this time the victims of kidnapping were between the ages of 12 and 15.

On May 5, 2014, Agence France Presse reported that a videotaped message from Boko Haram leader Abubacar Shekau had been released. In that message, Shekau, on behalf of his militant Islamic group, took responsibility for the kidnapping of the more than 200 female students and confirmed that the girls had been sold to his militants. Shekau declared that the abductions had been instructed by God, saying: "God instructed me to sell them, they are his properties, and I will carry out his instructions." Shekau further said that females should never have been in school in the first place, and instead should be married.

As discussed here, Boko Haram rejects education and has strong Islamic objections to the notion of females being educated. It can further be surmised that Boko Haram holds the antidiluvian belief that the purpose of womanhood is to be married and produce children, and that females kidnapped during military operations are to be treated as the spoils of war, potentially as sex slaves. But the Boko Haram leader was on the record having made other deeply disturbing declarations. In 2012, following an attack by his group in Kano, he said, "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams." Not surprisingly, as of

the spring of 2014, with between 200 and 300 girls now under the control of such a man, the plight of the girls has taken on global proportions thanks to a vigorous social media campaign.

It should be noted that Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan had earlier announced the firing of the commanders of his military forces. While there was no official reason given for the mass dismissals, speculation abounded that the move came in response to the military's failure to end the Islamist-led insurgency by Boko Haram terrorists in northern Nigeria. The office of the president said that new appointments to head the military would soon be made. President Jonathan also defended the military's efforts against Boko Haram, claiming that it had seen some success -- the relentless wave of violence notwithstanding. In truth, however, there was growing discontent regarding the fecklessness of the military in addressing the threat posed by Boko Haram, and frustration with the president for failing to secure the country from the threat of extremist terrorists.

A meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) on Africa in Nigeria, which took place from May 7-9, 2014, was overshadowed by the abduction crisis playing out in that country. The criticism of President Goodluck Jonathan only increased when he made the audacious claim at the forum that the kidnapping of the girls and the ensuing international assistance to find them marked the "end of terrorism." He said, “I believe that the kidnap of these girls will be the beginning of the end of terror in Nigeria.” The reality, of course, was that more than 200 girls remained missing, the president had little to say on the subject until this point, and his efforts to crush Boko Haram, to date, had ended in failure. Despite the fact that a state of emergency had been established in the states of Borni, Yobe, and Adamawa, Boko Haram has been able to continue to carry out its rampage of violence and bloodshed in Nigeria, with the death toll among civilians on an upward swing. Accordingly, there was a growing chorus of vociferous criticism from human rights groups over the Nigerian government's failure to protect its citizens from the brutality of Boko Haram, which was quite literally operating in a context of impunity.

That criticism reached new heights with the abducation crisis unfolding in the spring of 2014. As the videotaped footage of Abubakara Shekau entered the public sphere, people around the world were shocked and horrified to see the Boko Haram leader boasting about the pleasure he takes in the act of killing, while proclaiming that the abduction and sale of young girls was the work of God. Revulsion over the Boko Haram leader's statements has spurred the United States and the United Kingdom to offer their assistance to the government of Nigeria in locating the girls. That assistance would come in the form of technological, military, and law enforcement expertise. Nevertheless, observers have pointed to the manifold resources expended to find the missing Malaysian Airlines jetliner and compared it unfavorably to the lack of resources expended on finding more than 200 schoolgirls.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian government was increasingly facing criticism, not only for its overall fecklessness in dealing with the threat of Boko Haram generally, and not only as regards the recovery of the missing girls, but eventually due to emerging reports that Nigeria's military had

advance warning of an attack in Chibok. According to Amnesty International, the military had several hours of advance warning of the impending raid by Boko Haram militants via a report made by a local herdsman, but sent no reinforcements to deal with the likely threat. Such a (lack of) response by the Nigerian military to threats posed by Boko Haram has been registered before, with locals in northern Nigeria often complaining that the military refused to intervene when they were faced with brutal assaults by Boko Haram militants. Analysts have surmised that members of the military were unwilling to engage with Boko Haram militants who were generally better armed. For its part, the Nigerian government refused to accept the report issued by Amnesty International, with Nigerian Information Minister Labaran Maku saying in an interview with BBC News, "If the government was aware, there would have been an intervention."

In the backdrop of these developments has been also the matter of international jurisprudence. Given Abubakar Shekau's admission of mass murder, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, the international community must ask why international levers of powers have not yet been used to begin an investigation against AbuBakar Shekau and other members of Boko Haram for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court. Instead, the United Nations was warning Boko Haram that if they actually sold the missing girls into sexual slavery they would be liable to prosecution for war crimes. As stated by the human rights spokesperson for the United Nations, Rupert Colville, "We warn the perpetrators that there is an absolute prohibition against slavery and sexual slavery in international law. These can ... constitute crimes against humanity. In fact, Boko Haram's record to date of brutal killings, rape, and human trafficking surely would fit the category of crimes against humanity without having to delve into the well of future atrocities and abuses.

On May 12, 2014, Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, emerged once again -- this time in videotaped footage in which he called for the release of his Boko Haram fighters currently in exchange for the abducted school girls. Shekau, armed with an automatic weapon and dressed in military fatigues, declared: "All I am saying is that if you want us to release the girls that we have kidnapped, those who have not accepted Islam will be treated as the Prophet (Mohammed) treated infidels and they will stay with us." He continued, "We will not release them while you detain our brothers...I swear to almighty Allah, you will not see them again until you release our brothers that you have captured."

Mike Omeri, an official from Nigeria's Ministry of Information, addressed the exchange offer from Boko Haram saying "The government of Nigeria is considering all options towards freeing the girls and reuniting them with their parents."

To that end, the footage also depicted more than 100 girls garbed in black and grey veils -- presumably about half of the kidnapped students -- chanting Islamic prayers. They were shown outdoors and under a thin canopy of trees. This visual imagery offered two bits of positive news for the international experts working together to try to recover the girls. First, approximately half of them were being held in one place (as opposed to dispersed at various locations); and second,

the thin tree cover suggested that that satellite and aerial reconnaissance could be used to potentially locate them. Of course, it was to be seen if the Nigerian military was even capable of rescuing the girls if their location was definitively determined.

A note on international assistance --

Meanwhile in mid-May 2014, it was reported that the United States was flying manned surveillance missions over Nigeria to try to find the kidnapped schoolgirls. As well, the United States had also provided other forms of expert assistance aimed at finding the missing girls. Despite such help and the fact that Nigerian authorities on their own had done little to recover the kidnapped individuals or to subdue Boko Haram, Nigeria appeared to show limited appreciation for efforts by the United States. Indeed, some local commentators even accusing the United States of "neocolonial" meddling. In truth, statements by the likes of United States Senator John McCain that Nigeria having a "practically nonexistent government" was interpreted as an insult by Nigerians at home and likely bolstered the negative interpretation of the United States' efforts. That being said, most international observers have noted that while Nigerians were entitled to national pride, with some 200 young girls lives at stake, there was no room for national vanity.

Latest violence in Nigeria:

At the local level, on May 14, 2014, villagers in Borno state repelled an attempted attack by Boko Haram. The villagers indicated that in the absence of proper protection from Nigerian military forces, and given increased anxieties following the abduction of the more than 200 girls, they had taken matters into their own hands and formed a vigilante group.

On May 21, 2014, with the abduction crisis in Nigeria still ongoing due to the aggression of Boko Haram, the central city of Jos was rocked by violence as explosions left more than 120 people dead. The apparent bombings targeted a hospital and a marketplace and were carried out by Boko Haram. President Goodluck Jonathan condemned the attacks, casting them as "cruel and evil" and also as a "tragic assault on human freedom." His office also insisted that the Nigerian government was "fully committed to winning the war against terror." However, the events in Nigeria suggested that the war was, at least for the moment, being won by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, as it has continued to wage its campaign of terror, violence, and bloodshed, on the citizens of Nigeria with little push back from the Nigerian military.

In late May 2014, a suicide bomber targeted the spectators at a football match in the central city of Jos. The list of casualties was limited to the suicide bomber and a handful of victims since the car exploded before the car arrived at the open air field. At the start of June 2014, a bomb exploded at a television viewing center for football in the northeastern Adamawa state. At least 14 people were killed and another dozen were wounded. Although there were no immediate claims of

responsibility in either case, suspicion rested on Boko Haram, which is active in these areas.

At the start of June 2014, dozens of villagers were killed in a spate of vicious attacks by Boko Haram militants in the Mandara Mountain area of Borno state -- a known stronghold of the Islamist extremist militants. One attack involved Boko Haram fighters disguised as soldiers opening fire on people at a church compound with deadly results. In another attack, Boko Haram fighters burned down a market place.

Also at the start of June 2014, with the 200 school \girls discussed above still missing, another 20 females were reported to have been abducted by Boko Haram in Borno state. The kidnapping episode occurred at a nomadic Garkin Fulani settlement of cattle herders.

By mid-June 2014, Nigeria was still suffering from the grip of bloodshed and violence when a suicide bomber targeted people watching a World Cup football match in the town of Damaturu in Yobe state. According to witnesses, the suicide bomber was traveling in a taxi when he detonated the explosives strapped to his body as spectators watched the Brazil versus Mexico match on June 17, 2014. Several people were killed as a result and the number of wounded was so significant that the hospital was overwhelmed. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, suspicion rested on Islamist extremists, such as Boko Haram, who have charged that football -- like education -- is un-Islamic.

In the last week of June 2014, an explosion at a crowded shopping plaza in the Nigerian capital of Abuja killed more than 20 people and left scores more wounded. The attack at the Banex plaza shopping complex was the latest incident of bloodshed in a country beset by vicious violence at the hands of Boko Haram. It was to be seen if this incident would also be attributed to the militant Islamic group, which has tended to concentrate on the northern parts of the country, but which has nonetheless been responsible for attacks in the capital.

On July 1, 2014, a truck bomb exploded in northeastern Nigeria, killing at least 20 people and destroying cars and businesses around a popular marketplace in the city of Maiduguri -- the capital of Borno state. Most of the victims were taxi drivers parked along the road close to the marketplace. While there was no immediate claim of responsibility, all expectations were that the attack was carried out by the bloodthirsty Islamist entity, Boko Haram, which has been behind the rage of violence and bloodshed that has plagued Nigeria in recent years.

Also in the first part of July 2014, Islamist extremists from the terror group, Boko Haram, attacked the barracks in the town of Dambao in northeastern Nigeria. While the military forces there were ultimately able to repel the assault and kill as many as 50 Boko Haram fighters, several soldiers were nonetheless killed in the attack.

Two weeks later in the third week of July 2014, Boko Haram militants carried out a gun attack in

the town of Damboa. Witnesses on the scene said half the town had been burned to the ground and that the many people had been killed. Those who survived the rampage by Boko Haram fled the town, leaving Damboa deserted. A local official told Agence France Presse, "Those who could not flee surrendered and were killed by the insurgents."

As July 2014 moved into its final week, Boko Haram was in full control over Damboa. The leader of a vigilante group in the town said that Boko Haram was flying its black flag in Damboa, had established checkpoints through the town, and was forcing people traveling through the town to pay a toll fee. While the Nigerian military said it would "firm up" the deployment of forces in the area, and that the Nigerian authorities would not "concede any portion of this country" to Boko Haram, the perception was that Boko Haram had the advantage.

Indeed, months after the schoolgirls from Chibok had been abducted, there was no progress by the Nigerian authorities in securing their release. In fact, despite promises by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan that the girls would be found and rescued, there was no sign that the military was even pursuing this unresolved crisis.

On July 27, 2014, an assailant hurled explosives at people attending church in the northern town of Kano, killing five people and wounding several others. As well, a female suicide bomber targeted police officers, ultimately only killing herself. Around the same period, a bomb exploded at a gas station owned by the state-run Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in the same northern town of Kano. At least four people were killed (including the suicide bomber) and at least eight others were injured as a result. Police on the scene said that the suicide bomber was a female. As before, all suspicion rested on Boko Haram as being behind the violence.

In mid-August 2014, almost the entire male population was kidnapped from the remote fishing village of Doron Baga in north eastern Nigeria. The Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, was regarded as being the likely culprit. According to witnesses in Doron Barka, Boko Haram militants dressed in military and police garb entered the village screaming "Allah Akbar" and shooting wildly around. Several older men were killed as a result, while several others were wounded. The Boko Haram fighters burned homes in the village and then captured all the males -- adult, youth, and boys included -- in the village, placing them on trucks and then driving off. Those left in the village -- women and female children -- were in a state of shock.

In September 2014, the extremist Islamic terror group, Boko Haram, was continuing its campaign of terror -- this time targeting the town of Bama in northern Nigeria. After two days of fighting, Boko Haram seized control over the town, displacing more than 25,000 residents and leaving the streets of Bama littered with dead bodies. The terrorists from Boko Haram patrolled the area and, in a particular act of cruelty, prevented residents from burying the dead.

The territorial gains for Boko Haram in the northern part of the country raised the specter that

Nigeria might go the way of Syria and Iraq by disintegrating into chaos at the hands of the Islamic terror group, Islamic State, which declared a caliphate across portions of those two countries. But in a remarkable example of the government's feckless and even delusional approach to addressing the security crisis plaguing northern Nigeria, the Nigerian government denied that Bama had fallen to Boko Haram -- irrespective of the concrete facts to the contrary.

In the third week of September 2014, Boko Haram militants launched an attack at a rural market in the north-eastern town of Mainok about 35 miles from the city of Maidugurai -- the capital of the restive Borno state. The gunmen opened fire on merchants and customers, ultimately killing dozens of people and looting food items displayed for sale at the market. Several people attempting to flee the scene were themselves killed or injured when they were hit by vehicles at the chaotic scene, as the people driving those cars tried to the escape the gunfire. Security forces ultimately engaged the Boko Haram militants, killing 13 of them.

These developments in September 2014 came months after the infamous incident in which a school in Chibok was attacked, the college library was burned to the ground, and some 200 female students were kidnapped. That act of terrorism and abduction -- another manifestation of the campaign of terror by the militant extremist group, Boko Haram. -- transfixed the world. Indeed, it was regarded as a "classic" Boko Haram assault since (1) the Islamist militant extremist entity is highly opposed to Western education, and (2) it has often targeted institutions of higher learning. But this incident had the additional distressing element of involving the abductions of more than 200 female students, all aged between 16 and 18 years old. Boko Haram soon took responsibility for the mass abductions, while reports emerged that the girls were "sold" to Boko Haram militants for the price of $12. Parents of the female students railed against the government of Nigeria, which had done little to rescue the girls.

The plight of the girls has taken on global proportions with people around the world shocked and horrified to see the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, boasting about the pleasure he takes in the act of killing, while proclaiming that the abduction and sale of young girls was the work of God. Revulsion over the Boko Haram leader's statements has spurred the United States and the United Kingdom to offer their assistance to the government of Nigeria in locating the girls. But observers have pointed to the manifold resources expended to find a missing Malaysian Airlines jetliner and compared it unfavorably to the lack of resources expended on finding more than 200 schoolgirls.

In the backdrop of these developments has been also the matter of international jurisprudence. Given Abubakar Shekau's admission of mass murder, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, the international community must ask why international levers of powers have not yet been used to begin an investigation against AbuBakar Shekau and other members of Boko Haram for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

The Nigerian military had no immediate response to any of these acts of horror carried out by

Boko Haram. Meanwhile, the wider public's rage and frustration has been increased and amplified. That anger by the public was set against the broader discontent with the Nigerian government for failing to effectively end Boko Haram's brutal rampage of violence and bloodshed that has been ongoing for years.

The Nigerian military has long promised to augment its deployment of forces in areas hard-hit by Islamist terrorists, while promising that it would not "concede any portion of this country" to Boko Haram. Despite these utterances, the public's perception was that Boko Haram had the advantage. Indeed, months after the schoolgirls from Chibok had been abducted, there was no progress by the Nigerian authorities in securing their release. In fact, despite promises by Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan that the girls would be found and rescued, there was no sign that the military was even pursuing this unresolved crisis. In August 2014, as discussed here, Boko Haram had actually managed to abduct further innocent civilians.

In response to the relentless bloodshed at the hands of Boko Haram, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan also called on the country's National Assembly to release an extra one billion in funds for the military, which has argued that Boko Haram is better armed. No action was expected on this request since members of parliament went into recess for two months before debating even the request.

Overall, there were prevailing questions about the effectiveness and the commitment of the government and Nigerian military to addressing the rampage of terror and bloodshed being carried out by Boko Haram. Despite President Goodluck Jonathan's claim that he was launching an offensive military operation against the vicious and brutal Islamist extremist group, the Nigerian media reported that several senior officials in the military were likely assisting Boko Haram by providing arms and information. The revelations -- if true -- would be a betrayal of the interests of the Nigerian people. While the Nigerian military has denied the allegations, a government minister tacitly acknowledged the veracity of the revelations by stating in an interview with BBC News that it was "good news" that the problem officers had been identified.

There were also indications that a Nigerian businessman who was arrested may have been involved in helping Boko Haram plan several attacks, including one incident that killed the Emir of Gwoza, a traditional ruler. According to a spokesperson for the Nigerian military, Major-General Chris Olukolade, the businessman shielded his ties to Boko Haram by joining a local pro-government vigilante group. Olukolade said the businessman used membership in that vigilante group "as a cover" and used his association to "spy and gather information for the terrorists.

The impotence of and lack of committment by the Nigerian government to fighting Boko Haram was displayed fully in August 2014 when Boko Haram declared dominion over an Islamic state in north-eastern Nigeria. In videotaped footage obtained by Agence France Presse, Abubakar Shekau -- the leader of Boko Haram -- declared victory over the area of Gwoza, located close to Chibok

where the 200 school girls were abducted. Shekau then announced that he was establishing an Islamic state in the broader north-eastern region of Nigeria. He said, "Thanks be to Allah who gave victory to our brethren in Gwoza and made it part of the Islamic state."

It should be noted that in a previous video recording, Shekau used the occasion to congratulate the notorious terrorist entity, Islamic State, for establishing a caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Following Islamic State's example of terrifying and horrifying viewers on video with blood lust and gruesome acts, Shekau's August 2014 broadcast depicted the corpses of approximately 20 male civilians.

In a strange development during the last week of September 2014, Nigerian military forces battling Boko Haram said they had killed a man suspected of being Shekau's "double." Clashes between the the military and Boko Haram fighters had been ongoing for several weeks in the area of Maiduguri. During one such clash, a man believed to be posing as the leader of the Islamic terror group was killed. A statement from the Nigerian military read as follows: "In the course of those encounters, one Mohammed Bashir who has been acting or posing on videos as the deceased Abubakar Shekau, the eccentric character known as leader of the group, died." The fate of the actual Shekau remained unknown, with the Nigerian military periodically announcing he had been killed, only to be forced to retract the claim later when Shekau emerged in apparent good health in propaganda media productions.

Special Report

Ebola in "hot zone" of West Africa

The year 2014 was marked by a horrific outbreak of the highly dangerous hemorrhagic disease Ebola in west Africa. By October 2014, the World Health Organzation (WHO) reported that the death toll from the Ebola epidemic had climbed to approximately 5,000 out of the more than 10,000 known cases in eight countries. The majority of deaths to this point were in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Senegal and Nigeria had been able to successfully contain outbreaks and were declared free of the disease. Outside of Africa, Spain and the United States had reported isolated cases. WHO reports, however, that the number of actual cases is likely much higher than what has been recorded globally.

In a new development, the virus had reached Mali, where a two-year-old girl died on Oct. 24, 2014. There was concern that many people in the country – which had become the sixth nation in West Africa to confirm the virus - had been exposed because the girl had been taken across the country while ill. As such, WHO was treating the situation in Mali as an emergency and officials in neighboring Mauritania had closed its borders with Mali in response. Meanwhile, the virus was also now threatening Cote d'Ivoire, since it had infected people virtually all along its borders with Guinea and Liberia.

As concerns over Ebola increased, there was a positive development in Liberia -- the country hardest hit by Ebola -- where the pace of infection was slowing. This mode, if sustained, would be a welcome surprise, given the WHO's warnings of an increased pace of infection in the offing. Still, the WHO warned that the crisis was not yet over.

At the same time, health experts were looking at the Nigerian model to stymie the spread of Ebola in that country, pointing to the excellent polio prevention infrastructure that had been implemented by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (founders of Microsoft), as well as the concerted effort by health professionals to trace and follow up with individuals believed to have had contact with Ebola patients across that country.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to quell the epidemic, WHO said that Ebola vaccines could begin in West Africa in December 2014 and that hundreds of thousands of doses should be ready for use by the middle of 2015.

Special Report

Boko Haram continues its rampage of terror

(Note that some portions of this report will include information already discussed above)

Summary

The Nigerian Islamist extremist group, Boko Haram, has in 2015 continued its rampage of terror, extending its reach beyond Nigeria's borders to the neighboring countries of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. In response, these countries banded together to take on the terror group, which had itself indicated its broader Jihadist terror inclinations by pledging allegiance to the world's most brutal Islamist terror enclave -- Islamic State. In the backdrop of these developments has been also the matter of international jurisprudence. Given the admissions by the group's leader of mass murder, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, the international community must ask why international levers of powers have not yet been used to begin an investigation against AbuBakar Shekau and other members of Boko Haram for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

Background:

In the aftermath of the initial 2014 attack at a school in Nigeria, which resulted in the kidnapping of female students and the college library being burned to the ground, the world became transfixed by the campaign of terror by the militant extremist group, Boko Haram.

This particular attack in the town of Chibok was regarded as a "classic" Boko Haram assault since (1) the Islamist militant extremist entity is highly opposed to Western education, and (2) it has often targeted institutions of higher learning. But this incident had the additional distressing element of involving the abductions of more than 200 female students, all aged between 16 and 18 years old. Boko Haram soon took responsibility for the mass abductions, while reports emerged that the girls were "sold" to Boko Haram militants for the price of $12. Parents of the female students railed against the government of Nigeria, which had done little to rescue the girls. That frustration was set against the broader discontent with the Nigerian government for failing to effectively end Boko Haram's brutal rampage of violence and bloodshed that has been ongoing for years.

Meanwhile the plight of the girls took on global proportions with people around the world shocked and horrified to see the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, boasting about the pleasure he takes in the act of killing, while proclaiming that the abduction and sale of young girls was the work of God. Revulsion over the Boko Haram leader's statements spurred the United States and the United Kingdom to offer their assistance to the government of Nigeria in locating the girls. But observers have pointed to the manifold resources expended to find the missing Malaysian Airlines jetliner and compared it unfavorably to the lack of resources expended on finding more than 200 schoolgirls.

In October 2014, there were reports that after a spate of victories for the Nigerian military against Islamist terrorists, the government of Nigeria reached a truce with Boko Haram. There were also suggestions that a deal had been reached to release the abducted school girls although it was not known if all the girls would be freed. In fact there was grave uncertainty about whether the accord could be regarded as a genuine agreement at all, especially since Boko Haram denied agreeing to a truce, made clear that the missing girls had been married off to fighters, and as the year 2014 was drawing to a close, continued its relentless rampage of terror. In fact, in December 2014, another 100 girls and women had been kidnapped by Boko Haram, while 40 boys and young men were captured, adding to the already disturbing list of victims abducted by the terrorist group.

By the start of 2015, Boko Haram attempted to show its dominance over the Nigerian military by seizing control of a military base. Boko Haram also sunk to new lows, carrying out a massacre in one town and using a 10-year-old girl to carry out a suicide bombing in another case. As well, a massacre in January 2015 in the town of Baga left as many as 2,000 people dead. With Boko Haram affecting neighboring territory in Niger, Cameroon, and Chad, the Islamist terror group was becoming a regional menace. As a result, these countries were banding together to take on the Boko Haram, which had itself indicated its broader Jihadist terror inclinations as the group pledged allegiance to the world's most brutal Islamist terror enclave -- Islamic State. But by mid-2015, Boko Haram was still successfully carrying out terror attacks in Nigeria, Niger, and Chad. It was to be seen if newly-elected Nigerian President Buhari would be able to successfully lead the effort against Boko Haram.

In the backdrop of these developments has been also the matter of international jurisprudence. Given Abubakar Shekau's admission of mass murder, human trafficking, and sexual slavery, the international community must ask why international levers of powers have not yet been used to begin an investigation against AbuBakar Shekau and other members of Boko Haram for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

Note: In 2014 alone, as many as 10,000 people had been killed by Boko Haram while more than 1.5 million others had been displaced by the Islamic terror group. It was to be seen if the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in the spring of 2015 would augur the start of a more concerted effort and a more effective campaign to defeat Boko Haram.

Key Developments in late 2014

In October 2014, Nigerian authorities announced that after days of negotiations with the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, an agreement had been reached for a ceasefire. The deal was made following a spate of military victories that left hundreds of Boko Haram militants dead or in federal custody. The ceasefire agreement reportedly also included a provision for the release of the 200 female students who were kidnapped six months earlier from a school in the town of Chibok, and which thus provoked international outrage.

In truth, there remained prevailing doubts about whether the ceasefire and release deal would actually be activated. While the talks had taken place between the Nigerian government and Danladi Ahmadu, the self-declared secretary-general of Boko Haram, it was not immediately clear if Boko Haram's notorious leader, Abubakar Shekau, had signed onto the deal. It was possible that Ahmadu represented another faction within the terror group and Shekau had not actually "blessed" the agreement. In fact, some Nigerian insiders were saying that Boko Haram denied even knowing that Ahmadu was a representative of the Islamist terror group.

Despite claims from the government that the truce included a provision for the release of the more than 200 school girls who had been abducted months earlier, to date, there has been no progress on that front. In fact, Boko Haram continued to carry out a relentless wave of attacks with villagers as the victims as the bloodshed continued.

On Oct. 18, 2014, only a day after the truce was announced, Boko Haram carried out several attacks on Nigerian villages, including Abadam and Dzur. The violence left scores of people dead. Later in October 2014, reports were emerging that Boko Haram had actually kidnapped dozens of women and girls from villages in the north-eastern Adamawa state.

As October 2014 drew to a close, there was no sign of an actual ceasefire between the Nigerian authorities and Boko Haram. Instead, the militant Islamist terror group had seized control over the northeast Nigerian town of Mubi in Yola. Boko Haram fighters reportedly launched an attack on

Mubi, opened fire, while screaming "Allah Akbar" (God is Great), and killing dozens of people. Among the dead was a university professor and his family. Presumably, his infraction was the pursuit of education and knowledge -- activities deemed by extremist Muslims to be un-Islamic. Those lucky enough to survive the gunfire were forced to flee Mubi by the thousands. The local bank was looted, the market was burned, and the palace of the local Emir was sacked.

In the aftermath of the melee, Boko Haram's signature black flag was hoisted above the Emir's palace. It was apparent that Mubi was now under Boko Haram's control and that the terror group was mirroring the tactics of Islamic State in the Middle East. Indeed, it was consolidating territory via bloodthirsty attacks, rape, and pillage of the locals --very much the barbaric measures used by Islamic State to carry out its own reign of terror.

Increasingly, it appeared that the announcement of a truce may have been a ploy by the government to gain support ahead of elections, while not being based on meaningful progress in the realm of negotiations.

At the start of November 2014, a suicide bomb attack in the northern city of Portiskum in Yobe State was startling evidence that no truce was afoot. Two dozen people, including women and children, had died while scores more were injured as a result of the attack on Shi'ite Muslims marking the Muslim holy occasion of Ashoura. For Boko Haram, Shi'ites were to be viewed as apostates and thus fair targets in their campaign of terror.

A week later, Boko Haram took control over the town of Maiha in Adamawa State. Boko Haram fighters entered the town in armored personnel carriers, which were apparently seized from the military. As has often been the case in Nigeria, once the Boko Haram fighters entered the town, the soldiers charged with defending it abandoned their positioned leaving the civilian population to fend for itself. As noted above, Boko Haram had already take control over Mubi in Yola state and so it was effectively expanding its domain in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, at the start of November 2014, Boko Haram released a video in which it denied agreeing to a ceasefire with the government. As well, the purported leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, was also shown on video asserting that the missing schoolgirls from Chibok had been "married off" to his fighters. This claim was a clear contradiction of the Nigerian government's announcement of a truce as well as the possible release of the abducted girls. No doubt this news would yield only heartbreak for the families of the missing girls, having had their hopes raised by the government, only to have them summarily dashed in this manner. There was unsurprisingly a massive outcry from Nigerians regarding the government's misleading assertions. Moreover, a statement by Nigeria's opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) was released and read as follows: "The president has failed in his most scared duty, protecting the safety and well being of Nigeria's citizens," the APC party said.

As intimated above, Boko Haram was actually consolidating its territory, even seizing control of the village of Chibok where hundreds of school girls had been abducted six months prior. Many residents fled the village in terror. In response to Boko Haram's progress in taking control over wide swaths of territory in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states, the deputy governor of Borno, Zanna Umar Mustapha, warned that the official map of a sovereign Nigeria would no longer be a reality.

As November 2014 was drawing to a close, the attacks by Boko Haram continued. On Nov. 25, 2014, a suicide bombing by two female assailants in Nigeria's north-eastern city of Maiduguri left more than 40 people dead. In recent times, Boko Haram has turned to female suicide attackers as a means by which to terrorize civilians. Days later on Nov. 28, 2014, Boko Haram militants detonated three bombs and opened fire on worshippers at a mosque in the northern Nigerian city of Kano. At least 80 people died as a result, with scores more being injured. Because of the mosque's location next to the palace of the emir of Kano, a leading Islamic authority in Nigeria and a strong critic of Boko Haram, there was some speculation that the attacks were particularly aimed at striking the emir.

Boko Haram began December 2014 with a relentless wave of violence and bloodshed. The terror group carried out attacks on Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state, and Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state. In Damaturu, Boko Haram militants attacked a police station and a university campus, and engaged with security forces, who were ultimately able to repel them. In Maiduguri, bombs exploded at a crowded marketplace, killing at least five people and injuring scores more.

But the news was not all good for Boko Haram. Realizing that no help would come from the military and other official security channels, local hunters and vigilantes were starting to defend their own villages. In at least two towns -- Mubi and Maiha -- local hunters and vigilantes used guns, machetes, as well as bows and arrows to hold off Boko Haram militants and drive them from the scene.

Meanwhile; Nigeria's Muslim leaders were entering the fray and urging people to defend themselves against attacks by the Boko Haram militants. Of note was the fact that Muhammad Sanusi, the Emir of Kano, urged residents to "acquire what they need" to protect themselves from harm. In interviews with the media Sanusi -- a vocal critic of the government -- said, "These terrorists slaughter our boys and abduct our girls to force them into slavery." He continued, "People should not sit idle and say prayer is the only solution. People should be made aware of the importance of being in a state of preparedness and make sure they acquire what they need to protect themselves. We should be ready to give our lives."

Security forces in Nigeria warned these moves would only destabilize the country and invite anarchy; however, it was difficult to see an alternate path for villagers who certainly could not count on police or soldiers for protection from Boko Haram.

In the first part of December 2014, violence continued to plague Nigeria. On Dec. 10, 2014, two female suicide bombers targeted the Kantin Kwari textile market in Kano. At least four people died and several more individuals were injured as a result of the violence , which was attributed to suspected female Boko Haram terrorists. Then on Dec. 11, 2014, double bombings close to the central Nigerian city of Jos left more than 40 people dead and several more wounded. As before, blame rested with Boko Haram.

By the third week of December 2014, more than 100 girls and women had been kidnapped by Boko Haram, adding to the already disturbing list of victims abducted by the terrorist group. As well, Boko Haram killed 34 people in a raid on the village of Gumsuri. According to witnesses, the Boko Haram assailants entered the village in pick up trucks, burned down homes and stores, opened fire on residents, and abducted the more than 100 girls and women, presumably forcing them into sexual slavery. Witnesses said there was no security presence in the region to help stave off the attack.

As December 2014 came to a close Boko Haram militants captured about 40 boys and young men during a raid on the village of Malari in northeast Nigeria. The militants arrived in the village in pick-up trucks wielding guns, demanded that all males listen to Islamic teachings, and then captured the youth.

Note: In 2014 alone, as many as 10,000 people had been killed by Boko Haram while more than 1.5 million others had been displaced by the Islamic terror group.

Key Developments in early 2015

Boko Haram remained active at the start of 2015, with the terror group seizing control over the northeastern town of Baga, as well as the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) base that houses troops from Nigeria, Chad and Niger. The Boko Haram militants arrived on the scene, opened fire, killing several residents, and then set the town's structures on fire. At the end of the day, the entire town was reportedly burned to the ground. Survivors fled the area, making their way to the neighboring country of Chad. As many as 2,000 Nigerians and 500 Chadians were reported to have fled the Lake Chad region, anxious to escape the horror being waged by Boko Haram. Meanwhile, soldiers at the MNJTF military base abandoned their post during the attack, allowing it to be seized by the Boko Haram fighters.

The fact of the matter was that the news emerging from Baga was grim. The killing spree by Boko Haram went on for days and reports from the ground depicted gruesome scenes of dead bodies strewn across the streets. In an interview with The Guardian newspaper, Muhammad Abba Gava, a spokesperson for a civilian defense group trying to defend locals from Boko Haram, said, "The human carnage perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists in Baga was enormous." He

continued, “No one could attend to the corpses and even the seriously injured ones who may have died by now."

The death toll was initially estimated to be about 100 but as Boko Haram fighters moved on to terrorize neighboring villages, such as Doron Barga, the number was raised to several hundreds, and then again to the disturbing figure of 2,000.

Human rights groups cast the attack on Baga as the worst ever massacre carried out by Boko Haram. Daniel Eyre, a Nigeria researcher for Amnesty International, said that if the 2,000 death toll estimate was correct, then “this marks a disturbing and bloody escalation of Boko Haram’s ongoing onslaught." The Nigerian government disputed the claim of 2,000 people having died, and instead insisted the death toll was 150. However, satellite imagery of the towns attacked by Boko Haram depicted catastrophic destruction, including the widespread decimation of as many as 3,700 structures. As noted by the aforementioned Daniel Eyre via a public statement: "These detailed images show devastation of catastrophic proportions in two towns, one of which was almost wiped off the map in the space of four days. It represents a deliberate attack on civilians whose homes, clinics and schools are now burnt out ruins." Meanwhile, Amnesty International made clear that witnesses on the scene had seen Boko Haram fighters killing their victims indiscriminately. Overall, there was no shortage of support for the claim that 2,000 people had indeed perished.

Boko Haram's wave of terror continued in the second week of January 2015 with attacks by female suicide bombers on a crowded market in city of Potiskum in Yobe state in northeastern Nigeria. Four people died and dozens more were wounded as a result. Eyewitnesses indicated that the suicide bombers may not have had control over the detonations, suggesting that the explosives strapped to their bodies may have been remote-controlled. Around the same period, the city of Maiduguri, in Borno state, was struck by an even more disturbing attack -- this one due to a bomb strapped to a 10-year-old girl. As many as 20 people died in that incident. Elizabeth Donnelly, the assistant head of the Africa program at the think tank, Chatham House, noted that Boko Haram appeared to be using the girls they abducted as a supply of suicide bombers. She said, "It is highly likely that Boko Haram is conscripting young girls to use as suicide bombers."

By mid-January 2015, Boko Haram's effects were being felt regionally and not just in Nigeria. As noted above in the Baga massacre, thousands of people fled across Lake Chad seeking refuge in the country of Chad. But the country of Cameroon was suffering directly as a result of Boko Haram's barbarism when the militant Islamist movement violated that country's borders, carrying out raids into Cameroon territory, attacking villages, and kidnapping and killing scores of people. It should be noted that some of the individuals who were kidnapped in Cameroon were reported to have been freed. Cameroon's defense ministry said the hostages were liberated when their armed forces "pursued the attackers who were heading back to Nigeria." Nevertheless, Chad announced that it would deploy soldiers to Cameroon to assist that country in repelling the threat posed by Boko Haram.

For his part, President Goodluck Jonathan has throughout appeared to be undeterred by these developments. Rather than attending to matters of national security or the challenge of a seemingly ineffectual military, he was instead launching his re-election bid for another term in office. He did manage in mid-November 2014 to announce an extension to the state of emergency he had declared in three northeastern states plagued by terrorism at the hands of Boko Haram. Legislation authorizing the move was set to be brought before parliament. However, it was clear as the year 2015 commenced that Boko Haram was still able to carry out its rampage of terror in Nigeria within a climate of relative impunity.

On Jan. 25, 2015, Boko Haram fighters attacked and captured the northeastern town on Monguno. Later, they launched an attack on the northeastern city of Maiduguri, leaving dozens of people dead. In response to the Maiduguri attack, the Nigerian military staged a ground response, backed by local vigilantes and air strikes, and managed to stop the Boko Haram terrrorists from moving in to the city center, concentrating the fighting close to an army barracks instead.

As January 2015 came to a close, Boko Haram Islamist militants launched a fresh assault on the city of Maiduguri. Heavy fighting was reported between Boko Haram on one side, and Nigerian troops backed by local vigilantes on the other side. Local residents were reported to be terrified that the military and vigilantes would be overpowered by the Islamic terrorists, essentially subjecting them to dire consequences. Humanitarian aid agencies warned of a crisis if Boko Haram was able to take over Maiduguri. But by the start of February 2015, the Nigerian authorities said that the assault by Boko Haram had been repelled and the Islamist terror group had endured heavy losses.

In February 2015, military troops from Cameroon and Chad killed more than 250 Boko Haram terrorists amidst successive days of fighting. In the town of Fotokol, a massacre ensued when Boko Haram terrorists raided the town, burning buildings to the ground, and brutally murdering as many as 100 residents in mosques and in their homes. The bodies of many victims were found with their throats slit. As many as 50 Boko Haram terrorists were killed as a result of the defensive operation by Cameroonian forces. Around the same period, the government of Chad said it had targeted and eliminated Boko Haram bases in the towns of Gambaru and Ngala in northern Nigeria on Tuesday, killing more than 200 Boko Haram terrorists; nine Chadian soldiers also died in the offensive. Chad, with its well-developed military, was also carrying out air strikes on other Boko Haram positions.

The geopolitical aspect extended to Niger in the first week of February 2015 when Boko Haram terrorists attacked the town of Bosso in Niger, leading to a defensive operation by Niger's troops and Chad's fighter jets. It should be noted that Chad has been the most active regional power, deploying as many as 2,500 soldiers to the region to protect its own territory and people, but also to assist Cameroon and Niger.

For its part, the government of Niger was considering deploying some of its own troops to fight Boko Haram. In the second week of February 2015 -- just hours before the parliament of that country was set to vote on a regional offensive force to fight the Islamist terror group -- Boko Haram stretched its abusive reach into Niger. At issue was an assault on the town of Diffa, leading thousands of people the flee the area. The army of Niger was able to successfully repel the assault; however, the attack was emblematic of the fact that Boko Haram was no longer a Nigerian problem, but in fact, a regional threat.

Feb. 13, 2015, saw Boko Haram launch another cross-border attack -- this time on the fishing village of Ngouboua in Chad along the shores of Lake Chad. As has become the norm for Boko Haram, the Islamist terrorists set homes on fire, often with residents inside, and slit the throats of other villagers in a rampage of horror. Included in the dead were a local chief, a police officer, three civilians, and two Boko Haram fighters. But the Chadian military was showing itself to be more effective than that of Nigeria and was ultimately able to repel the Boko Haram fighters. The rate of cross-border attacks in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, however, suggested (1) the possibility of Boko Haram sleeper cells in these countries; and (2) a burgeoning imperative of Boko Haram to consolidate territory regionally rather than within one country, perhaps with an eye on establishing an African variant to the caliphate claimed by Islamic State in the Middle Eastern cross-border territory of Iraq and Syria.

It should be noted that United States special forces were deployed to Chad to assist the Chadian military in going after the Nigeria-based terror group, Boko Haram. While the United States has increased its military cooperation with Nigeria following the abduction of nearly 300 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Chibok in April 2015, it has been reluctant to provide the Nigerian military with weapons and attack helicopters, out of fear of human rights abuses by the country.

At home in Nigeria in mid-February 2015, Boko Haram remained active with a series of raids and suicide attacks, including at least one by a female suicde bomber, in Nigeria's Borno state. In better news, Nigerian forces were able to stave off assaults by Boko Haram on the ton of Dadin Kowa and the city of Gombe. Then, it was reported that Nigerian forces, backed by air strikes, were able to recapture two Nigerian towns - Monguno and Marte -- which were held by Boko Haram.

On Feb. 16, 2015, Boko Haram was still managing to carry out cross-border attacks -- this time launching a raid on a military camp in northern Cameroon. Several troops were injured in that incident, although Cameroonian authorities said their troops were able to quickly retaliate.

The Nigerian military were able to tout a rare win in the fight against Boko Haram on Feb. 22, 2015, when they reclaimed control over the town Baga, which was under the control of the Islamist terror group since the start of the year. As discussed above, Baga was on the international

purview at the time due to the massacre of hundreds (some reports indicated thousands) of people in Baga, at the hands of Boko Haram terrorists. Thousands of terrified survivors were forced to flee across Lake Chad in an effort to save their lives. Now, in February 2015, the Nigerian military said via the social media outlet, Twitter, that it was able to eliminate many Boko Haram miltants during the operation. There were reports that Boko Haram laid several land mines; as such, soldiers were in the process of dealing with that threat.

Violence at the hands of Boko Haram plagued Nigeria as February 2015 came to a close, with a spate of attacks that could only be described as urban terrorism. They ended with the killing of around 30 people in the northern part of the country. A suicide bomber targeted a bus station in Biu, killing 17 people. A second suicide bomber was not successfulin his endeavor, having been apprehended by the surrounding crowd and beaten to death. The scene in Jos was also marked by death as an assailant hurled three bombs from a car, targeting a bus station and a university, and killing around 15 people. Separate attacks in Kano and Potiskum in the same period killed approximately 50 people. In Potiskum, a suicide bomber targeted a bus, killing a dozen people and injuring 20 more. In Kano, two suicide bombers targeted a bus station, killing at least 12 people and injuring many more.

Earlier, President Goodluck Jonathan had been preparing for elections in the spring of 2015. In early February 2015, he escaped harm when a female suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to her body at an election rally in Gombe city in northern Nigeria. At least one person died and several others were wounded as a result. The president was unharmed having departed the scene only minutes before the blast. Around the same period, coordinated bomb attacks rocked the southern part of the country, targeting Port Harcourt, Isiokpo, and Degema. While Boko Haram was blamed for the election rally attack, there was skepticism that the Islamist terror group was responsible for the attacks in southern Nigeria, which has not been part of its stronghold.

President Goodluck Jonathan's main rival in the 2015 presidential contest, former military strongman Muhammadu Buhari, blasted the incumbent leader for his ineffectual defense of Nigeria from Boko Haram. He added that it was a "disgrace" that neighboring countries were doing more to fight Boko Haram and were seeing more success than the Nigerian military. In an interview with Reuters News, Buhari said, "It's a big disgrace for Nigeria. It is now Cameroon and Chad fighting the insurgency more than Nigeria." He promised that under his presidency, more would be done to vanquish Boko Haram, as he vowed: "We will build the capacity and Nigeria should be able to secure its territorial integrity."

President Jonathan's prospects were marred on Feb. 17, 2015, with the news that former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had withdrawn as a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- the very party of which he was a founding member. Adding to the drama of Obasanjo's decision to exit the PDP was the fact that he also tore up his membership card. In a statement that

was published in the Nigerian press, Obasanjo declared: "Henceforth I will only be a Nigerian. I am ready to work with anybody regardless of his or her political affiliation." He made good on that non-partisan promise by endorsing Jonathan's main rival for the presidency -- Buhari, the candidate of the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

Obasanjo's objections to Jonathan were not new; going back to 2013, he penned an open letter to Jonathan, calling for the president not to seek another term in office, and making suggestions of abuses and corruption. Since that time, Obasanjo's criticism of Jonathan has only increased, with specific regard to Jonathan's feckless handling of the national security threat posed by Boko Haram.

Note: Nigeria was scheduled to hold elections in mid-February 2015 but those polls were postponed due to security concerns. To that end, in the weeks leading up to the now-postponed polls in Nigeria, the country was plagued by violence at the hands of Boko Haram.

At the start of March 2015, Boko Haram militants raided the village of Njaba in Borno state and killed scores of people, before setting the village on fire. Days later in the city of Maiduguri, a series of bombings at bust marketplaces and a bus terminal left at least 50 people dead.

Meanwhile, the regional effort was afoot to target Boko Haram -- despite Nigeria's overt attempts to subvert international assistance. Chadian forces -- some of the most sophisticated and capable in the region -- were reportedly ready to carry out an assault on Boko Haram but were prevented from doing so by Nigerian authorities. In fact, Cameroon and Niger in addition to Chad have respectively complained about Nigeria's unwillingness to cooperate in the effort to establish a regional taskforce aimed at vanquishing Boko Haram.

The rationale for Nigeria's obstinancy -- especially in the face of its own ineffectual approach to dealing with Boko Haram -- raised questions about the Nigerian government's commitment to fighting the terror group.

Nevertheless, in March 2015, regardless of the possible embarrassment to President Goodluck Jonathan, who was seeking re-election, military forces from Chad and Niger launched a joint air and ground offensive against Boko Haram, with the restive Borno state in Nigeria at the top of the target list.

In the third week of March 2015, scores of bodies were found in the trading town of Damasak, which had been liberated from Boko Haram hands by troops from Chad and Niger. Because the corpses had slit throats -- a favored method of murder used by Boko Haram fighters -- and because the bodies were mummified by desert air, it seemed that they had been killed by the Islamist terror group some time ago.

With the Nigerian election only days away, in the last week of March 2015, Boko Haram defied claims by Nigerian authorities that it was on the run, by kidnapping 400 women and children. The mass abduction took place in the northern Nigerian town of Damasak, which ironically had been liberated from Boko Haram control weeks earlier by joint troops from Niger and Chad. Witnesses in Damasak said that at least 50 people had been killed by Boko Haram as it carried out this assault and abduction attack.

Meanwhile, even with pressure being placed on the Nigeria-based terror group, Boko Haram continued to be active. In an ominous move in March 2015, Boko Haram officially pledged its allegiance to the world's most brutal terrorist entity -- Islamic State. Via an audio message disseminated on March 7, 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau declared: "We announce our allegiance to the caliph... and will hear and obey in times of difficulty and prosperity. We call on Muslims everywhere to pledge allegiance to the caliph."

The move made clear that Boko Haram had its own Islamist Jihadist ambitions, and hoped to establish in Africa what Islamic State had managed to accomplish in the cross-border region of Syria and Iraq. To that end, it could certainly boast of its own cross-border successes having encroached upon Chad, Cameroon and Niger. of course, as discussed here, those very moves had propelled a response from those countries unwilling to cede its own territory and sovereignty to a terror group in the way that President Goodluck Jonathan has apprently been prepared to concede in northern Nigeria.

Election Shift:

Note that presidential and parliamentary elections took place in Nigeria on March 28, 2015, and resulted in an unprecedented victory for the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), as it ended the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and as the ex-military leader, Muhammadu Buhari, defeated Goodluck Jonathan for president. Tired of Goodluck Jonathan's fecklessness in the fight against Islamist terrorists, Nigerians overwhelmingly chose the former military strongman to be the next president. It seemed that the majority of Nigerians believed that Buhari would be better positioned to fight -- and defeat -- the terror group, Boko Haram, which was carrying out a rampage of violence, as discussed here.

It should be noted that in his inauguration address in Abuja at the close of May 2015, President Buhari promised to take on difficult issues such as corruption and terrorism. He also made it clear that he would be the president for all Nigerians while being beholden to no one group. He declared: "I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody."

2015 Elections in Nigeria

Presidential and parliamenary elections were set to be held in Nigeria in the first part of 2015. At first, the elections were set to be held in mid-February 2015. However, less than two weeks ahead of the scheduled election day, Nigerian electoral authorities decided to delay the presidential and parliamentary elections to the end of March 2015 due to violence at the hands of the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram.

In truth, violence by Boko Haram has plagued the country for years, so the sudden decision to delay long-anticipated elections was being viewed with skepticism by the opposition. Indeed, the opposition argued that the government was afraid that it would lose at the polls if the elections were held, as scheduled. Opposition leaders further said it was setback for democracy. At the same time, many Nigerians took to the streets to register their discontent over the delay of the elections and to accuse Nigerian authorities of foul play. For its part, Nigeria's election commission said that the postponement was necessary to deploy security forces to polling stations in the event that there were attacks by Boko Haram on voters and election staff.

Note: The new election schedule in Nigeria would see voters go to the polls to vote in the parliamentary and presidential contest on March 28, 2015.

At the presidential level, the main candidate for the presidency would be incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, who was in power since 2010 when he assumed the presidency after the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua. Goodluck Jonathan's presidency was ratified with election victory at the polls in 2011. Now, in 2015, it was to be seen if he would be re-elected, especially perceptions of his feckless leadership in the face of chronic terrorism by Boko Haram Islamic militants in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

President Jonathan's main rival for the presidency would be a former military dictator, Muhammadu Buhari, who won a primary contest against former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Kano State Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso, Imo State Governor Rochas Okorocha, and newspaper editor Sam Nda Isaiah, to gain the nomination of the main opposition bloc, All Progressives Congress (discussed below).

At the parliamentary level, the election would focus on the bicameral body, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is made up of 109 seats; members are normally elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. The House of Representatives is made up of 360 seats, members are normally elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms.

To date, the dominant party on the Nigerian political scene has been the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which won all the elections since the end of military rule in 1999. Those victories, though, were not without blemishes; indeed, there have been longstanding claims of vote rigging and other forms of electoral fraud associated with elections in Nigeria.

The main challenge to the PDP's power in 2015 would come from the opposition bloc, All Progressives Congress, composed of the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive Change, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, and the All Progressives Grand Alliance. There were high hopes that a unified opposition bloc would see more success at the polls against the dominant PDP.

In the pre-election period, President Goodluck Jonathan had been preparing for elections in the spring of 2015. In early February 2015, he escaped harm when a female suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to her body at an election rally in Gombe city in northern Nigeria. Blame was placed on the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, which was terrorizing the country in recent years, with little effective push-back from President Jonathan or the military. In fact, the threat to Boko Haram on national security was quickly becoming the primary issue facing the country in 2015.

President Goodluck Jonathan's main rival in the 2015 presidential contest, former military strongman, Muhammadu Buhari, blasted the incumbent leader for his ineffectual defense of Nigeria from Boko Haram. Buhari that it was a "disgrace" that neighboring countries were doing more to fight Boko Haram, and were seeing more success than the Nigerian military. He promised that under his presidency, more would be done to vanquish Boko Haram, as he vowed: "We will build the capacity and Nigeria should be able to secure its territorial integrity."

President Jonathan's political prospects were marred on Feb. 17, 2015, with the news that former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had withdrawn as a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- the very party of which he was a founding member. Adding to the drama of Obasanjo's decision to exit the PDP was the fact that he also tore up his membership card. In a statement that was published in the Nigerian press, Obasanjo declared: "Henceforth I will only be a Nigerian. I am ready to work with anybody regardless of his or her political affiliation." He made good on that non-partisan promise by endorsing Jonathan's main rival for the presidency -- Buhari, the candidate of the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

Obasanjo's objections to Jonathan were not new; going back to 2013, he penned an open letter to Jonathan, calling for the president not to seek another term in office, and making suggestions of abuses and corruption. Since that time, Obasanjo's criticism of Jonathan has only increased, with specific regard to Jonathan's feckless handling of the national security threat posed by Boko Haram.

Nevertheless, in mid-March 2015, with the election just weeks away, Olisa Metuh -- the spokesperson for Nigeria's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- expressed confidence that incumbent President Jonathan would win re-election by landslide victory. He said, "We don't want to be too ambitious, but we are expecting 67-68 percent of the total votes. We know we will win the election comfortably and we are predicting that we will have 68 percent of all the votes on March 28." Metuh added, "The president is very well accepted by all Nigerians because of the

developments that he has done. He has touched all the sectors of the economy across all the zones and all the tribes and all cadres of people. So, Nigerian people are excited about it." Metuh also denied reports that the PDP was buying votes and indulging in other forms of vote rigging, with an eye on guaranteed victory.

For its part, the main opposition bloc, the All Progressives Congress, has said that the 2015 election should be regarded as a referendum on 16 years of PDP rule. In an ostensible illustration of its campaign platform of change, the symbol used by the All Progressives Congress has been a broom - presumably an image intended to remind voters that sweeping changes are coming.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's socio-cultural context has to be considered in any discussion of the political sphere since the country is marked by tribalist, ethnic, and religious divisions. Of late, the Muslim (northern)-Christian (southern) divide has been particularly pronounced, given the security threat posed by Boko Haram Islamic militants in the northern and eastern parts of the country. It was to be seen if this reality would translate into changing voting patterns in 2015.

On March 28, 2015, voters finally went to the polls to vote in Nigeria's presidential and parliamentary elections. At the presidential level, the contests was between President Goodluck Jonathan -- a Christian and a southerner, and his rival, Buhari -- a Muslim and a southerner. At the parliamentary level, the contest was between the ruling the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

The election was not entirel free of violence. About a dozen people died in the restive northern part of the country. That being said, the degree of bloodshed was significantly reduced from the previous elections in Nigeria when up to 800 people died in election violence.

Voting was extended to March 29, 2015, to ensure that all Nigerians were able to cast their ballots. At issue was the fact that some voters in various parts of the country experienced problems with the new electronic card reader system, which was introduced to guard against the kind of election fraud believed to have occurred in the past. In fact, President Jonathan was himself one of the voters who encountered voting complications. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter was that only a small number of the electronic card readers across the country malfunctioned; as such, the election authorities noted that the impact on the overall election was minimal, and certainly mitigated by the extension of voting hours well into the next day.

Once the polling stations closed and the ballot counting began, the early tally appeared to favor the opposition. Still, with many key states yet to be counted in an apparently close race, it was announced that full results would not be available for a few days.

Worth noting was the fact that people in Nigeria were watching the election returns in football stadiums and viewing centers as if the event was a World Cup football final. It was clear that

Nigerian voters were fully aware of the political, economic, and security stakes of their nation state.

As the tally showed the advantage solidifying for the opposition, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) struck out initially in anger at the prospect of defeat. The target was the chairman of the election commission, with Elder Orubebe of the PDP declaring, "Mr. Chairman... We have lost confidence in what you're doing, we don't believe in you any more! You are being very, very selective. You are partial." But the head of the electoral commission, Attahiru Jega, dismissed any suggestion of wrong-doing, saying instead: "Let us be careful about what we say or do and let us not dispute a process that has begun peacefully."

In Buhari's strongholds of northern Nigeria, the mood was quite different. Residents were celebrating an impending victory for the opposition. Despite Goodluck Jonathan's strong performance in the Niger Delta area, the fact of the matter was that Buhari was seeing extraordinary success in key states such as Borno, Kaduna, and Sokoto. The leadership of the oppostion was cautiously optimistic but rather circumspect. The campaign spokesperson, Garba Shehu, saying in an interview with BBC News: "We feel we have won because we have the numbers. We're in celebratory mood but we're not taking anything for granted because of the kind of government we have."

Finally, on March 31, 2015, the official election results were announced and the opposition was able to claim a historic victory in the Nigerian elections. This result was emblematic of a significant shift on the political landscape as the All Progressives Congress (APC) ended the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and as the ex-military leader, Buhari, defeated Jonathan for president. It was the first time since Nigeria's transition from military dictatorship that the opposition had won election victory.

Tired of Goodluck Jonathan's fecklessness in the fight against Islamist terrorists, Nigerians overwhelming chose the former military strongman to be the next president. It seemed that the majority of Nigerians believed that Buhari would be better positioned to fight -- and defeat -- the terror group, Boko Haram, that was carrying out a rampage of violence across the country in recent years.

There were initial fears that Goodluck Jonathan would be reluctant to relinquish control; however, the outgoing president quickly conceded defeat and ensured a smooth transition of power. A spokesperson for Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC) party paid tribute to Goodluck Jonathan's immediate concession and generous congratulatory words, saying: "He [the outgoing president] will remain a hero for this move. The tension will go down dramatically." In this way, the historic victory for Buhari and the All Progressives Congress (APC) aside, the Nigerian elections of 2015 were also marked by victory for the democratic process in Africa's most populous country.

While Nigeria has gained notoriety for manifold corruption, and while previous elections have been marked by irregularities and massive election violence, the 2015 elections went off with relative ease. Attahiru Jega was widely viewed as a credible head of the elections commission and he had overseen one of the most transparent and internationally-respected elections in modern Nigerian history. There were, indeed, voting irregularities and obstacles in certain select areas, as noted above; however, the scope of Buhari's victory likely vitiated any doubts about the legitimacy of the overall election.

Indeed, Buhari was able to stake out a decisive victory across the country winning the lion's share of the votes across the country. In Nigeria, a presidential winner must pass the 25 percent threshold in 24 states in order to claim a first-round victory. Buhari was able to easily cross that 25 percent threshold and claim a conclusive first round victory.

In a post-election speech on April 1, 2015, President-elect Buhari paid tribute to outgoing President Jonathan, saying in a conciliatory tone, : "I extend a hand of friendship and conciliation to President Jonathan and his team. I have no ill will against anyone. He has nothing to fear from me. He is a great Nigerian and still our president." Buhari promised to tackle corruption, which has plagued Nigeria and contributed to a negative international reputation in this regard. He said of corruption, "It creates unjustly enriched people... and undermines democracy. Corruption will not be tolerated by this government." Finally, President-elect Buhari vowed to vanquish Boko Haram, saying the Islamist terrorist group would "soon know the strength of our collective will." He also promised to do everything in his power to rescue the 200 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram almst exactly a year prior from a school in Chibok. Outgoing President Jonathan was pilloried for appearing to do little to rescue the 200 female students. The sad anniversary of the abduction of the girls was marked in the capital of Abuja with a silent vigil.

It should be noted that almost two months later in late May 2015 and into June 2015, as Buhari was officially inaugurated into power, Boko Haram continued to display its influence. At that time, close to 30 people were killed in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri in Borno state as a result of an extended assault by Boko Haram. The attacks occurred only hours after Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as new president of Nigeria and thus delivered the message that even with new leadership at the helm, Boko Haram retained its ability to carry out its campaign of terror. For his part, upon becoming the new leader of Nigeria, President Buhari promised to target Boko Haram, which he described as a "godless group, who are as far away from Islam as one can think."

Update on Threat Posed by Boko Haram

On May 30, 2015, close to 30 people were killed in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri in

Borno state as a result of an extended assault by Boko Haram. The assault began as the Islamist terror group attacked the city, killing at least 13 people before troops were able to repel them. Then, a suicide bomber killed at least 16 more people at a mosque in Maiduguri.

These two attacks occurred only hours after Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as new president of Nigeria; the attacks thus delivered the message that even with new leadership at the helm, Boko Haram retained its ability to carry out its campaign of terror. For his part, upon becoming the new leader of Nigeria, President Buhari promised to target Boko Haram, which he described as a "godless group, who are as far away from Islam as one can think."

Days later in the first week of June 2015, the Nigerian city of Maiduguri was again struck by violence as Boko Haram orchestrated a bombing at a meat market. The explosion left at least 50 people dead, with shoppers and bystanders being among the main victims.

Around the same time as these attacks, videotaped footage by Boko Haram surfaced with the messenger delivering a defiant message on behalf of the Islamist terror group. The messenger asserted that claims by Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon of military success against Boko Haram were exagerrated and that the Islamist terrorists were not being pressured into retreat. Amidst gruesome footage of corpses, the anonymous speaker declared: "Most of our territory is still under control. Whoever believes that the Nigerian army has defeated us.... know that we have battled against them and killed them." It seemed that in the immediate aftermath of President Buhari's inauguration, he would have to immediately confront the Boko Haram problem.

In the third week of June 2015, Boko Haram carried out attacks in Chad and Niger -- two countries participating in a regional multinational fight against the Islamist terror group. In one case, Chad was struck by a suicide attack and responded with air strikes on Boo Haram positions. In another case, Boko Haram carried out bloody assaults on villages in Niger, killing around 40 people including women and children. The attacks made clear that Boko Haram was still fully equipped to be a threat to the region, irrespective of the efforts of multiple governments to repel the Nigeria-based Islamist terror group.

For his part, newly-elected Nigerian President Buhari indicated that the effort against Boko Haram was about to go into high gear. Via the social media outlet, Twitter, he wrote that the "efforts to strengthen security cooperation with our neighbours and adjust our own response to Boko Haram will yield results very soon."

A suicide bomb attack on July 7, 2015, targeted the town of Zaria in Kaduna state in northern Nigeria. In the assault, a suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to his body at a local government building in the Sabon Gari district of the city of Zaria, killing more than two dozen people and injuring scores more. Teachers lining up to apply for jobs at the government building were among the victims. While Boko Haram did not issue a statement about the attack, the

bloodshed was nevertheless blamed on the Islamist terror group, which has remained active in northern Nigeria for several years, and which has particularly targeted students and teachers. The attack in Zaria occurred a day after bombs exploded in the town of Jos in Plateau state and left close to 50 people dead. Around the same time, a young female suicide bomber carried out an attack at a mosque in Kano. Overall, violence by Boko Haram in the first part of July 2015 alone had killed as many as 200 people.

On Aug. 11, 2015, the Islamist terror group was believed to be behind an explosion at a market in the Nigerian state of Borno, which left approximately 50 people dead and scores more wounded. The bombing occurred at the Jebo market in the southern Borno town of Savon Gari and was attributed to Boko Haram, which holds sway in Borno. It remained unknown if the actual bombing was the work of a suicide bomber or the result of a timed explosive device.

In November 2015, Nigeria was struck by a spate of terror attacks -- quite likely at the hands of the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. On Nov. 17, 2015, an explosion at a fruit and vegetable market in the northeastern city of Yolo left 32 people dead and 80 other injured. A day later on Nov. 18, 2015, two female suicide bombers detonated the explosives strapped to their bodies at mobile phone store in the northern city of Kano, killing 14 people and injuring 100 others. On Nov. 23, 2015, a female suicide bomber carried out an attack close to the northeastern city of Maiduguri, killing eight people and injuring several others. The attack was imbued with an added layer of tragedy as the suicide bomber detonated the explosives just as a group of internally displaced persons -- mostly women and children -- were fleeing the terror group, Boko Haram, and arrived at a checkpoint on the outskirts of Maiduguri. Indeed, the victims were quite likely killed or wounded by the very same terror group they were attempting to escape.

While there was no immediate claim of responsibility in any of the cases, suspicions rested on the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, which has been active in the area. The back to back attacks in Yolo and Kano came after a lull in the violence. Indeed, there had not been any attacks in Nigeria since October 2015 when bombings in Maidugurai and Yolo left close to 40 people dead. The third attack in Maidugurai came on the heels of the other two cases of violence in November 2015.

In recent times, Boko Haram has come under pressure from an a military offensive, and even lost control over the vast majority of the territory it had proudly claimed earlier in 2015. Now, with an eye on remaining relevant, Boko Haram had returned to its more effective strategy of terrorizing communities with bombings that have targeted "soft" targets, such as bus stations, churches, and markets.

President Muhammudu Buhari, who came to power on the basis of his vow to defeat Boko Haram, has found the Islamist terror group difficult to defeat, as demonstrated by a continuing spate of violence throughout the year 2015. Cognizant of the Nigeria citizenry's frustration over

the continuing plague of terror by Boko Haram, the president's spokesperson, Garba Shehu, released the following statement: "President Buhari reassures Nigerians that his administration is very much determined to wipe out Boko Haram in Nigeria and bring all perpetrators of this heinous crime against humanity to justice."

Nigerian president fires military chiefs; Chadian leader promises to "decapitate" Boko Haram

Newly-elected President Muhammudu Buhari has vowed to go after Boko Haram; however, as demonstrated by this spate of violence in mid-2015 alone, it was clear that the terror group has continued to function. In fact, only hours after Buhari was officially inaugurated into power in June 2015, Boko Haram continued to display its influence, killing 30 people were killed in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri in Borno state. Boko Haram was clearly delivering the message that even with new leadership at the helm, the Islamist terror group retained its ability to carry out its campaign of violence and bloodshed.

Boko Haram has continued to wage violent terror attacks not only in Nigeria but in neighboring countries, such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, which have done their part to wage war on the Islamist terror movement. In fact, in July 2015, a suicide attack attributed to Boko Haram unfolded in Cameroon, killing a dozen people. Around the same period, a suicide attack in Chad also attributed to Boko Haram left 15 people dead.

For his part, President Buhari carried out a military shake-up by which he replaced the chiefs of the country's army, navy, and air force. The moves had been anticipated since Buhari has long been a critic of the military's feckless efforts against Boko Haram. Thus, the new president was eager to put his stamp on the military by putting in place new military leadership, who would be expected to cooperate with their counterparts in neighboring countries in the effort to stamp out Boko Haram. But in August 2015, with the Jebo market attack, it was evident that Boko Haram had not been entirely defanged and retained its capacity for terrorism.

Around the same period of August 2015, President Idriss Deby of Chad insisted that while Boko Haram might still be carrying out attacks, the regional effort against the terror group had been successful and would end "by the end of the year." President Deby's bold declaration was as follows: "Boko Haram is decapitated. There are little groups (composed of Boko Haram militants) scattered throughout east Nigeria, on the border with Cameroon. It is within our power to definitively overcome Boko Haram." Speaking of the establishment of a multilateral regional force and its planned offensive against the remnants of Boko Haran, President Deby said, "The war will be short, with the setting up of the regional force, it will be over by the end of the year." He also added that the notorious leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, was no longer in control of the Islamist terror group and had been replaced by an individual known as Mahamat Daoud.

Note: The claim by President Deby that there was new leadership at the helm of Boko Haram was challenged by the release of an audio message by Shekau himself denying that he had been replaced. In the message, Shekau cast Deby's claim as "blatant lies" and declared, "I am alive. I will only die when the time appointed by Allah comes."

Boko Haram responsible attack in northeastern Nigeria; victims brutally burned to death

On Jan. 31, 2016, the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, carried out a horrific attack on the village of Dalori in northeastern Nigeria. According to reports from Nigeria, the assailants used guns and bombs, and then followed up the carnage by burning livestock and firebombing huts with people in them. The human death toll was estimated to be as low as 50 people but as high as 65, based on the number of bodies at the morgue.

Boko Haram exploiting child suicide bombers in attacks

The United Nations has reported that the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, based in Nigeria, has increasingly used children to carry out suicide bombings. Pointing to the alarming statistic that one in five suicide attacks claimed by Boko Haram are being carried out by children, the United Nations children's agency, UNICEF, noted that the situation pointed to an appalling human rights crisis. One profile of the typical child assailant was that young girls who have been abducted by Boko Haram militants. Once in captivity, they are subjected to sexual abuse, and if they refuse to marry militants, they are forced to become suicide bombers. Typically, these individuals are drugged, then explosives are strapped to their bodies, then they are forced to carry out suicide attacks. Meanwhile, boys fared not much better, with abducted male youth forced to attack their own villages and families in order to prove themselves.

Editor's Note:

The extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, launched an uprising in mid-2009 and was responsible for much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the country of Nigeria in recent times. Indeed, Boko Haram has a record of attacking security and political personnel manifested by its litany of targets. In more recent times, Boko Haram has expanded its target list as it has attacked Christian churches and killed worshipers, often during church services. For its part, Boko Haram is a militant Jihadist entity, which seeks to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria.

The government of Nigeria has throughout claimed that it was committed to dealing with the

national security threat posed by Boko Haram. In truth, however, members of the military have been linked with the terrorist group, while the Nigerian authorities have proven themselves to be largely feckless and ineffectually in the fight against Boko Haram. In fact, the impotence of the Nigerian government in fighting Boko Haram was displayed fully in August 2014 when Boko Haram declared dominion over an Islamic state in northeastern Nigeria, and as it has continued to dominate the Nigerian military as of the start of 2015.

While "Boko Haram" is the popular name of the extremist Islamist entity, its official name title is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad," which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term, Boko Haram, means "Western education is sacrilege" or "Western education is a sin" in the Hausa language; however, the group is not only against Western education but also against Western culture, modern science, the wearing of regular Western clothing such as shirts and pants, as well as the act of voting in elections.

There have been signs that Boko Haram poses a threat not only to Nigerians -- many of whom are fellow Muslims -- but also to the wider community, and anyone deemed to be of a pro-Western persuasion. Of note was the fact that in 2011, a Boko Haram suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja killed at least two dozen people. More recently -- in 2014 -- there was a series of attacks and abductions of high-profile figures in neighboring Cameroon. It was apparent that Boko Haram was taking advantage of the porous border between Nigeria and Cameroon, essentially making Boko Haram a regional threat to security.

The United States has designated Boko Haram as a terror organization and placed a $7 million bounty on the leader's (Abubakar Shekau's) head. Although there has been no direct national interest for the United States in being further involved in the Boko Haram threat in Nigeria, recent statements by Shekau threatening to confront the United States and the West suggest that Boko Haram's regional agenda may be expanding to a wider Jihadist orientation.

Indeed, the head of the United States Africa Command, General Carter Ham, has said that evidence points to a relationship of some sort between Boko Haram and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in northwest Africa, as well as al-Shabab in Somalia, which is itself aligned with the notorious terror enclave, al-Qaida. But as of 2015, Boko Haram had explicitly declared its allegiance to the notorious terror group, Islamic State. Following the mode of that terrorist entity, Boko Haram was carrying out cross-border attacks into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, seemingly with an eye on establishing its own African equivalent of the Middle Eastern extremist Islamist caliphate. It was clear that Boko Haram was now a regional menace.

It was to be seen if the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in the spring of 2015 would augur the start of a more concerted effort and a more effective campaign to defeat Boko Haram. Of note, though, was the fact that by 2016, Boko Haram was still capable of carrying out attacks with its particular hallmark strain of brutality and barbarism.

Meanwhile, as Nigeria confronted the threats posed by Boko Haram and Ansaru, it was also enduring ethno tribal violence -- often with religious overtones. At issue were tensions between semi-nomadic Muslim herdsmen from the Fulani (sometimes referred to as Peule) tribe and Muslim farmers from the Hausa tribe, as well as conflict between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers.

It should also be noted that militants in the Niger Delta have been responsible for a spate of attacks in recent years -- many against foreign oil companies -- and motivated by demand for greater control over local oil reserves. At issue for militants and sympathetic locals has been the fact that despite the vast oil wealth, the beneficiaries are rarely the impoverished residents of the Niger Delta. Militants have, thus, taken up arms and been responsible for attacks against the region's oil infrastructure. They have also carried out various forms of violence and kidnappings. Most of the kidnappings have targeted foreign workers employed by multinational corporations; however, both the number of extremist enclaves, as well as the tactics employed, increased around 2007. Since 2009 when the Nigerian government offered amnesty to militants, attacks in the Niger Delta have become a less frequent phenomenon. Concomitantly, oil input has increased as well. An incident in 2012 showed that the Nigeria's oil-producing region of the Niger Delta, nonetheless, remained a dangerous place.

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Written by Dr. Denise Coleman, Editor in Chief, www.countrywatch.com. General sources used in all Country Reviews listed in the Bibliography. Supplementary sources for this section include the following: AllAfrica, John Boye Ejobowah, Africa Confidential, APIC, BBC.

Political Risk Index

Political Risk Index

The **Political Risk Index** is a proprietary index measuring the level of risk posed to governments, corporations, and investors, based on a myriad of political and economic factors. The Political Risk Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on varied criteria* including the following consideration: political stability, political

representation, democratic accountability, freedom of expression, security and crime, risk of conflict, human development, jurisprudence and regulatory transparency, economic risk, foreign investment considerations, possibility of sovereign default, and corruption. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the highest political risk, while a score of 10 marks the lowest political risk. Stated differently, countries with the lowest scores pose the greatest political risk. A score of 0 marks the most dire level of political risk and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the lowest possible level of political risk, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater risk.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4
Antigua	8
Argentina	4
Armenia	4-5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5

Azerbaijan	4
Bahamas	8.5
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	3.5
Barbados	8.5-9
Belarus	3
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	4
Botswana	7
Brazil	7
Brunei	7
Bulgaria	6
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5

Burundi	3
Cambodia	4
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7
Comoros	5
Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	4
Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7

Cuba	4-4.5
Cyprus	5
Czech Republic	8
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	7
Dominican Republic	6
East Timor	5
Ecuador	6
Egypt	5
El Salvador	7
Equatorial Guinea	4
Eritrea	3
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	5

France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	6
Greece	4.5-5
Grenada	8
Guatemala	6
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	3.5
Holy See (Vatican)	9
Honduras	4.5-5
Hungary	7
Iceland	8.5-9
India	7.5-8

Indonesia	6
Iran	3.5-4
Iraq	2.5-3
Ireland	8-8.5
Israel	8
Italy	7.5
Jamaica	6.5-7
Japan	9
Jordan	6.5
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	7
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	8
Kosovo	4
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4.5

Latvia	7
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	6
Liberia	3.5
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9
Madagascar	4
Malawi	4
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5
Mali	4
Malta	8
Marshall Islands	6
Mauritania	4.5-5
Mauritius	7
Mexico	6.5

Micronesia	7
Moldova	5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	6
Morocco	6.5
Mozambique	4.5-5
Namibia	6.5-7
Nauru	6
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3.5

Palau	7
Panama	7.5
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6.5-7
Peru	7
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5
Qatar	7.5
Romania	5.5
Russia	5.5
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	8
Samoa	7
San Marino	9
Sao Tome and Principe	5.5

Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	6
Serbia	5
Seychelles	7
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8
Slovenia	8
Solomon Islands	6
Somalia	2
South Africa	7
Spain	7.5
Sri Lanka	5
Sudan	3.5
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5

Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6.5
Togo	4.5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	6
Turkey	7
Turkmenistan	4.5
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4
United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9.5
Uruguay	8
Uzbekistan	4

Vanuatu	7
Venezuela	4
Vietnam	5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Risk Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. political stability (record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of government to stay in office and carry out policies as a result of productive executive-legislative relationship, perhaps with popular support vis a vis risk of government collapse)

2. political representation (right of suffrage, free and fair elections, multi-party participation, and influence of foreign powers)

3. democratic accountability (record of respect for political rights, human rights, and civil liberties, backed by constitutional protections)

4. freedom of expression (media freedom and freedom of expression, right to dissent or express political opposition, backed by constitutional protections)

5. security and crime (the degree to which a country has security mechanisms that ensures safety of citizens and ensures law and order, without resorting to extra-judicial measures)

6. risk of conflict (the presence of conflict; record of coups or civil disturbances; threat of war; threats posed by internal or external tensions; threat or record of terrorism or insurgencies)

7. human development (quality of life; access to education; socio-economic conditions; systemic concern for the status of women and children)

8. jurisprudence and regulatory transparency (the impartiality of the legal system, the degree of transparency within the regulatory system of a country and the durability of that structure)

9. economic conditions (economic stability, investment climate, degree of nationalization of industries, property rights, labor force development)

10. corruption (the degree of corruption in a country and/or efforts by the government to address graft and other irregularities)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world.

North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe -- retain their low rankings.

Several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. The worst downgrades affected Syria where civil war is at play, along with the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamist terrorists who have also seized control over part of Syrian territory. Iraq has been further downgraded due to the rampage of Islamist terrorists and their takeover of wide swaths of Iraqi territory. Libya has also been downgraded further due to its slippage into failed state status; at issue in Libya have been an ongoing power struggle between rival militias. Yemen continues to hold steady with a poor ranking due to continued unrest at the hands of Houthi rebels, secessinionists, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, and Islamic State. Its landscape has been further complicated by the fact that it is now the site of a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Conversely, Tunisia and Egypt have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, Zimbabwe continues to be one of the bleak spots of the world with the Mugabe regime effectively destroying the country's once vibrant economy, and miring Zimbabwe with an exceedingly high rate of inflation, debilitating unemployment, devolving public services, and critical food shortages; rampant crime and political oppression round out the landscape. Somalia also sports a poor ranking due to the continuing influence of the terror group, al-Shabab, which was not operating across the border in Kenya. On the upside, Nigeria, which was ineffectively dealing with the threat posed by the terror group, Boko Haram, was making some strides on the national security front with its new president at the helm. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the

government by Muslim Seleka rebels and a continued state of lawlessness in that country. South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Burkina Faso, Burundi and Guinea have been downgraded due to political unrest, with Guinea also having to deal with the burgeoning Ebola crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Strains on the infrastructure of southern and eastern European countries, such as Serbia, Croatia, and Hungary, due to an influx of refugees was expected to pose social and economic challenges, and slight downgrades were made accordingly. So too, a corruption crisis for the Romanian prime minister has affected the ranking of that country. Meanwhile, the rankings for Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy were maintained due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was earlier downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, no further downgrade was added since the country was able to successfully forge a bailout rescue deal with creditor institutions. Cyprus' exposure to Greek banks yielded a downgrade in its case.

In Asia, Nepal was downgraded in response to continuous political instability and a constitutional crisis that prevails well after landmark elections were held. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in Pakistan resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating. Meanwhile, Singapore retained its strong rankings due to its continued effective stewardship of the economy and political stability.

In the Americas, ongoing political and economic woes, as well as crime and corruption have affected the rankings for Mexico , Guatemala, and Brazil. Argentina was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. Venezuela was downgraded due to its mix of market unfriendly policies and political oppression. For the moment, the United States maintains a strong ranking along with Canada, and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean; however, a renewed debt ceiling crisis could cause the United States to be downgraded in a future edition. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Political Stability

Political Stability

The **Political Stability Index** is a proprietary index measuring a country's level of stability, standard of good governance, record of constitutional order, respect for human rights, and overall strength of democracy. The Political StabilityIndex is calculated using an established methodology* by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's record of peaceful transitions of power, ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse. Threats include coups, domestic violence and instability, terrorism, etc. This index measures the dynamic between the quality of a country's government and the threats that can compromise and undermine stability. Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of political stability and an ultimate nadir, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of political stability possible, according to this proprietary index. Rarely will there be scores of 0 or 10 due to the reality that countries contain complex landscapes; as such, the index offers a range of possibilities ranging from lesser to greater stability.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5-5
Algeria	5
Andorra	9.5
Angola	4.5-5

Antigua	8.5-9
Argentina	7
Armenia	5.5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	6
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	8
Benin	5
Bhutan	5
Bolivia	6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	8.5

Brazil	7
Brunei	8
Bulgaria	7.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5-5
Cameroon	6
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4.5
Chile	9
China	7
China: Hong Kong	8
China: Taiwan	8
Colombia	7.5
Comoros	5

Congo DRC	3
Congo RC	5
Costa Rica	9.5
Cote d'Ivoire	3.5
Croatia	7.5
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	8
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	5
Dominica	8.5
Dominican Republic	7
East Timor	5
Ecuador	7
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	7.5-8
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	4

Estonia	9
Ethiopia	4.5
Fiji	5
Finland	9
Fr.YugoslavRep.Macedonia	6.5
France	9
Gabon	5
Gambia	4.5
Georgia	5
Germany	9.5
Ghana	7
Greece	6
Grenada	8.5
Guatemala	7
Guinea	3.5-4
Guinea-Bissau	4
Guyana	6
Haiti	3.5-4

Holy See (Vatican)	9.5
Honduras	6
Hungary	7.5
Iceland	9
India	8
Indonesia	7
Iran	3.5
Iraq	2.5
Ireland	9.5
Israel	8
Italy	8.5-9
Jamaica	8
Japan	9
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	8
Korea, North	2

Korea, South	8.5
Kosovo	5.5
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	5
Laos	5
Latvia	8.5
Lebanon	5.5
Lesotho	5
Liberia	3.5-4
Libya	2
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	9.5
Madagascar	4
Malawi	5
Malaysia	8
Maldives	4.5-5
Mali	4.5-5

Malta	9
Marshall Islands	8
Mauritania	6
Mauritius	8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	8
Moldova	5.5
Monaco	9.5
Mongolia	6.5-7
Montenegro	8
Morocco	7
Mozambique	5
Namibia	8.5
Nauru	8
Nepal	4.5
Netherlands	9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	6

Niger	4.5
Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9.5
Oman	7
Pakistan	3
Palau	8
Panama	8.5
Papua New Guinea	6
Paraguay	8
Peru	7.5
Philippines	6
Poland	9
Portugal	9
Qatar	7
Romania	7
Russia	6
Rwanda	5
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9

Saint Lucia	9
Saint Vincent and Grenadines	9
Samoa	8
San Marino	9.5
Sao Tome and Principe	7
Saudi Arabia	6
Senegal	7.5
Serbia	6.5
Seychelles	8
Sierra Leone	4.5
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	9
Solomon Islands	6.5-7
Somalia	2
South Africa	7.5
Spain	9
Sri Lanka	5

Sudan	3
Suriname	5
Swaziland	5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2
Tajikistan	4.5
Tanzania	6
Thailand	6
Togo	5
Tonga	7
Trinidad and Tobago	8
Tunisia	5
Turkey	7.5
Turkmenistan	5
Tuvalu	8.5
Uganda	6
Ukraine	3.5-4

United Arab Emirates	7
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	8.5
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	8.5
Venezuela	4.5-5
Vietnam	4.5
Yemen	2.5
Zambia	5
Zimbabwe	3

*Methodology

The Political Stability Index is calculated by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on the combined scoring of varied criteria as follows --

1. record of peaceful transitions of power (free and fair elections; adherence to political accords)

2. record of democratic representation, presence of instruments of democracy; systemic accountability

3. respect for human rights; respect for civil rights

4. strength of the system of jurisprudence, adherence to constitutional order, and good governance

5. ability of a government to stay in office and carry out its policies vis a vis risk credible risks of government collapse (i.e. government stability versus a country being deemed "ungovernable")

6. threat of coups, insurgencies, and insurrection

7. level of unchecked crime and corruption

8. risk of terrorism and other threats to national security

9. relationship with regional powers and international community; record of bilateral or multilateral cooperation

10. degree of economic strife (i.e. economic and financial challenges)

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the current climate of upheaval internationally -- both politically and economically -- has affected the ratings for several countries across the world. The usual suspects -- North Korea, Afghanistan, and Somalia -- retain their low rankings. The reclusive and ultra-dictatorial North Korean regime, which has terrified the world with its nuclear threats, has exhibited internal instability. Of note was a cut-throat purge of hundreds of high ranking officials deemed to be a threat to Kim Jung-un. Despite their attempts to recover from years of lawlessness, war, and warlordism, both Afghanistan and Somalia continue to be beset by terrorism and turmoil. In Afghanistan, while international forces have seen success in the effort against the terror group, al-Qaida, the other Islamist extremist group, the Taliban, continues to carry out a vicious insurgency using terrorism. In Somalia, while the government attempts to do the nation's business, the terror group, al-Shabab continues to make its presence known not only in Somalia, but across the border into Kenya with devastating results/ Also in this category is Iraq, which continues to be rocked by horrific violence and terrorism at the hands of Islamic State, which has taken over wide swaths of Iraqi territory.

Syria, Libya, and Yemen have been added to this unfortunate echelon of the world's most politically unstable countries. Syria has been mired by the twin hazards of 1. a civil war as rebels oppose the Assad regime; and 2. the rampage of terror being carried out by Islamic State, which also seized control over vast portions of Syrian territory. Meanwhile, the post-Qaddhafi landscape of Libya has devolved into chaos as rival militias battle for control -- the elected government of the country notwithstanding. Rounding out this grim triad is Yemen, which was dealing with a Houthi rebellion, secesionists in the south, as well as the threat of terrorism from al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula as well as Islamic State, while also being the site of a proxy war between Shi'a Iran and Sunni Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, several Middle Eastern and North African countries, such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain were downgraded in recent years due to political instability occurring in the "season of unrest" sweeping the region since 2011 and continuing today. All three of these countries have stabilized in recent years and have been upgraded accordingly. In Bahrain, the landscape had calmed. In Egypt, the secular military-backed government has generated criticism for its crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood; however, the country had ratified the presidency via democratic elections and were on track to hold parliamentary elections as the country moved along the path of democratization. Perhaps the most impressive story was coming out of Tunisia -- the country whose Jasmine Revolution sparked the entire Arab Spring -- and where after a few years of strife, a new progressive constitution was passed into law and a secular government had been elected to power. Tunisia, Egypt, and Bahrain have seen slight upgrades as these countries stabilize.

In Africa, the Central African Republic was downgraded the previous year due to the takeover of the government by Muslim Seleka rebels. Although the country has been trying to emerge from this crisis, the fact of the matter was that it was difficult to halt the precipitous decline into lawlessness in that country. Zimbabwe has maintained its consistently poor ranking due to the dictatorial regime of Mugabe, who continues to hold a tight grip on power, intimidates the opposition, squashes dissent, and oppresses the white farmer population of the country. Moving in a slightly improved direction is Nigeria, which has sported abysmal ratings due to the government's fecklessness in dealing with the threat posed by the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram. Under its newly-elected government, there appears to be more of a concerted effort to make national security a priority action item. Mali was also slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Political instability has visited Burkina Faso and Burundi as the leaders of those countries attempted to side-step constitutional limits to hold onto power. In Burundi, an attempted coup ensued but quelled, and the president won a (questionable) new term in office; unrest has since punctuated the landscape. In Burkina Faso, the political climate has turned stormy as a result of a successful coup that ended the rule of the president, and then a putsch against the transitional government. These two African countries have been downgraded as a result.

It should be noted that the African country of South Sudan -- the world's newest nation state -- has not been officially included in this assessment; however, it can be unofficially assessed to be in the vicinity of "3" due to its manifold political and economic challenges. Guinea has endured poor rankings throughout, but was slightly downgraded further over fears of social unrest and the Ebola heath crisis.

In Europe, Ukraine was downgraded due to the unrest facing that country following its Maidan revolution that triggered a pro-Russian uprising in the eastern part of the country. Russia was also implicated in the Ukrainian crisis due to its intervention on behalf of pro-Russian separatists, as

well as its annexation of the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. Serbia and Albania were slightly downgraded due to eruptions of unrest, while Romania was slightly downgraded on the basis of corruption charges against the prime minister. Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy were downgraded due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was downgraded the previous year due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, the country successfully forged a rescue deal with international creditors and stayed within the Euro zone. Greek voters rewarded the hitherto unknown upstart party at the polls for these efforts. As a result, Greece was actually upgraded slightly as it proved to the world that it could endure the political and economic storms. Meanwhile, Germany, France, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries continue to post impressive ranking consistent with these countries' strong records of democracy, freedom, and peaceful transfers of power.

In Asia, Nepal was downgraded in response to continuous political instability well after landmark elections that prevails today. Cambodia was very slighly downgraded due to post-election instability that has resulted in occasional flares of violence. Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in Japan in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability. Increasing violence and political instability in Pakistan resulted in a downgrade for this country's already low rating.

In the Americas, Haiti retained its downgraded status due to ongoing political and economic woes. Mexico was downgraded due to its alarming rate of crime. Guatemala was downgraded due to charges of corruption, the arrest of the president, and uncertainty over the outcome of elections. Brazil was downgraded due to the corruption charges erupting on the political landscape, the stalling of the economy, and the increasingly loud calls for the impeachment of President Rousseff. Argentina was downgraded due to its default on debt following the failure of talks with bond holders. Venezuela was downgraded due to the fact that the country's post-Chavez government is every bit as autocratic and nationalistic, but even more inclined to oppress its political opponents. Colombia was upgraded slightly due to efforts aimed at securing a peace deal with the FARC insurgents. A small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States. Meanwhile, the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, Panama, and most of the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean retain their strong rankings due to their records of stability and peaceful transfers of power.

In the Pacific, Fiji was upgraded due to its return to constitutional order and democracy with the holding of the first elections in eight years.

In Oceania, Maldives has been slightly downgraded due to the government's continued and rather

relentless persecution of the country's former pro-democracy leader - former President Nasheed.

Source:

Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief, CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

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Freedom Rankings

Freedom Rankings

Freedom in the World

Editor's Note: This ranking by Freedom House quantifies political freedom and civil liberties into a single combined index on each sovereign country's level of freedom and liberty. The initials "PR" and "CL" stand for Political Rights and Civil Liberties, respectively. The number 1 represents the most free countries and the number 7 represents the least free. Several countries fall in the continuum in between. The freedom ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

Country	PR	CL	Freedom Status	Trend Arrow
Afghanistan	6 ?	6	Not Free	
Albania*	3	3	Partly Free	

Algeria	6	5	Not Free	
Andorra*	1	1	Free	
Angola	6	5	Not Free	
Antigua and Barbuda*	3 ?	2	Free	
Argentina*	2	2	Free	
Armenia	6	4	Partly Free	
Australia*	1	1	Free	
Austria*	1	1	Free	
Azerbaijan	6	5	Not Free	
Bahamas*	1	1	Free	
Bahrain	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Bangladesh*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Barbados*	1	1	Free	
Belarus	7	6	Not Free	
Belgium*	1	1	Free	
Belize*	1	2	Free	
Benin*	2	2	Free	
Bhutan	4	5	Partly Free	

Bolivia*	3	3	Partly Free	
Bosnia-Herzegovina*	4	3	Partly Free	
Botswana*	3 ?	2	Free	
Brazil*	2	2	Free	
Brunei	6	5	Not Free	
Bulgaria*	2	2	Free	
Burkina Faso	5	3	Partly Free	
Burma	7	7	Not Free	
Burundi*	4	5	Partly Free	⇑
Cambodia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Cameroon	6	6	Not Free	
Canada*	1	1	Free	
Cape Verde*	1	1	Free	
Central African Republic	5	5	Partly Free	
Chad	7	6	Not Free	
Chile*	1	1	Free	
China	7	6	Not Free	
Colombia*	3	4	Partly Free	

Comoros*	3	4	Partly Free	
Congo (Brazzaville)	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Congo (Kinshasa)	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Costa Rica*	1	1	Free	
Cote d'Ivoire	6	5	Not Free	
Croatia*	1 ?	2	Free	
Cuba	7	6	Not Free	
Cyprus*	1	1	Free	
Czech Republic*	1	1	Free	
Denmark*	1	1	Free	
Djibouti	5	5	Partly Free	
Dominica*	1	1	Free	
Dominican Republic*	2	2	Free	⇓
East Timor*	3	4	Partly Free	
Ecuador*	3	3	Partly Free	
Egypt	6	5	Not Free	
El Salvador*	2	3	Free	
Equatorial Guinea	7	7	Not Free	

Eritrea	7	7 ?	Not Free	
Estonia*	1	1	Free	
Ethiopia	5	5	Partly Free	⇓
Fiji	6	4	Partly Free	
Finland*	1	1	Free	
France*	1	1	Free	
Gabon	6	5 ?	Not Free ?	
The Gambia	5	5 ?	Partly Free	
Georgia	4	4	Partly Free	
Germany*	1	1	Free	
Ghana*	1	2	Free	
Greece*	1	2	Free	
Grenada*	1	2	Free	
Guatemala*	4 ?	4	Partly Free	
Guinea	7	6 ?	Not Free	
Guinea-Bissau*	4	4	Partly Free	
Guyana*	2	3	Free	
Haiti*	4	5	Partly Free	

Honduras	4 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Hungary*	1	1	Free	
Iceland*	1	1	Free	
India*	2	3	Free	
Indonesia*	2	3	Free	
Iran	6	6	Not Free	⇓
Iraq	5 ?	6	Not Free	
Ireland*	1	1	Free	
Israel*	1	2	Free	
Italy*	1	2	Free	
Jamaica*	2	3	Free	
Japan*	1	2	Free	
Jordan	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Kazakhstan	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Kenya	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Kiribati*	1	1	Free	
Kosovo	5 ?	4 ?	Partly Free ?	
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free	

Kyrgyzstan	6 ?	5 ?	Not Free ?	
Laos	7	6	Not Free	
Latvia*	2	1	Free	
Lebanon	5	3 ?	Partly Free	
Lesotho*	3 ?	3	Partly Free ?	
Liberia*	3	4	Partly Free	
Libya	7	7	Not Free	
Liechtenstein*	1	1	Free	
Lithuania*	1	1	Free	
Luxembourg*	1	1	Free	
Macedonia*	3	3	Partly Free	⇑
Madagascar	6 ?	4 ?	Partly Free	
Malawi*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Malaysia	4	4	Partly Free	
Maldives*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Mali*	2	3	Free	
Malta*	1	1	Free	⇓
Marshall Islands*	1	1	Free	

Mauritania	6	5	Not Free	
Mauritius*	1	2	Free	
Mexico*	2	3	Free	
Micronesia*	1	1	Free	
Moldova*	3 ?	4	Partly Free	
Monaco*	2	1	Free	
Mongolia*	2	2	Free	⇑
Montenegro*	3	2 ?	Free ?	
Morocco	5	4	Partly Free	⇓
Mozambique	4 ?	3	Partly Free	
Namibia*	2	2	Free	
Nauru*	1	1	Free	
Nepal	4	4	Partly Free	
Netherlands*	1	1	Free	
New Zealand*	1	1	Free	
Nicaragua*	4	4 ?	Partly Free	
Niger	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Nigeria	5	4	Partly Free	⇓

North Korea	7	7	Not Free	⇓
Norway*	1	1	Free	
Oman	6	5	Not Free	
Pakistan	4	5	Partly Free	
Palau*	1	1	Free	
Panama*	1	2	Free	
Papua New Guinea*	4	3	Partly Free	
Paraguay*	3	3	Partly Free	
Peru*	2	3	Free	
Philippines	4	3	Partly Free	⇓
Poland*	1	1	Free	
Portugal*	1	1	Free	
Qatar	6	5	Not Free	
Romania*	2	2	Free	
Russia	6	5	Not Free	⇓
Rwanda	6	5	Not Free	
Saint Kitts and Nevis*	1	1	Free	
Saint Lucia*	1	1	Free	

Saint Vincent and Grenadines*	2	1	Free	
Samoa*	2	2	Free	
San Marino*	1	1	Free	
Sao Tome and Principe*	2	2	Free	
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free	
Senegal*	3	3	Partly Free	
Serbia*	2 ?	2	Free	
Seychelles*	3	3	Partly Free	
Sierra Leone*	3	3	Partly Free	
Singapore	5	4	Partly Free	
Slovakia*	1	1	Free	⇓
Slovenia*	1	1	Free	
Solomon Islands	4	3	Partly Free	
Somalia	7	7	Not Free	
South Africa*	2	2	Free	
South Korea*	1	2	Free	
Spain*	1	1	Free	
Sri Lanka*	4	4	Partly Free	

Sudan	7	7	Not Free	
Suriname*	2	2	Free	
Swaziland	7	5	Not Free	
Sweden*	1	1	Free	
Switzerland*	1	1	Free	⇓
Syria	7	6	Not Free	
Taiwan*	1 ?	2 ?	Free	
Tajikistan	6	5	Not Free	
Tanzania	4	3	Partly Free	
Thailand	5	4	Partly Free	
Togo	5	4 ?	Partly Free	
Tonga	5	3	Partly Free	
Trinidad and Tobago*	2	2	Free	
Tunisia	7	5	Not Free	
Turkey*	3	3	Partly Free	⇓
Turkmenistan	7	7	Not Free	
Tuvalu*	1	1	Free	
Uganda	5	4	Partly Free	

Ukraine*	3	2	Free	
United Arab Emirates	6	5	Not Free	
United Kingdom*	1	1	Free	
United States*	1	1	Free	
Uruguay*	1	1	Free	
Uzbekistan	7	7	Not Free	
Vanuatu*	2	2	Free	
Venezuela	5 ?	4	Partly Free	
Vietnam	7	5	Not Free	⇓
Yemen	6 ?	5	Not Free ?	
Zambia*	3	4 ?	Partly Free	
Zimbabwe	6 ?	6	Not Free	

Methodology:
PR and CL stand for political rights and civil liberties, respectively; 1 represents the most free and 7 the least free rating. The ratings reflect an overall judgment based on survey results.

? ? up or down indicates a change in political rights, civil liberties, or status since the last survey.
⇑ ⇓ up or down indicates a trend of positive or negative changes that took place but that were not sufficient to result in a change in political rights or civil liberties ratings of 1-7.

* indicates a country's status as an electoral democracy.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2010 edition.
Available at URL: http://www.freedomhouse.org

Updated:

Reviewed in 2015

Human Rights

Human Rights in Nigeria

Overview
Nigeria is a federal republic. Recent elections were marred by political violence, fraud, and other serious irregularities. While the opposition challenged the election results, the Supreme Court upheld them. Typically, Nigeria's human rights record has been extremely poor and recent years have seen little change.

The government and security forces perpetrate most of the abuses committed in the nation. Arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as the use of excessive force and torture to apprehend suspects, are perpetrated by the police and security forces. Beatings of protestors, suspects, detainees and prisoners are other actions committed with impunity. Politically motivated and extrajudicial killings are done at the behest of the government. The judiciary is corrupt and externally influenced by the executive branch and other authorities. The government arbitrarily infringes upon citizens' privacy rights and limits the freedoms of speech, press, religion, movement, and assembly. Child abuse, child labor and child prostitution are all human rights abuses committed in Nigeria and the wider region of west Africa.

Note: Since 1999, intercommunal violence along religious and ethnic lines has cost thousands of lives in Nigeria. Clashes in the Edo, Kwara, and Delta states have continued to occur throughout the ensuing year. The security forces are often absent when the violence -- including death -- occurs. Because of the well-known climate of impunity, the cycle of violence has continued and has exacerbated the already-poor human rights landscape in Nigeria.

Human Development Index (HDI) Rank:
See full listing of the Human Development Index located in the Social Overview of this report for

this country's current rank.

Human Poverty Index Rank:
75th out of 103

Gini Index:
50.6

Life Expectancy at Birth (years):
46.74 years

Unemployment Rate:
2.9%

Population living on $1 a day (%):
70%

Population living on $2 a day (%):
90.8%

Population living beneath the Poverty Line (%):
34.1%

Internally Displaced People:
200,000
Note-Some 24,000 refugees are currently seeking asylum in Nigeria

Total Crime Rate (%):
N/A

Health Expenditure (% of GDP):
Public: 1.2%

% of GDP Spent on Education:
0.9%

Human Rights Conventions Party to:
• International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
• International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
• International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
• Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
• Conventions on the Rights of the Child

• Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
• Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

*Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life-expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the United Nation's Human Development Report since 1993.

*Human Poverty Index Ranking is based on certain indicators used to calculate the Human Poverty Index. Probability at birth of not surviving to age 40, adult literacy rate, population without sustainable access to an improved water source, and population below income poverty line are the indicators assessed in this measure.

*The Gini Index measures inequality based on the distribution of family income or consumption. A value of 0 represents perfect equality (income being distributed equally), and a value of 100 perfect inequality (income all going to one individual).

*The calculation of the total crime rate is the % of the total population which has been effected by property crime, robbery, sexual assault, assault, or bribery (corruption) related occurrences.

Government Functions

Under the late President Abacha, the main decision-making organ was the military Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), which ruled by decree. The PRC oversaw the 32-member Federal Executive Council composed of military officers and civilians, including several prominent politicians. Pending a new constitution, some provisions of the 1979 and 1989 constitutions were observed, although the decree suspending the 1979 constitution was not repealed, and the 1989 constitution has never been fully implemented.

Since transitioning to a democracy in February 1999, the system has gone through significant changes. The new system is modeled on the American system with a balance between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. The May 1999 constitution established a

federal system that lends power to Nigeria's 36 state legislatures. One particular clause stipulates that at least one cabinet minister must be appointed by each of the states. Critics say this has led to further regionalization of the polity and increased ethno-politics and thus want to amend the constitution to reflect a more unitary structure. Regional authorities, especially those with social, cultural, or religious differences from the president, want to see the constitution amended to put more power in the hands of the state governments.

The president is the chief executive and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He also holds the power to appoint his ministers. The primary function of the executive is to initiate policies and programs of the government and ensure they are implemented after they have been passed into law by the legislature. The president is excluded from membership of both houses of the legislature as well as the judiciary. He is elected separately by popular vote. Beyond the ballot box, the president can only be removed by death, impeachment or resignation. The president holds t he power to appoint judges but not to remove them. Though he is the chief architect of foreign policy, he does not reserve the power to declare war. According to Article 146 (1) of the Constitution, The vice president shall hold the office of president if the office of president becomes vacant by reason of death or resignation, impeachment, permanent incapacity or the removal of the President from office for any other reason in accordance with section 143 of this Constitution. Article 146 (3) stipulates that if the vice president becomes incapacitated or is otherwise impeached the President shall nominate and, with the approval of each House of the National Assembly, appoint a new vice president.

The legislature (National Assembly) is bicameral, composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives. The National Assembly is comprised of 109 senators (3 from each state plus one from Ajuba) and over 300 representatives, each elected for a four-year term. Th ere are no term limits. The president of the Senate is the third in the national hierarchy after the president and the vice president. He presides over all joint meetings of the National Assembly. His counterpart is the speaker of the House of Representatives who is the fourth in the national hierarchy. The legislature is the sole body imbued with the right to make laws. However, the judiciary may scrutinize all laws. Further, all laws must comply with the constitution. It can amend the constitution with a two-thirds majority vote. All other laws are passed when ratified by a simple majority of each of the houses and signed into law by the president.

The judiciary is comprised predominantly of eight courts. It is the duty of the Federal Court to adjudicate in disputes between individuals, governments and corporate entities in their inter-relations with one another within or outside the country. The Federal Court is divided into five parts. The Supreme Court is the highest court in the country and the last appeal on all matters. The Court of Appeal has exclusive jurisdiction to hear and determine appeals from the Federal High Court, High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, State High Court, Shari'a (Islamic law) Court of Appeal, Customary Court of Appeal, National Industrial Court, Court martial, or other tribunals. It is comprised of three customary law judges and one Islamic law judge. The Constitutional Court

has original jurisdiction in all matters relating to the interpretation or enforcement of the constitution. The Federal High Court has exclusive jurisdiction in civil causes and matter relating to the revenue of the government. The High Court of the Federal Capital Territory has the same jurisdiction as the State High Courts. The High Court of a state has unlimited jurisdiction to hear and determine any civil and criminal proceeding under any law of the state. In addition, there is a parallel State Shari'a (Islamic law) Court of Appeal for any state that needs it.

Government Structure

Names:
conventional long form:
Federal Republic of Nigeria
conventional short form:
Nigeria

Type:
federal republic

Executive Branch:
Note on Head of State and Head of Government:
Muhammadu Buhari defeated incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan in the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria; see "Note on Presidency" below; see also 2015 Election Primer below.

Note on Presidency:
The president is popularly elected.

Elections:
See 2015 Election Primer below.

Legislative Branch:
Bicameral Parliament:
Consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate

Senate:
109 seats; 3 from each state plus one from Abuja, members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms

House of Representatives:
360 seats, members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms

Elections:
See 2015 Election Primer below.

2015 Elections Note:
(Presidential and parliamentary elections to be held on March 28, 2015 and April 11, 2015; delayed from original date of February 2015)

--- Note that this primer covers both the presidential and parliamentary contests.

Presidential and parliamenary elections were set to be held in Nigeria in the first part of 2015. At first, the elections were set to be held in mid-February 2015. However, less than two weeks ahead of the scheduled election day, Nigerian electoral authorities decided to delay the presidential and parliamentary elections to the end of March 2015 due to violence at the hands of the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram.

In truth, violence by Boko Haram has plagued the country for years, so the sudden decision to delay long-anticipated elections was being viewed with skepticism by the opposition. Indeed, the opposition argued that the government was afraid that it would lose at the polls if the elections were held, as scheduled. Opposition leaders further said it was setback for democracy. At the same time, many Nigerians took to the streets to register their discontent over the delay of the elections and to accuse Nigerian authorities of foul play. For its part, Nigeria's election commission said that the postponement was necessary to deploy security forces to polling stations in the event that there were attacks by Boko Haram on voters and election staff.

Note: The new election schedule in Nigeria would see voters go to the polls to vote in the parliamentary and presidential contest on March 28, 2015.

At the presidential level, the main candidate for the presidency would be incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan, who was in power since 2010 when he assumed the presidency after the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua. Goodluck Jonathan's presidency was ratified with election victory at the polls in 2011. Now, in 2015, it was to be seen if he would be re-elected, especially perceptions of his feckless leadership in the face of chronic terrorism by Boko Haram Islamic militants in the northern and eastern parts of the country.

President Jonathan's main rival for the presidency would be a former military dictator, Muhammadu Buhari, who won a primary contest against former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, Kano State Governor Rabiu Kwankwaso, Imo State Governor Rochas Okorocha, and newspaper editor Sam Nda Isaiah, to gain the nomination of the main opposition bloc, All Progressives Congress (discussed below).

At the parliamentary level, the election would focus on the bicameral body, consisting of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate is made up of 109 seats; members are normally elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms. The House of Representatives is made up of 360 seats, members are normally elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms.

To date, the dominant party on the Nigerian political scene has been the People's Democratic Party (PDP), which won all the elections since the end of military rule in 1999. Those victories, though, were not without blemishes; indeed, there have been longstanding claims of vote rigging and other forms of electoral fraud associated with elections in Nigeria.

The main challenge to the PDP's power in 2015 would come from the opposition bloc, All Progressives Congress, composed of the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive Change, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, and the All Progressives Grand Alliance. There were high hopes that a unified opposition bloc would see more success at the polls against the dominant PDP.

In the pre-election period, President Goodluck Jonathan had been preparing for elections in the spring of 2015. In early February 2015, he escaped harm when a female suicide bomber detonated the explosives strapped to her body at an election rally in Gombe city in northern Nigeria. Blame was placed on the Islamist terror group, Boko Haram, which was terrorizing the country in recent years, with little effective push-back from President Jonathan or the military. In fact, the threat to Boko Haram on national security was quickly becoming the primary issue facing the country in 2015.

President Goodluck Jonathan's main rival in the 2015 presidential contest, former military strongman, Muhammadu Buhari, blasted the incumbent leader for his ineffectual defense of Nigeria from Boko Haram. Buhari that it was a "disgrace" that neighboring countries were doing more to fight Boko Haram, and were seeing more success than the Nigerian military. He promised that under his presidency, more would be done to vanquish Boko Haram, as he vowed: "We will build the capacity and Nigeria should be able to secure its territorial integrity."

President Jonathan's political prospects were marred on Feb. 17, 2015, with the news that former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had withdrawn as a member of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- the very party of which he was a founding member. Adding to the drama of Obasanjo's decision to exit the PDP was the fact that he also tore up his membership

card. In a statement that was published in the Nigerian press, Obasanjo declared: "Henceforth I will only be a Nigerian. I am ready to work with anybody regardless of his or her political affiliation." He made good on that non-partisan promise by endorsing Jonathan's main rival for the presidency -- Buhari, the candidate of the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

Obasanjo's objections to Jonathan were not new; going back to 2013, he penned an open letter to Jonathan, calling for the president not to seek another term in office, and making suggestions of abuses and corruption. Since that time, Obasanjo's criticism of Jonathan has only increased, with specific regard to Jonathan's feckless handling of the national security threat posed by Boko Haram.

Nevertheless, in mid-March 2015, with the election just weeks away, Olisa Metuh -- the spokesperson for Nigeria's ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) -- expressed confidence that incumbent President Jonathan would win re-election by landslide victory. He said, "We don't want to be too ambitious, but we are expecting 67-68 percent of the total votes. We know we will win the election comfortably and we are predicting that we will have 68 percent of all the votes on March 28." Metuh added, "The president is very well accepted by all Nigerians because of the developments that he has done. He has touched all the sectors of the economy across all the zones and all the tribes and all cadres of people. So, Nigerian people are excited about it." Metuh also denied reports that the PDP was buying votes and indulging in other forms of vote rigging, with an eye on guaranteed victory.

For its part, the main opposition bloc, the All Progressives Congress, has said that the 2015 election should be regarded as a referendum on 16 years of PDP rule. In an ostensible illustration of its campaign platform of change, the symbol used by the All Progressives Congress has been a broom - presumably an image intended to remind voters that sweeping changes are coming.

Meanwhile, Nigeria's socio-cultural context has to be considered in any discussion of the political sphere since the country is marked by tribalist, ethnic, and religious divisions. Of late, the Muslim (northern)-Christian (southern) divide has been particularly pronounced, given the security threat posed by Boko Haram Islamic militants in the northern and eastern parts of the country. It was to be seen if this reality would translate into changing voting patterns in 2015.

On March 28, 2015, voters finally went to the polls to vote in Nigeria's presidential and parliamentary elections. At the presidential level, the contests was between President Goodluck Jonathan -- a Christian and a southerner, and his rival, Buhari -- a Muslim and a southerner. At the parliamentary level, the contest was between the ruling the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC).

The election was not entirel free of violence. About a dozen people died in the restive northern part of the country. That being said, the degree of bloodshed was significantly reduced from the

previous elections in Nigeria when up to 800 people died in election violence.

Voting was extended to March 29, 2015, to ensure that all Nigerians were able to cast their ballots. At issue was the fact that some voters in various parts of the country experienced problems with the new electronic card reader system, which was introduced to guard against the kind of election fraud believed to have occurred in the past. In fact, President Jonathan was himself one of the voters who encountered voting complications. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter was that only a small number of the electronic card readers across the country malfunctioned; as such, the election authorities noted that the impact on the overall election was minimal, and certainly mitigated by the extension of voting hours well into the next day.

Once the polling stations closed and the ballot counting began, the early tally appeared to favor the opposition. Still, with many key states yet to be counted in an apparently close race, it was announced that full results would not be available for a few days.

Worth noting was the fact that people in Nigeria were watching the election returns in football stadiums and viewing centers as if the event was a World Cup football final. It was clear that Nigerian voters were fully aware of the political, economic, and security stakes of their nation state.

As the tally showed the advantage solidifying for the opposition, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) struck out initially in anger at the prospect of defeat. The target was the chairman of the election commission, with Elder Orubebe of the PDP declaring, "Mr. Chairman... We have lost confidence in what you're doing, we don't believe in you any more! You are being very, very selective. You are partial." But the head of the electoral commission, Attahiru Jega, dismissed any suggestion of wrong-doing, saying instead: "Let us be careful about what we say or do and let us not dispute a process that has begun peacefully."

In Buhari's strongholds of northern Nigeria, the mood was quite different. Residents were celebrating an impending victory for the opposition. Despite Goodluck Jonathan's strong performance in the Niger Delta area, the fact of the matter was that Buhari was seeing extraordinary success in key states such as Borno, Kaduna, and Sokoto. The leadership of the oppostion was cautiously optimistic but rather circumspect. The campaign spokesperson, Garba Shehu, saying in an interview with BBC News: "We feel we have won because we have the numbers. We're in celebratory mood but we're not taking anything for granted because of the kind of government we have."

Finally, on March 31, 2015, the official election results were announced and the opposition was able to claim a historic victory in the Nigerian elections. This result was emblematic of a significant shift on the political landscape as the All Progressives Congress (APC) ended the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and as the ex-military leader, Buhari, defeated

Jonathan for president. It was the first time since Nigeria's transition from military dictatorship that the opposition had won election victory.

Tired of Goodluck Jonathan's fecklessness in the fight against Islamist terrorists, Nigerians overwhelming chose the former military strongman to be the next president. It seemed that the majority of Nigerians believed that Buhari would be better positioned to fight -- and defeat -- the terror group, Boko Haram, that was carrying out a rampage of violence across the country in recent years.

There were initial fears that Goodluck Jonathan would be reluctant to relinquish control; however, the outgoing president quickly conceded defeat and ensured a smooth transition of power. A spokesperson for Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC) party paid tribute to Goodluck Jonathan's immediate concession and generous congratulatory words, saying: "He [the outgoing president] will remain a hero for this move. The tension will go down dramatically." In this way, the historic victory for Buhari and the All Progressives Congress (APC) aside, the Nigerian elections of 2015 were also marked by victory for the democratic process in Africa's most populous country.

While Nigeria has gained notoriety for manifold corruption, and while previous elections have been marked by irregularities and massive election violence, the 2015 elections went off with relative ease. Attahiru Jega was widely viewed as a credible head of the elections commission and he had overseen one of the most transparent and internationally-respected elections in modern Nigerian history. There were, indeed, voting irregularities and obstacles in certain select areas, as noted above; however, the scope of Buhari's victory likely vitiated any doubts about the legitimacy of the overall election.

Indeed, Buhari was able to stake out a decisive victory across the country winning the lion's share of the votes across the country. In Nigeria, a presidential winner must pass the 25 percent threshold in 24 states in order to claim a first-round victory. Buhari was able to easily cross that 25 percent threshold and claim a conclusive first round victory.

Judicial Branch:
Supreme Court, judges appointed by the Armed Forces Ruling Council; Federal Court of Appeal, judges appointed by the federal government on the advice of the Advisory Judicial Committee

Constitution:
New constitution in May 1999

Legal System:
Based on English common law and Islamic (Shari'ah) law in some states

Administrative Divisions:
36 states and 1 territory*: Abia, Abuja Capital Territory*, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Borno, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nassarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe, Zamfara

Political Parties and Leaders:
Accord Party or ACC [Mohammad Lawal MALADO]
Action Congress of Nigeria or ACN [Adebisi Bamidele AKANDE]
All Nigeria Peoples Party or ANPP [Ogbonnaya C. ONU]
All Progressives Congress [Adebisi Bamidele AKANDE, acting]
All Progressives Grand Alliance or APGA [Victor C. UMEH]
Congress for Progressive Change or CPC [Tony MOMOH]
Democratic Peoples Party or DPP [Biodun OGUNBIYI]
Labor Party or LP [Chief Dan NWANYANWU]
Peoples Democratic Party or PDP [Adamu MU'AZU]

Suffrage:
18 years of age; universal

Principal Government Officials

Leadership and Government

Pres. Muhammadu BUHARI, Gen. (Ret.)
Vice Pres. Oluyemi "Yemi" OSINBAJO
Min. of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Min. of Aviation

Min. of Communication Technology
Min. of Culture & Tourism
Min. of Defense
Min. of Education
Min. of Environment
Min. of the Federal Capital Territory
Min. of Finance
Min. of Foreign Affairs
Min. of Health
Min. of Industry, Trade, & Investment
Min. of Information
Min. of Interior
Min. of Justice & Attorney Gen. of the Federation
Min. of Labor & Productivity
Min. of Lands, Housing, & Development
Min. of Mines & Steel Development
Min. of National Planning Commission
Min. of National Sports Commission
Min. for Niger Delta Affairs
Min. of Petroleum Resources
Min. of Police Affairs
Min. of Power
Min. of Science & Technology
Min. of Special Duties
Min. of Sports
Min. of Transport
Min. of Water Resources
Min. of Women's Affairs
Min. of Works
Min. of Youth Development
Governor, Central Bank of Nigeria Godwin EMEFIELE
Ambassador to the US Adebowale ADEFUYE
Permanent Representative to the UN, New York Joy OGWU

-- as of 2015

Leader Biography

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Leader

Executive Branch:

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In Buhari's strongholds of northern Nigeria, the mood was quite different. Residents were celebrating an impending victory for the opposition. Despite Goodluck Jonathan's strong performance in the Niger Delta area, the fact of the matter was that Buhari was seeing extraordinary success in key states such as Borno, Kaduna, and Sokoto. The leadership of the oppostion was cautiously optimistic but rather circumspect. The campaign spokesperson, Garba Shehu, saying in an interview with BBC News: "We feel we have won because we have the numbers. We're in celebratory mood but we're not taking anything for granted because of the kind of government we have."

Finally, on March 31, 2015, the official election results were announced and the opposition was able to claim a historic victory in the Nigerian elections. This result was emblematic of a significant shift on the political landscape as the All Progressives Congress (APC) ended the dominance of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), and as the ex-military leader, Buhari, defeated Jonathan for president. It was the first time since Nigeria's transition from military dictatorship that the opposition had won election victory.

Tired of Goodluck Jonathan's fecklessness in the fight against Islamist terrorists, Nigerians overwhelming chose the former military strongman to be the next president. It seemed that the majority of Nigerians believed that Buhari would be better positioned to fight -- and defeat -- the terror group, Boko Haram, that was carrying out a rampage of violence across the country in

recent years.

There were initial fears that Goodluck Jonathan would be reluctant to relinquish control; however, the outgoing president quickly conceded defeat and ensured a smooth transition of power. A spokesperson for Buhari's All Progressives Congress (APC) party paid tribute to Goodluck Jonathan's immediate concession and generous congratulatory words, saying: "He [the outgoing president] will remain a hero for this move. The tension will go down dramatically." In this way, the historic victory for Buhari and the All Progressives Congress (APC) aside, the Nigerian elections of 2015 were also marked by victory for the democratic process in Africa's most populous country.

While Nigeria has gained notoriety for manifold corruption, and while previous elections have been marked by irregularities and massive election violence, the 2015 elections went off with relative ease. Attahiru Jega was widely viewed as a credible head of the elections commission and he had overseen one of the most transparent and internationally-respected elections in modern Nigerian history. There were, indeed, voting irregularities and obstacles in certain select areas, as noted above; however, the scope of Buhari's victory likely vitiated any doubts about the legitimacy of the overall election.

Indeed, Buhari was able to stake out a decisive victory across the country winning the lion's share of the votes across the country. In Nigeria, a presidential winner must pass the 25 percent threshold in 24 states in order to claim a first-round victory. Buhari was able to easily cross that 25 percent threshold and claim a conclusive first round victory.

In a post-election speech on April 1, 2015, President-elect Buhari paid tribute to outgoing President Jonathan, saying in a conciliatory tone, : "I extend a hand of friendship and conciliation to President Jonathan and his team. I have no ill will against anyone. He has nothing to fear from me. He is a great Nigerian and still our president." Buhari promised to tackle corruption, which has plagued Nigeria and contributed to a negative international reputation in this regard. He said of corruption, "It creates unjustly enriched people... and undermines democracy. Corruption will not

be tolerated by this government." Finally, President-elect Buhari vowed to vanquish Boko Haram, saying the Islamist terrorist group would "soon know the strength of our collective will." He also promised to do everything in his power to rescue the 200 girls kidnapped by Boko Haram almst exactly a year prior from a school in Chibok. Outgoing President Jonathan was pilloried for appearing to do little to rescue the 200 female students. The sad anniversary of the abduction of the girls was marked in the capital of Abuja with a silent vigil.

It should be noted that almost two months later in late May 2015, as Buhari was officially inaugurated into power, Boko Haram continued to display its influence. At that time, close to 30 people were killed in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri in Borno state as a result of an extended assault by Boko Haram. The attacks occurred only hours after Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as new president of Nigeria and thus delivered the message that even with new leadership at the helm, Boko Haram retained its ability to carry out its campaign of terror. For his part, upon becoming the new leader of Nigeria, President Buhari promised to target Boko Haram, which he described as a "godless group, who are as far away from Islam as one can think.

Foreign Relations

General Relations

Since independence, Nigerian foreign policy has been characterized by a focus on Africa and by attachment to several fundamental principles: African unity and independence; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-alignment and nonintervention in the internal affairs of other nations; and regional economic cooperation and development. In carrying out these principles, Nigeria participates in the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Non-Aligned Movement, and the United Nations.

Nigeria has maintained meaningful relations with governments of the United Kingdom or U.K, and the United States or U.S., and other Western powers.

Although the continent of Africa has traditionally been the focus of Nigeria's foreign policy for several decades, economic diplomacy is emerging as another significant prior ity. In this regard, Nigeria hopes to promote economic co-operation with the global community.

Regional Relations

ECOWAS and ECOMOG

In pursuing the goal of regional economic cooperation and development, Nigeria helped create ECOWAS, which seeks to harmonize trade and investment practices for its 16 West African member countries and ultimately to achieve a full customs union. Nigeria also has taken the lead in articulating the views of developing nations on the need for modifying the existing international economic order in the context of the North-South dialogue.

The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a peacekeeping force composed primarily of Nigerian troops, played an important role in helping to end the Liberian civil war. ECOMOG forces also ousted the junta, which had toppled Sierra Leonean-President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in May 1997. Kabbah, elected as president in February 1996, was returned to power in March 1998.

In 1999 Nigerian ECOMOG forces intervened in Sierra Leone's civil war, paving the way for U.N. peacekeepers. The swiftness and success with which Nigeria has intervened since the founding of ECOMOG, and the leadership it has shown in supporting both ECOMOG and U.N. interventions, has gained Nigeria significant international notoriety for the strength and commitment it has shown as a regional force. In this way, the post-Abacha era in Nigeria has been marked by a measure of moderation of policy issues-at least in the realm of foreign policy within the region.

ECOWAS has announced the move towards a common currency. A lot of work led by Nigeria has made it possible for this goal to be achieved. However, Nigeria has been quite careful, warning that an accelerated pact may be to the detriment of the regional financial system. Therefore they recommend a much more considered approach to the monetary integration. As of mid-year no significant steps towards monetary union have been made.

Cameroon

Nigeria has enjoyed generally good relations with its immediate neighbors. A long-standing border dispute with Cameroon resurfaced in 1981, but relations were eased following a visit to Nigeria by the president of Cameroon in early 1982.

In February 1996, tensions in the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula resulted in fighting and a tenuous peace.

Meanwhile, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) considers the border dispute. Tensions increased in the disputed peninsula in September 1998 and both sides sent troops to the region. However, both sides released 200 prisoners that had been detained since the dispute began.

The ICJ awarded the peninsula to Cameroon in late 2002. The ruling was made in the basis of a 1913 treaty between the former colonial powers, the United Kingdom and Germany. Nigeria initially rejected the ruling but later backed away from that statement.

In 2003, Nigeria said that it would take three years to cede control of the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. Nigeria began the very slow process by giving Cameroon control over 30 villages near Lake Chad.

In September 2004, the Nigerian Assembly asked for a referendum on the issue in the Bakassi Peninsula.

On August 14, 2006, Nigeria was scheduled to handover control of the oil-rich Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. The development came following a 2002 decision by the International Court of Justice to grant sovereignty of Bakassi to Cameroon, thus mandating the withdrawal of Nigerian troops.

Following mediation by the United Nations, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo said in June 2006 that his country would abide with the ruling that would affect the predominantly Nigerian peoples of the contested Bakassi area.

Tribal chiefs in Bakassi were against Nigerian assent on the issue and were trying to seek a court injunction to stop the move. Then, only days before the official ruling was set to go into effect, the Bakassi Movement for Self Determination -- a group of several hundred residents -- declared their independence. Tony Ene, the interim head of the movement, asserted: "The people have declared their own republic, known as the Democratic Republic of Bakassi. We will no longer have anything to do with Nigeria, since Nigeria does not want anything to do with us."

Chad

In addition to the Cameroonian dispute, a border dispute with Chad flared in the spring of 1983 but was eased by talks between the two governments. Nigeria's land borders, closed in April 1984, were reopened in March 1986.

Benin

In mid-August 2003, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo agreed to re-open Nigeria's border with Benin after having earlier in the week sealed off the border between the two countries because of alleged criminal activity across the frontier. The closure hit Benin's economy, pushing up the price of fuel and other imports.

Sudan

Nigeria has played a major role for several years in attempting to negotiate an end to Sudan's civil war, which was ultimately realized in 2005. See "Special Entry" below on Nigeria's role in the attempt to bring the Sudanese leader, Omar al-Bashir, to justice on war crimes charges.

Africa Union

At its July 2-11, 2001, meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, the Organization of African Unity officially approved the transformation of the Organization of African Unity into the new African Union. Former foreign minister of Cote d'Ivoire, Amara Essy, was elected the first Secretary-General of the African Union. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan reacted with the statement that, "This historic effort will require leadership, courage and willingness to depart from the ways of the past, if it is to do for Africa what the European Union has done for Europe." The goal of the African Union is to be a continental body that will pave the way to a better life for all Africans. Where the OAU was criticized for its lack of action on economic and social fronts, the African Union is charged with development as its primary task. Following a model based on the European Union, the African Union is intended to bridge the economic gaps between African countries and thrust the continent onto the world economic stage as a single entity. The African Union Bill was based on a convergence of South African president Thabo Mbeki's African development plan, and the Plan Omega proposed by Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade. It therefore adds to its economic mandate the political mandate that all of Africa should seek democratic consolidation.

There are significant criticisms to the new African Union, though. Some fear that too much faith is being placed in a document that makes more sense in theory than in practice. The strongest criticism, however, is that the Africa Union's largest force has been Libyan President Moammar Al-Qadhafi. The U.S. has made its objections to the Union clear no dou bt due to a lack of trust in Qadhafi's motives. Many African leaders backed the Union even though they also demonstrated a lack of faith in Qadhafi's motives. Even at the opening of the meeting of the OAU leaders noted that Qadhafi failed to even mention Africa's founding fathers even though it was Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah who was the founder of pan-Africanism some forty years ago. Indeed, Qadhafi has

backed groups that are markedly anti-pan-Africanist in his own country. Other comments challenged the controversial role Libyan nationals often play in sub-Saharan African countries. Yet the most controversial position of Qadhafi no doubt was his statement that "We cannot be neutral here. We are here for the Africans, not the Europeans. We are here for the blacks, not for the whites." With Louis Farrakhan, leader of the U.S.-based Nation of Islam movement, standing behind him, this statement was taken as an affront to increased western relations as opposed to the Union's goal of increasi ng economic ties with wealthier countries.

The new African Union began its official functions during the spring of 2002.

Other Significant Relations

Europe

Upon the election of President Obasanjo, the Commonwealth re-admitted Nigeria and the European Union lifted all of the sanctions imposed on the country in 1995. The sanction was a reaction to the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa, an activist slain by the Nigerian military regime of Sani Abacha.

In November 1999, Nigeria and the U.K agreed on a joint military operations and training. Clearly, the present Nigerian government is committed to fundamental democratic principles and the return of political stability. To achieve this, Obasanjo is aligning himself with countries such as the U.K.

United States

As a result of the annulled June 12, 1993, presidential election, failure to embark on a meaningful democratic transition, and various other human rights abuses, the United States (U.S.) had:

-- Imposed section 212(f) of the Immigration and Nationality Act on Nigeria to refuse entry into the United States senior government and military officials and others who formulate, implement or benefit from policies which impede Nigeria's transition to democracy;
-- recalled Ambassador Carrington for consultations following the execution of the Ogoni activists on Nov. 10, 1995 (the Ambassador returned to Nigeria March 3, 1996);
-- suspended all military assistance;
-- banned the sale and repair of military goods and services to Nigeria;
-- taken the lead on consultations at the United Nations on appropriate measures. The United Nations Human Rights Commission on April 23 adopted by consensus a draft resoluti on condemning Nigeria's Human Rights record co-sponsored by the U.S. and many other nations, including South Africa.

President Obasanjo's visit to former U.S. President Clinton was one of his first visits to heads of state. The United States welcomed the election of Obasanjo and re-established military ties with Nigeria. Most sanctions imposed on Nigeria by the United States since 1993 have been repealed. The U.S. made its preference for Obasanjo known during the 1999 elections. Opposition parties, in fact, accuse the U.S. of accepting flawed electoral results because of their favor. (The Carter Center and other notable international observers ruled that there were significant electoral inconsistencies, but that it is unlikely these inconsistencies altered the final outcome.)

In 1999 U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright hailed Nigeria's transition as one of the most vital in the world for U.S. national interests. A large number of U.S. offic ials visited Nigeria on aid, state and business missions later in the year. The importance, President Clinton clarified in his own trip to the country, is both the strategic interest of Nigeria as the largest and most influential country in western Africa and the significant oil reserves and exploration rights yet to be exploited.

While U.S. President George W. Bush did not detail his Nigeria policy early on, it appeared that at the top of the U.S. agenda, will be the expansion of the Nigerian oil industry, followed by increased stability and decreased corruption. In the wake of the terrorist attacks in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, the Bush administration began to show greater interest in the developing world, including Nigeria. In this regard, officials in the U.S. Defense Department have stated that cooperation on security interests in the region is of importance and will benefit both the U.S. and Nigeria. As such, a number of cooperative efforts h ave been implemented, including a defense assistance and training program in Nigeria, which is the largest of its kind in Africa.

The U.S. mission currently provides approximately US$10 million per year in aid for electoral assistance, military assistance and to make up for budgetary shortfalls.

Special Report

Nigerian at the Center of Foiled Terror Attack on U.S. Airliner

Summary:

Yemen's al-Qaida connection has become the focus of geopolitical anxiety in the aftermath of an attempted bombing of a U.S. airliner on Christmas Day. A Nigerian national charged with attempting to bomb the aircraft said he received explosives and training from al-Qaida in Yemen. Fears of terrorist attacks emanating from that country have led to increased anti-terrorism support for Yemen.

The Foiled Attack:

On Dec. 25, 2009, a Nigerian national on a flight from Amsterdam in the Netherlands to Detroit in the United States attempted to carry out a bomb attack. The Christmas Day incident occurred when Northwest Airlines Flight 253, carrying 278 passengers and 11 crew, was less than half an hour from arriving at its destination.

The incident ensued when the suspect, identified as 23-year old Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, tried to ignite an incendiary device, and burnt his leg in so doing. No one else was hurt in what United States officials described as a failed terrorist attack. Passengers on the aircraft described a scene of panic in the cabin after they detected smoke and flames. There were some suggestions that the attempted bomb attack was thwarted when one passenger, Dutch tourist Jasper Schuringa, jumped across several rows of seats to tackle the suspect, and other passengers then helped to fully subdue him. Water, blankets and a fire extinguisher were used to put out the fire. A report by the Associated Press noted that the lives of the passengers and crew about Flight 253 were actually saved because the explosive device failed to detonate due to an apparent malfunction. Nonetheless, Schuringa was hailed as a hero for his quick reaction to the unfolding crisis aboard the flight.

The aircraft was soon cleared for emergency landing at Detroit Metropolitan Airport where Abdulmutallab was taken into official custody and treated for the aforementioned burns at the University of Michigan Medical Center in Ann Arbor. While there, United States District Judge Paul Borman officially charged Abdulmutallab with placing a destructive device on an aircraft, and attempting to destroy a passenger jet by detonating a bomb. According to the Associated Press, Abdulmutallab was asked in English if he understood the charges being brought against him and responded, "Yes, I do." Abdulmutallab's lawyer later said he had been transferred to a federal prison in Milan, Michigan.

Abdulmutallab reportedly told United States authorities that he was acting on behalf of the notorious terrorist enclave, al-Qaida. Indeed, ABC news reported that Abdulmutallab told authorities that he spent one month being trained by al-Qaida in Yemen. Abdulmutallab also apparently explained that he acquired the explosive powder from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, which he attached to his leg and mixed in a concoction with liquid chemicals, with the intent of causing an explosion. Subsequent media reports indicated that the highly explosive substance was pentaerythritol (PETN) -- the same substance used by the failed show bomber, Richard Reid, exactly eight years earlier in December 2001, when he attempted to bring down a flight from France to the United States. CNN reported that the amount of PETN in this 2009 case was certainly enough to destroy the aircraft, presumably killing all those on board.

Counter-terrorism authorities in the Netherlands confirmed that Abdulmutallab first boarded a KLM flight in Lagos, Nigeria, bound for Amsterdam. It was not known at the time of writing if Abdulmutallab had the explosives attached to his body when his originating flight departed from

Nigeria at the very start of the journey. In fact, the logistical details were complicated by the revelation that Abdulmutallab actually flew from Ghana to Nigeria on a one-way ticket. Nevertheless, once Abdulmutallab arrived in the Netherlands, he transferred to the Northwest flight headed to the United States. According to the Justice Department in the United States, Abdulmutallab at that point had "a device attached to his body" when he boarded the flight in Amsterdam bound for Detroit. He presumably was allowed to board that flight because he had a valid United States visa.

There were serious questions being raised regarding the ease with which the transportation of explosives was able to elude detection. It was possible that security conditions in Nigeria helped in this regard. That is to say, the Lagos airport has long held the dubious distinction of being one of the least efficient travel centers in the world, where lax security runs rampant, largely as a result of widespread corruption. On the other hand, later evidence showing the explosives had been carried in a specially-made pouch within the alleged bombers undergarments would suggest that detection would be almost impossible using a regular magnetometers, and would require more intrusive body scanning techniques.

Accordingly, security at airports worldwide was expected to increase. For his part, United States President Barack Obama ordered that air travel be subject to heightened security measures. Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration in the United States warned that additional screening procedures would be implemented, however, they declined to specify particulars, suggesting that the intent was to preserve the element of surprise for obvious security reasons. Certain international aircraft carriers, though, such as Air Canada and British Airways, noted on their websites that passengers on international flights would be subject to much more intense security, and would be prevented from accessing carry-on luggage or getting up from their seats at certain points during flights. Delays, particularly on trans-Atlantic flights, were being anticipated.

White House spokesperson Robert Gibbs announced that a review of air safety was underway. On one front, there would be an investigation into the systems in place for detecting explosives before passengers board flights. On another front, there would be an examination of the terrorist identification protocols, in light of the revelation that Abdulmutallab was already listed in a broad terrorist database and yet allowed to board a flight. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano explained in an interview with CNN that despite the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father had warned the United States' embassy in Nigeria that his son might have jihadist inclinations, it was not sufficient actionable information to have moved him to the terrorism "no fly" list. The actual criteria for inclusion in these various databases -- some overseen by the Director of National Intelligence and some by the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- was not made known to the public.

Nevertheless, the fact that Abdulmutallab's own father -- a well-known Nigerian banker -- had

gone to such lengths to notify United States officials of his suspicions, along with revelations that Abdulmutallab had purchased a one-way ticket from Ghana using cash and was carrying only one carry-on piece of luggage, were matters expected to be subjects of grave critique in the coming weeks. Typically, such actions would be flagged as suspicious and indicative of a possible terrorist threat and so Secretary Napolitano's assurances that flying was still "very, very safe" were unlikely to go unchallenged. However, despite the perception of breaches in the air transport security system, preliminary examinations in the Netherlands -- where Flight 253 originated -- found that existing security procedures were correctly followed. The obvious conclusion, therefore, has been that current security technology does not facilitate the easy detection of explosive devices and substances. Indeed, as indicated above, most passengers in airports have to pass through only magnetometers, which detect metal and not explosives. Accordingly, there was likely to be intensified focus in the future on equipping airports with "puffer" machines that detect explosive powder residue, manual hand swabs to the same end, bomb-sniffing dogs as well as body scanners.

Meanwhile, attention was on Abdulmutallab himself, who was born into a life of relative privilege. He once studied engineering at a prestigious school in the United Kingdom, but his Islamic views had caught the attention of his own family, including his father, Alhaji Umaru Mutallab. Indeed, media reports suggested that he was estranged from his family, actually losing touch with them in the months he may have been living in Yemen. The official Saba News Agency in Yemen subsequently reported that Abdulmutallab had, in fact, been living in that country from August 2009 to the start of December 2009 while he attended the Sanaa Institute for the Arabic Language (SIAL). Nigerian authorities suggested that Abdulmutallab used surreptitious means to re-enter Nigeria before departing on the trip that would span three continents.

The United States government has been reticent about drawing conclusions about a global terrorist plot in this case. Nevertheless, this attempt to carry out an in-flight bombing on Christmas Day appeared to be in keeping with al-Qaida's latest terrorist directives. The NEFA Foundation published an October 2009 al-Qaida article calling for operatives to use "small explosives" to kill "apostates" and Westerners at airports and in aircrafts. Moreover, Abdulmutallab -- the man at the center of the Christmas Day attempted terror attack -- has expressly conjured up al-Qaida in his interrogations with authorities. Finally, a Yemen-based branch of the network removed some prevailing doubts about the orchestration of the failed terrorist attack by claiming responsibility.

Special Report

Nigeria drops charges against former U.S. Vice President Cheney

On Dec. 2, 2010, the government of Nigeria said it intended to bring charges against former United State Vice President Richard "Dick" Cheney in an alleged bribery scandal. The charges have

involved the company firm KBR, a subsidiary of the energy company Halliburton, where Cheney served as chief executive officer before becoming vice president in 2001. In 2009 in the United States, KBR pleaded guilty to charges of bribing Nigerian officials with $180 million at a time when the firm was an affiliate of Halliburton. Accordingly, KBR agreed to pay fines of about $580 million. While KBR and Halliburton no longer share a corporate connection, and even though Halliburton has insisted that it was not involved in the case centering on KBR, both companies and their principal officers still remain in the line of fire as other countries, including Nigeria, France and Switzerland, conduct their own investigations. Given that context, Nigeria was now moving against Cheney and Halliburton. Ironically, Nigeria has itself been condemned for an atrocious record of corruption; however, current President Goodluck Jonathan -- up for election in 2011 -- has emphasized an anti-corruption political platform. Note that by mid-December 2010, Nigeria's anti-corruption police had dropped the charges against Cheney. The decision to withdraw the charges was made following overtures by former President George H.W. Bush and former Secretary of State James Baker. According to Femi Babafemi, a spokesman for the anti-corruption entity, "There was a plea bargain on the part of the company to pay $250m as fines in lieu of prosecution."

Special Entry

Sudanese President Bashir flees Nigeria amidst demands for his arrest on war crimes charges

In mid-July 2013, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir fled Nigeria, where he was attending the African Union (AU) summit, following demands by human rights activists that he be arrested on prevailing charges of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity and sent to The Hague to face justice.

At issue was the litany of allegations brought against President Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC) based at The Hague in the Netherlands. In 2008, the ICC officially charged President Bashir with war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. President Bashir's charge sheet included five counts of crime against humanity: murder, extermination, torture, rape and forcible transfer, and two counts of war crimes: intentional direction of attacks against civilians and pillaging. Genocide was subsequently added to the list of alleged crimes.

At the heart of the case, according to ICC judges, were accusations that Bashir, "as the de jure and de facto president of Sudan and commander-in-chief of the Sudanese armed forces... coordinated the design and implementation of the counter-insurgency campaign," by which the black African civilian population -- composed of the three ethnic groups in Darfur -- were "unlawfully attacked" by the Arab Janjaweed militia. The judges concluded that Bashir's position as a sitting head of state did not "exclude his criminal responsibility, nor does it grant him immunity against prosecution before the ICC."

In 2009, the ICC issued an international arrest warrant for President Bashir on the basis of the charges discussed here. It was the first time the ICC, based in The Hague in the Netherlands, had decided to issue an arrest warrant for a sitting head of state since its establishment in 2002.

ICC Chief Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo hailed the judges' decision to issue an arrest warrant for the Sudanese president as historic, and cast Bashir in pariah territory. He said, "Like Slobodan Milosevic or Charles Taylor, Omar Al Bashir's destiny is to face justice." Meanwhile, the government of the United States welcomed the development, along with international human rights groups. Richard Dicker of Human Rights Watch characterized Bashir as "a wanted man" while Amnesty International urged all countries to do their duty and arrest the Sudanese leader if he entered their jurisdiction. Not surprisingly, Darfur's Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel group characterized the ICC's decision as a "victory for international law" and urged Bashir to surrender.

For his part, Bashir has consistently disregarded these charges and the arrest warrant as irrelevant. In the past, he noted that Sudan is not a member of the ICC and does not recognize the court's jurisdiction.

Regardless of Bashir's recognition (or not) of the ICC's powers and jurisdiction, the fact of the matter was that the larger realm of international jurisprudence does take the legitimacy of the ICC seriously. To some extent, Bashir himself must have been willing to acknowledge the reality of the international arrest warrants against him since he left Nigerian territory.

A spokesperson for President Bashir confirmed that the Sudanese leader had departed Nigeria less than a day after he arrived for the AU summit, saying he had gone onto another engagement. But Elise Keppler of Human Rights Watch cast Bashir's departure from Nigeria in decidedly different terms, saying, "Business as usual is over for this head of state suspected of the most serious crimes committed in Darfur. Al-Bashir faced intense pressure for his arrest from local activists when he tried to visit Nigeria, including court action."

Indeed, human rights lawyers filed papers at the Federal High Court in an attempt to force Nigeria's government to comply with international law and arrest al-Bashir. As well, human and civil rights groups called on the International Criminal Court to refer the government of Nigeria to the United Nations Security Council for allowing Bashir's visit in the first place.

It should be noted that the the ICC had already weighed in on the situation, having demanded that Nigeria "immediately arrest" the Sudanese leader, and reminding the government of Nigeria -- and indeed, the world -- that there were existing arrest warrant issued for Bashir, with the objective of forcing him to stand trial for the aforementioned charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Other members of the international community entered the fray with the European Union urging Nigeria "to respect its obligations under international law" and with the United States and the United Kingdom respectively expressing regret over Nigeria's decision to allow Bashir to travel to Nigeria.

But Nigeria had a different view of the situation and released a statement saying: "Any attempt to make an issue out of the attendance of President El- Bashir at the African Union Summit will only serve to unnecessarily shift focus away from the important objectives of the Special Summit. It is therefore a matter between the African Union and the international community." Meanwhile, many African and Arab countries have opposed the notion of an arrest warrant for Bashir, warning that it could negatively affect peace negotiations in Darfur and exacerbate tensions in Sudan and the wider region.

Special Note

United States declared Boko Haram to be a terrorist group

In mid-November 2013, the United State officially designated both Boko Haram and Ansaru as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists." Both militant extremist Islamist entities have carried out acts of terror in Nigeria, leading to the deaths of thousands of people over the years.

In a statement, Lisa Monaco, the homeland security and counterterrorism adviser to United States President Barack Obama, declared: "By cutting these terrorist organizations off from U.S. financial institutions and enabling banks to freeze assets held in the United States, these designations demonstrate our strong support for Nigeria's fight against terrorism and its efforts to address security challenges in the north." She continued, "We encourage Nigeria to pursue a comprehensive counterterrorism approach that uses law enforcement tools effectively, creates economic opportunity, and ensures that human rights are protected and respected."

Editor's Note:

The extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, launched an uprising in mid-2009 and was responsible for much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the country of Nigeria in recent times. Indeed, Boko Haram has a record of attacking security and political personnel manifested by its litany of targets. In more recent times, Boko Haram has expanded its target list as it has attacked Christian churches and killed worshipers, often during church services. For its part, Boko Haram is a militant Jihadist entity, which seeks to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria. While "Boko Haram" is the popular name of the extremist Islamist entity, its

official name title is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad," which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term, Boko Haram, means "Western education is sacrilege" or "Western education is a sin" in the Hausa language; however, the group is not only against Western education but also against Western culture, modern science, the wearing of regular Western clothing such as shirts and pants, as well as the act of voting in elections. The head of the United States Africa Command, General Carter Ham, has said that evidence points to a relationship of some sort between Boko Haram and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in northwest Africa, as well as al-Shabab in Somalia, which is itself aligned with the notorious terror enclave, al-Qaida.

By 2012, a new Islamist extremist entity emerged on the Nigerian landscape with the kidnapping of a French national. The "Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa (Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan)" is also known in the public purview as Ansaru. There are some suggestions that this new grouping is an offshoot of Boko Haram, although the Ansaru leader, Abu Usmatul al-Ansari, reportedly characterized Boko Haram's brutal killings as as "inhuman to the Muslim Ummah." Indeed, videotaped footage released on the Internet in 2012 showed the Ansaru leader articulating its policy of not killing innocent non-Muslims or security officials, except in "self defense." That being said, even Ansaru was responsible for no shortage of terror attacks in Nigeria. Another point of contrast between Ansaru and Boko Haram has been the fact that the former has an international or transnational focus whereas the latter has focused on the region of northern Nigeria. There are some suggestions that Ansaru has a link, if not an alliance, with the northern Mali-based al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. Note that in mid-November 2013, the United State officially designated both Boko Haram and Ansaru as "Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists."

Special Note

Regional threat posed by Boko Haram

The extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, launched an uprising in 2009 and was responsible for much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the country of Nigeria in recent times. Indeed, Boko Haram has a record of attacking security and political personnel manifested by its litany of targets. In more recent times, Boko Haram has expanded its target list as it has attacked Christian churches and killed worshipers, often during church services. For its part, Boko Haram is a militant Jihadist entity, which seeks to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria.

While "Boko Haram" is the popular name of the extremist Islamist entity, its official name title is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad," which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term, Boko Haram, means "Western

education is sacrilege" or "Western education is a sin" in the Hausa language; however, the group is not only against Western education but also against Western culture, modern science, the wearing of regular Western clothing such as shirts and pants, as well as the act of voting in elections.

There have been signs that Boko Haram poses a threat not only to Nigerians -- many of whom are fellow Muslims -- but also to the wider community, and anyone deemed to be of a pro-Western persuasion. Of note was the fact that in 2011, a Boko Haram suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja killed at least two dozen people. More recently -- in 2014 -- there was a series of attacks and abductions of high-profile figures in neighboring Cameroon. It was apparent that Boko Haram was taking advantage of the porous border between Nigeria and Cameroon, essentially making Boko Haram a regional threat to security.

Indeed, by January 2015, Boko Haram's effects were being felt regionally and not just in Nigeria. A massacre in the town of Baga resulted in thousands of people fled across Lake Chad seeking refuge in the country of Chad. But the country of Cameroon was suffering directly as a result of Boko Haram's barbarism when the militant Islamist movement violated that country's borders, carrying out raids into Cameroon territory, attacking villages, and kidnapping and killing scores of people. It should be noted that some of the individuals who were kidnapped in Cameroon were reported to have been freed. Cameroon's defense ministry said the hostages were liberated when their armed forces "pursued the attackers who were heading back to Nigeria." Nevertheless, Chad announced that it would deploy soldiers to Cameroon to assist that country in repelling the threat posed by Boko Haram.

In February 2015, military troops from Cameroon and Chad killed more than 250 Boko Haram terrorists amidst successive days of fighting. In the town of Fotokol, a massacre ensued when Boko Haram terrorists raided the town, burning buildings to the ground, and brutally murdering as many as 100 residents in mosques and in their homes. The bodies of many victims were found with their throats slit. As many as 50 Boko Haram terrorists were killed as a result of the defensive operation by Cameroonian forces. Around the same period, the government of Chad said it had targeted and eliminated Boko Haram bases in the towns of Gambaru and Ngala in northern Nigeria on Tuesday, killing more than 200 Boko Haram terrorists; nine Chadian soldiers also died in the offensive. Chad, with its well-developed military, was also carrying out air strikes on other Boko Haram positions.

The geopolitical aspect extended to Niger in the first week of February 2015 when Boko Haram terrorists attacked the town of Bosso in Niger, leading to a defensive operation by Niger's troops and Chad's fighter jets. It should be noted that Chad has been the most active regional power, deploying as many as 2,500 soldiers to the region to protect its own territory and people, but also to assist Cameroon and Niger.

For its part, the government of Niger was considering deploying some of its own troops to fight

Boko Haram. In the second week of February 2015 -- just hours before the parliament of that country was set to vote on a regional offensive force to fight the Islamist terror group -- Boko Haram stretched its abusive reach into Niger. At issue was an assault on the town of Diffa, leading thousands of people the flee the area. The army of Niger was able to successfully repel the assault; however, the attack was emblematic of the fact that Boko Haram was no longer a Nigerian problem, but in fact, a regional threat.

Feb. 13, 2015 saw Boko Haram launch another cross-border attack -- this time on the fishing village of Ngouboua in Chad along the shores of Lake Chad. As has become the norm for Boko Haram, the Islamist terrorists set homes on fire, often with residents inside, and slit the throats of other villagers in a rampage of horror. Included in the dead were a local chief, a police officer, three civilians, and two Boko Haram fighters. But the Chadian military was showing itself to be more effective than that of Nigeria and was ultimately able to repel the Boko Haram fighters. The rate of cross-border attacks in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, however, suggested (1) the possibility of Boko Haram sleeper cells in these countries; and (2) a burgeoning imperative of Boko Haram to consolidate territory regionally rather than within one country, perhaps with an eye on establishing an African variant to the caliphate claimed by Islamic State in the Middle Eastern cross-border territory of Iraq and Syria.

On Feb. 16, 2015, Boko Haram was still managing to carry out cross-border attacks -- this time launching a raid on a military camp in northern Cameroon. Several troops were injured in that incident, although Cameroonian authorities said their troops were able to quickly retaliate.

Two weeks later at the start of March 2015, the regional effort was afoot to target Boko Haram -- despite Nigeria's overt attempts to subvert international assistance. Chadian forces -- some of the most sophisticated and capable in the region -- were reportedly ready to carry out an assault on Boko Haram but were prevented from doing so by Nigerian authorities. In fact, Cameroon and Niger in addition to Chad have respectively complained about Nigeria's unwillingness to cooperate in the effort to establish a regional taskforce aimed at vanquishing Boko Haram.

The rationale for Nigeria's obstinancy -- especially in the face of its own ineffectual approach to dealing with Boko Haram -- raised questions about the Nigerian government's commitment to fighting the terror group.

Nevertheless, in March 2015, regardless of the possible embarrassment to President Goodluck Jonathan, who was seeking re-election, military forces from Chad and Niger launched a joint air and ground offensive against Boko Haram, with the restive Borno state in Nigeria at the top of the target list.

In June 2015, Boko Haram carried out attacks in Chad and Niger -- two countries participating in a regional multinational fight against the Islamist terror group. In one case, Chad was struck by a

suicide attack and responded with air strikes on Boo Haram positions. In another case, Boko Haram carried out bloody assaults on villages in Niger, killing around 40 people including women and children. The attacks made clear that Boko Haram was still fully equipped to be a threat to the region, irrespective of the efforts of multiple governments to repel the Nigeria-based Islamist terror group.

Note that ahead of the 2015 election in Nigeria, President Goodluck Jonathan's main rival in the 2015 presidential contest, former military strongman, Muhammadu Buhari, blasted the incumbent leader for his ineffectual defense of Nigeria from Boko Haram. He added that it was a "disgrace" that neighboring countries were doing more to fight Boko Haram, and were seeing more success than the Nigerian military. In an interview with Reuters News, Buhari said, "It's a big disgrace for Nigeria. It is now Cameroon and Chad fighting the insurgency more than Nigeria." He promised that under his presidency, more would be done to vanquish Boko Haram.

Ultimately, Buhari defeated Jonathan for the presidency. In mid-2015, the newly-elected Nigerian President Buhari indicated that the effort against Boko Haram was about to go into high gear. Via the social media outlet, Twitter, he wrote that the "efforts to strengthen security cooperation with our neighbours and adjust our own response to Boko Haram will yield results very soon."

By mid-2015, as Buhari was officially inaugurated into power, Boko Haram continued to display its influence as a series of attacks plagued Nigeria.

Around the same time as these attacks, videotaped footage by Boko Haram surfaced with the messenger delivering a defiant message on behalf of the Islamist terror group. The messenger asserted that claims by Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon of military success against Boko Haram were exagerrated and that the Islamist terrorists were not being pressured into retreat. Amidst gruesome footage of corpses, the anonymous speaker declared: "Most of our territory is still under control. Whoever believes that the Nigerian army has defeated us.... know that we have battled against them and killed them." It seemed that in the immediate aftermath of President Buhari's inauguration, he would have to immediately confront the Boko Haram problem.

In the third week of June 2015, Boko Haram carried out attacks in Chad and Niger -- two countries participating in a regional multinational fight against the Islamist terror group. In one case, Chad was struck by a suicide attack and responded with air strikes on Boko Haram positions. In another case, Boko Haram carried out bloody assaults on villages in Niger, killing around 40 people including women and children. In July 2015, a suicide attack attributed to Boko Haram unfolded in Cameroon, killing a dozen people. Around the same period, a suicide attack in Chad also attributed to Boko Haram left 15 people dead.The attacks made clear that Boko Haram was still fully equipped to be a threat to the region, irrespective of the efforts of multiple governments to repel the Nigeria-based Islamist terror group.

In August 2015, President Idriss Deby of Chad insisted that while Boko Haram might still be carrying out attacks, the regional effort against the terror group had been successful and would end "by the end of the year." President Deby's bold declaration was as follows: "Boko Haram is decapitated. There are little groups (composed of Boko Haram militants) scattered throughout east Nigeria, on the border with Cameroon. It is within our power to definitively overcome Boko Haram." Speaking of the establishment of a multilateral regional force and its planned offensive against the remnants of Boko Haran, President Deby said, "The war will be short, with the setting up of the regional force, it will be over by the end of the year." He also added that the notorious leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, was no longer in control of the Islamist terror group and had been replaced by an individual known as Mahamat Daoud.

Note: The claim by President Deby that there was new leadership at the helm of Boko Haram was challenged by the release of an audio message by Shekau himself denying that he had been replaced. In the message, Shekau cast Deby's claim as "blatant lies" and declared, "I am alive. I will only die when the time appointed by Allah comes."

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at www.countrywatch.com. See Bibliography for list of research sources.

National Security

External Threats

No foreign nation poses an immediate threat to Nigeria. It is involved in several territorial disputes with neighboring countries, however. Per the recommendations of a bilateral commission, the governments of Nigeria and Chadhave begun to demarcate their overland border. The two governments were engaged in a disagreement over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula. Nigeria began in 2006 to withdraw its forces from the region. Along with other differences between the parties involved, that dispute had earlier contributed to a delay in the implementation of an International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling on the maritime boundary between Nigeria, Cameron, and Equatorial Guinea. The Lake Chad boundaries of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, remain ill defined. Though all respective governments have signed the Lake Chad Commission's delimitation treaty, none has approved it. The Lake Chad region plays host to frequent armed clashes involving the

local inhabitants and militias, exacerbating the urgency of delimitation as a preliminary step to enhancing the security there. Finally, the governments of Nigeria and Benin have yet to reach an accord over the sovereignty of villages along the Okpara River. Note also that in 2004, some 17,000 Nigerian refugees fled to neighboring Cameroonto escape ethnic conflicts between pastoralists and farmers.

Crime

Nigeria is a major hub of criminal activity, including the narcotics trafficking, illicit financial transactions, and street crime. Nigerian drug traffickers operate worldwide. The country itself serves as an interim destination for heroin and cocaine bound for East Asia, Europe, and North America. Money laundering is prevalent in Nigeria, as are other financial crimes. Nigeriawas placed on the July 2004 Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering's (FATF) List of Non-Cooperative Countries (NCCTs). A division of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the FATF was created in 1989 to address global concerns over the proliferation of money laundering. Also, the U.S Department of State reports a high incidence of business fraud in Nigeria. Nigerian criminals have a longstanding tradition of enticing unsuspecting victims, generally foreigners, with advance fee schemes in particular. One common variation begins with an unsolicited correspondence, generally an e-mail, which offers the recipient the promise of high returns on an investment. The hopeful victim is required to pay a series of advance fees before collecting any compensation. The criminals keep the fees, without fulfilling their obligation to pay the duped investor. Another familiar take on the advance fee scheme commences with a solicitation to assist in transferring a large sum of money out of the country. The addressee is promised compensation in return for facilitating the transaction, but is required to pay 'taxes' in advance or to provide confidential information, such as a blank, signed invoice or a bank account number, in turn used to perpetrate a theft. Outside of transnational crime, there is high occurrence of petty theft, burglary, robbery, extortion, and kidnapping in Nigeria.

Insurgencies

Within the last five years, Nigeriahas taken significant strides towards greater internal stability. After sixteen years under a military regime, the country adopted a new constitution in 1999, paving the way for a return to civilian rule. Olusegun Obasanjo became president in May 1999 and was re-elected to a second term in April 2003, marking the nation's first civilian transfer of power. Despite the much-improved domestic conditions, however, regionalized conflicts continue to undermine the country's overall stability.

During Obasanjo's tenure as president, sporadic and often spectacular outbursts of violence have been a regular occurrence in Nigeria, presenting a significant impediment to his quest to bring tranquility to a long troubled nation.

Religious and ethnic tension drives much of it - Nigeriais home to a highly diversified population - but there are other causes as well. In May 1999, a disagreement of the succession of an emir (Islamic leader) led to an outbreak of violence in Kaduna Statethat claimed over 100 lives. In November 1999, elements of Nigeria's armed forces killed a number of civilians in Odi to avenge the murder of 12 policemen by a local gang. In February and May 2000 more than 1,000 perished during riots over the controversial introduction of shar'ia (Islamic law) in Kaduna. Hundreds of ethnic Hausa (predominately Muslim) were subsequently killed in southeastern Nigeriaduring reprisal attacks. In September 2001, religious differences precipitated an outbreak of violence that killed over 2,000 in Jos. In October 2001, communal violence in Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa killed hundreds and displaced thousands. In June 2004, the United States (U.S.) Department of State reported outbreaks of violence over the course of the previous year in the following states: Abuja, Akwa Ibom, Benue, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Delta, Ebonyi, Enugu, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos, Ondo, Oyo and Plateau rivers. It also warned of the ongoing potential for inter-ethnic violence in and around the city of Warri, located in the Niger River Delta.

In June 2005, the U.S., the United Kingdom and Germany were forced to close their consulates in Lagosafter threats from Islamic militants. This came on the heels of the kidnapping of six Shell oil workers in Nigeria, who were released one week later unharmed. Escalating violence and deaths in Niger Delta are now resulting in the deaths of more than 1000 persons per year. Criminal gangs are known to siphon off millions of dollars' worth of crude oil a year. The proceeds from the sales are used to buy weapons which in turn fuel the ethnic warfare in the region.

Terrorism

There is no specific threat of a terrorist attack against targets in Nigeriaor its interests abroad. Its government has cooperated closely with that of the United States to monitor potential threats to American citizens living in Nigeria, as well as illicit financial transactions with possible links to terrorist organizations. Likewise, the Nigerian government has willingly shared information on the presence of militant Islamic elements there. Nigeriais party to six of the 21 global and regional treaties pertaining to terrorism.

Editor's Note:

The extremist militant Islamist group, Boko Haram, launched an uprising in mid-2009 and was responsible for much of the sectarian bloodshed plaguing the country of Nigeria in recent times. Indeed, Boko Haram has a record of attacking security and political personnel manifested by its litany of targets. In more recent times, Boko Haram has expanded its target list as it has attacked Christian churches and killed worshipers, often during church services. For its part, Boko Haram is

a militant Jihadist entity, which seeks to establish an Islamic government and Shari'a law across the whole of Nigeria.

The government of Nigeria has throughout claimed that it was committed to dealing with the national security threat posed by Boko Haram. In truth, however, members of the military have been linked with the terrorist group, while the Nigerian authorities have proved themselves to be largely feckless and ineffectually in the fight against Boko Haram. In fact, the impotence of the Nigerian government in fighting Boko Haram was displayed fully in August 2014 when Boko Haram declared dominion over an Islamic state in northeastern Nigeria, and as it has continued to dominate the Nigerian military as of the start of 2015.

While "Boko Haram" is the popular name of the extremist Islamist entity, its official name title is "Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad," which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." The term, Boko Haram, means "Western education is sacrilege" or "Western education is a sin" in the Hausa language; however, the group is not only against Western education but also against Western culture, modern science, the wearing of regular Western clothing such as shirts and pants, as well as the act of voting in elections.

There have been signs that Boko Haram poses a threat not only to Nigerians -- many of whom are fellow Muslims -- but also to the wider community, and anyone deemed to be of a pro-Western persuasion. Of note was the fact that in 2011, a Boko Haram suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja killed at least two dozen people. More recently -- in 2014 -- there was a series of attacks and abductions of high-profile figures in neighboring Cameroon. It was apparent that Boko Haram was taking advantage of the porous border between Nigeria and Cameroon, essentially making Boko Haram a regional threat to security.

The United States has designated Boko Haram as a terror organization and placed a $7 million bounty on the leader's (Abubakar Shekau's) head. Although there has been no direct national interest for the United States in being further involved in the Boko Haram threat in Nigeria, recent statements by Shekau threatening to confront the United States and the West suggest that Boko Haram's regional agenda may be expanding to a wider Jihadist orientation.

Indeed, the head of the United States Africa Command, General Carter Ham, has said that evidence points to a relationship of some sort between Boko Haram and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates in northwest Africa, as well as al-Shabab in Somalia, which is itself aligned with the notorious terror enclave, al-Qaida. But as of 2015, Boko Haram had explicitly declared its allegiance to the notorious terror group, Islamic State. Following the mode of that terrorist entity, Boko Haram was carrying out cross-border attacks into Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, seemingly with an eye on establishing its own African equivalent of the Middle Eastern extremist Islamist caliphate. It was clear that Boko Haram was now a regional menace.

It was to be seen if the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in the spring of 2015 would augur the start of a more concerted effort and a more effective campaign to defeat Boko Haram.

Meanwhile, as Nigeria confronted the threats posed by Boko Haram and Ansaru, it was also enduring ethno tribal violence -- often with religious overtones. At issue were tensions between semi-nomadic Muslim herdsmen from the Fulani (sometimes referred to as Peule) tribe and Muslim farmers from the Hausa tribe, as well as conflict between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian farmers.

It should also be noted that militants in the Niger Delta have been responsible for a spate of attacks in recent years -- many against foreign oil companies -- and motivated by demand for greater control over local oil reserves. At issue for militants and sympathetic locals has been the fact that despite the vast oil wealth, the beneficiaries are rarely the impoverished residents of the Niger Delta. Militants have, thus, taken up arms and been responsible for attacks against the region's oil infrastructure. They have also carried out various forms of violence and kidnappings. Most of the kidnappings have targeted foreign workers employed by multinational corporations; however, both the number of extremist enclaves, as well as the tactics employed, increased around 2007. Since 2009 when the Nigerian government offered amnesty to militants, attacks in the Niger Delta have become a less frequent phenomenon. Concomitantly, oil input has increased as well. An incident in 2012 showed that the Nigeria's oil-producing region of the Niger Delta, nonetheless, remained a dangerous place.

See "Political Conditions" for details.

Defense Forces

Military Data

Military Branches:

Army, Navy, Air Force

Eligible age to enter service:

18 years of age for voluntary military service

Mandatory Service Terms:

No conscription

Manpower in general population-fit for military service:

males age 16-49: 20,839,976
females age 16-49: 19,867,683

Manpower reaching eligible age annually:

males: 1,767,428
females: 1,687,719

Military Expenditures-Percent of GDP:

0.89%

Chapter 3

Economic Overview

Economic Overview

Overview

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa. As one of the world's largest oil producers, Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on the oil sector. The country has long been hobbled by political instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure and poor macroeconomic management, with more than half of its population still living in poverty.

Nigeria emerged from repressive military rule to leadership by an elected civilian government in May 1999. The country has undertaken structural reforms, including measures to: tackle public sector corruption, improve the transparency of public policies, and improve the business environment. These reforms have made Nigeria better prepared to deal with the global economic crisis, having averted the boom-bust pattern that characterized previous oil price cycles. Central to this success is the oil-price-based fiscal rule, which broke the link between public spending and oil prices and created a substantial cushion of oil savings. Nevertheless, the global crisis had a significant impact on Nigeria's economy, with lower oil prices putting pressure on the fiscal and external accounts. Infrastructure has been the primary obstacle to the country's growth. In August 2010, government officials unveiled a power sector blueprint that included privatization of the state-run electricity generation and distribution facilities. The government also has been working to develop stronger public-private partnerships for roads.

In May 2011, the Nigerian Senate approved the Nigeria Sovereign Investment Authority Bill, which seeks to establish a sovereign wealth fund to manage excess profits from the country's sale of crude oil. The move to establish a so-called sovereign wealth fund was being made as an effort to preserve and increase its oil revenue. By October 2011,Wall Street giants such as Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley were courting top Nigerian officials in hopes of getting a stake in a portfolio that could end up being worth tens of billions of dollars. "The country is at a point of inflection, and what we do in the next few years will set the pace," said Olusegun Aganga, the former Nigerian finance minister and current minister for trade and investment, who helped create the sovereign wealth fund. "It's a land of opportunities, which unfortunately has not been tapped well." Still, in late October 2011, Nigeria's governors appealed to the Supreme Court to block the federal government's planned removal of $1 billion from the country's crude oil savings to set up the sovereign wealth fund and it remained to be seen if it would ever actually come to fruition. Overall, for the year, economic growth remained strong and a modest fiscal consolidation took place.

In July 2012, Nigeria's state-oil company said it was owed $7 billion in government fuel import subsidies. There was concern that the debts would clean out savings. Nigeria's Central Bank Governor Lamido Sanusi was quoted by Reuters as saying that risks from high government spending, worsening security problems and lower oil output were “ominous.” Also in late July 2012, Nigeria's central bank (CBN) left its benchmark interest rate on hold at 12 percent but took steps to tighten liquidity to support the weakening local naira currency, which has been impacted by declining oil prices and global risk aversion. Some members of Nigeria's parliament went as far as to say that President Goodluck Jonathan could be impeached if the government didn’t implement all the projects in the 2012 budget prior to lawmakers returning from their recess in September.

Severe floods affected agricultural output in 2012 but the economy remained resilient. Meanwhile, there was no doubt that Nigeria’s financial sector was growing fast, as banks tapped into GDP growth of 7 percent. Total banking assets almost doubled in two years to about US$132.1 billion as of December 2012. It’s important to note, though, that bank lending is mainly to government or multinationals rather than to domestic businesses or retail customers. Bank profits in 2013 were being squeezed and banks were seeking a new way to make money. Meanwhile, the country was suffering from a housing shortage of some 17 million units with limited housing financing. There were only 20,000 mortgages in the country in 2013, according to Ministry of Finance data cited by Reuters. In October 2013, Fitch Ratings affirmed Nigeria’s long-term foreign and local currency IDRs and senior unsecured bond ratings at ‘BB-‘ and ‘BB’ respectively with a stable outlook. While GDP growth slowed in the first half of 2013, the non-oil economy still grew by 7.6 percent. In November 2013, Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan refused to present the 2014 budget to the national assembly because of a dispute between his team and lawmakers on how to control spending. Lawmakers had indicated they would increase spending in the 2014 budget, ahead of presidential and parliamentary polls in 2015, but the houses could not agree on the exact amount.

Fiscal authorities pursued countercyclical policies in 2011-2013, significantly reducing the budget deficit. Real GDP growth was projected to have been strong in 2013 due to continued strong performance in the non-oil sector. Inflation declined by the end of the year, supported by lower food price, fiscal consolidation, and a tight monetary policy stance.

Economic growth was expected to improve further in 2014, driven by agriculture, trade, and services.

In April 2014, Bloomberg reported that Nigeria’s economy had surpassed South Africa’s as the largest on the continent after Nigeria overhauled its GDP data for the first time in two decades. The revised data - with 2014 GDP estimated at US$479 billion - made Nigeria the 26th-biggest economy in the world. However, the country still lagged in income per capita, ranking 121 with $2,688 for each citizen, according to Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

In late October 2014, Nigeria's central bank cut the limit on banks' foreign currency borrowings to

75 percent of shareholders' funds from 200 percent, according to Reuters. Nigerian banks had raised over $1.1 billion over the course of the year by issuing Eurobonds and other types of debt instruments as lenders clamored to take advantage of loose monetary policies by global central banks trying to shore up their capital bases. The local currency was down by nearly 4 percent against the dollar as of late October 2014. Also in October 2014, Nigeria's finance minister said he expected the country's economic growth for 2015 to reach 6.75 percent, an improvement compared to 2014 despite the risks posed by falling global oil prices to government revenues, according to a Reuters article.

However, robust growth of around 7 percent for the past decade was being threatened by macroeconomic challenges, particularly exchange-rate volatility and falling global oil prices that impacted public-sector spending.

The main opposition party, the All Progressive's Congress, in April 2015 won the most competitive presidential elections in Nigeria's history, which were considered relatively peaceful in spite of the insurgency in the northeast.

By September 2015, Nigeria was struggling with an unprecedented economic crisis due to a plunge in oil revenues undermining the state's ability to provide even basic services, according to Senate President Bukola Saraki as cited by Reuters.

A collapse of global oil prices has whacked public finances and weakened the naira, delaying public salaries and fuelling inflation. Oil is the main source for the budget and to fund food imports.

"The dwindling oil revenue has brought enormous shock to our economy and greatly limited the capacity of government at various levels to meet even basic commitments," Saraki told the Senate, according to a copy of his speech. "Our country has gone through periods of recession in the past. What we face today is however unprecedented in ramification and potential gravity."

Meanwhile, foreign investors and Nigerian were charging that Nigeria was suffering from a policy vacuum as they tried to work around currency restrictions imposed by the central bank seeking to prevent collapse of the naira.

Economic Performance

Reforms initiated earlier this decade have put Nigeria in a position of strength in the face of the global economic crisis, but the crisis has adversely affected the economy through lower oil prices. Following strong growth from 2006 to 2008, real GDP slowed in 2009 reflecting weaker demand from the public sector and decelerating credit extension to the private sector. Real GDP growth was strong from 2010 to 2012.

According to CountryWatch estimated calculations for 2014:

Real GDP growth rate was: 6.7 percent
The fiscal deficit/surplus as percent of GDP (%) was: -1.3 percent
Inflation was measured at: 10.5 percent

Updated in 2015

**Please note that the figures in our Economic Performance section are estimates or forecasts based on IMF-based data that are formulated using CountryWatch models of analysis.*

Supplementary Sources: New York Times, International Monetary Fund, Bloomberg and Reuters

Nominal GDP and Components

Nominal GDP and Components					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Nominal GDP (LCU billions)	63,713.36	72,599.63	81,009.96	90,136.98	98,309.30
Nominal GDP Growth Rate (%)	14.862	13.947	11.585	11.267	9.067
Consumption (LCU billions)	41,686.51	42,394.48	58,440.39	67,118.14	70,987.76
Government Expenditure (LCU billions)	5,412.01	5,953.21	6,548.53	7,520.91	7,954.52
Gross Capital Formation (LCU billions)	10,329.20	10,822.93	11,924.54	13,695.20	17,064.53
Exports of Goods &					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Services (LCU billions)	19,961.27	22,824.41	14,615.29	14,512.06	16,553.26
Imports of Goods & Services (LCU billions)	13,675.63	9,395.40	10,518.78	12,709.32	14,250.78

Population and GDP Per Capita

Population and GDP Per Capita					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Population, total (million)	160.342	164.752	169.282	173.938	178.721
Population growth (%)	2.750	2.750	2.750	2.750	2.750
Nominal GDP per Capita (LCU 1000s)	397,359.14	440,660.08	478,550.38	518,213.30	550,071.33

Real GDP and Inflation

Real GDP and Inflation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Real Gross Domestic Product (LCU billions 2005 base)	58,180.40	60,670.07	63,942.95	67,977.64	70,667.14
Real GDP Growth Rate (%)	4.887	4.279	5.395	6.310	3.956
GDP Deflator (2005=100.0)	109.510	119.663	126.691	132.598	139.116
Inflation, GDP Deflator (%)	9.510	9.271	5.873	4.663	4.916

Government Spending and Taxation

Government Spending and Taxation					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Government Fiscal Budget (billions)	11,039.28	10,189.05	10,819.53	11,251.09	11,136.29
Fiscal Budget Growth Rate (percentage)	19.522	-7.7019	6.188	3.989	-1.0203
National Tax Rate Net of Transfers (%)	17.729	14.296	11.047	10.522	7.478
Government Revenues Net of Transfers (LCU billions)	11,296.00	10,379.04	8,949.41	9,484.10	7,351.14
Government Surplus(-) Deficit(+) (LCU billions)	256.728	189.996	-1870.1240	-1766.9850	-3785.1440
Government Surplus(+) Deficit(-) (%GDP)	0.4029	0.2617	-2.3085	-1.9603	-3.8502

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment

Money Supply, Interest Rates and Unemployment					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Money and Quasi-Money (M2) (LCU billions)	13,179.00	15,391.22	17,307.37	18,233.40	19,886.54
Money Supply Growth Rate (%)	12.999	16.786	12.450	5.351	9.067
Lending Interest Rate (%)	16.017	16.792	16.722	16.548	15.449
Unemployment Rate (%)	6.000	10.600	10.000	7.800	8.200

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate

Foreign Trade and the Exchange Rate					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Official Exchange Rate (LCU/$US)	152.121	155.420	155.247	157.033	199.416
Trade Balance NIPA ($US billions)	41.320	86.405	26.387	11.480	11.546
Trade Balance % of GDP	9.866	18.497	5.057	2.000	2.342
Total Foreign Exchange Reserves ($US billions)	36.264	47.548	46.255	37.497	42.364

Data in US Dollars

Data in US Dollars					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Nominal GDP ($US billions)	418.834	467.119	521.812	573.999	492.986
Exports ($US billions)	131.220	146.856	94.142	92.414	83.009
Imports ($US billions)	89.900	60.452	67.755	80.934	71.463

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units

Energy Consumption and Production Standard Units					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (TBPD)	288.416	279.191	280.000	288.086	291.972
Petroleum Production (TBPD)	2,554.95	2,507.48	2,364.28	2,373.45	2,389.67
Petroleum Net Exports (TBPD)	2,266.53	2,228.29	2,084.28	2,085.37	2,097.70
Natural Gas Consumption (bcf)	190.701	505.181	554.128	534.261	564.105
Natural Gas Production (bcf)	1,108.56	1,508.29	1,359.27	1,343.12	1,469.32
Natural Gas Net Exports (bcf)	917.858	1,003.11	805.144	808.856	905.219
Coal Consumption (1000s st)	35.274	35.274	43.008	45.870	46.683
Coal Production (1000s st)	34.600	33.231	39.527	41.554	41.609
Coal Net Exports (1000s st)	-0.6736	-2.0431	-3.4812	-4.3167	-5.0744
Nuclear Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Hydroelectric Production (bil kwh)	5.824	5.602	5.854	6.100	6.195
Renewables Production (bil kwh)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS

Energy Consumption and Production QUADS					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Consumption (Quads)	0.6158	0.5961	0.5979	0.6151	0.6234
Petroleum Production (Quads)	5.455	5.391	5.065	5.184	4.078
Petroleum Net Exports (Quads)	4.839	4.794	4.467	4.569	3.455
Natural Gas Consumption (Quads)	0.1945	0.5153	0.5652	0.5449	0.5754
Natural Gas Production (Quads)	1.130	1.533	1.384	1.390	1.283
Natural Gas Net Exports (Quads)	0.9351	1.018	0.8184	0.8447	0.7074
Coal Consumption (Quads)	0.0007	0.0007	0.0009	0.0009	0.0009
Coal Production (Quads)	0.0007	0.0007	0.0008	0.0008	0.0008
Coal Net Exports (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	-0.0001	-0.0002
Nuclear Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Hydroelectric Production (Quads)	0.0582	0.0560	0.0585	0.0610	0.0619
Renewables Production (Quads)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

World Energy Price Summary

World Energy Price Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum-WTI ($/bbl)	95.054	94.159	97.943	93.112	48.709
Natural Gas-Henry Hub ($/mmbtu)	3.999	2.752	3.729	4.369	2.614
Coal Thermal-Australian ($/mt)	121.448	96.364	84.562	70.130	57.511

CO2 Emissions

CO2 Emissions					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Petroleum Based (mm mt C)	13.759	13.318	13.357	13.743	13.928
Natural Gas Based (mm mt C)	3.094	8.196	8.990	8.668	9.152
Coal Based (mm mt C)	0.0202	0.0202	0.0246	0.0263	0.0268
Total CO2 Emissions (mm mt C)	16.873	21.535	22.372	22.437	23.107

Agriculture Consumption and Production

Agriculture Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	8,879.26	8,695.89	8,416.34	10,784.63	9,705.64
Corn Production (1000 metric tons)	8,862.00	8,668.46	8,388.35	10,955.67	10,210.76
Corn Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-17.2606	-27.4348	-27.9862	171.044	505.122
Soybeans Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	484.861	644.321	521.917	683.588	599.578
Soybeans Production (1000 metric tons)	493.498	648.821	514.819	668.015	629.348
Soybeans Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	8.637	4.500	-7.0980	-15.5727	29.769
Rice Total					

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Consumption (1000 metric tons)	4,612.76	5,433.23	4,823.41	6,734.42	5,901.57
Rice Production (1000 metric tons)	4,615.72	5,432.84	4,821.22	6,731.35	6,629.99
Rice Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	2.965	-0.3916	-2.1972	-3.0690	728.428
Coffee Total Consumption (metric tons)	2,209.00	2,692.00	2,069.00	1,996.71	1,842.95
Coffee Production (metric tons)	2,515.75	2,900.21	2,056.46	1,988.73	1,801.62
Coffee Net Exports (metric tons)	306.751	208.210	-12.5381	-7.9800	-41.3355
Cocoa Beans Total Consumption (metric tons)	172,500.00	183,710.00	184,101.00	186,569.60	197,325.33
Cocoa Beans Production (metric tons)	395,341.60	397,553.15	389,338.66	372,206.03	377,124.36
Cocoa Beans Net Exports (metric tons)	222,841.60	213,843.15	205,237.66	185,636.43	179,799.04

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Wheat Total Consumption (1000 metric tons)	4,204.40	4,167.04	4,438.76	4,585.92	3,789.14
Wheat Production (1000 metric tons)	164.633	100.529	79.875	90.297	75.152
Wheat Net Exports (1000 metric tons)	-4039.7635	-4066.5146	-4358.8883	-4495.6209	-3713.9849

World Agriculture Pricing Summary

World Agriculture Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Corn Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	291.684	298.417	259.389	192.881	169.750
Soybeans Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	540.667	591.417	538.417	491.771	390.417
Rice Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	458.558	525.071	473.989	425.148	386.033
Coffee Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	5.976	4.111	3.076	4.424	3.526
Cocoa Beans Pricing Summary ($/kilogram)	2.980	2.392	2.439	3.062	3.135
Wheat Pricing Summary ($/metric ton)	316.264	313.242	312.248	284.895	203.177

Metals Consumption and Production

Metals Consumption and Production					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Copper Net Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Consumption (1000 mt)	21,965.54	29,141.28	22,672.57	26,112.77	23,072.50
Zinc Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Zinc Exports (1000 mt)	-21965.5350	-29141.2760	-22672.5660	-26112.7670	-23072.5035
Lead Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Lead Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Lead Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Tin Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Consumption (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Production (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Nickel Exports (1000 mt)	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Gold Consumption (kg)	4,529.62	5,223.36	5,450.61	6,476.28	5,600.62
Gold Production (kg)	3,380.85	4,896.88	5,130.54	6,144.88	6,152.94
Gold Exports (kg)	-1148.7639	-326.4833	-320.0678	-331.4028	552.316

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Silver Consumption (mt)	222.391	222.391	222.391	245.000	198.781
Silver Production (mt)	2,545.07	2,670.46	2,713.63	2,808.26	2,580.86
Silver Exports (mt)	2,322.68	2,448.06	2,491.24	2,563.26	2,382.08

World Metals Pricing Summary

World Metals Pricing Summary					
	2011	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Copper ($/mt)	8,828.19	7,962.35	7,332.10	6,863.40	5,510.46
Zinc ($/mt)	2,193.90	1,950.41	1,910.26	2,160.97	1,931.68
Tin ($/mt)	26,053.68	21,125.99	22,282.80	21,898.87	16,066.63
Lead ($/mt)	2,400.81	2,064.64	2,139.79	2,095.46	1,787.82
Nickel ($/mt)	22,910.36	17,547.55	15,031.80	16,893.38	11,862.64
Gold ($/oz)	1,569.21	1,669.52	1,411.46	1,265.58	1,160.66
Silver ($/oz)	35.224	31.137	23.850	19.071	15.721

Economic Performance Index

Economic Performance Index

The Economic Performance rankings are calculated by CountryWatch's editorial team, and are based on criteria including sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus, unemployment and structural imbalances. Scores are assessed from 0 to 100 using this aforementioned criteria as well as CountryWatch's proprietary economic research data and models.

	Bank stability risk	Monetary/ Currency stability	Government Finances	Empl./ Unempl.	Econ.GNP growth or decline/ forecast
	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	0 - 100	%
North Americas					
Canada	92	69	35	38	3.14%
United States	94	76	4	29	3.01%
Western Europe					
Austria	90	27	30	63	1.33%
Belgium	88	27	19	23	1.15%
Cyprus	81	91	16	80	-0.69%
Denmark	97	70	45	78	1.20%
Finland	89	27	41	33	1.25%

France	87	27	18	27	1.52%
Germany	86	27	22	21	1.25%
Greece	79	27	5	24	-2.00%
Iceland	90	17	2	34	-3.04%
Italy	85	27	37	24	0.84%
Ireland	92	27	11	10	-1.55%
Luxembourg	99	27	28	66	2.08%
Malta	77	27	41	51	0.54%
Netherlands	91	27	26	74	1.30%
Norway	98	44	10	76	1.08%
Portugal	77	27	13	20	0.29%
Spain	83	27	9	3	-0.41%
Sweden	94	72	54	32	1.23%
Switzerland	97	86	55	77	1.53%
United Kingdom	85	12	9	37	1.34%
Central and Eastern Europe					
Albania	44	60	33	6	2.30%
Armenia	45	59	49	30	1.80%

Azerbaijan	56	4	84	99	2.68%
Belarus	59	21	83	98	2.41%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	68	69	N/A	0.50%
Bulgaria	58	75	88	49	0.20%
Croatia	69	68	94	9	0.18%
Czech Republic	80	89	29	70	1.67%
Estonia	72	90	66	92	0.80%
Georgia	36	60	53	56	2.00%
Hungary	70	66	26	54	-0.16%
Latvia	67	100	65	44	-3.97%
Lithuania	65	91	87	79	-1.65%
Macedonia (FYR)	53	69	56	2	2.03%
Moldova	23	36	81	67	2.50%
Poland	74	74	38	12	2.72%
Romania	62	56	70	62	0.75%
Russia	73	18	90	8	4.00%
Serbia	48	49	52	5	1.97%

Montenegro	39	27	73	1	-1.70%
Slovak Republic	80	62	30	14	4.06%
Slovenia	81	27	36	65	1.12%
Ukraine	41	11	57	N/A	3.68%
Africa					
Algeria	57	18	96	7	4.55%
Angola	49	1	97	N/A	7.05%
Benin	19	91	20	N/A	3.22%
Botswana	68	58	76	N/A	6.33%
Burkina Faso	16	91	13	N/A	4.41%
Burundi	2	91	6	N/A	3.85%
Cameroon	26	91	91	N/A	2.58%
Cape Verde	52	87	4	N/A	4.96%
Central African Republic	9	91	32	N/A	3.18%
Chad	22	91	89	N/A	4.42%
Congo	52	87	87	N/A	12.13%
Côte d'Ivoire	25	91	82	28	2.98%
Dem. Republic					

Congo	4	91	47	N/A	5.44%
Djibouti	31	76	50	N/A	4.47%
Egypt	37	20	24	69	5.01%
Equatorial Guinea	82	91	85	N/A	0.94%
Eritrea	1	3	1	18	1.81%
Ethiopia	6	45	8	N/A	6.96%
Gabon	64	91	96	N/A	5.36%
Gambia	8	48	86	N/A	4.82%
Ghana	9	11	69	N/A	4.50%
Guinea	10	7	91	N/A	3.03%
Guinea-Bissau	5	91	46	N/A	3.47%
Kenya	20	41	59	N/A	4.11%
Lesotho	13	40	12	N/A	2.98%
Liberia	12	73	74	N/A	5.92%
Libya	73	2	94	N/A	5.22%
Madagascar	4	22	24	N/A	-1.02%
Malawi	7	25	55	N/A	5.96%
Mali	20	91	82	N/A	5.12%

Mauritania	15	13	93	N/A	4.58%
Mauritius	65	52	56	55	4.10%
Morocco	37	72	48	26	3.23%
Mozambique	12	23	71	N/A	6.45%
Namibia	40	39	62	N/A	1.70%
Niger	10	91	21	N/A	4.41%
Nigeria	30	6	61	N/A	6.98%
Rwanda	21	40	68	N/A	5.39%
Sao Tome & Principe	1	61	100	N/A	3.40%
Senegal	24	91	63	N/A	3.44%
Seychelles	60	67	97	N/A	4.01%
Sierra Leone	5	10	39	N/A	4.77%
Somalia	2	38	59	N/A	3.19%
South Africa	61	37	70	N/A	2.59%
Sudan	16	5	73	N/A	5.52%
Swaziland	32	44	79	N/A	1.09%
Tanzania	15	45	32	N/A	6.17%
Togo	8	91	92	N/A	2.56%

Tunisia	50	61	44	39	4.00%
Uganda	11	17	54	N/A	5.59%
Zambia	29	20	49	N/A	5.84%
Zimbabwe	0	8	16	N/A	2.24%
South and Central America					
Argentina	66	3	80	36	3.50%
Belize	47	76	80	N/A	1.00%
Bolivia	32	51	61	81	3.99%
Brazil	71	47	78	11	5.50%
Chile	78	25	92	73	4.72%
Columbia	47	52	34	47	2.25%
Costa Rica	60	42	39	57	3.45%
Ecuador	43	76	75	64	2.51%
El Salvador	35	76	67	N/A	1.04%
Guatemala	46	59	58	N/A	2.52%
Honduras	27	47	58	N/A	2.00%
Mexico	69	42	52	61	4.07%
Nicaragua	23	49	42	N/A	1.75%

Panama	66	76	72	45	5.00%
Paraguay	35	46	66	16	5.27%
Peru	59	66	75	22	6.33%
Suriname	58	26	81	59	4.02%
Uruguay	70	26	27	N/A	5.71%
Venezuela	55	1	28	13	-2.63%
Caribbean					
Antigua & Barbuda	72	76	15	N/A	-2.01%
Bahamas	74	76	45	87	-0.50%
Barbados	67	76	33	15	-0.50%
Bermuda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cuba	45	76	18	95	0.25%
Dominica	53	76	65	N/A	1.40%
Dominican Republic	54	39	43	4	3.50%
Grenada	63	76	48	N/A	0.80%
Guyana	28	56	17	N/A	4.36%
Haiti	11	27	89	N/A	-8.50%
Jamaica	42	9	85	19	-0.28%

St Lucia	55	76	67	N/A	1.14%
St Vincent & Grenadines	49	76	95	N/A	0.50%
Trinidad & Tobago	82	37	77	72	2.13%
Middle East					
Bahrain	84	76	62	91	3.48%
Iran	51	19	40	58	3.01%
Iraq	48	9	8	N/A	7.27%
Israel	87	62	12	48	3.20%
Jordan	41	51	3	N/A	4.10%
Kuwait	96	4	99	N/A	3.10%
Lebanon	63	54	2	N/A	6.00%
Oman	76	16	88	N/A	4.71%
Qatar	99	16	83	N/A	18.54%
Saudi Arabia	76	8	98	N/A	3.70%
Syria	61	24	40	N/A	5.00%
Turkey	75	23	27	60	5.20%
United Arab Emirates	96	24	98	94	1.29%

Yemen	28	2	78	N/A	7.78%
Asia					
Afghanistan	17	70	74	N/A	8.64%
Bangladesh	13	43	25	N/A	5.38%
Bhutan	24	55	5	N/A	6.85%
Brunei	78	19	99	75	0.48%
Cambodia	18	67	42	N/A	4.77%
China	54	90	19	68	11.03%
Hong Kong	89	76	14	82	5.02%
India	31	38	34	35	8.78%
Indonesia	42	46	37	31	6.00%
Japan	88	89	6	71	1.90%
Kazakhstan	62	13	76	42	2.40%
Korea North	18	65	23	N/A	1.50%
Korea South	83	63	22	85	4.44%
Kyrgyz Republic	24	15	84	88	4.61%
Laos	17	54	7	N/A	7.22%
Macao	91	76	14	82	3.00%

Malaysia	68	65	44	90	4.72%
Maldives	44	55	17	N/A	3.45%
Mongolia	33	5	77	93	7.22%
Myanmar	3	41	72	N/A	5.26%
Nepal	3	14	25	N/A	2.97%
Pakistan	19	15	31	41	3.00%
Papua New Guinea	75	50	11	N/A	7.96%
Philippines	30	48	53	43	3.63%
Singapore	93	75	63	40	5.68%
Sri Lanka	38	22	10	N/A	5.50%
Taiwan	84	88	35	89	6.50%
Tajikistan	6	6	60	97	4.00%
Thailand	56	64	90	96	5.46%
Turkmenistan	51	53	68	N/A	12.00%
Uzbekistan	40	10	60	100	8.00%
Vietnam	25	12	20	N/A	6.04%
Pacific					
Australia	96	63	31	46	2.96%

Fiji	46	53	3	N/A	2.06%
Marshall Islands	27	76	46	N/A	1.08%
Micronesia (Fed. States)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New Caledonia	96	73	51	52	2.00%
New Zealand	98	73	51	52	2.00%
Samoa	34	88	64	N/A	-2.77%
Solomon Islands	14	71	1	N/A	3.36%
Tonga	26	57	38	N/A	0.60%
Vanuatu	33	58	47	N/A	3.80%

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

This material was produced in 2010; it is subject to updating in 2012.

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Chapter 4

Investment Overview

Foreign Investment Climate

Background

Oil-rich Nigeria has been hobbled by political instability, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, and poor macroeconomic management but in 2008 began pursuing economic reforms. Nigeria's former military rulers failed to diversify the economy away from its overdependence on the capital-intensive oil sector, which provides 95% of foreign exchange earnings and about 80% of budgetary revenues. Following the signing of an IMF stand-by agreement in August 2000, Nigeria received a debt-restructuring deal from the Paris Club and a $1 billion credit from the IMF, both contingent on economic reforms. Nigeria pulled out of its IMF program in April 2002, after failing to meet spending and exchange rate targets, making it ineligible for additional debt forgiveness from the Paris Club. In November 2005, Abuja won Paris Club approval for a debt-relief deal that eliminated $18 billion of debt in exchange for $12 billion in payments - a total package worth $30 billion of Nigeria's total $37 billion external debt. Since 2008 the government has begun to show the political will to implement the market-oriented reforms urged by the IMF, such as modernizing the banking system, curbing inflation by blocking excessive wage demands, and resolving regional disputes over the distribution of earnings from the oil industry. GDP rose strongly in 2007-10 because of increased oil exports and high global crude prices in 2010. President JONATHAN has pledged to continue the economic reforms of his predecessor with emphasis on infrastructure improvements. Infrastructure is the main impediment to growth and in August 2010 JONATHAN unveiled a power sector blueprint that includes privatization of the state-run electricity generation and distribution facilities. The government also is working toward developing stronger public-private partnerships for roads. Nigeria's financial sector was hurt by the global financial and economic crises and the Central Bank governor has taken measures to strengthen that sector.

Foreign Investment Assessment

Nigeria is Africa's largest supplier of oil to the United States. In terms of foreign investment, the country offers a low cost labor pool, a vast array of natural resources, as well as a significant domestic market in the region. But foreign investors are challenged by the country's inadequate infrastructure, corruption, and opaque regulatory system. Foreign investors must spend a great deal of time, money and effort to begin operations before the profits can be earned. It should also be noted that while Nigeria's basic infrastructure is extensive, given the size of the population --

the largest in Africa -- it is actually quite inadequate. The physical problems of dilapidated roads and bridges, inconsistent telephone service, and shortages of fuel, water, electrical power are complicated by periodic episodes of social and political unrest across the country.

Industries

crude oil, coal, tin, columbite, palm oil, peanuts, cotton, rubber, wood, hides and skins, textiles, cement and other construction materials, food products, footwear, chemicals, fertilizer, printing, ceramics, steel; (agricultural products include -- cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, corn, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava (tapioca), yams, rubber; cattle, sheep, goats, pigs; timber; fish)

Import Commodities

machinery, chemicals, transport equipment, manufactured goods, food and live animals

Import Partners

US 15.6%, UK 9.6%, Germany 7.3%, China 7.2%, Italy 4.3%

Export Commodities

petroleum and petroleum products 95%, cocoa, rubber

Export Partners

US 38.3%, India 9.9%, Brazil 6.8%, Spain 6.2%, France 5.6%, Japan 4%

Ports and Harbors

Calabar, Lagos, Onne, Port Harcourt, Sapele, Warri

Telephone System

general assessment: an inadequate system, further limited by poor maintenance; major expansion is

required and a start has been made; country code - 234

Internet Users

750,000; on the increase

Labor Force

54.36 million according to recent estimates in the following sectors -- agriculture 70%, services 20%, industry 10%,

Legal System and Considerations

The Nigerian legal system is fashioned after English common law but has been modified by statutes in order to meet local demands and conditions. Some such modifications include the use of Shariah (Islamic) law or tribal law in some areas. Although Nigeria possesses this legal and judicial system, enforcement of judgments in Nigerian courts is painstakingly slow and at times suspect. First the court system is overburdened and in many cases, judgments are written by hand rather than placed on computerized record. In the past, judgments were sometimes ignored completely. In general, a large degree of corruption pervades the system making it rather bereft of transparency in practice.

Corruption Perception Ranking

See Corruption Perception index reported by Transparency International elsewhere in this report, from least to most corrupt countries. Typically, Nigeria ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world according to this index

Cultural Considerations

Note that Nigeria is a culturally and religiously diverse country where tribe and ethnic affiliation is important. Be sure to be sensitive to these differences.

Country Website (s)

N/A

Foreign Investment Index

Foreign Investment Index

The Foreign Investment Index is a proprietary index measuring attractiveness to international investment flows. The Foreign Investment Index is calculated using an established methodology by CountryWatch's Editor-in-Chief and is based on a given country's economic stability (sustained economic growth, monetary stability, current account deficits, budget surplus), economic risk (risk of non-servicing of payments for goods or services, loans and trade-related finance, risk of sovereign default), business and investment climate (property rights, labor force and laws, regulatory transparency, openness to foreign investment, market conditions, and stability of government). Scores are assigned from 0-10 using the aforementioned criteria. A score of 0 marks the lowest level of foreign investment viability, while a score of 10 marks the highest level of foreign investment viability, according to this proprietary index.

Country	Assessment
Afghanistan	2
Albania	4.5
Algeria	6
Andorra	9
Angola	4.5-5
Antigua	8.5
Argentina	5

Armenia	5
Australia	9.5
Austria	9-9.5
Azerbaijan	5
Bahamas	9
Bahrain	7.5
Bangladesh	4.5
Barbados	9
Belarus	4
Belgium	9
Belize	7.5
Benin	5.5
Bhutan	4.5
Bolivia	4.5
Bosnia-Herzegovina	5
Botswana	7.5-8
Brazil	8
Brunei	7

Bulgaria	5.5
Burkina Faso	4
Burma (Myanmar)	4.5
Burundi	4
Cambodia	4.5
Cameroon	5
Canada	9.5
Cape Verde	6
Central African Republic	3
Chad	4
Chile	9
China	7.5
China: Hong Kong	8.5
China: Taiwan	8.5
Colombia	7
Comoros	4
Congo DRC	4
Congo RC	5

Costa Rica	8
Cote d'Ivoire	4.5
Croatia	7
Cuba	4.5
Cyprus	7
Czech Republic	8.5
Denmark	9.5
Djibouti	4.5
Dominica	6
Dominican Republic	6.5
East Timor	4.5
Ecuador	5.5
Egypt	4.5-5
El Salvador	6
Equatorial Guinea	4.5
Eritrea	3.5
Estonia	8
Ethiopia	4.5

Fiji	5
Finland	9
Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia	5
France	9-9.5
Gabon	5.5
Gambia	5
Georgia	5
Germany	9-9.5
Ghana	5.5
Greece	5
Grenada	7.5
Guatemala	5.5
Guinea	3.5
Guinea-Bissau	3.5
Guyana	4.5
Haiti	4
Holy See (Vatican)	n/a
Hong Kong (China)	8.5

Honduras	5.5
Hungary	8
Iceland	8-8.5
India	8
Indonesia	5.5
Iran	4
Iraq	3
Ireland	8
Israel	8.5
Italy	8
Jamaica	5.5
Japan	9.5
Jordan	6
Kazakhstan	6
Kenya	5
Kiribati	5.5
Korea, North	1
Korea, South	9

Kosovo	4.5
Kuwait	8.5
Kyrgyzstan	4.5
Laos	4
Latvia	7
Lebanon	5
Lesotho	5.5
Liberia	3.5
Libya	3
Liechtenstein	9
Lithuania	7.5
Luxembourg	9-9.5
Madagascar	4.5
Malawi	4.5
Malaysia	8.5
Maldives	6.5
Mali	5
Malta	9

Marshall Islands	5
Mauritania	4.5
Mauritius	7.5-8
Mexico	6.5-7
Micronesia	5
Moldova	4.5-5
Monaco	9
Mongolia	5
Montenegro	5.5
Morocco	7.5
Mozambique	5
Namibia	7.5
Nauru	4.5
Nepal	4
Netherlands	9-9.5
New Zealand	9.5
Nicaragua	5
Niger	4.5

Nigeria	4.5
Norway	9-9.5
Oman	8
Pakistan	4
Palau	4.5-5
Panama	7
Papua New Guinea	5
Paraguay	6
Peru	6
Philippines	6
Poland	8
Portugal	7.5-8
Qatar	9
Romania	6-6.5
Russia	6
Rwanda	4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	8
Saint Lucia	8

Saint Vincent and Grenadines	7
Samoa	7
San Marino	8.5
Sao Tome and Principe	4.5-5
Saudi Arabia	7
Senegal	6
Serbia	6
Seychelles	5
Sierra Leone	4
Singapore	9.5
Slovak Republic (Slovakia)	8.5
Slovenia	8.5-9
Solomon Islands	5
Somalia	2
South Africa	8
Spain	7.5-8
Sri Lanka	5.5
Sudan	4

Suriname	5
Swaziland	4.5
Sweden	9.5
Switzerland	9.5
Syria	2.5
Tajikistan	4
Taiwan (China)	8.5
Tanzania	5
Thailand	7.5-8
Togo	4.5-5
Tonga	5.5-6
Trinidad and Tobago	8-8.5
Tunisia	6
Turkey	6.5-7
Turkmenistan	4
Tuvalu	7
Uganda	5
Ukraine	4.5-5

United Arab Emirates	8.5
United Kingdom	9
United States	9
Uruguay	6.5-7
Uzbekistan	4
Vanuatu	6
Venezuela	5
Vietnam	5.5
Yemen	3
Zambia	4.5-5
Zimbabwe	3.5

Editor's Note:

As of 2015, the global economic crisis (emerging in 2008) had affected many countries across the world, resulting in changes to their rankings. Among those countries affected were top tier economies, such as the United Kingdom, Iceland, Switzerland and Austria. However, in all these cases, their rankings have moved back upward in the last couple of years as anxieties have eased. Other top tier countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland, and Italy, suffered some effects due to debt woes and the concomitant effect on the euro zone. Greece, another euro zone nation, was also downgraded due to its sovereign debt crisis; however, Greece's position on the precipice of default incurred a sharper downgrade than the other four euro zone countries mentioned above. Cyprus' exposure to Greek bank yielded a downgrade in its case. Slovenia and Latvia have been slightly downgraded due to a mix of economic and political concerns but could easily be upgraded in a future assessment, should these concerns abate. Meanwhile, the crisis in eastern Ukraine fueled downgrades in that country and neighboring Russia.

Despite the "trifecta of tragedy" in Japan in 2011 -- the earthquake, the ensuing tsunami, and the resulting nuclear crisis -- and the appreciable destabilization of the economic and political terrain therein, this country has only slightly been downgraded. Japan's challenges have been assessed to be transient, the government remains accountable, and there is little risk of default. Both India and China retain their rankings; India holds a slightly higher ranking than China due to its record of democratic representation and accountability.

There were shifts in opposite directions for Mali and Nigeria versus the Central African Republic, Burkina Faso, and Burundi. Mali was slightly upgraded due to its efforts to return to constitutional order following the 2012 coup and to neutralize the threat of separatists and Islamists. Likewise, a new government in Nigeria generated a slight upgrade as the country attempts to confront corruption, crime, and terrorism. But the Central African Republic was downgraded due to the takeover of the government by Seleka rebels and the continued decline into lawlessness in that country. Likewise, the attempts by the leaders of Burundi and Burkina Faso to hold onto power by by-passing the constitution raised eybrows and resulted in downgrades.

Political unrest in Libya and Algeria have contributed to a decision to marginally downgrade these countries as well. Syria incurred a sharper downgrade due to the devolution into de facto civil war and the dire security threat posed by Islamist terrorists. Iraq saw a similar downgrade as a result of the takeover of wide swaths of territory and the threat of genocide at the hands of Islamist terrorists. Yemen, likewise, has been downgraded due to political instability at the hands of secessionists, terrorists, Houthi rebels, and the intervention of external parties. Conversely, Egypt and Tunisia saw slight upgrades as their political environments stabilize.

At the low end of the spectrum, devolving security conditions and/or economic crisis have resulted in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe maintaining their low ratings.

The United States continues to retain its previous slight downgrade due to the enduring threat of default surrounding the debt ceiling in that country, matched by a conflict-ridden political climate. In the case of Mexico, there is limited concern about default, but increasing alarm over the security situation in that country and the government's ability to contain it. In Argentina, a default to bond holders resulted in a downgrade to that country. Finally, a small but significant upgrade was attributed to Cuba due to its recent pro-business reforms and its normalization of ties with the Unitd States.

Source:

CountryWatch Inc. www.countrywatch.com

Updated:

2015

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index

Transparency International: Corruption Perceptions Index

Editor's Note:

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index is a composite index which ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials. This index indicates the views of national and international business people and analysts about the levels of corruption in each country. The highest (and best) level of transparency is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

Rank	Country/Territory	CPI 2009 Score	Surveys Used	Confidence Range
1	New Zealand	9.4	6	9.1 - 9.5
2	Denmark	9.3	6	9.1 - 9.5
3	Singapore	9.2	9	9.0 - 9.4
3	Sweden	9.2	6	9.0 - 9.3
5	Switzerland	9.0	6	8.9 - 9.1
6	Finland	8.9	6	8.4 - 9.4
6	Netherlands	8.9	6	8.7 - 9.0
8	Australia	8.7	8	8.3 - 9.0

8	Canada	8.7	6	8.5 - 9.0
8	Iceland	8.7	4	7.5 - 9.4
11	Norway	8.6	6	8.2 - 9.1
12	Hong Kong	8.2	8	7.9 - 8.5
12	Luxembourg	8.2	6	7.6 - 8.8
14	Germany	8.0	6	7.7 - 8.3
14	Ireland	8.0	6	7.8 - 8.4
16	Austria	7.9	6	7.4 - 8.3
17	Japan	7.7	8	7.4 - 8.0
17	United Kingdom	7.7	6	7.3 - 8.2
19	United States	7.5	8	6.9 - 8.0
20	Barbados	7.4	4	6.6 - 8.2
21	Belgium	7.1	6	6.9 - 7.3
22	Qatar	7.0	6	5.8 - 8.1
22	Saint Lucia	7.0	3	6.7 - 7.5
24	France	6.9	6	6.5 - 7.3
25	Chile	6.7	7	6.5 - 6.9
25	Uruguay	6.7	5	6.4 - 7.1

27	Cyprus	6.6	4	6.1 - 7.1
27	Estonia	6.6	8	6.1 - 6.9
27	Slovenia	6.6	8	6.3 - 6.9
30	United Arab Emirates	6.5	5	5.5 - 7.5
31	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	6.4	3	4.9 - 7.5
32	Israel	6.1	6	5.4 - 6.7
32	Spain	6.1	6	5.5 - 6.6
34	Dominica	5.9	3	4.9 - 6.7
35	Portugal	5.8	6	5.5 - 6.2
35	Puerto Rico	5.8	4	5.2 - 6.3
37	Botswana	5.6	6	5.1 - 6.3
37	Taiwan	5.6	9	5.4 - 5.9
39	Brunei Darussalam	5.5	4	4.7 - 6.4
39	Oman	5.5	5	4.4 - 6.5
39	Korea (South)	5.5	9	5.3 - 5.7
42	Mauritius	5.4	6	5.0 - 5.9
43	Costa Rica	5.3	5	4.7 - 5.9

43	Macau	5.3	3	3.3 - 6.9
45	Malta	5.2	4	4.0 - 6.2
46	Bahrain	5.1	5	4.2 - 5.8
46	Cape Verde	5.1	3	3.3 - 7.0
46	Hungary	5.1	8	4.6 - 5.7
49	Bhutan	5.0	4	4.3 - 5.6
49	Jordan	5.0	7	3.9 - 6.1
49	Poland	5.0	8	4.5 - 5.5
52	Czech Republic	4.9	8	4.3 - 5.6
52	Lithuania	4.9	8	4.4 - 5.4
54	Seychelles	4.8	3	3.0 - 6.7
55	South Africa	4.7	8	4.3 - 4.9
56	Latvia	4.5	6	4.1 - 4.9
56	Malaysia	4.5	9	4.0 - 5.1
56	Namibia	4.5	6	3.9 - 5.1
56	Samoa	4.5	3	3.3 - 5.3
56	Slovakia	4.5	8	4.1 - 4.9
61	Cuba	4.4	3	3.5 - 5.1

61	Turkey	4.4	7	3.9 - 4.9
63	Italy	4.3	6	3.8 - 4.9
63	Saudi Arabia	4.3	5	3.1 - 5.3
65	Tunisia	4.2	6	3.0 - 5.5
66	Croatia	4.1	8	3.7 - 4.5
66	Georgia	4.1	7	3.4 - 4.7
66	Kuwait	4.1	5	3.2 - 5.1
69	Ghana	3.9	7	3.2 - 4.6
69	Montenegro	3.9	5	3.5 - 4.4
71	Bulgaria	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.5
71	FYR Macedonia	3.8	6	3.4 - 4.2
71	Greece	3.8	6	3.2 - 4.3
71	Romania	3.8	8	3.2 - 4.3
75	Brazil	3.7	7	3.3 - 4.3
75	Colombia	3.7	7	3.1 - 4.3
75	Peru	3.7	7	3.4 - 4.1
75	Suriname	3.7	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Burkina Faso	3.6	7	2.8 - 4.4

79	China	3.6	9	3.0 - 4.2
79	Swaziland	3.6	3	3.0 - 4.7
79	Trinidad and Tobago	3.6	4	3.0 - 4.3
83	Serbia	3.5	6	3.3 - 3.9
84	El Salvador	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.8
84	Guatemala	3.4	5	3.0 - 3.9
84	India	3.4	10	3.2 - 3.6
84	Panama	3.4	5	3.1 - 3.7
84	Thailand	3.4	9	3.0 - 3.8
89	Lesotho	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.8
89	Malawi	3.3	7	2.7 - 3.9
89	Mexico	3.3	7	3.2 - 3.5
89	Moldova	3.3	6	2.7 - 4.0
89	Morocco	3.3	6	2.8 - 3.9
89	Rwanda	3.3	4	2.9 - 3.7
95	Albania	3.2	6	3.0 - 3.3
95	Vanuatu	3.2	3	2.3 - 4.7
97	Liberia	3.1	3	1.9 - 3.8

97	Sri Lanka	3.1	7	2.8 - 3.4
99	Bosnia and Herzegovina	3.0	7	2.6 - 3.4
99	Dominican Republic	3.0	5	2.9 - 3.2
99	Jamaica	3.0	5	2.8 - 3.3
99	Madagascar	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
99	Senegal	3.0	7	2.5 - 3.6
99	Tonga	3.0	3	2.6 - 3.3
99	Zambia	3.0	7	2.8 - 3.2
106	Argentina	2.9	7	2.6 - 3.1
106	Benin	2.9	6	2.3 - 3.4
106	Gabon	2.9	3	2.6 - 3.1
106	Gambia	2.9	5	1.6 - 4.0
106	Niger	2.9	5	2.7 - 3.0
111	Algeria	2.8	6	2.5 - 3.1
111	Djibouti	2.8	4	2.3 - 3.2
111	Egypt	2.8	6	2.6 - 3.1
111	Indonesia	2.8	9	2.4 - 3.2
111	Kiribati	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3

111	Mali	2.8	6	2.4 - 3.2
111	Sao Tome and Principe	2.8	3	2.4 - 3.3
111	Solomon Islands	2.8	3	2.3 - 3.3
111	Togo	2.8	5	1.9 - 3.9
120	Armenia	2.7	7	2.6 - 2.8
120	Bolivia	2.7	6	2.4 - 3.1
120	Ethiopia	2.7	7	2.4 - 2.9
120	Kazakhstan	2.7	7	2.1 - 3.3
120	Mongolia	2.7	7	2.4 - 3.0
120	Vietnam	2.7	9	2.4 - 3.1
126	Eritrea	2.6	4	1.6 - 3.8
126	Guyana	2.6	4	2.5 - 2.7
126	Syria	2.6	5	2.2 - 2.9
126	Tanzania	2.6	7	2.4 - 2.9
130	Honduras	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Lebanon	2.5	3	1.9 - 3.1
130	Libya	2.5	6	2.2 - 2.8
130	Maldives	2.5	4	1.8 - 3.2

130	Mauritania	2.5	7	2.0 - 3.3
130	Mozambique	2.5	7	2.3 - 2.8
130	Nicaragua	2.5	6	2.3 - 2.7
130	Nigeria	2.5	7	2.2 - 2.7
130	Uganda	2.5	7	2.1 - 2.8
139	Bangladesh	2.4	7	2.0 - 2.8
139	Belarus	2.4	4	2.0 - 2.8
139	Pakistan	2.4	7	2.1 - 2.7
139	Philippines	2.4	9	2.1 - 2.7
143	Azerbaijan	2.3	7	2.0 - 2.6
143	Comoros	2.3	3	1.6 - 3.3
143	Nepal	2.3	6	2.0 - 2.6
146	Cameroon	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.6
146	Ecuador	2.2	5	2.0 - 2.5
146	Kenya	2.2	7	1.9 - 2.5
146	Russia	2.2	8	1.9 - 2.4
146	Sierra Leone	2.2	5	1.9 - 2.4
146	Timor-Leste	2.2	5	1.8 - 2.6

146	Ukraine	2.2	8	2.0 - 2.6
146	Zimbabwe	2.2	7	1.7 - 2.8
154	Côte d´Ivoire	2.1	7	1.8 - 2.4
154	Papua New Guinea	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Paraguay	2.1	5	1.7 - 2.5
154	Yemen	2.1	4	1.6 - 2.5
158	Cambodia	2.0	8	1.8 - 2.2
158	Central African Republic	2.0	4	1.9 - 2.2
158	Laos	2.0	4	1.6 - 2.6
158	Tajikistan	2.0	8	1.6 - 2.5
162	Angola	1.9	5	1.8 - 1.9
162	Congo Brazzaville	1.9	5	1.6 - 2.1
162	Democratic Republic of Congo	1.9	5	1.7 - 2.1
162	Guinea-Bissau	1.9	3	1.8 - 2.0
162	Kyrgyzstan	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.1
162	Venezuela	1.9	7	1.8 - 2.0
168	Burundi	1.8	6	1.6 - 2.0
168	Equatorial Guinea	1.8	3	1.6 - 1.9

168	Guinea	1.8	5	1.7 - 1.8
168	Haiti	1.8	3	1.4 - 2.3
168	Iran	1.8	3	1.7 - 1.9
168	Turkmenistan	1.8	4	1.7 - 1.9
174	Uzbekistan	1.7	6	1.5 - 1.8
175	Chad	1.6	6	1.5 - 1.7
176	Iraq	1.5	3	1.2 - 1.8
176	Sudan	1.5	5	1.4 - 1.7
178	Myanmar	1.4	3	0.9 - 1.8
179	Afghanistan	1.3	4	1.0 - 1.5
180	Somalia	1.1	3	0.9 - 1.4

Methodology:

As noted above, the highest (and best) level of transparency with the least perceived corruption is indicated by the number, 10. The lower (and worse) levels of transparency are indicated by lower numbers.

According to Transparency International, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) table shows a country's ranking and score, the number of surveys used to determine the score, and the confidence range of the scoring.

The rank shows how one country compares to others included in the index. The CPI score indicates the perceived level of public-sector corruption in a country/territory.

The CPI is based on 13 independent surveys. However, not all surveys include all countries. The

surveys used column indicates how many surveys were relied upon to determine the score for that country.

The confidence range indicates the reliability of the CPI scores and tells us that allowing for a margin of error, we can be 90% confident that the true score for this country lies within this range.

Note:

Kosovo, which separated from the Yugoslav successor state of Serbia, is not listed above. No calculation is available for Kosovo at this time, however, a future corruption index by Transparency International may include the world's newest country in its tally. Taiwan has been listed above despite its contested status; while Taiwan claims sovereign status, China claims ultimate jurisdiction over Taiwan. Hong Kong, which is also under the rubric of Chinese sovereignty, is listed above. Note as well that Puerto Rico, which is a United States domain, is also included in the list above. These inclusions likely have to do with the size and fairly autonomous status of their economies.

Source:

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; available at URL: http://www.transparency.org

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Competitiveness Ranking

Competitiveness Ranking

Editor's Note:

The Global Competitiveness Report's competitiveness ranking is based on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), which was developed for the World Economic Forum. The GCI is based on a number of competitiveness considerations, and provides a comprehensive picture of the competitiveness landscape in countries around the world. The competitiveness considerations are: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher

education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation. The rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey.

Country/Economy	GCI 2010 Rank	GCI 2010 Score	GCI 2009 Rank	Change 2009-2010
Switzerland	1	5.63	1	0
Sweden	2	5.56	4	2
Singapore	3	5.48	3	0
United States	4	5.43	2	-2
Germany	5	5.39	7	2
Japan	6	5.37	8	2
Finland	7	5.37	6	-1
Netherlands	8	5.33	10	2
Denmark	9	5.32	5	-4
Canada	10	5.30	9	-1
Hong Kong SAR	11	5.30	11	0
United Kingdom	12	5.25	13	1
Taiwan, China	13	5.21	12	-1
Norway	14	5.14	14	0

France	15	5.13	16	1
Australia	16	5.11	15	-1
Qatar	17	5.10	22	5
Austria	18	5.09	17	-1
Belgium	19	5.07	18	-1
Luxembourg	20	5.05	21	1
Saudi Arabia	21	4.95	28	7
Korea, Rep.	22	4.93	19	-3
New Zealand	23	4.92	20	-3
Israel	24	4.91	27	3
United Arab Emirates	25	4.89	23	-2
Malaysia	26	4.88	24	-2
China	27	4.84	29	2
Brunei Darussalam	28	4.75	32	4
Ireland	29	4.74	25	-4
Chile	30	4.69	30	0
Iceland	31	4.68	26	-5
Tunisia	32	4.65	40	8

Estonia	33	4.61	35	2
Oman	34	4.61	41	7
Kuwait	35	4.59	39	4
Czech Republic	36	4.57	31	-5
Bahrain	37	4.54	38	1
Thailand	38	4.51	36	-2
Poland	39	4.51	46	7
Cyprus	40	4.50	34	-6
Puerto Rico	41	4.49	42	1
Spain	42	4.49	33	-9
Barbados	43	4.45	44	1
Indonesia	44	4.43	54	10
Slovenia	45	4.42	37	-8
Portugal	46	4.38	43	-3
Lithuania	47	4.38	53	6
Italy	48	4.37	48	0
Montenegro	49	4.36	62	13
Malta	50	4.34	52	2

India	51	4.33	49	-2
Hungary	52	4.33	58	6
Panama	53	4.33	59	6
South Africa	54	4.32	45	-9
Mauritius	55	4.32	57	2
Costa Rica	56	4.31	55	-1
Azerbaijan	57	4.29	51	-6
Brazil	58	4.28	56	-2
Vietnam	59	4.27	75	16
Slovak Republic	60	4.25	47	-13
Turkey	61	4.25	61	0
Sri Lanka	62	4.25	79	17
Russian Federation	63	4.24	63	0
Uruguay	64	4.23	65	1
Jordan	65	4.21	50	-15
Mexico	66	4.19	60	-6
Romania	67	4.16	64	-3
Colombia	68	4.14	69	1

Iran	69	4.14	n/a	n/a
Latvia	70	4.14	68	-2
Bulgaria	71	4.13	76	5
Kazakhstan	72	4.12	67	-5
Peru	73	4.11	78	5
Namibia	74	4.09	74	0
Morocco	75	4.08	73	-2
Botswana	76	4.05	66	-10
Croatia	77	4.04	72	-5
Guatemala	78	4.04	80	2
Macedonia, FYR	79	4.02	84	5
Rwanda	80	4.00	n/a	n/a
Egypt	81	4.00	70	-11
El Salvador	82	3.99	77	-5
Greece	83	3.99	71	-12
Trinidad and Tobago	84	3.97	86	2
Philippines	85	3.96	87	2
Algeria	86	3.96	83	-3

Argentina	87	3.95	85	-2
Albania	88	3.94	96	8
Ukraine	89	3.90	82	-7
Gambia, The	90	3.90	81	-9
Honduras	91	3.89	89	-2
Lebanon	92	3.89	n/a	n/a
Georgia	93	3.86	90	-3
Moldova	94	3.86	n/a	n/a
Jamaica	95	3.85	91	-4
Serbia	96	3.84	93	-3
Syria	97	3.79	94	-3
Armenia	98	3.76	97	-1
Mongolia	99	3.75	117	18
Libya	100	3.74	88	-12
Dominican Republic	101	3.72	95	-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	102	3.70	109	7
Benin	103	3.69	103	0
Senegal	104	3.67	92	-12

Ecuador	105	3.65	105	0
Kenya	106	3.65	98	-8
Bangladesh	107	3.64	106	-1
Bolivia	108	3.64	120	12
Cambodia	109	3.63	110	1
Guyana	110	3.62	104	-6
Cameroon	111	3.58	111	0
Nicaragua	112	3.57	115	3
Tanzania	113	3.56	100	-13
Ghana	114	3.56	114	0
Zambia	115	3.55	112	-3
Tajikistan	116	3.53	122	6
Cape Verde	117	3.51	n/a	n/a
Uganda	118	3.51	108	-10
Ethiopia	119	3.51	118	-1
Paraguay	120	3.49	124	4
Kyrgyz Republic	121	3.49	123	2
Venezuela	122	3.48	113	-9

Pakistan	123	3.48	101	-22
Madagascar	124	3.46	121	-3
Malawi	125	3.45	119	-6
Swaziland	126	3.40	n/a	n/a
Nigeria	127	3.38	99	-28
Lesotho	128	3.36	107	-21
Côte d'Ivoire	129	3.35	116	-13
Nepal	130	3.34	125	-5
Mozambique	131	3.32	129	-2
Mali	132	3.28	130	-2
Timor-Leste	133	3.23	126	-7
Burkina Faso	134	3.20	128	-6
Mauritania	135	3.14	127	-8
Zimbabwe	136	3.03	132	-4
Burundi	137	2.96	133	-4
Angola	138	2.93	n/a	n/a
Chad	139	2.73	131	-8

Methodology:

The competitiveness rankings are calculated from both publicly available data and the Executive Opinion Survey, a comprehensive annual survey conducted by the World Economic Forum together with its network of Partner Institutes (leading research institutes and business organizations) in the countries covered by the Report.

Highlights according to WEF --

- The United States falls two places to fourth position, overtaken by Sweden and Singapore in the rankings of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011
- The People's Republic of China continues to move up the rankings, with marked improvements in several other Asian countries
- Germany moves up two places to fifth place, leading the Eurozone countries
- Switzerland tops the rankings

Source:

World Economic Forum; available at URL: http://www.weforum.org

Updated:

2011 using most recent ranking available; reviewed in 2015.

Taxation

The corporate income tax rate in Nigeria is 35 percent. A 20 percent income tax rate applies to agricultural, mining, and manufacturing companies with a turnover less than N 1 million for the first five years of operations. New manufacturing companies that derive most of their revenues from export and mining enterprises may be eligible for exemption from income tax for the first three years of operations if it operates. Petroleum companies are also eligible for a three-year tax holiday and significant incentives for the following years. A 10 percent tax is imposed on capital gains. Dividends and interest are both subject to a 10 percent withholding tax.

Stock Market

The Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) in Lagos was established in 1960. By the end of the 1990s, it had 194 listed companies. The NSE's Automated Trading System has been launched.

There is another exchange that began operation in 2000, the Stock Exchange of Nigeria (SEN) in Abuja. However, little data is available at this time on the SEN.

Partner Links

Partner Links

Chapter 5

Social Overview

People

Demography

As the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria accounts for one quarter of Sub-Saharan Africa's people. Although fewer than 25 percent of Nigerians are urban dwellers, at least 24 cities have populations of more than 100,000. The population and growth estimates vary widely. According to government figures, the World Bank estimated 1990 population at 119 million; however, 1991 preliminary census figures published in 1992 gave population total of 88.5 million. The World Gazetteer in 2003 estimated the population to be around 150 million while the CIA World Factbook estimate for July 2003 was closer to 130 million. In 2008, population size was noted to be more than 147 million, according to the World Gazatteer. By 2011, the population of Nigeria exceeded 154 million.

The dominant ethnic group in the northern two-thirds of the country is the Hausa-Fulari, most of whom are Muslims. Other major ethnic groups of the north are the Nupe, Tiv and Kanuri. The Yoruba people are predominant in the southwest. About half the Yorubas are Christian and the other half Muslim. The predominately Catholic Igbos are the largest ethnic group in the southeast, with the Efik, Ibibio and Ijaw comprising a substantial segment of the population in that area as well.

There are between 250 to 400 other recognized ethnic groups, many divided into subgroups of considerable social and political importance. The most important ethno linguistic categories are the Hausa and Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in southwest, and the Igbo in southeast. All of these ethnic groups are further divided on sub ethnic and clan lines. Other important groups include the Kanuri, Ibibio, Tiv and Ijaw.

According to Ethnologue, the number of first languages spoken in Nigeria is 478. Many languages have regional dialects. The most broadly spoken languages are Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. Hausa is the major language in the north. English is the official language used in government, large-scale business, mass media and education beyond primary school. Diverse local languages are used for primary education. Classical Arabic is taught for use in prayer in the north.

Educated people of different language backgrounds most commonly communicate in English, although knowledge of two or more Nigerian languages is widespread. Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo are

the most widely used as a lingua franca.

Human Development

Few people study beyond primary school and the literacy rate is thought to be around 68 percent in Nigeria.

According to recent figures, Nigeria has a life expectancy on average 46.74 years for the total population -- 46.21 years for males and 47.29 years for females. The mortality rate is a high 98.8 deaths/1,000 live births -- 105.69 deaths/1,000 live births for males and 91.7 deaths/1,000 live births for females. The fertility rate is about 5.5 children born per woman.

About 5.8 percent of GDP in this country is spent on health expenditures.

Of the total population, about 60 percent of the population reportedly lives below the poverty line and the risk of infectious diseases is very high. Indeed, food or waterborne diseases affecting the population include bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever. Vectorborne diseases include malaria, respiratory diseases include meningococcal meningitis, and Nigeria is one of the most highly endemic areas for Lassa fever.

The HIV/AIDs infection rate was measured at 5.4 percent in recent years. The Government of United States data source indicated little change from 2003 to the present in regard to the HIV/AIDs infection rate. A secondary source, titled the "Epidemiological Fact Sheet on Nigeria" by UNAIDS and dated 2004, seemed to reflect a similar rate of infection.

The United Nation Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) reflects this low quality of life. The Human Development Index (HDI), which is formulated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is a notable measure of human development. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main areas of human development: longevity, knowledge and education, as well as economic standard of living. In a ranking of 169 countries, the HDI places Nigeria in the low human development category, at 142nd place. Note: Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI, which is calculated and updated annually, offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators.

Written by Dr. Denise Youngblood Coleman, Editor in Chief at www.countrywatch.com. See Bibliography for list of research sources.

Human Development Index

Human Development Index

Human Development Index (Ranked Numerically)

The Human Development Index (HDI) is used to measure quality of life in countries across the world. The HDI has been compiled since 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a regular basis. The HDI is a composite of several indicators, which measure a country's achievements in three main arenas of human development: longevity, education, and economic standard of living. Although the concept of human development is complicated and cannot be properly captured by values and indices, the HDI offers a wide-ranging assessment of human development in certain countries, not based solely upon traditional economic and financial indicators. For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this review.

Very High Human Development	High Human Development	Medium Human Development	Low Human Development
1. Norway	43. Bahamas	86. Fiji	128. Kenya
2. Australia	44. Lithuania	87. Turkmenistan	129. Bangladesh
3. New Zealand	45. Chile	88. Dominican Republic	130. Ghana
4. United States	46. Argentina	89. China	131. Cameroon
5. Ireland	47. Kuwait	90. El Salvador	132. Myanmar (Burma)
6. Liechtenstein	48. Latvia	91. Sri Lanka	133. Yemen

7. Netherlands	49. Montenegro	92. Thailand	134. Benin
8. Canada	50. Romania	93. Gabon	135. Madagascar
9. Sweden	51. Croatia	94. Surname	136. Mauritania
10. Germany	52. Uruguay	95. Bolivia	137. Papua New Guinea
11. Japan	53. Libya	96. Paraguay	138. Nepal
12. South Korea	54. Panama	97. Philippines	139. Togo
13. Switzerland	55. Saudi Arabia	98. Botswana	140. Comoros
14. France	56. Mexico	99. Moldova	141. Lesotho
15. Israel	57. Malaysia	100. Mongolia	142. Nigeria
16. Finland	58. Bulgaria	101. Egypt	143. Uganda
17. Iceland	59. Trinidad and Tobago	102. Uzbekistan	144. Senegal
18. Belgium	60. Serbia	103. Micronesia	145. Haiti
19. Denmark	61. Belarus	104. Guyana	146. Angola
20. Spain	62. Costa Rica	105. Namibia	147. Djibouti
21. Hong King	63. Peru	106. Honduras	148. Tanzania
22. Greece	64. Albania	107. Maldives	149. Cote d'Ivoire
23. Italy	65. Russian Federation	108. Indonesia	150. Zambia

24. Luxembourg	66. Kazakhstan	109. Kyrgyzstan	151. Gambia
25. Austria	67. Azerbaijan	110. South Africa	152. Rwanda
26. United Kingdom	68. Bosnia and Herzegovina	111. Syria	153. Malawi
27. Singapore	69. Ukraine	112. Tajikistan	154. Sudan
28. Czech Republic	70. Iran	113. Vietnam	155. Afghanistan
29. Slovenia	71. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	114. Morocco	156. Guinea
30. Andorra	72. Mauritius	115. Nicaragua	157. Ethiopia
31. Slovakia	73. Brazil	116. Guatemala	158. Sierra Leone
32. United Arab Emirates	74. Georgia	117. Equatorial Guinea	159. Central African Republic
33. Malta	75. Venezuela	118. Cape Verde	160. Mali
34. Estonia	76. Armenia	119. India	161. Burkina Faso
35. Cyprus	77. Ecuador	120. East Timor	162. Liberia
36. Hungary	78. Belize	121. Swaziland	163. Chad
37. Brunei	79. Colombia	122. Laos	164. Guinea-Bissau
		123. Solomon	165.

38. Qatar	80. Jamaica	Islands	Mozambique
39. Bahrain	81. Tunisia	124. Cambodia	166. Burundi
40. Portugal	82. Jordan	125. Pakistan	167. Niger
41. Poland	83. Turkey	126. Congo RC	168. Congo DRC
42. Barbados	84. Algeria	127. Sao Tome and Principe	169. Zimbabwe
	85. Tonga		

Methodology:

For more information about the methodology used to calculate the HDI, please see the "Source Materials" in the appendices of this Country Review.

Reference:

As published in United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2010.

Source:

United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index available at URL: http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/

Updated:

Uploaded in 2011 using ranking available; reviewed in 2015

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Life Satisfaction Index

Created by Adrian G. White, an Analytic Social Psychologist at the University of Leicester, the "Satisfaction with Life Index" measures subjective life satisfaction across various countries. The data was taken from a metastudy (see below for source) and associates the notion of subjective happiness or life satisfaction with qualitative parameters such as health, wealth, and access to basic education. This assessment serves as an alternative to other measures of happiness that tend to rely on traditional and quantitative measures of policy on quality of life, such as GNP and GDP. The methodology involved the responses of 80,000 people across the globe.

Rank	Country	Score
1	Denmark	273.4
2	Switzerland	273.33
3	Austria	260
4	Iceland	260
5	The Bahamas	256.67
6	Finland	256.67
7	Sweden	256.67
8	Iran	253.33
9	Brunei	253.33
10	Canada	253.33
11	Ireland	253.33

12	Luxembourg	253.33
13	Costa Rica	250
14	Malta	250
15	Netherlands	250
16	Antiguaand Barbuda	246.67
17	Malaysia	246.67
18	New Zealand	246.67
19	Norway	246.67
20	Seychelles	246.67
21	Saint Kitts and Nevis	246.67
22	United Arab Emirates	246.67
23	United States	246.67
24	Vanuatu	246.67
25	Venezuela	246.67
26	Australia	243.33
27	Barbados	243.33
28	Belgium	243.33
29	Dominica	243.33

30	Oman	243.33
31	Saudi Arabia	243.33
32	Suriname	243.33
33	Bahrain	240
34	Colombia	240
35	Germany	240
36	Guyana	240
37	Honduras	240
38	Kuwait	240
39	Panama	240
40	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	240
41	United Kingdom	236.67
42	Dominican Republic	233.33
43	Guatemala	233.33
44	Jamaica	233.33
45	Qatar	233.33
46	Spain	233.33
47	Saint Lucia	233.33

48	Belize	230
49	Cyprus	230
50	Italy	230
51	Mexico	230
52	Samoa	230
53	Singapore	230
54	Solomon Islands	230
55	Trinidad and Tobago	230
56	Argentina	226.67
57	Fiji	223.33
58	Israel	223.33
59	Mongolia	223.33
60	São Tomé and Príncipe	223.33
61	El Salvador	220
62	France	220
63	Hong Kong	220
64	Indonesia	220
65	Kyrgyzstan	220

66	Maldives	220
67	Slovenia	220
68	Taiwan	220
69	East Timor	220
70	Tonga	220
71	Chile	216.67
72	Grenada	216.67
73	Mauritius	216.67
74	Namibia	216.67
75	Paraguay	216.67
76	Thailand	216.67
77	Czech Republic	213.33
78	Philippines	213.33
79	Tunisia	213.33
80	Uzbekistan	213.33
81	Brazil	210
82	China	210
83	Cuba	210

84	Greece	210
85	Nicaragua	210
86	Papua New Guinea	210
87	Uruguay	210
88	Gabon	206.67
89	Ghana	206.67
90	Japan	206.67
91	Yemen	206.67
92	Portugal	203.33
93	Sri Lanka	203.33
94	Tajikistan	203.33
95	Vietnam	203.33
96	Bhutan	200
97	Comoros	196.67
98	Croatia	196.67
99	Poland	196.67
100	Cape Verde	193.33
101	Kazakhstan	193.33

102	South Korea	193.33
103	Madagascar	193.33
104	Bangladesh	190
105	Republic of the Congo	190
106	The Gambia	190
107	Hungary	190
108	Libya	190
109	South Africa	190
110	Cambodia	186.67
111	Ecuador	186.67
112	Kenya	186.67
113	Lebanon	186.67
114	Morocco	186.67
115	Peru	186.67
116	Senegal	186.67
117	Bolivia	183.33
118	Haiti	183.33
119	Nepal	183.33

120	Nigeria	183.33
121	Tanzania	183.33
122	Benin	180
123	Botswana	180
124	Guinea-Bissau	180
125	India	180
126	Laos	180
127	Mozambique	180
128	Palestinian Authority	180
129	Slovakia	180
130	Myanmar	176.67
131	Mali	176.67
132	Mauritania	176.67
133	Turkey	176.67
134	Algeria	173.33
135	Equatorial Guinea	173.33
136	Romania	173.33
137	Bosnia and Herzegovina	170

138	Cameroon	170
139	Estonia	170
140	Guinea	170
141	Jordan	170
142	Syria	170
143	Sierra Leone	166.67
144	Azerbaijan	163.33
145	Central African Republic	163.33
146	Republic of Macedonia	163.33
147	Togo	163.33
148	Zambia	163.33
149	Angola	160
150	Djibouti	160
151	Egypt	160
152	Burkina Faso	156.67
153	Ethiopia	156.67
154	Latvia	156.67
155	Lithuania	156.67

156	Uganda	156.67
157	Albania	153.33
158	Malawi	153.33
159	Chad	150
160	Côte d'Ivoire	150
161	Niger	150
162	Eritrea	146.67
163	Rwanda	146.67
164	Bulgaria	143.33
165	Lesotho	143.33
166	Pakistan	143.33
167	Russia	143.33
168	Swaziland	140
169	Georgia	136.67
170	Belarus	133.33
171	Turkmenistan	133.33
172	Armenia	123.33
173	Sudan	120

174	Ukraine	120
175	Moldova	116.67
176	Democratic Republic of the Congo	110
177	Zimbabwe	110
178	Burundi	100

Commentary:

European countries, such as Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria resided at the top of the ranking with highest levels of self-reported life satisfaction. Conversely, European countries such as Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine ranked low on the index. African countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Zimbabwe and Burundi found themselves at the very bottom of the ranking, and indeed, very few African countries could be found in the top 100. Japan was at the mid-way point in the ranking, however, other Asian countries such as Brunei and Malaysia were in the top tier, while Pakistan was close to the bottom with a low level of self-identified life satisfaction. As a region, the Middle East presented a mixed bad with Saudi Arabians reporing healthy levels of life satisfaction and Egyptians near the bottom of the ranking. As a region, Caribbean countries were ranked highly, consistently demonstrating high levels of life satisfaction. The findings showed that health was the most crucial determining factor in life satisfaction, followed by prosperity and education.

Source:

White, A. (2007). A Global Projection of Subjective Well-being: A Challenge To Positive Psychology? Psychtalk 56, 17-20. The data was extracted from a meta-analysis by Marks, Abdallah, Simms & Thompson (2006).

Uploaded:

Based on study noted above in "Source" ; reviewed in 2015

Happy Planet Index

Happy Planet Index

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is used to measure human well-being in conjunction with environmental impact. The HPI has been compiled since 2006 by the New Economics Foundation. The index is a composite of several indicators including subjective life satisfaction, life expectancy at birth, and ecological footprint per capita.

As noted by NEFA, the HPI "reveals the ecological efficiency with which human well-being is delivered." Indeed, the index combines environmental impact with human well-being to measure the environmental efficiency with which, country by country, people live long and happy lives. The countries ranked highest by the HPI are not necessarily the ones with the happiest people overall, but the ones that allow their citizens to live long and fulfilling lives, without negatively impacting this opportunity for either future generations or citizens of other countries. Accordingly, a country like the United States will rank low on this list due to its large per capital ecological footprint, which uses more than its fair share of resources, and will likely cause planetary damage.

It should be noted that the HPI was designed to be a counterpoint to other well-established indices of countries' development, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures overall national wealth and economic development, but often obfuscates the realities of countries with stark variances between the rich and the poor. Moreover, the objective of most of the world's people is not to be wealthy but to be happy. The HPI also differs from the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures quality of life but not ecology, since it [HPI] also includes sustainability as a key indicator.

Rank	Country	HPI
1	Costa Rica	76.1
2	Dominican Republic	71.8
3	Jamaica	70.1
4	Guatemala	68.4

5	Vietnam	66.5
6	Colombia	66.1
7	Cuba	65.7
8	El Salvador	61.5
9	Brazil	61.0
10	Honduras	61.0
11	Nicaragua	60.5
12	Egypt	60.3
13	Saudi Arabia	59.7
14	Philippines	59.0
15	Argentina	59.0
16	Indonesia	58.9
17	Bhutan	58.5
18	Panama	57.4
19	Laos	57.3
20	China	57.1
21	Morocco	56.8
22	Sri Lanka	56.5

23	Mexico	55.6
24	Pakistan	55.6
25	Ecuador	55.5
26	Jordan	54.6
27	Belize	54.5
28	Peru	54.4
29	Tunisia	54.3
30	Trinidad and Tobago	54.2
31	Bangladesh	54.1
32	Moldova	54.1
33	Malaysia	54.0
34	Tajikistan	53.5
35	India	53.0
36	Venezuela	52.5
37	Nepal	51.9
38	Syria	51.3
39	Burma	51.2
40	Algeria	51.2

41	Thailand	50.9
42	Haiti	50.8
43	Netherlands	50.6
44	Malta	50.4
45	Uzbekistan	50.1
46	Chile	49.7
47	Bolivia	49.3
48	Armenia	48.3
49	Singapore	48.2
50	Yemen	48.1
51	Germany	48.1
52	Switzerland	48.1
53	Sweden	48.0
54	Albania	47.9
55	Paraguay	47.8
56	Palestinian Authority	47.7
57	Austria	47.7
58	Serbia	47.6

59	Finland	47.2
60	Croatia	47.2
61	Kyrgyzstan	47.1
62	Cyprus	46.2
63	Guyana	45.6
64	Belgium	45.4
65	Bosnia and Herzegovina	45.0
66	Slovenia	44.5
67	Israel	44.5
68	South Korea	44.4
69	Italy	44.0
70	Romania	43.9
71	France	43.9
72	Georgia	43.6
73	Slovakia	43.5
74	United Kingdom	43.3
75	Japan	43.3
76	Spain	43.2

77	Poland	42.8
78	Ireland	42.6
79	Iraq	42.6
80	Cambodia	42.3
81	Iran	42.1
82	Bulgaria	42.0
83	Turkey	41.7
84	Hong Kong	41.6
85	Azerbaijan	41.2
86	Lithuania	40.9
87	Djibouti	40.4
88	Norway	40.4
89	Canada	39.4
90	Hungary	38.9
91	Kazakhstan	38.5
92	Czech Republic	38.3
93	Mauritania	38.2
94	Iceland	38.1

95	Ukraine	38.1
96	Senegal	38.0
97	Greece	37.6
98	Portugal	37.5
99	Uruguay	37.2
100	Ghana	37.1
101	Latvia	36.7
102	Australia	36.6
103	New Zealand	36.2
104	Belarus	35.7
105	Denmark	35.5
106	Mongolia	35.0
107	Malawi	34.5
108	Russia	34.5
109	Chad	34.3
110	Lebanon	33.6
111	Macedonia	32.7
112	Republic of the Congo	32.4

113	Madagascar	31.5
114	United States	30.7
115	Nigeria	30.3
116	Guinea	30.3
117	Uganda	30.2
118	South Africa	29.7
119	Rwanda	29.6
120	Democratic Republic of the Congo	29.0
121	Sudan	28.5
122	Luxembourg	28.5
123	United Arab Emirates	28.2
124	Ethiopia	28.1
125	Kenya	27.8
126	Cameroon	27.2
127	Zambia	27.2
128	Kuwait	27.0
129	Niger	26.9
130	Angola	26.8

131	Estonia	26.4
132	Mali	25.8
133	Mozambique	24.6
134	Benin	24.6
135	Togo	23.3
136	Sierra Leone	23.1
137	Central African Republic	22.9
138	Burkina Faso	22.4
139	Burundi	21.8
140	Namibia	21.1
141	Botswana	20.9
142	Tanzania	17.8
143	Zimbabwe	16.6

Source: *This material is derived from the Happy Planet Index issued by the New Economics Foundation (NEF).*

Methodology: *The methodology for the calculations can be found at URL: http://www.happyplanetindex.org/*

Status of Women

Overview

Women in Nigeria have fought to advance their rights for many years. Despite soem degree of progress, women continue to face discrimination and oppression. The subordination of women in Nigeria occurs within all social and economic segments. Whereas in most parts of the world, high status, wealth and education can lessen the chances of oppression, there are no such boundaries in Nigeria that protect women from injustice.

While the Nigerian Constitution guarantees rights to women, in practice, the daily lives of women are constantly influenced by religious, economic and societal pressures, which work to undermine those guaranteed rights. Issues such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, rape, HIV/AIDS, and polygamy are just some of the inhumane injustices that women face daily.

In spite of women's lower status in Nigerian society, there has been considerable progress made to create a more equitable society. Nigeria is a party to the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the African Charter for Human and People's Rights.

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) Rank:

123rd out of 140

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) Rank:

Not Ranked

Female Population:

64.6 million

Female Life Expectancy at birth:

47.29 years

Total Fertility Rate:

5.7

Maternal Mortality Ratio:

800

Total Number of Women Living with HIV/AIDS:

810,000-2,400,000

Ever Married Women, Ages 15-19 (%):

28%

Mean Age at Time of Marriage:

21

Contraceptive Use Among Married Women, Any Method (%):

12%

Female Adult Literacy Rate:

68% for total population; 60% estimated for women

Combined Female Gross enrollment ratio for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary schools:

57%

Female-Headed Households (%):

17%

Economically Active Females (%):

47.8%

Female Contributing Family Workers (%):

N/A

Female Estimated Earned Income:

$614

Seats in Parliament held by women (%):

Lower or Single House: 6.4%
Upper House or Senate: 3.7%

Year Women Received the Right to Vote:

1958

Year Women Received the Right to Stand for Election:

1958

*The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a composite index which measures the average achievement in a country. While very similar to the Human Development Index in its use of the same variables, the GDI adjusts the average achievement of each country in terms of life expectancy, enrollment in schools, income, and literacy in accordance to the disparities between males and females.

*The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is a composite index measuring gender inequality in three of the basic dimensions of empowerment; economic participation and decision-making, political participation and decision-making, and power over economic resources.

*Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is defined as the average number of babies born to women during their reproductive years. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement rate; once a TFR of a population reaches 2.1 the population will remain stable assuming no immigration or emigration takes place. When the TFR is greater than 2.1 a population will increase and when it is less than 2.1 a population will eventually decrease, although due to the age structure of a population it will take years before a low TFR is translated into lower population.

*Maternal Mortality Rate is the number of deaths to women per 100,000 live births that resulted from conditions related to pregnancy and or delivery related complications.

*Economically Active Females are the share of the female population, ages 15 and above, whom supply, or are able to supply, labor for the production of goods and services.

*Female Contributing Family Workers are those females who work without pay in an economic enterprise operated by a relative living in the same household.

*Estimated Earned Income is measured according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in US dollars.

Global Gender Gap Index

Global Gender Gap Index

Editor's Note:

The Global Gender Gap Index by the World Economic Forum ranks most of the world's countries in terms of the division of resources and opportunities among males and females. Specifically, the ranking assesses the gender inequality gap in these four arenas:

1. Economic participation and opportunity (salaries and high skilled employment participation levels)
2. Educational attainment (access to basic and higher level education)
3. Political empowerment (representation in decision-making structures)
4. Health and survival (life expectancy and sex ratio)

	2010 rank	2010 score	2010 rank among 2009 countries	2009 rank	2009 score	2008 rank	2008 score	2007 rank
Country								
Iceland	1	0.8496	1	1	0.8276	4	0.7999	4
Norway	2	0.8404	2	3	0.8227	1	0.8239	2
Finland	3	0.8260	3	2	0.8252	2	0.8195	3
Sweden	4	0.8024	4	4	0.8139	3	0.8139	1

New Zealand	5	0.7808	5	5	0.7880	5	0.7859	5
Ireland	6	0.7773	6	8	0.7597	8	0.7518	9
Denmark	7	0.7719	7	7	0.7628	7	0.7538	8
Lesotho	8	0.7678	8	10	0.7495	16	0.7320	26
Philippines	9	0.7654	9	9	0.7579	6	0.7568	6
Switzerland	10	0.7562	10	13	0.7426	14	0.7360	40
Spain	11	0.7554	11	17	0.7345	17	0.7281	10
South Africa	12	0.7535	12	6	0.7709	22	0.7232	20
Germany	13	0.7530	13	12	0.7449	11	0.7394	7
Belgium	14	0.7509	14	33	0.7165	28	0.7163	19
United Kingdom	15	0.7460	15	15	0.7402	13	0.7366	11
Sri Lanka	16	0.7458	16	16	0.7402	12	0.7371	15
Netherlands	17	0.7444	17	11	0.7490	9	0.7399	12
Latvia	18	0.7429	18	14	0.7416	10	0.7397	13
United States	19	0.7411	19	31	0.7173	27	0.7179	31
Canada	20	0.7372	20	25	0.7196	31	0.7136	18
Trinidad and Tobago	21	0.7353	21	19	0.7298	19	0.7245	46

Mozambique	22	0.7329	22	26	0.7195	18	0.7266	43
Australia	23	0.7271	23	20	0.7282	21	0.7241	17
Cuba	24	0.7253	24	29	0.7176	25	0.7195	22
Namibia	25	0.7238	25	32	0.7167	30	0.7141	29
Luxembourg	26	0.7231	26	63	0.6889	66	0.6802	58
Mongolia	27	0.7194	27	22	0.7221	40	0.7049	62
Costa Rica	28	0.7194	28	27	0.7180	32	0.7111	28
Argentina	29	0.7187	29	24	0.7211	24	0.7209	33
Nicaragua	30	0.7176	30	49	0.7002	71	0.6747	90
Barbados	31	0.7176	31	21	0.7236	26	0.7188	n/a
Portugal	32	0.7171	32	46	0.7013	39	0.7051	37
Uganda	33	0.7169	33	40	0.7067	43	0.6981	50
Moldova	34	0.7160	34	36	0.7104	20	0.7244	21
Lithuania	35	0.7132	35	30	0.7175	23	0.7222	14
Bahamas	36	0.7128	36	28	0.7179	n/a	n/a	n/a
Austria	37	0.7091	37	42	0.7031	29	0.7153	27
Guyana	38	0.7090	38	35	0.7108	n/a	n/a	n/a
Panama	39	0.7072	39	43	0.7024	34	0.7095	38

Ecuador	40	0.7072	40	23	0.7220	35	0.7091	44
Kazakhstan	41	0.7055	41	47	0.7013	45	0.6976	32
Slovenia	42	0.7047	42	52	0.6982	51	0.6937	49
Poland	43	0.7037	43	50	0.6998	49	0.6951	60
Jamaica	44	0.7037	44	48	0.7013	44	0.6980	39
Russian Federation	45	0.7036	45	51	0.6987	42	0.6994	45
France	46	0.7025	46	18	0.7331	15	0.7341	51
Estonia	47	0.7018	47	37	0.7094	37	0.7076	30
Chile	48	0.7013	48	64	0.6884	65	0.6818	86
Macedonia, FYR	49	0.6996	49	53	0.6950	53	0.6914	35
Bulgaria	50	0.6983	50	38	0.7072	36	0.7077	25
Kyrgyz Republic	51	0.6973	51	41	0.7058	41	0.7045	70
Israel	52	0.6957	52	45	0.7019	56	0.6900	36
Croatia	53	0.6939	53	54	0.6944	46	0.6967	16
Honduras	54	0.6927	54	62	0.6893	47	0.6960	68
Colombia	55	0.6927	55	56	0.6939	50	0.6944	24
Singapore	56	0.6914	56	84	0.6664	84	0.6625	77

Thailand	57	0.6910	57	59	0.6907	52	0.6917	52
Greece	58	0.6908	58	85	0.6662	75	0.6727	72
Uruguay	59	0.6897	59	57	0.6936	54	0.6907	78
Peru	60	0.6895	60	44	0.7024	48	0.6959	75
China	61	0.6881	61	60	0.6907	57	0.6878	73
Botswana	62	0.6876	62	39	0.7071	63	0.6839	53
Ukraine	63	0.6869	63	61	0.6896	62	0.6856	57
Venezuela	64	0.6863	64	69	0.6839	59	0.6875	55
Czech Republic	65	0.6850	65	74	0.6789	69	0.6770	64
Tanzania	66	0.6829	66	73	0.6797	38	0.7068	34
Romania	67	0.6826	67	70	0.6805	70	0.6763	47
Malawi	68	0.6824	68	76	0.6738	81	0.6664	87
Paraguay	69	0.6804	69	66	0.6868	100	0.6379	69
Ghana	70	0.6782	70	80	0.6704	77	0.6679	63
Slovak Republic	71	0.6778	71	68	0.6845	64	0.6824	54
Vietnam	72	0.6776	72	71	0.6802	68	0.6778	42
Dominican Republic	73	0.6774	73	67	0.6859	72	0.6744	65

Italy	74	0.6765	74	72	0.6798	67	0.6788	84
Gambia, The	75	0.6762	75	75	0.6752	85	0.6622	95
Bolivia	76	0.6751	76	82	0.6693	80	0.6667	80
Brueni Darussalem	77	0.6748	77	94	0.6524	99	0.6392	n/a
Albania	78	0.6726	78	91	0.6601	87	0.6591	66
Hungary	79	0.6720	79	65	0.6879	60	0.6867	61
Madagascar	80	0.6713	80	77	0.6732	74	0.6736	89
Angola	81	0.6712	81	106	0.6353	114	0.6032	110
Bangladesh	82	0.6702	82	93	0.6526	90	0.6531	100
Malta	83	0.6695	83	88	0.6635	83	0.6634	76
Armenia	84	0.6669	84	90	0.6619	78	0.6677	71
Brazil	85	0.6655	85	81	0.6695	73	0.6737	74
Cyprus	86	0.6642	86	79	0.6706	76	0.6694	82
Indonesia	87	0.6615	87	92	0.6580	93	0.6473	81
Georgia	88	0.6598	88	83	0.6680	82	0.6654	67
Tajikistan	89	0.6598	89	86	0.6661	89	0.6541	79
El Salvador	90	0.6596	90	55	0.6939	58	0.6875	48

Mexico	91	0.6577	91	98	0.6503	97	0.6441	93
Zimbabwe	92	0.6574	92	95	0.6518	92	0.6485	88
Belize	93	0.6536	93	87	0.6636	86	0.6610	94
Japan	94	0.6524	94	101	0.6447	98	0.6434	91
Mauritius	95	0.6520	95	96	0.6513	95	0.6466	85
Kenya	96	0.6499	96	97	0.6512	88	0.6547	83
Cambodia	97	0.6482	97	104	0.6410	94	0.6469	98
Malaysia	98	0.6479	98	100	0.6467	96	0.6442	92
Maldives	99	0.6452	99	99	0.6482	91	0.6501	99
Azerbaijan	100	0.6446	100	89	0.6626	61	0.6856	59
Senegal	101	0.6414	101	102	0.6427	n/a	n/a	n/a
Suriname	102	0.6407	102	78	0.6726	79	0.6674	56
United Arab Emirates	103	0.6397	103	112	0.6198	105	0.6220	105
Korea, Rep.	104	0.6342	104	115	0.6146	108	0.6154	97
Kuwait	105	0.6318	105	105	0.6356	101	0.6358	96
Zambia	106	0.6293	106	107	0.6310	106	0.6205	101
Tunisia	107	0.6266	107	109	0.6233	103	0.6295	102
Fiji	108	0.6256	108	103	0.6414	n/a	n/a	n/a

Guatemala	109	0.6238	109	111	0.6209	112	0.6072	106
Bahrain	110	0.6217	110	116	0.6136	121	0.5927	115
Burkina Faso	111	0.6162	111	120	0.6081	115	0.6029	117
India	112	0.6155	112	114	0.6151	113	0.6060	114
Mauritania	113	0.6152	113	119	0.6103	110	0.6117	111
Cameroon	114	0.6110	114	118	0.6108	117	0.6017	116
Nepal	115	0.6084	115	110	0.6213	120	0.5942	125
Lebanon*	116	0.6084	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Qatar	117	0.6059	116	125	0.5907	119	0.5948	109
Nigeria	118	0.6055	117	108	0.6280	102	0.6339	107
Algeria	119	0.6052	118	117	0.6119	111	0.6111	108
Jordan	120	0.6048	119	113	0.6182	104	0.6275	104
Ethiopia	121	0.6019	120	122	0.5948	122	0.5867	113
Oman	122	0.5950	121	123	0.5938	118	0.5960	119
Iran	123	0.5933	122	128	0.5839	116	0.6021	118
Syria	124	0.5926	123	121	0.6072	107	0.6181	103
Egypt	125	0.5899	124	126	0.5862	124	0.5832	120

Turkey	126	0.5876	125	129	0.5828	123	0.5853	121
Morocco	127	0.5767	126	124	0.5926	125	0.5757	122
Benin	128	0.5719	127	131	0.5643	126	0.5582	123
Saudi Arabia	129	0.5713	128	130	0.5651	128	0.5537	124
Côte d'Ivoire*	130	0.5691	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Mali	131	0.5680	129	127	0.5860	109	0.6117	112
Pakistan	132	0.5465	130	132	0.5458	127	0.5549	126
Chad	133	0.5330	131	133	0.5417	129	0.5290	127
Yemen	134	0.4603	132	134	0.4609	130	0.4664	128
Belarus	n/a	n/a	n/a	34	0.7141	33	0.7099	23
Uzbekistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	58	0.6913	55	0.6906	41

*new country 2010

Commentary:

According to the report's index, Nordic countries, such as Iceland, Norway, Finland, and Sweden have continued to dominate at the top of the ranking for gender equality. Meanwhile, France has seen a notable decline in the ranking, largely as a result of decreased number of women holding ministerial portfolios in that country. In the Americas, the United States has risen in the ranking to top the region, predominantly as a result of a decreasing wage gap, as well as higher number of women holding key positions in the current Obama administration. Canada has continued to

remain as one of the top ranking countries of the Americas, followed by the small Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, which has the distinction of being among the top three countries of the Americans in the realm of gender equality. Lesotho and South African ranked highly in the index, leading not only among African countries but also in global context. Despite Lesotho still lagging in the area of life expectancy, its high ranking was attributed to high levels of female participation in the labor force and female literacy. The Philippines and Sri Lanka were the top ranking countries for gender equality for Asia, ranking highly also in global context. The Philippines has continued to show strong performance in all strong performance on all four dimensions (detailed above) of the index. Finally, in the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates held the highest-rank within that region of the world; however, its placement near the bottom of the global list highlights the fact that Arab countries are generally poor performers when it comes to the matter of gender equality in global scope.

Source:

This data is derived from the latest edition of The Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum.

Available at URL:

http://www.weforum.org/en/Communities/Women%20Leaders%20and%20Gender%20Parity/Gende

Updated:

Based on latest available data as set forth in chart; reviewed in 2014

Culture and Arts

Content coming soon.

Etiquette

Cultural Dos and Taboos

1. Shaking hands is the acceptable form of greeting. You may find people bowing to their superiors and the elderly.

2. Greetings should always include some interest in your acquaintances family and health.

3. Women with children, pregnant women and the elderly should always get the right of way in public places or public transportation.

4. Do be not over complimentary of a person's dress or belongings, he or she mat feel obligated to give you what you find attractive. However, be sure to compliment a dinner or food prepared by a Nigerian host.

5. The left hand rules apply here. Do not take or give anything with the left hand. Do not eat with the left hand.

6. Note that Nigeria is a culturally and religiously diverse country where tribe and ethnic affiliation is important. Be sure to be sensitive to these differences.

Travel Information

Please Note:

This is a generalized travel guide and it is intended to coalesce several resources, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination. As such, it does not include travel warnings for specific "hot spot" destinations.

For travel alerts and warnings, please see the United States Department of State's listings available at URL:
http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Palestinian Territories of West Bank and Gaza, Philippines areas of Sulu Archipelago, Mindanao, and southern Sulu Sea, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen.

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<u>Please Note:</u>

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Nigeria and recommends that U.S. citizens avoid all travel to Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states because the security situation in northeast Nigeria remains fluid and unpredictable. The ability of the Mission to provide assistance to U.S. citizens in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states remains severely limited. The Department continues to recommend against all but essential travel to the following states due to the risk of kidnappings, robberies, and other armed attacks: Adamawa, Bauchi, Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, Rivers, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. The Department also warns against travel in the Gulf of Guinea because of the threat of piracy.

The U.S. Mission advises all U.S. citizens to be particularly vigilant around government security facilities; churches, mosques, and other places of worship; locations where large crowds may gather, such as hotels, clubs, bars, restaurants, markets, shopping malls; and other areas frequented by expatriates and foreign travelers. Security measures in Nigeria remain heightened due to threats posed by extremist groups, and U.S. citizens may encounter police and military checkpoints, additional security, and possible road blocks throughout the country.

Boko Haram, an extremist group based in northeast Nigeria designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the Department of State, has claimed responsibility for many attacks, mainly in northern Nigeria. Its members have killed or wounded thousands of people during the past four years. Boko Haram has targeted churches, schools, mosques, government installations, educational institutions, and entertainment venues in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau, Taraba, the Federal Capital Territory, and Yobe states. Hundreds of thousands of Nigerians have been displaced as a result of violence

in the north.

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International Travel Guide

Checklist for Travelers

1. Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment or medical evacuation. Overseas medical costs are expensive to most international travelers, where one's domestic, nationalized or even private health insurance plans will not provide coverage outside one's home country. Learn about "reciprocal insurance plans" that some international health care companies might offer.
2. Make sure that one's travel insurance is appropriate. If one intends to indulge in adventurous activities, such as parasailing, one should be sure that one is fully insured in such cases. Many traditional insurance policies do not provide coverage in cases of extreme circumstances.
3. Take time to learn about one's destination country and culture. Read and learn about the place one is traveling. Also check political, economic and socio-cultural developments at the destination by reading country-specific travel reports and fact sheets noted below.
4. Get the necessary visas for the country (or countries) one intends to visit - but be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry. A number of useful sites regarding visa and other entry requirements are noted below.
5. Keep in regular contact with friends and relatives back at home by phone or email, and be sure to leave a travel itinerary.
6. Protect one's personal information by making copies of one's passport details, insurance policy, travelers checks and credit card numbers. Taking copies of such documents with you, while leaving another collection copies with someone at home is also good practice for travelers. Taking copies of one's passport photograph is also recommended.
7. Stay healthy by taking all possible precautions against illness. Also, be sure to take extra supplies of prescription drugs along for the trip, while also taking time to pack general pharmaceutical supplies, such as aspirin and other such painkillers, bandages, stomach ailment medication, anti-inflammatory medication and anti-bacterial medication.
8. Do not carry illicit drugs. Understand that the punishment for possession or use of illegal drugs in some countries may be capital punishment. Make sure your prescription drugs are legal in the countries you plan to visit.
9. Know the laws of one's destination country and culture; be sure to understand the repercussions of breaking those laws and regulations. Often the transparency and freedoms of the juridical system at home is not consistent with that of one's destination country. Become aware of these complexities and subtleties before you travel.
10. For longer stays in a country, or where the security situation is volatile, one should register

one's self and traveling companions at the local embassy or consulate of one's country of citizenship.
11. Women should take care to be prepared both culturally and practically for traveling in a different country and culture. One should be sure to take sufficient supplies of personal feminine products and prescription drugs. One should also learn about local cultural standards for women, including norms of dressing. Be aware that it is simply inappropriate and unsafe for women to travel alone in some countries, and take the necessary precautions to avoid risk-filled situations.
12. If one is traveling with small children, one should pack extra supplies, make arrangements with the travel carrier for proper seating that would adequately accommodate children, infants or toddlers. Note also that whether one is male of female, traveling with children means that one's hands are thus not free to carry luggage and bags. Be especially aware that this makes one vulnerable to pickpockets, thieves and other sorts of crime.
13. Make proper arrangements for accommodations, well in advance of one's arrival at a destination. Some countries have limited accommodation, while others may have culturally distinctive facilities. Learning about these practicalities before one travels will greatly aid the enjoyment of one's trip.
14. Travel with different forms of currency and money (cash, traveler's checks and credit cards) in anticipation that venues may not accept one or another form of money. Also, ensuring that one's financial resources are not contained in one location, or by one person (if one is traveling with others) can be a useful measure, in the event that one loses a wallet or purse.
15. Find out about transportation in the destination country. In some places, it might be advisable to hire a local driver or taxi guide for safety reasons, while in other countries, enjoying one's travel experience may well be enhanced by renting a vehicle and seeing the local sights and culture independently. Costs may also be prohibitive for either of these choices, so again, prior planning is suggested.

Tips for Travelers

• Bring enough funds for your stay and your return. Bank transfers take time.

• Take care of your passport at all times. Travel with a photocopy of your passport and keep it separate from your passport.

• Be vigilant when sitting in traffic jams particularly on bridges. Lock car doors and close windows at all times. Do not resist if confronted by armed robbers.

• Ensure that you are met at the airport on arrival.

• Leave money with friends/relatives in your home country to be transferred to Nigeria in an emergency.

• Ensure that someone in your home country is aware of your travel plans and advise them when you have reached your destination safely. Enter next of kin details into the back of your passport.

• Don't leave home without travel insurance. Ensure that it covers medical treatment, including medical evacuation to your home country, and unexpected losses/expenses (e.g. missing flight, losing passport, stolen cash or credit cards). Robberies are a high occurrence in Nigeria.

• Don't get involved with drugs. Penalties can be severe.

• Don't let go of your luggage at Nigerian airports and public places. Report all losses as soon as possible at the nearest police station and obtain a police report.

• Don't swim in the ocean. Currents are very strong.

• Don't use public transport and beware of driving conditions in Nigeria. Taxis and buses are poorly maintained.

• Don't travel outside cities after dark.

• Don't use credit cards. Fraud is very common in Nigeria.

• Don't enter the country on a visitor's visa and then work. Nigerian immigration is very strict with visitors who work in the country.

Note: This information is directly quoted from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sources: *United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

Business Culture: Information for Business Travelers

English is the official language of Nigeria, although it is a second language for many Nigerians who also speak one of several indigenous languages, such as Yoruba, Hausa and Ibo. Business travelers will find that most government officials and business people speak English well.

Sources: *United States Department of State Commercial Guides*

For more general information on etiquette in Nigeria, see our Cultural Etiquette page.

Online Resources Regarding Entry Requirements and Visas

Foreign Entry Requirements for Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Visa Services for Non-Americans from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

Visa Bulletins from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html

Visa Waivers from the United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html - new

Passport and Visa Information from the Government of the United Kingdom
http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/

Visa Information from the Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/visas/index.html

Passport Information from the Government of Australia
https://www.passports.gov.au/Web/index.aspx

Passport Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/passport_passeport-eng.asp

Visa Information from the Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/visas-eng.asp

Online Visa Processing by Immigration Experts by VisaPro
http://www.visapro.com

Sources: United States Department of State, United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Canada Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Useful Online Resources for Travelers

Country-Specific Travel Information from United States
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Travel Advice by Country from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/

General Travel Advice from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/General

Travel Bulletins from the Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/TravelBulletins/

Travel Tips from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/tips/index.html

Travel Checklist by Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/preparation_information/checklist_sommaire-eng.asp

Travel Checklist from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/staying-safe/checklist

Your trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1225.html

A safe trip abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html

Tips for expatriates abroad from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/residing/residing_1235.html

Tips for students from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/living/studying/studying_1238.html http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/broc

Medical information for travelers from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1185.html

US Customs Travel information
http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/

Sources: United States Department of State; United States Customs Department, United Kingdom

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Government of Australia; Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Other Practical Online Resources for Travelers

Foreign Language Phrases for Travelers
http://www.travlang.com/languages/
http://www.omniglot.com/language/phrases/index.htm

World Weather Forecasts
http://www.intellicast.com/
http://www.wunderground.com/
http://www.worldweather.org/

Worldwide Time Zones, Map, World Clock
http://www.timeanddate.com/
http://www.worldtimezone.com/

International Airport Codes
http://www.world-airport-codes.com/

International Dialing Codes
http://www.kropla.com/dialcode.htm
http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/

International Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/phones.htm

International Mobile Phone Guide
http://www.kropla.com/mobilephones.htm

International Internet Café Search Engine
http://cybercaptive.com/

Global Internet Roaming
http://www.kropla.com/roaming.htm

World Electric Power Guide
http://www.kropla.com/electric.htm
http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm

World Television Standards and Codes
http://www.kropla.com/tv.htm
International Currency Exchange Rates
http://www.xe.com/ucc/

Banking and Financial Institutions Across the World
http://www.123world.com/banks/index.html

International Credit Card or Automated Teller Machine (ATM) Locator
http://visa.via.infonow.net/locator/global/
http://www.mastercard.com/us/personal/en/cardholderservices/atmlocations/index.html

International Chambers of Commerce
http://www.123world.com/chambers/index.html

World Tourism Websites
http://123world.com/tourism/

Diplomatic and Consular Information

United States Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.usembassy.gov/

United Kingdom Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/embassies-and-posts/find-an-embassy-overseas/

Australia's Diplomatic Posts Around the World
http://www.dfat.gov.au/missions/
http://www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html

Canada's Embassies and High Commissions
http://www.international.gc.ca/ciw-cdm/embassies-ambassades.aspx

Resources for Finding Embassies and other Diplomatic Posts Across the World
http://www.escapeartist.com/embassy1/embassy1.htm

Safety and Security

Travel Warnings by Country from Government of Australia
http://www.smartraveller.gov.au/zw-cgi/view/Advice/

Travel Warnings and Alerts from United States Department of State
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html

Travel Reports and Warnings by Government of Canada
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp
http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/updates_mise-a-jour-eng.asp

Travel Warnings from Government of United Kingdom
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/
http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/?action=noTravelAll#noTravelAll

Sources: United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United States Department of State, the Government of Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Government of Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Other Safety and Security Online Resources for Travelers

United States Department of State Information on Terrorism
http://www.state.gov/s/ct/

Government of the United Kingdom Resource on the Risk of Terrorism
http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1044011304926

Government of Canada Terrorism Guide
http://www.international.gc.ca/crime/terrorism-terrorisme.aspx?lang=eng

Information on Terrorism by Government of Australia
http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/index.html

FAA Resource on Aviation Safety
http://www.faasafety.gov/

In-Flight Safety Information for Air Travel (by British Airways crew trainer, Anna Warman)
http://www.warman.demon.co.uk/anna/inflight.html

Hot Spots: Travel Safety and Risk Information
http://www.airsecurity.com/hotspots/HotSpots.asp

Information on Human Rights
http://www.state.gov/g/drl/hr/

Sources: The United States Department of State, the United States Customs Department, the Government of Canada, the Government of United Kingdom, the Government of Australia, the Federal Aviation Authority, Anna Warman's In-flight Website, Hot Spots Travel and Risk Information

Diseases/Health Data

Please Note: Most of the entry below constitutes a generalized health advisory, which a traveler might find useful, regardless of a particular destination.

As a supplement, however, the reader will also find below a list of countries flagged with current health notices and alerts issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Please note that travel to the following countries, based on these 3 levels of warnings, is ill-advised, or should be undertaken with the utmost precaution:

Level 3 (highest level of concern; avoid non-essential travel) --

Guinea - Ebola
Liberia - Ebola
Nepal - Eathquake zone
Sierra Leone - Ebola

Level 2 (intermediate level of concern; use utmost caution during travel) --

Cameroon - Polio
Somalia - Polio
Vanuatu - Tropical Cyclone zone
Throughout Middle East and Arabia Peninsula - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)

Level 1 (standard level of concern; use practical caution during travel) -

Australia - Ross River disease
Bosnia-Herzegovina - Measles
Brazil - Dengue Fever
Brazil - Malaria
Brazil - Zika
China - H7N9 Avian flu
Cuba - Cholera
Egypt - H5N1 Bird flu
Ethiopia - Measles
Germany - Measles
Japan - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
Kyrgyzstan - Measles
Malaysia -Dengue Fever
Mexico - Chikungunya
Mexico - Hepatitis A
Nigeria - Meningitis
Philippines - Measles
Scotland - Mumps
Singapore - Hand, foot, and mouth disease (HFMD)
South Korea - MERS ((Middle East Respiratory Syndrome)
Throughout Caribbean - Chikungunya
Throughout Central America - Chikungunya
Throughout South America - Chikungunya
Throughout Pacific Islands - Chikungunya

For specific information related to these health notices and alerts please see the CDC's listing available at URL:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices

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Health Information for Travelers to Nigeria

General Guidance --

Food and waterborne diseases are the number one cause of illness in travelers. Travelers' diarrhea can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which are found throughout the region and can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli, Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe. (See below.)

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites (see below). Most travelers to malaria risk areas in this region should take mefloquine to prevent malaria. Your risk of malaria is high in all parts of these countries, including cities, except for most of the Cape Verde Islands. For more detailed information about the risk in specific locations, see Malaria in West Africa (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/regionalmalaria/wafrica.htm).

Yellow fever vaccination is recommended and may be required for entry into certain of these countries. If you travel to West Africa, the easiest and safest thing to do is get a yellow fever vaccination and a signed certificate. For detailed information, see Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/yelfever.htm).

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites (see below) will help to prevent these diseases.

Schistosomiasis, a parasitic infection, is found in fresh water in the region. Do not swim in fresh water (except in well-chlorinated swimming pools) in these countries. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/safety.htm.)

Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid nighttime travel if possible and always use seat belts.

Special Report on Ebola in "hot zone" of West Africa --

The year 2014 was marked by a horrific outbreak of the highly dangerous hemorrhagic disease Ebola in west Africa. By October 2014, the World Health Organzation (WHO) reported that the death toll from the Ebola epidemic had climbed to approximately 5,000 out of the more than 10,000 known cases in eight countries. The majority of deaths to this point were in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Senegal and Nigeria had been able to successfully contain outbreaks and were

declared free of the disease. Outside of Africa, Spain and the United States had reported isolated cases. WHO reports, however, that the number of actual cases is likely much higher than what has been recorded globally.

In a new development, the virus had reached Mali, where a two-year-old girl died on Oct. 24, 2014. There was concern that many people in the country – which had become the sixth nation in West Africa to confirm the virus - had been exposed because the girl had been taken across the country while ill. As such, WHO was treating the situation in Mali as an emergency and officials in neighboring Mauritania had closed its borders with Mali in response. Meanwhile, the virus was also now threatening Cote d'Ivoire, since it had infected people virtually all along its borders with Guinea and Liberia.

As concerns over Ebola increased, there was a positive development in Liberia -- the country hardest hit by Ebola -- where the pace of infection was slowing. This mode, if sustained, would be a welcome surprise, given the WHO's warnings of an increased pace of infection in the offing. Still, the WHO warned that the crisis was not yet over.

At the same time, health experts were looking at the Nigerian model to stymie the spread of Ebola in that country, pointing to the excellent polio prevention infrastructure that had been implemented by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (founders of Microsoft), as well as the concerted effort by health professionals to trace and follow up with individuals believed to have had contact with Ebola patients across that country.

Meanwhile, in an attempt to quell the epidemic, WHO said that Ebola vaccines could begin in West Africa in December 2014 and that hundreds of thousands of doses should be ready for use by the middle of 2015.

CDC Recommends the Following Vaccines (as Appropriate for Age):

See your doctor at least 4-6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

• Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
• Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
• Meningococcal meningitis, for travel to most of these countries (see meningitis map at URL http://www.cdc.gov/travel/meninmap.htm) from December through June.
• Yellow fever.
• Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
• Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.
• As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria, measles, and a one-time dose of polio vaccine

for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11-12 years who did not complete the series as infants.

To Stay Healthy, Do:

• Wash hands often with soap and water.
• Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
• Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.
• Take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
• Protect yourself from insects by remaining in well-screened areas, using repellents (applied sparingly at 4-hour intervals) and permethrin-impregnated mosquito nets, and wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants from dusk through dawn.
• To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.
• Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

To Avoid Getting Sick:

• Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
• Don't drink beverages with ice.
• Don't eat dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
• Don't share needles with anyone.
• Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page.)
• Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

What You Need To Bring with You:

• Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
• Insect repellent containing DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide), in 30%-35% strength for adults and 6%-10% for children. Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin. (Bed nets can be purchased in camping or military supply stores.)
• Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.

• Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available. See Do's above for more details about water filters.
• Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
• Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

After You Return Home:
If you have visited an area where there is risk for malaria, continue taking your malaria medication weekly for 4 weeks after you leave the area.

If you become ill after your trip-even as long as a year after you return-tell your doctor where you have traveled.

For More Information:

Ask your doctor or check the CDC web sites for more information about how to protect yourself against diseases that occur in West Africa, such as:

For information about diseases-

Carried by Insects
Dengue, Malaria, Yellow Fever

Carried in Food or Water
Cholera, *Escherichia coli,* diarrhea, Hepatitis A, Schistosomiasis, Typhoid Fever

Person-to-Person Contact
Hepatitis B, HIV/AIDS

For more information about these and other diseases, please check the Diseases (http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases.htm) section and the Health Topics A-Z (http://www.cdc.gov/health/diseases.htm).

An outbreak of meningitis occurred in recent years in several central, east, and west African countries, including Ethiopia, Chad, Cameroon, Burkino Faso, and Benin. For more information on this outbreak and recommendations, see the following sites:

Travelers' Health Information on Meningococcal Disease
(http://www.cdc.gov/travel/diseases/menin.htm)

World Health Organization Disease Outbreak News

(http://www.who.int/disease-outbreak-news/)

Note:

This country is located in the West Africa health region.

Sources:

The Center for Disease Control Destinations Website:
http://www.cdc.gov/travel/indianrg.htm

Chapter 6

Environmental Overview

Environmental Issues

General Overview:

Although Nigeria is home to a wealth of bio-diversity, rich natural resources, and a variety of eco-systems, it also suffers from a number of environmental challenges. These issues are largely a result of human activities, population density, and over-population in urban centers.

In particular, the clearing of forests for agricultural activities, logging and fuel wood, has exacerbated deforestation. As well, recent droughts in the north have severely affected marginal agricultural activities. Further, wetlands exploitation and hunting have had deleterious effects on bio-diversity.

Current Issues:

-soil degradation
-rapid deforestation
-desertification
-threats to bio-diversity
-poor waste management techniques

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Mtc):

44.3

Country Rank (GHG output):

34th

Natural Hazards:

-periodic drought

Environmental Policy

Regulation and Jurisdiction:

The regulation and protection of the environment in Nigeria is under the jurisdiction of the following:

- Federal Environmental Protection Agency (managed by the Ministry of Works and Housing)

Major Non-Governmental Organizations:

- The Nigerian Conservation Foundation
- The Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team.

International Environmental Accords:

Party to:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Marine Dumping
- Marine Life Conservation
- Nuclear Test Ban
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Wetlands

Signed but not ratified:

- None

Kyoto Protocol Status (year ratified):

2004

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

Greenhouse Gas Ranking

GHG Emissions Rankings

Country Rank	**Country**
1	United States
2	China
4	Russia
5	Japan
6	India
7	Germany

8	United Kingdom
9	Canada
10	Korea, South
11	Italy
12	Mexico
13	France
14	South Africa
15	Iran
16	Indonesia
17	Australia
18	Spain
19	Brazil
20	Saudi Arabia
21	Ukraine
22	Poland
23	Taiwan
24	Turkey
25	Thailand

26	Netherlands
27	Kazakhstan
28	Malaysia
29	Egypt
30	Venezuela
31	Argentina
32	Uzbekistan
33	Czech Republic
34	Belgium
35	Pakistan
36	Romania
37	Greece
38	United Arab Emirates
39	Algeria
40	Nigeria
41	Austria
42	Iraq
43	Finland

44	Philippines
45	Vietnam
46	Korea, North
47	Israel
48	Portugal
49	Colombia
50	Belarus
51	Kuwait
52	Hungary
53	Chile
54	Denmark
55	Serbia & Montenegro
56	Sweden
57	Syria
58	Libya
59	Bulgaria
60	Singapore
61	Switzerland

62	Ireland
63	Turkmenistan
64	Slovakia
65	Bangladesh
66	Morocco
67	New Zealand
68	Oman
69	Qatar
70	Azerbaijan
71	Norway
72	Peru
73	Cuba
74	Ecuador
75	Trinidad & Tobago
76	Croatia
77	Tunisia
78	Dominican Republic
79	Lebanon

80	Estonia
81	Yemen
82	Jordan
83	Slovenia
84	Bahrain
85	Angola
86	Bosnia & Herzegovina
87	Lithuania
88	Sri Lanka
89	Zimbabwe
90	Bolivia
91	Jamaica
92	Guatemala
93	Luxembourg
94	Myanmar
95	Sudan
96	Kenya
97	Macedonia

98	Mongolia
99	Ghana
100	Cyprus
101	Moldova
102	Latvia
103	El Salvador
104	Brunei
105	Honduras
106	Cameroon
107	Panama
108	Costa Rica
109	Cote d'Ivoire
110	Kyrgyzstan
111	Tajikistan
112	Ethiopia
113	Senegal
114	Uruguay
115	Gabon

116	Albania
117	Nicaragua
118	Botswana
119	Paraguay
120	Tanzania
121	Georgia
122	Armenia
123	Congo, RC
124	Mauritius
125	Nepal
126	Mauritius
127	Nepal
128	Mauritania
129	Malta
130	Papua New Guinea
131	Zambia
132	Suriname
133	Iceland

134	Togo
135	Benin
136	Uganda
137	Bahamas
138	Haiti
139	Congo, DRC
140	Guyana
141	Mozambique
142	Guinea
143	Equatorial Guinea
144	Laos
145	Barbados
146	Niger
147	Fiji
148	Burkina Faso
149	Malawi
150	Swaziland
151	Belize

152	Afghanistan
153	Sierra Leone
154	Eritrea
155	Rwanda
156	Mali
157	Seychelles
158	Cambodia
159	Liberia
160	Bhutan
161	Maldives
162	Antigua & Barbuda
163	Djibouti
164	Saint Lucia
165	Gambia
166	Guinea-Bissau
167	Central African Republic
168	Palau
169	Burundi

170	Grenada
171	Lesotho
172	Saint Vincent & the Grenadines
173	Solomon Islands
174	Samoa
175	Cape Verde
176	Nauru
177	Dominica
178	Saint Kitts & Nevis
179	Chad
180	Tonga
181	Sao Tome & Principe
182	Comoros
183	Vanuatu
185	Kiribati
Not Ranked	Andorra
Not Ranked	East Timor
Not Ranked	Holy See

Not Ranked	Hong Kong
Not Ranked	Liechtenstein
Not Ranked	Marshall Islands
Not Ranked	Micronesia
Not Ranked	Monaco
Not Ranked	San Marino
Not Ranked	Somalia
Not Ranked	Tuvalu

* European Union is ranked 3rd
Cook Islands are ranked 184th
Niue is ranked 186th

Global Environmental Snapshot

Introduction

The countries of the world face many environmental challenges in common. Nevertheless, the nature and intensity of problem vary from region to region, as do various countries' respective capacities, in terms of affluence and infrastructure, to remediate threats to environmental quality.

Consciousness of perils affecting the global environment came to the fore in the last third or so of the 20th century has continued to intensify well into the new millennium. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, considerable environmental progress has been made at the level of institutional developments, international cooperation accords, and public participation. Approximately two-dozen international environmental protection accords with global implications have been promulgated since the late 1970s under auspices of the United Nations and other

international organizations, together with many additional regional agreements. Attempts to address and rectify environmental problems take the form of legal frameworks, economic instruments, environmentally sound technologies and cleaner production processes as well as conservation efforts. Environmental impact assessments have increasingly been applied across the globe.

Environmental degradation affects the quality, or aesthetics, of human life, but it also displays potential to undermine conditions necessary for the sustainability of human life. Attitudes toward the importance of environmental protection measures reflect ambivalence derived from this bifurcation. On one hand, steps such as cleaning up pollution, dedicating parkland, and suchlike, are seen as embellishments undertaken by wealthy societies already assured they can successfully perform those functions deemed, ostensibly, more essential-for instance, public health and education, employment and economic development. On the other hand, in poorer countries, activities causing environmental damage-for instance the land degradation effects of unregulated logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, overgrazing, and mining-can seem justified insofar as such activities provide incomes and livelihoods.

Rapid rates of resource depletion are associated with poverty and high population growth, themselves correlated, whereas consumption per capita is much higher in the most developed countries, despite these nations' recent progress in energy efficiency and conservation. It is impossible to sequester the global environmental challenge from related economic, social and political challenges.

First-tier industrialized countries have recently achieved measurable decreases in environmental pollution and the rate of resource depletion, a success not matched in middle income and developing countries. It is believed that the discrepancy is due to the fact that industrialized countries have more developed infrastructures to accommodate changes in environmental policy, to apply environmental technologies, and to invest in public education. The advanced industrialized countries incur relatively lower costs in alleviating environmental problems, in comparison to developing countries, since in the former even extensive environmental programs represent a rather minuscule percentage of total expenditures. Conversely, budget constraints, lagged provision of basic services to the population, and other factors such as debt service and militarization may preclude institution of minimal environmental protection measures in the poorest countries.

A synopsis for the current situation facing each region of the world follows:

Regional Synopsis: Africa

The African continent, the world's second-largest landmass, encompasses many of the world's least developed countries. By global standards, urbanization is comparatively low but rising at a rapid rate. More heavily industrialized areas at the northern and southern ends of the continent

experience the major share of industrial pollution. In other regions the most serious environmental problems typically stem from inefficient subsistence farming methods and other forms of land degradation, which have affected an increasingly extensive area under pressure of a widely impoverished, fast-growing population. Africa's distribution of natural resources is very uneven. It is the continent at greatest risk of desertification, especially in the Sahel region at the edge of the Sahara but also in other dry-range areas. Yet at the same time, Africa also harbors some of the earth's richest and most diverse biological zones.

Key Points:

Up to half a billion hectares of African land are moderately to severely degraded, an occurrence reflecting short-fallow shifting cultivation and overgrazing as well as a climatic pattern of recurrent droughts.

Soil degradation is severe along the expanse directly south of the Sahara, from the west to the east coasts. Parts of southern Africa, central-eastern Africa, and the neighboring island of Madagascar suffer from serious soil degradation as well.

Africa contains about 17 percent of the world's forest cover, concentrated in the tropical belt of the continent. Many of the forests, however, are severely depleted, with an estimated 70 percent showing some degree of degradation.

Population growth has resulted in continuing loss of arable land, as inefficient subsistence farming techniques affect increasingly extensive areas. Efforts to implement settled, sustainable agriculture have met with some recent success, but much further progress in this direction is needed. Especially in previously uninhabited forestlands, concern over deforestation is intensifying.

By contrast, the African savanna remains the richest grassland in the world, supporting a substantial concentration of animal and plant life. Wildlife parks are sub-Saharan Africa's greatest tourist attraction, and with proper management-giving local people a stake in conservation and controlling the pace of development-could greatly enhance African economies.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of northern, southern and eastern Africa are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in Mauritania and Madagascar is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these two countries currently under threat.

With marine catch trends increasing from 500,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 3,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Water resource vulnerability is a major concern in northeastern Africa, and a moderate concern across the rest of the continent. An exception is central Africa, which has plentiful water supplies.

Many Africans lack adequate access to resources, not just (if at all) because the resources are unevenly distributed geographically, but also through institutional failures such as faulty land tenure systems or political upheaval. The quality of Africa's natural resources, despite their spotty distribution, is in fact extraordinarily rich. The infrastructure needed to protect and benefit from this natural legacy, however, is largely lacking.

Regional Synopsis: Asia and the Pacific

Asia-earth's largest landmass-and the many large and nearly innumerable small islands lying off its Pacific shore display extraordinarily contrasting landscapes, levels of development, and degrees of environmental stress. In the classification used here, the world's smallest continent, Australia, is also included in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to 9 of the world's 14 largest urban areas, and as energy use for utilities, industry and transport increases in developing economies, urban centers are subject to worsening air quality. Intense population density in places such as Bangladesh or Hong Kong is the quintessential image many people have of Asia, yet vast desert areas such as the Gobi and the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas, span the continent as well. Forested areas in Southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines were historically prized for their tropical hardwood, but in many places this resource is now severely depleted. Low-lying small island states are extremely vulnerable to the effects of global warming, both rising sea levels and an anticipated increase in cyclones.

Key Points:

Asian timber reserves are forecast to be depleted in the next 40 years. Loss of natural forest is irreversible in some areas, but plantation programs to restore tree cover may ameliorate a portion of the resulting land degradation.

Increased usage of fossil fuels in China and other parts of southern Asia is projected to result in a marked increase in emissions, especially in regard to carbon dioxide. The increased usage of energy has led to a marked upsurge in air pollution across the region.

Acidification is an emerging problem regionally, with sulfur dioxide emissions expected to triple by 2010 if the current growth rate is sustained. China, Thailand, India, and Korea seem to be suffering from particularly high rates of acid deposition. By contrast, Asia's most highly developed economy, Japan, has effected substantial improvements in its environmental indicators.

Water pollution in the Pacific is an urgent concern since up to 70 percent of the water discharged into the region's waters receives no treatment. Additionally, the disposal of solid wastes, in like manner, poses a major threat in a region with many areas of high population density.

The Asia-Pacific region is the largest expanse of the world's land that is adversely affected by soil degradation.

The region around Australia reportedly suffers the largest degree of ozone depletion.

The microstates of the Pacific suffer land loss due to global warming, and the consequent rise in the levels of ocean waters. A high-emissions scenario and anthropogenic climate impact at the upper end of the currently predicted range would probably force complete evacuation of the lowest-elevation islands sometime in this century.

The species-rich reefs surrounding Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to the deleterious effects of coastal development, land-based pollution, over-fishing and exploitative fishing methods, as well as marine pollution from oil spills and other activities.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of China and south-east Asia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity in India, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Malaysia is even further compromised with over 20 percent of the mammal species in these countries currently under threat.

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern in areas surrounding the Indian subcontinent.

Regional Synopsis: Central Asia

The Central Asian republics, formerly in the Soviet Union, experience a range of environmental problems as the result of poorly executed agricultural, industrial, and nuclear programs during the Soviet era. Relatively low population densities are the norm, especially since upon the breakup of the U.S.S.R. many ethnic Russians migrated back to European Russia. In this largely semi-arid region, drought, water shortages, and soil salinization pose major challenges.

Key Points:

The use of agricultural pesticides, such as DDT and other chemicals, has contributed to the contamination of soil and groundwater throughout the region.

Land and soil degradation, and in particular, increased salinization, is mostly attributable to faulty irrigation practices.

Significant desertification is also a problem in the region.

Air pollution is prevalent, mostly due to use of low octane automobile fuel.

Industrial pollution of the Caspian Sea and the Aral Sea, as a result of industrial effluents as well as mining and metal production, presents a challenge to the countries bordering these bodies of water.

One of the most severe environmental problems in the region is attributable to the several billion tons of hazardous materials stored in landfills across Central Asia.

Uzbekistan's particular problem involves the contraction of the Aral Sea, which has decreased in size by a third, as a consequence of river diversions and poor irrigation practices. The effect has been the near-total biological destruction of that body of water.

Kazakhstan, as a consequence of being the heartland of the former Soviet Union's nuclear program, has incurred a high of cancerous malignancies, biogenetic abnormalities and radioactive contamination.

While part of the Soviet Union, the republics in the region experienced very high levels of greenhouse gas emissions, as a consequence of rapid industrialization using cheap but dirty energy sources, especially coal.

By contrast, however, there have recently been substantial reductions in the level of greenhouse gas emissions, especially those attributable to coal burning, with further decreases anticipated over the next decade. These changes are partially due to the use of cleaner energy technologies, such as natural gas, augmented by governmental commitment to improving environmental standards.

Regional Synopsis: Europe

Western Europe underwent dramatic transformation of its landscape, virtually eliminating large-scale natural areas, during an era of rapid industrialization, which intensified upon its recovery from World War II. In Eastern Europe and European Russia, intensive land development has been less prevalent, so that some native forests and other natural areas remain. Air and water pollution from use of dirty fuels and industrial effluents, however, are more serious environmental problems in

Eastern than in Western Europe, though recent trends show improvement in many indicators. Acid rain has inflicted heavy environmental damage across much of Europe, particularly on forests. Europe and North America are the only regions in which water usage for industry exceeds that for agriculture, although in Mediterranean nations agriculture is the largest water consumer.

Key Points:

Europe contributes 36 percent of the world's chlorofluorocarbon emissions, 30 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, and 25 percent of sulfur dioxide emissions.

Sulfur and nitrogen oxide emissions are the cause of 30 to 50 percent of Central and Eastern Europe's deforestation.

Acid rain has been an environmental concern for decades and continues to be a challenge in parts of Western Europe.

Overexploitation of up to 60 percent of Europe's groundwater presents a problem in industrial and urban areas.

With marine catch trends increasing from 5,000,000 metric tons in the 1950s to over 20,000,000 metric tons by 2000, there was increasing concern about the reduction in fisheries and marine life, should this trend continue unabated.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of western Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia are currently threatened, while the biological diversity on the Iberian Peninsula is even further compromised with over 40 percent of the mammal species in this region currently under threat. As a result, there has been a 10 percent increase in protected areas of Europe.

A major environmental issue for Europe involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Some estimates suggest that up to 50 percent of the continent's fish species may be considered endangered species. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species.

Fortunately, in the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Recently, most European countries have adopted cleaner production technologies, and alternative methods of waste disposal, including recycling.

The countries of Eastern Europe have made air quality a major environmental priority. This is

exemplified by the Russian Federation's addition to the 1995 "Berlin Mandate" (transnational legislation based on resolutions of the Rio Earth Summit) compelling nations to promote "carbon sinks" to absorb greenhouse gases.

On a relative basis, when compared with the degree of industrial emissions emitted by many Eastern European countries until the late 1980s, there has been some marked increase in air quality in the region, as obsolete plants are closed and a transition to cleaner fuels and more efficient energy use takes place.

Regional Synopsis: The Middle and Near East

Quite possibly, the Middle East will exemplify the adage that, as the 20th century was a century fixated on oil, the 21st century will be devoted to critical decisions about water. Many (though far from all) nations in the Middle East rank among those countries with the largest oil and gas reserves, but water resources are relatively scarce throughout this predominantly dry region. Effects of global warming may cause moderately high elevation areas that now typically receive winter "snowpack" to experience mainly rain instead, which would further constrain dry-season water availability. The antiquities and religious shrines of the region render it a great magnet for tourism, which entails considerable economic growth potential but also intensifies stresses on the environment.

Key Points:

Water resource vulnerability is a serious concern across the entire region. The increased usage of, and further demand for water, has exacerbated long-standing water scarcity in the region. For instance, river diversions and industrial salt works have caused the Dead Sea to shrink by one-third from its original surface area, with further declines expected.

The oil industry in the region contributes to water pollution in the Persian Gulf, as a result of oil spills, which have averaged 1.2 million barrels of oil spilt per year (some sources suggest that this figure is understated). The consequences are severe because even after oil spills have been cleaned up, environmental damage to the food webs and ecosystems of marine life will persist for a prolonged period.

The region's coastal zone is considered one of the most fragile and endangered ecosystems of the world. Land reclamation, shoreline construction, discharge of industrial effluents, and tourism (such as diving in the Red Sea) contribute to widespread coastal damage.

Significant numbers of mammal species in parts of the Middle East are currently threatened.

Since the 1980s, 11 percent of the region's natural forest has been depleted.

Regional Synopsis: Latin America and the Caribbean

The Latin American and Caribbean region is characterized by exceedingly diverse landforms that have generally seen high rates of population growth and economic development in recent decades. The percentage of inhabitants residing in urban areas is quite high at 73.4 percent; the region includes the megacities of Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro. The region also includes the world's second-highest mountain range, the Andes; significant expanses of desert and grassland; the coral reefs of the Caribbean Sea; and the world's largest contiguous tropical forest in the Amazon basin. Threats to the latter from subsistence and commercial farming, mineral exploitation and timbering are well publicized. Nevertheless, of eight countries worldwide that still retain at least 70 percent of their original forest cover, six are in Latin America. The region accounts for nearly half (48.3 percent) of the world's greenhouse gas emissions derived from land clearing, but as yet a comparatively minuscule share (4.3 percent) of such gases from industrial sources.

Key Points:

Although Latin America is one of the most biologically diverse regions of the world, this biodiversity is highly threatened, as exemplified by the projected extinction of up to 100,000 species in the next few decades. Much of this loss will be concentrated in the Amazon area, although the western coastline of South America will also suffer significant depletion of biological diversity. The inventory of rainforest species with potentially useful commercial or medical applications is incomplete, but presumed to include significant numbers of such species that may become extinct before they are discovered and identified.

Up to 50 percent of the region's grazing land has lost its soil fertility as a result of soil erosion, salinization, alkalinization and overgrazing.

The Caribbean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Pacific Ocean have all been contaminated by agricultural wastes, which are discharged into streams that flow into these major waters. Water pollution derived from phosphorous, nitrates and pesticides adversely affects fish stocks, contributes to oxygen depletion and fosters overgrowth of aquatic vegetation. Marine life will continue to be severely compromised as a result of these conditions.

Due to industrial development in the region, many beaches of eastern Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from tar deposits.

Most cities in the region lack adequate sewage treatment facilities, and rapid migration of the rural

poor into the cities is widening the gap between current infrastructure capacity and the much greater level needed to provide satisfactory basic services.

The rainforest region of the Amazon Basin suffers from dangerously high levels of deforestation, which may be a significant contributory factor to global warming or "the greenhouse effect." In the late 1990s and into the new millennium, the rate of deforestation was around 20 million acres of rainforest being destroyed annually.

Deforestation on the steep rainforest slopes of Caribbean islands contributes to soil erosion and landslides, both of which then result in heavy sedimentation of nearby river systems. When these sedimented rivers drain into the sea and coral reefs, they poison the coral tissues, which are vital to the maintenance of the reef ecosystem. The result is marine degradation and nutrient depletion. Jamaica's coral reefs have never quite recovered from the effects of marine degradation.

The Southern Cone of Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) suffers the effects of greatly increased ultraviolet-B radiation, as a consequence of more intense ozone depletion in the southern hemisphere.

Water resource vulnerability is an increasingly major concern in the northwestern portion of South America.

Regional Synopsis: North America

North American nations, in particular the United States and Canada, rank among the world's most highly developed industrial economies-a fact which has generated significant pollution problems, but also financial resources and skills that have enabled many problems to be corrected. Although efforts to promote energy efficiency, recycling, and suchlike have helped ease strains on the environment in a part of the world where per capita consumption levels are high, sprawling land development patterns and recent preferences many households have demonstrated for larger vehicles have offset these advances.

Meanwhile, a large portion of North America's original forest cover has been lost, though in many cases replaced by productive second-growth woodland. In recent years, attitudes toward best use of the region's remaining natural or scenic areas seem to be shifting toward recreation and preservation and away from resource extraction. With increasing attention on the energy scarcity in the United States, however, there is speculation that this shift may be short-lived. Indeed, the energy shortage on the west coast of the United States and associated calls for energy exploration, indicate a possible retrenchment toward resource extraction. At the same time, however, it has also served to highlight the need for energy conservation as well as alternative energy sources.

Despite generally successful anti-pollution efforts, various parts of the region continue to suffer significant air, water and land degradation from industrial, vehicular, and agricultural emissions and runoff. Mexico, as a middle-income country, displays environmental problems characteristic of a developing economy, including forest depletion, pollution from inefficient industrial processes and dirty fuels, and lack of sufficient waste-treatment infrastructure.

Key Points:

Because of significantly greater motor vehicle usage in the United States (U.S.) than in the rest of the world, the U.S. contribution of urban air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, especially carbon dioxide, is disproportionately high in relation to its population.

Acid rain is an enduring issue of contention in the northeastern part of the United States, on the border with Canada.

Mexico's urban areas suffer extreme air pollution from carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, and other toxic air pollutants. Emissions controls on vehicles are in their infancy, compared to analogous regulations in the U.S.

The cities of Mexico, including those on the U.S. border, also discharge large quantities of untreated or poorly treated sewage, though officials are currently planning infrastructure upgrades.

Deforestation is noteworthy in various regions of the U.S., especially along the northwest coastline. Old growth forests have been largely removed, but in the northeastern and upper midwestern sections of the United States, evidence suggests that the current extent of tree cover probably surpasses the figure for the beginning of the 20th century.

Extreme weather conditions in the last few years have resulted in a high level of soil erosion along the north coast of California; in addition, the coastline itself has shifted substantially due to soil erosion and concomitant landslides.

Agricultural pollution-including nitrate contamination of well water, nutrient runoff to waterways, and pesticide exposure-is significant in various areas. Noteworthy among affected places are California's Central Valley, extensive stretches of the Midwest, and land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Inland waterways, especially around the Great Lakes, have substantially improved their water quality, due to concentrated efforts at reducing water pollution by governmental, commercial and community representatives. Strict curbs on industrial effluents and near-universal implementation of sewage treatment are the chief factors responsible for this improvement.

A major environmental issue for Canada and the United States involves the depletion of various already endangered or threatened species, and most significantly, the decline of fish stocks. Coastal fisheries have been over-harvested, resulting in catch limits or moratoriums on many commercially important fish species. In the last few years, these policies have started to yield measurable results with decreasing trends in marine fish catch.

Due to the decay of neighboring ecosystems in Central America and the Caribbean, the sea surrounding Florida has become increasingly sedimented, contributing to marine degradation, nutrient depletion of the ecosystem, depletion of fish stocks, and diseases to coral species in particular.

Polar Regions

Key Points:

The significant rise in sea level, amounting 10 to 25 centimeters in the last 100 years, is due to the melting of the Arctic ice sheets, and is attributed to global warming.

The Antarctic suffers from a significant ozone hole, first detected in 1976. By 1985, a British scientific team reported a 40 percent decrease in usual regeneration rates of the ozone. Because a sustained increase in the amount of ultraviolet-B radiation would have adverse consequences upon all planetary life, recent environmental measures have been put into effect, aimed at reversing ozone depletion. These measures are projected to garner significant results by 2050.

Due to air and ocean currents, the Arctic is a sink for toxic releases originally discharged thousands of miles away. Arctic wildlife and Canada's Inuit population have higher bodily levels of contaminants such as PCB and dioxin than those found in people and animals in much of the rest of the world.

Global Environmental Concepts

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1. Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases

The Greenhouse Effect:

In the early 19th century, the French physicist, Jean Fourier, contended that the earth's atmosphere functions in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse, thus describing what is now understood as the "greenhouse effect." Put simply, the "greenhouse effect" confines some of the sun's energy to the earth, preserving some of the planet's warmth, rather than allowing it to flow back into space. In so doing, all kinds of life forms can flourish on earth. Thus, the "greenhouse effect" is necessary to sustain and preserve life forms and ecosystems on earth.

In the late 19th century, a Swedish chemist, Svante Arrhenius, noticed that human activities, such as the burning of coal and other fossil fuels for heat, and the removal of forested lands for urban development, led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, in the atmosphere. This increase in the levels of greenhouse gases was believed to advance the "greenhouse effect" exponentially, and might be related to the trend in global warming.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, after industrial development took place on a large scale and the total human population burgeoned simultaneously with industrialization, the resulting increase in greenhouse gas emissions could, many scientists believe, be significant enough to have some bearing on climate. Indeed, many studies in recent years support the idea that there is a linkage between human activities and global warming, although there is less consensus on the extent to which this linkage may be relevant to environmental concerns.

That said, some scientists have argued that temperature fluctuations have existed throughout the evolution of the planet. Indeed, Dr. S. Fred Singer, the president of the Science and Environment Policy Project has noted that 3,000-year-old geological records of ocean sediment reveal changes in the surface temperature of the ocean. Hence, it is possible that climate variability is merely a normal fact of the planet's evolution. Yet even skeptics as to anthropogenic factors concur that any substantial changes in global temperatures would likely have an effect upon the earth's ecosystems, as well as the life forms that inhabit them.

The Relationship Between Global Warming and Greenhouse Gases:

A large number of climatologists believe that the increase in atmospheric concentrations of "greenhouse gas emissions," mostly a consequence of human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, are contributing to global warming. The cause notwithstanding, the planet has reportedly warmed 0.3°C to 0.6°C over the last century. Indeed, each year during the 1990s was one of the very warmest in the 20th century, with the mean surface temperature for 1999 being the fifth warmest on record since 1880.

In early 2000, a panel of atmospheric scientists for the National Research Council concluded in a report that global warming was, indeed, a reality. While the panel, headed by Chairman John Wallace, a professor of atmospheric sciences at the University of Washington, stated that it

remained unclear whether human activities have contributed to the earth's increasing temperatures, it was apparent that global warming exists.

In 2001, following a request for further study by the incoming Bush administration in the United States, the National Academy of Sciences again confirmed that global warming had been in existence for the last 20 years. The study also projected an increase in temperature between 2.5 degrees and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the year 2100. Furthermore, the study found the leading cause of global warming to be emissions of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, and it noted that greenhouse gas accumulations in the earth's atmosphere was a result of human activities.

Within the scientific community, the controversy regarding has centered on the difference between surface air and upper air temperatures. Information collected since 1979 suggests that while the earth's surface temperature has increased by about a degree in the past century, the atmospheric temperature five miles above the earth's surface has indicated very little increase. Nevertheless, the panel stated that this discrepancy in temperature between surface and upper air does not invalidate the conclusion that global warming is taking place. Further, the panel noted that natural events, such as volcanic eruptions, can decrease the temperature in the upper atmosphere.

The major consequences of global warming potentially include the melting of the polar ice caps, which, in turn, contribute to the rise in sea levels. Many islands across the globe have already experienced a measurable loss of land as a result. Because global warming may increase the rate of evaporation, increased precipitation, in the form of stronger and more frequent storm systems, is another potential outcome. Other consequences of global warming may include the introduction and proliferation of new infectious diseases, loss of arable land (referred to as "desertification"), destructive changes to existing ecosystems, loss of biodiversity and the isolation of species, and concomitant adverse changes in the quality of human life.

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to

changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

*** See section on "International Environmental Agreements and Associations" for information related to international policies related to limiting greenhouse gases and controlling climate change emanating from historic summits at Kyoto, Copenhagen, Doha, and Paris. ***

2. Air Pollution

Long before global warming reared its head as a significant issue, those concerned about the environment and public health noted the deleterious effects of human-initiated combustion upon the atmosphere. Killer smogs from coal burning triggered acute health emergencies in London and other places. At a lower level of intensity motor vehicle, power plant, and industrial emissions impaired long-range visibility and probably had some chronic adverse consequences on the respiratory systems of persons breathing such air.

In time, scientists began associating the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides released from coal burning with significant acid deposition in the atmosphere, eventually falling as "acid rain." This phenomenon has severely degraded forestlands, especially in Europe and a few parts of the United States. It has also impaired some aquatic ecosystems and eaten away the surface of some human artifacts, such as marble monuments. Scrubber technology and conversion to cleaner fuels have enabled the level of industrial production to remain at least constant while significantly reducing acid deposition. Technologies aimed at cleaning the air and curtailing acid rain, soot, and smog may, nonetheless, boomerang as the perils of global warming become increasingly serious. In brief, these particulates act as sort of a sun shade -- comparable to the effect of volcanic eruptions on the upper atmosphere whereby periods of active volcanism correlate with temporarily cooler weather conditions. Thus, while the carbon dioxide releases that are an inevitable byproduct of combustion continue, by scrubbing the atmosphere of pollutants, an industrial society opens itself to greater insolation (penetration of the sun's rays and consequent heating), and consequently, it is likely to experience a correspondingly greater rise in ambient temperatures.

The health benefits of removing the sources of acid rain and smog are indisputable, and no one would recommend a return to previous conditions. Nevertheless, the problematic climatic effects of continually increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases pose a major global environmental challenge, not as yet addressed adequately.

3. Ozone Depletion

The stratospheric ozone layer functions to prevent ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth. Normally, stratospheric ozone is systematically disintegrated and regenerated through natural photochemical processes. The stratospheric ozone layer, however, has been depleted unnaturally as a result of anthropogenic (man-made) chemicals, most especially chlorine and bromide compounds such as chloroflorocarbons (CFCs), halons, and various industrial chemicals in the form of solvents, refrigerants, foaming agents, aerosol propellants, fire retardants, and fumigants. Ozone depletion is of concern because it permits a greater degree of ultraviolet-B radiation to reach the earth, which then increases the incidences of cancerous malignancies, cataracts, and human immune deficiencies. In addition, even in small doses, ozone depletion affects the ecosystem by disturbing food chains, agriculture, fisheries and other forms of biological diversity.

Transnational policies enacted to respond to the dangers of ozone depletion include the 1985 Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol was subsequently amended in London in 1990, Copenhagen in 1992 and Vienna in 1995. By 1996, 155 countries had ratified the Montreal Protocol, which sets out a time schedule for the reduction (and eventual elimination) of ozone depleting substances (OPS), and bans exports and imports of ODS from and to non-participant countries.

In general, the Protocol stipulates that developed countries must eliminate halon consumption by 1994 and CFC consumption by 1996, while developing countries must eliminate these substances by 2010. Consumption of methyl bromide, which is used as a fumigant, was to be frozen at the 1995 in developed countries, and fully eliminated in 2010, while developing countries are to freeze consumption by 2002, based on average 1995-1998 consumption levels. Methyl chloroform is to be phased out by 2005. Under the Montreal Protocol, most ODS will be completely eliminated from use by 2010.

4. Land Degradation

In recent decades, land degradation in more arid regions of the world has become a serious concern. The problem, manifest as both "desertification" and "devegetation," is caused primarily by climate variability and human activities, such as "deforestation," excessive cultivation, overgrazing, and other forms of land resource exploitation. It is also exacerbated by inadequate irrigation practices. Although the effects of droughts on drylands have been temporary in the past, today, the productivity and sustainability of these lands have been severely compromised for the long term. Indeed, in every region of the world, land degradation has become an acute issue.

Desertification and Devegetation:

"Desertification" is a process of land degradation causing the soil to deteriorate, thus losing its nutrients and fertility, and eventually resulting in the loss of vegetation, known as "devegetation." As aforementioned, "desertification" and "devegetation" are caused by human activities, yet human beings are also the greatest casualties. Because these forms of land degradation affect the ability of the soil to produce crops, they concomitantly contribute to poverty. As population increases and demographic concentrations shift, the extent of land subject to stresses by those seeking to wrest subsistence from it has inexorably risen.

In response, the United Nations has formed the Convention to Combat Desertification-aimed at implementing programs to address the underlying causes of desertification, as well as measures to prevent and minimize its effects. Of particular significance is the formulation of policies on transboundary resources, such as areas around lakes and rivers. At a broader level, the Convention has established a Conference of Parties (COP), which includes all ratifying governments, for directing and advancing international action.

To ensure more efficacious use of funding, the Convention intends to reconfigure international aid to utilize a consultative and coordinated approach in the disbursement and expenditure of donor funds. In this way, local communities that are affected by desertification will be active participants in the solution-generation process. In-depth community education projects are envisioned as part of this new international aid program, and private donor financing is encouraged. Meanwhile, as new technologies are developed to deal with the problem of desertification, they need to be distributed for application across the world. Hence, the Convention calls for international cooperation in scientific research in this regard.

Desertification is a problem of sustainable development. It is directly connected to human challenges such as poverty, social and economic well-being and environmental protection as well. Broader environmental issues, such as climate change, biological diversity, and freshwater supplies, are indirectly related, so any effort to resolve this environmental challenge must entail coordinated research efforts and joint action.

Deforestation:

Deforestation is not a recent phenomenon. For centuries, human beings have cut down trees to clear space for land cultivation, or in order to use the wood for fuel. Over the last 200 years, and most especially after World War II, deforestation increased because the logging industry became a globally profitable endeavor, and so the clearing of forested areas was accelerated for the purposes of industrial development. In the long term, this intensified level of deforestation is considered problematic because the forest is unable to regenerate itself quickly. The deforestation that has

occurred in tropical rainforests is seen as an especially serious concern, due to the perceived adverse effects of this process upon the entire global ecosystem.

The most immediate consequence of deforestation is soil degradation. Soil, which is necessary for the growth of vegetation, can be a fragile and vital property. Organically, an extensive evolution process must take place before soil can produce vegetation, yet at the same time, the effects of natural elements, such as wind and rain, can easily and quickly degrade this resource. This phenomenon is known as soil erosion. In addition, natural elements like wind and rain reduce the amount of fertile soil on the ground, making soil scarcity a genuine problem. When fertile topsoil that already exists is removed from the landscape in the process of deforestation, soil scarcity is further exacerbated. Equally significant is the fact that once land has been cleared so that the topsoil can be cultivated for crop production, not only are the nutrient reserves in the soil depleted, thus producing crops of inferior quality, but the soil structure itself becomes stressed and deteriorates further.

Another direct result of deforestation is flooding. When forests are cleared, removing the cover of vegetation, and rainfall occurs, the flow of water increases across the surface of land. When extensive water runoff takes place, the frequency and intensity of flooding increases. Other adverse effects of deforestation include the loss of wildlife and biodiversity within the ecosystem that supports such life forms.

At a broader level, tropical rainforests play a vital role in maintaining the global environmental system. Specifically, destruction of tropical rainforests affects the carbon dioxide cycle. When forests are destroyed by burning (or rotting), carbon dioxide is released into the air, thus contributing to an intensified "greenhouse effect." The increase in greenhouse gas emissions like carbon dioxide is a major contributor to global warming, according to many environmental scientists. Indeed, trees themselves absorb carbon dioxide in the process of photosynthesis, so their loss also reduces the absorption of greenhouse gases.

Tropical rainforest destruction also adversely affects the nitrogen cycle. Nitrogen is a key nutrient for both plants and animals. Plants derive nitrogen from soil, while animals obtain it via nitrogen-enriched vegetation. This element is essential for the formation of amino acids, and thereby for proteins and biochemicals that all living things need for metabolism and growth. In the nitrogen cycle, vegetation acquires these essential proteins and biochemicals, and then cyclically returns them to the atmosphere and global ecosystem. Accordingly, when tropical rainforest ecosystems are compromised, not only is vegetation removed; the atmosphere is also affected and climates are altered. At a more immediate level, the biodiversity within tropical rainforests, including wildlife and insect species and a wealth of plant varieties, is depleted. Loss of rare plants is of particular concern because certain species as yet unknown and unused could likely yield many practical benefits, for instance as medicines.

As a result of the many challenges associated with deforestation, many environmental groups and agencies have argued for government policies on the sustainable development of forests by governments across the globe. While many countries have instituted national policies and programs aimed at reducing deforestation, and substantial research has been advanced in regard to sustainable and regenerative forestry development, there has been very little progress on an international level. Generally speaking, most tropical rainforests are located in developing and less developed countries, where economic growth is often dependent upon the exploitation of tropical rainforests. Timber resources as well as wildlife hunting tend to be particularly lucrative arenas.

In places such as the Amazon, where deforestation takes place for the construction of energy plants aimed at industrialization and economic development, there is an exacerbated effect on the environment. After forests are cleared in order to construct such projects, massive flooding usually ensues. The remaining trees then rot and decay in the wake of the flooding. As the trees deteriorate, their biochemical makeup becomes more acidic, producing poisonous substances such as hydrogen sulphide and methane gases. Acidified water subsequently corrodes the mechanical equipment and operations of the plants, which are already clogged by rotting wood after the floodwaters rise.

Deforestation generally arises from an economically plausible short-term motivation, but nonetheless poses a serious global concern because the effects go beyond national boundaries. The United Nations has established the World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development. This body's task is to determine the optimal means of dealing with the issue of deforestation, without unduly affecting normal economic development, while emphasizing the global significance of protecting tropical forest ecosystems.

5. Water Resources

For all terrestrial fauna, including humans, water is the most immediate necessity to sustain life. As the population has increased and altered an ever-greater portion of the landscape from its natural condition, demand on water resources has intensified, especially with the development of industrialization and large-scale irrigation. The supply of freshwater is inherently limited, and moreover distributed unevenly across the earth's landmasses. Moreover, not just demand for freshwater but activities certain to degrade it are becoming more pervasive. By contrast, the oceans form a sort of "last wilderness," still little explored and in large part not seriously affected by human activity. However, coastal environments - the biologically richest part of the marine ecosystem-are experiencing major depletion due to human encroachment and over-exploitation.

Freshwater:

In various regions, for instance the Colorado River in the western United States, current withdrawals of river water for irrigation, domestic, and industrial use consume the entire streamflow so that almost no water flows into the sea at the river's mouth. Yet development is ongoing in many such places, implying continually rising demand for water. In some areas reliant on groundwater, aquifers are being depleted at a markedly faster rate than they are being replenished. An example is the San Joaquin Valley in California, where decades of high water withdrawals for agriculture have caused land subsidence of ten meters or more in some spots. Naturally, the uncertainty of future water supplies is particularly acute in arid and semi-arid regions. Speculation that the phenomenon of global warming will alter geographic and seasonal rainfall patterns adds further uncertainty.

Water conservation measures have great potential to alleviate supply shortages. Some city water systems are so old and beset with leaking pipes that they lose as much water as they meter. Broad-scale irrigation could be replaced by drip-type irrigation, actually enhancing the sustainability of agriculture. In many areas where heavy irrigation has been used for decades, the result is deposition of salts and other chemicals in the soil such that the land becomes unproductive for farming and must be abandoned.

Farming is a major source of water pollution. Whereas restrictions on industrial effluents and other "point sources" are relatively easy to implement, comparable measures to reform hydraulic practices at farms and other "nonpoint sources" pose a significantly knottier challenge. Farm-caused water pollution takes the following main forms:

- Nitrate pollution found in wells in intensive farming areas as a consequence of heavy fertilizer use is a threat to human health. The most serious danger is to infants, who by ingesting high-nitrate water can contract methemoglobinemia, sometimes called "blue baby syndrome," a potentially fatal condition.

- Fertilizer runoff into rivers and lakes imparts unwanted nutrients that cause algae growth and eventual loss of oxygen in the body of water, degrading its ability to support fish and other desirable aquatic life.

- Toxic agricultural chemicals - insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides - are detectable in some aquifers and waterways.

In general, it is much easier to get a pollutant into water than to retrieve it out. Gasoline additives, dry cleaning chemicals, other industrial toxins, and in a few areas radionucleides have all been found in water sources intended for human use. The complexity and long time scale of subterranean hydrological movements essentially assures that pollutants already deposited in aquifers will continue to turn up for decades to come. Sophisticated water treatment processes are available, albeit expensive, to reclaim degraded water and render it fit for human consumption. Yet

source protection is unquestionably a more desirable alternative.

In much of the developing world, and even some low-income rural enclaves of the developed world, the population lacks ready access to safe water. Surface water and shallow groundwater supplies are susceptible to contamination from untreated wastewater and failing septic tanks, as well as chemical hazards. The occurrence of waterborne disease is almost certainly greatly underreported.

Marine Resources:

Coastal areas have always been desirable places for human habitation, and population pressure on them continues to increase. Many types of water degradation that affect lakes and rivers also affect coastal zones: industrial effluents, untreated or partially treated sewage, nutrient load from agriculture figure prominently in both cases. Prospects for more extreme storms as a result of global warming, as well as the pervasiveness of poorly planned development in many coastal areas, forebode that catastrophic hurricanes and landslides may increase in frequency in the future. Ongoing rise in sea levels will force remedial measures and in some cases abandonment of currently valuable coastal property.

Fisheries over much of the globe have been overharvested, and immediate conservation measures are required to preserve stocks of many species. Many governments subsidized factory-scale fishing fleets in the 1970s and 1980s, and the resultant catch increase evidently surpassed a sustainable level. It is uncertain how much of the current decline in fish stocks stems from overharvesting and how much from environmental pollution. The deep ocean remains relatively unaffected by human activity, but continental shelves near coastlines are frequently seriously polluted, and these close-to-shore areas are the major biological nurseries for food fish and the smaller organisms they feed on.

6. Environmental Toxins

Toxic chemical pollution exploded on the public consciousness with disclosure of spectacularly polluted industrial areas such as Love Canal near Buffalo, New York. There is no question that pollutants such as organophosphates or radionucleides can be highly deleterious to health, but evidence to date suggests that seriously affected areas are a localized rather than universal problem.

While some explore the possibilities for a lifestyle that fully eschews use of modern industrial chemicals, the most prevalent remediative approach is to focus on more judicious use. The most efficient chemical plants are now able to contain nearly all toxic byproducts of their production processes within the premises, minimizing the release of such substances into the environment.

Techniques such as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) dictate limited rather than broadcast use of pesticides: application only when needed using the safest available chemical, supplemented as much as possible with nontoxic controls.

While heightened public awareness and growing technical sophistication suggest a hopeful outlook on limiting the damage from manmade environmental toxins, one must grant that previous incidents of their misuse and mishandling have already caused environmental damage that will have to be dealt with for many years to come. In the case of the most hazardous radioactive substances, the time scale for successful remediation actually extends beyond that of the recorded history of civilization. Moreover, in this era of high population density and rapid economic growth, quotidian activities such as the transport of chemicals will occasionally, seemingly inevitably result in accidents with adverse environmental consequences.

7. "Islandization" and Biodiversity

With increased awareness regarding the adverse effects of unregulated hunting and habitat depletion upon wildlife species and other aspects of biodiversity, large-scale efforts across the globe have been initiated to reduce and even reverse this trend.

In every region of the world, many species of wildlife and areas of biodiversity have been saved from extinction. Nationally, many countries have adopted policies aimed at preservation and conservation of species, and one of the most tangible measures has been the proliferation of protected habitats. Such habitats exist in the form of wildlife reserves, marine life reserves, and other such areas where biodiversity can be protected from external encroachment and exploitation.

Despite these advances in wildlife and biodiversity protection, further and perhaps more intractable challenges linger. Designated reserves, while intended to prevent further species decline, exist as closed territories, fragmented from other such enclaves and disconnected from the larger ecosystem. This environmental scenario is referred to as "islandization." Habitat reserves often serve as oversized zoos or game farms, with landscapes and wildlife that have effectively been "tamed" to suit. Meanwhile, the larger surrounding ecosystem continues to be seriously degraded and transformed, while within the islandized habitat, species that are the focus of conservation efforts may not have sufficient range and may not be able to maintain healthy genetic variability.

As a consequence, many conservationists and preservationists have demanded that substantially larger portions of land be withheld as habitat reserves, and a network of biological corridors to connect continental reserves be established. While such efforts to combat islandization have considerable support in the United States, how precisely such a program would be instituted, especially across national boundaries, remains a matter of debate. International conservationists and preservationists say without a network of reserves a massive loss of biodiversity will result.

The concept of islandization illustrates why conservation and preservation of wildlife and biodiversity must consider and adopt new, broader strategies. In the past, conservation and preservation efforts have been aimed at specific species, such as the spotted owl and grizzly bear in North America, the Bengal tiger in Southeast Asia, the panda in China, elephants in Africa. Instead, the new approach is to simultaneously protect many and varied species that inhabit the same ecosystem. This method, referred to as "bio-regional conservation," may more efficaciously generate longer-term and more far-reaching results precisely because it is aimed at preserving entire ecosystems, and all the living things within.

More About Biodiversity Issues:

This section is directly taken from the United Nations Environmental Program: "Biodiversity Assessment"

The Global Biodiversity Assessment, completed by 1500 scientists under the auspices of United Nations Environmental Program in 1995, updated what is known (or unknown) about global biological diversity at the ecosystem, species and genetic levels. The assessment was uncertain of the total number of species on Earth within an order of magnitude. Of its working figure of 13 million species, only 13 percent are scientifically described. Ecological community diversity is also poorly known, as is its relationship to biological diversity, and genetic diversity has been studied for only a small number of species. The effects of human activities on biodiversity have increased so greatly that the rate of species extinctions is rising to hundreds or thousands of times the background level. These losses are driven by increasing demands on species and their habitats, and by the failure of current market systems to value biodiversity adequately. The Assessment calls for urgent action to reverse these trends.

There has been a new recognition of the importance of protecting marine and aquatic biodiversity. The first quantitative estimates of species losses due to growing coral reef destruction predict that almost 200,000 species, or one in five presently contributing to coral reef biodiversity, could die out in the next 40 years if human pressures on reefs continue to increase.

Since Rio, many countries have improved their understanding of the status and importance of their biodiversity, particularly through biodiversity country studies such as those prepared under the auspices of UNEP/GEF. The United Kingdom identified 1250 species needing monitoring, of which 400 require action plans to ensure their survival. Protective measures for biodiversity, such as legislation to protect species, can prove effective. In the USA, almost 40 percent of the plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act are now stable or improving as a direct result of recovery efforts. Some African countries have joined efforts to protect threatened species through the 1994 Lusaka Agreement, and more highly migratory species are being protected by

specialized cooperative agreements among range states under the Bonn Agreement.

There is an emerging realization that a major part of conservation of biological diversity must take place outside of protected areas and involve local communities. The extensive agricultural areas occupied by small farmers contain much biodiversity that is important for sustainable food production. Indigenous agricultural practices have been and continue to be important elements in the maintenance of biodiversity, but these are being displaced and lost. There is a new focus on the interrelationship between agrodiversity conservation and sustainable use and development practices in smallholder agriculture, with emphasis on use of farmers' knowledge and skills as a source of information for sustainable farming.

Perhaps even more important than the loss of biodiversity is the transformation of global biogeochemical cycles, the reduction in the total world biomass, and the decrease in the biological productivity of the planet. While quantitative measurements are not available, the eventual economic and social consequences may be so significant that the issue requires further attention.

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Online resources used generally in the Environmental Overview:

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/

Global Warming Information Page. URL: http://globalwarming.org

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/

Note on Edition Dates:

The edition dates for textual resources are noted above because they were used to formulate the original content. We also have used online resources (cited above) to update coverage as needed.

Information Resources

For more information about environmental concepts, CountryWatch recommends the following resources:

The United Nations Environmental Program Network (with country profiles)

<http://www.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environment Program on Climate Change

<http://climatechange.unep.net/>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Waters and Oceans

<http://www.unep.ch/earthw/Pdepwat.htm>

The United Nations Environmental Program on Forestry: "Forests in Flux"

<http://www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/flux/homepage.htm>

FAO "State of the World's Forests"

<http://www.fao.org/forestry/FO/SOFO/SOFO99/sofo99-e.stm>

World Resources Institute.

<http://www.wri.org/>

Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment

<http://www.med.harvard.edu/chge/the-review.html>

The University of Wisconsin Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment

http://sage.aos.wisc.edu/

International Environmental Agreements and Associations

International Policy Development in Regard to Global Warming:

Introduction

Regardless of what the precise nature of the relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and global warming may be, it seems that there is some degree of a connection between the phenomena. Any substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and global warming trends will likely involve systematic changes in industrial operations, the use of advanced energy sources and technologies, as well as global cooperation in implementing and regulating these transformations.

In this regard, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) stipulated the following objectives:

1. To stabilize "greenhouse gas" concentrations within the atmosphere, in such a manner that would preclude hazardous anthropogenic intervention into the existing biosphere and ecosystems of the world. This stabilization process would facilitate the natural adaptation of ecosystems to changes in climate.

2. To ensure and enable sustainable development and food production on a global scale.

Following are two discusssions regarding international policies on the environment, followed by listings of international accords.

Special Entry: The Kyoto Protocol

The UNFCCC was adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and entered into force in 1994. Over 175 parties were official participants.

Meanwhile, however, many of the larger, more industrialized nations failed to reach the emissions' reduction targets, and many UNFCCC members agreed that the voluntary approach to reducing emissions had not been successful. As such, UNFCCC members reached a consensus that legally binding limits were necessitated, and agreed to discuss such a legal paradigm at a meeting in Kyoto, Japan in 1997. At that meeting, the UNFCCC forged the Kyoto Protocol. This concord is the first legally binding international agreement that places limits on emissions from industrialized countries. The major greenhouse gas emissions addressed in the Kyoto Protocol include carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and methane.

The provisions of the Kyoto Protocol stipulate that economically advanced nations must reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases, by approximately five percent from their 1990

levels, before the 2008-2010 deadline. Countries with the highest carbon dioxide emissions, such as the United States (U.S.), many of the European Union (EU) countries, and Japan, are to reduce emissions by a scale of 6 to 8 percent. All economically advanced nations must show "demonstrable progress" by 2005. In contrast, no binding limits or timetable have been set on developing countries. Presumably, this distinction is due to the fact that most developing countries -- with the obvious exceptions of India and China -- simply do not emit as many greenhouse gases as do more industrially advanced countries. Meanwhile, these countries are entrenched in the process of economic development.

Regardless of the aforementioned reasoning, there has been strong opposition against the asymmetrical treatment assigned to emissions limits among developed and developing countries. Although this distinction might be regarded as unfair in principle, associations such as the Alliance of Small Island States have been vocal in expressing how global warming -- a result of greenhouse gas emissions - has contributed to the rise in sea level, and thus deleteriously affected their very existence as island nation states. For this reason, some parties have suggested that economically advanced nations, upon returning to their 1990 levels, should be required to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by a deadline of 2005. In response, interested parties have observed that even if such reductions were undertaken by economically advanced nations, they would not be enough to completely control global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming. Indeed, a reduction in the rate of fossil fuel usage by developing nations would also be necessary to have substantial ameliorative effect on global warming.

As such, the Protocol established a "Clean Development Mechanism" which permits developed countries to invest in projects aimed at reducing emissions within developing countries in return for credit for the reductions. Ostensibly, the objective of this mechanism is to curtail emissions in developing countries without unduly penalizing them for their economic development. Under this model, the countries with more potential emissions credits could sell them to other signatories of the Kyoto Protocol, whose emissions are forecast to significantly rise in the next few years. Should this trading of emissions credits take place, it is estimated that the Kyoto Protocol's emissions targets could still be met.

In 1999, the International Energy Outlook projected that Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Newly Independent States, as well as parts of Asia, are all expected to show a marked decrease in their level of energy-related carbon emissions in 2010. Nations with the highest emissions, specifically, the U.S., the EU and Japan, are anticipated to reduce their emissions by up to 8 percent by 2012. By 2000, however, the emissions targets were not on schedule for achievement. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates forecast that by 2010, there will be a 34 percent increase in carbon emissions from the 1990 levels, in the absence of major shifts in policy, economic growth, energy prices, and consumer trends. Despite this assessment in the U.S., international support for the Kyoto Protocol remained strong, especially among European countries

and island states, who view the pact as one step in the direction away from reliance on fossil fuels and other sources of greenhouse gases.

In 2001, U.S. President, George W. Bush, rejected his country's participation in the Kyoto Protocol, saying that the costs imposed on the global economic system, and especially, on the US, overshadowed the benefits of the Protocol. He also cited the unfair burden on developed nations to reduce emissions, as another primary reasons for withdrawal from the international pact, as well as insufficient evidence regarding the science of global warming. Faced with impassioned international disapproval for his position, the U.S. president stated that his administration remained interested in dealing with the matter of global warming, but would endorse alternative measures to combat the problem, such as voluntary initiatives limiting emissions. Critics of Bush's position, however, have noted that it was the failure of voluntary initiatives to reduce emissions following the Rio Summit that led to the establishment of the Kyoto Protocol in the first place.

In the wake of the Bush administration's decision, many participant countries resigned themselves to the reality that the goals of the Kyoto Protocol might not be achieved without U.S. involvement. Nevertheless, in Bonn, Germany, in July 2001, the remaining participant countries struck a political compromise on some of the key issues and sticking points, and planned to move forward with the Protocol, irrespective of the absence of the U.S. The key compromise points included the provision for countries to offset their targets with carbon sinks (these are areas of forest and farmland which can absorb carbon through the process of photosynthesis). Another compromise point within the broader Bonn Agreement was the reduction of emissions cuts of six gases from over 5 percent to a more achievable 2 percent. A third key change was the provision of funding for less wealthy countries to adopt more progressive technologies.

In late October and early November 2001, the UNFCC's 7th Conference of the Parties met in Marrakesh, Morocco, to finalize the measures needed to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. Although the UNFCC projected that ratification of the Protocol would make it legally binding within a year, many critics noted that the process had fallen short of implementing significant changes in policy that would be necessary to actually stop or even slow climate change. They also maintained that the absence of U.S. participation effectively rendered the Protocol into being a political exercise without any substance, either in terms of transnational policy or in terms of environmental concerns.

The adoption of the compromises ensconced within the Bonn Agreement had been intended to make the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol more palatable to the U.S. In this regard, it failed to achieve its objective as the Bush administration continued to eschew participation in the international accord. Still, however, the Bonn Agreement did manage to render a number of other positive outcomes. Specifically, in 2002, key countries, such as Russia, Japan and Canada agreed to ratify the protocol, bringing the number of signatories to 178. The decision by key countries to

ratify the protocol was regarded as "the kiss of life" by observers.

By 2005, on the eve of a climate change conference in London, British Prime Minister Tony Blair was hoping to deal with the problems of climate change beyond the provisions set forth in the Kyoto Protocol. Acknowledging that the Kyoto Protocol could not work in its current form, Blair wanted to open the discussion for a new climate change plan.

Blair said that although most of the world had signed on to Kyoto, the protocol could not meet any of its practical goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions without the participation of the United States, the world's largest polluter. He also noted that any new agreement would have to include India and China -- significant producers of greenhouse gas emissions, but exempt from Kyoto because they have been classified as developing countries. Still, he said that progress on dealing with climate change had been stymied by "a reluctance to face up to reality and the practical action needed to tackle problem."

Blair also touted the "huge opportunities" in technology and pointed toward the possibilities offered by wind, solar and nuclear power, along with fuel cell technology, eco-friendly biofuels, and carbon capture and storage which could generate low carbon power. Blair also asserted that his government was committed to achieving its domestic goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 20 percent by 2010.

In the United States, President George W. Bush has said that global warming remained a debatable issue and despite conclusions reached by his own Environmental Protection Agency, he has not agreed with the conclusion that global warming and climate change are linked with human activities. Bush has also refused to ratify Kyoto on the basis of its economic costs.

Australia, an ally of the United States, has taken a similarly dim view of the Kyoto Protocol. Ahead of the November 2005 climate change meeting in Canada in which new goals for the protocol were to be discussed, Australia 's Environment Minister, Ian Campbell, said that negotiating new greenhouse gas emission levels for the Kyoto Protocol would be a waste of time. Campbell said, "There is a consensus that the caps, targets and timetables approach is flawed. If we spend the next five years arguing about that, we'll be fiddling and negotiating while Rome burns." Campbell, like the Bush administration, has also advocated a system of voluntary action in which industry takes up new technologies rather than as a result of compelling the reduction of emissions. But the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has called on its government to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, to establish a system of emissions trading, and to set binding limits on emissions. Interestingly, although it did not sign on to Kyoto , Australia was expected to meet its emissions target by 2012 (an 8 percent increase in 1990 levels in keeping with the country's reliance on coal). But this success has nothing to do with new technologies and is due to state-based regulations on land clearing.

Note: The Kyoto Protocol calls for developed nations to cut greenhouse emissions by 5.2 percent of 1990 levels by 2012.

Special Entry: Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen (2009) --

In December 2009, the United Nations Climate Change Summit opened in the Danish capital of Copenhagen. The summit was scheduled to last from Dec. 7-18, 2009. Delegates from more than 190 countries were in attendance, and approximately 100 world leaders, including British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and United States President Barack Obama, were expected to participate. At issue was the matter of new reductions targets on greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

Despite earlier fears that little concurrence would come from the conference, effectively pushing significant actions forward to a 2010 conference in Mexico City, negotiators were now reporting that the talks were productive and several key countries, such as South Africa, had pledged to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The two main issues that could still lead to cleavages were questions of agreement between the industrialized countries and the developing countries of the world, as well as the overall effectiveness of proposals in seriously addressing the perils of climate change.

On Dec. 9, 2009, four countries -- the United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway -- presented a document outlining ideas for raising and managing billions of dollars, which would be intended to help vulnerable countries dealing with the perils of climate change. Described as a "green fund," the concept could potentially help small island states at risk because of the rise in sea level. Bangladesh identified itself as a potential recipient of an assistance fund, noting that as a country plagued by devastating floods, it was particularly hard-hit by climate change. The "green fund" would fall under the rubric of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for which developed countries have been committed to quantifying their emission reduction targets, and also to providing financial and technical support to developing countries.

The United Kingdom, Australia, Mexico and Norway also called for the creation of a new legal treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol. This new treaty, which could go into force in 2012, would focus largely on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. But Australia went even further in saying that the successor treaty to the Kyoto Protocol, should be one with provisions covering all countries. Such a move would be a departure from the structure of the Kyoto Protocol, which contained emissions targets for industrialized countries due to the prevailing view that developed countries had a particular historic responsibility to be accountable for climate change. More recently, it has become apparent that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions demanded by scientists would only come to pass with the participation also of significant developing nation states, such as China and India. Indeed, one of the most pressing critiques of the Kyoto Protocol was that it was a "paper tiger" that failed to address the impact of the actions of

emerging economies like China and India, with its focus on the developed economies.

Now, in 2009, China -- as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter -- was responding this dubious distinction by vocalizing its criticism of the current scenario and foregrounding its new commitments. Ahead of the Copenhagen summit, China had announced it would reduce the intensity of its carbon emissions per unit of its GDP in 2020 by 40 to 45 percent against 2005 levels. With that new commitment at hand, China was now accusing the United States and the European Union of shirking their own responsibilities by setting weak targets for greenhouse gas emissions cuts. Senior Chinese negotiator, Su Wei, characterized the goals of the world's second largest greenhouse gas emitter -- the United States -- as "not notable," and the European Union's target as "not enough." Su Wei also took issue with Japan for setting implausible preconditions.

On Dec. 11, 2009, China demanded that developed and wealthy countries in Copenhagen should help deliver a real agreement on climate change by delivering on their promises to reduce carbon emissions and provide financial support for developing countries to adapt to global warming. In so doing, China's Vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said his country was hoping that a "balanced outcome" would emerge from the discussions at the summit. Echoing the position of the Australian government, He Yafei spoke of a draft agreement as follows: "The final document we're going to adopt needs to be taking into account the needs and aspirations of all countries, particularly the most vulnerable ones."

China's Vice Foreign Minister emphasized the fact that climate change was "a matter of survival" for developing countries, and accordingly, such countries need wealthier and more developed countries to accentuate not only their pledges of emissions reduction targets, but also their financial commitments under the aforementioned United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To that end, scientists and leaders of small island states in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, have highlighted the existential threat posed by global warming and the concomitant rise in sea level.

China aside, attention was also on India -- another major player in the developing world and a country with an industrializing economy that was impacting the environment. At issue was the Indian government's decision to set a carbon intensity target, which would slow emissions growth by up to 25 percent by the 2020 deadline. This strong position was resisted by some elements in India, who argued that their country should not be taking such a strong position when developed wealthy countries were yet to show accountability for their previous commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The matter grew so heated that the members of the opposition stormed out of the parliament in protest as Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh defended the policy. But the political pressure at home in India was leaving the Indian delegation in Copenhagen in a state of chaos as well. In fact, India's top environmental negotiator refused to travel to Copenhagen in protest of the government's newly-announced stance.

China and India were joined by Brazil and South Africa in the crafting of a draft document calling

for a new global climate treaty to be completed by June 2010. Of concern has been the realization that there was insufficient time to find concurrence on a full legal treaty, which would leave countries only with a politically-binding text by the time the summit at Copenhagen closed. But Guyana's leader, President Bharrat Jagdeo, warned that the summit in Denmark would be classified as a failure unless a binding document was agreed upon instead of just political consensus. He urged his cohorts to act with purpose saying, "Never before have science, economics, geo-strategic self-interest and politics intersected in such a way on an issue that impacts everyone on the planet."

Likewise, Tuvalu demanded that legally binding agreements emerge from Copenhagen. Its proposal was supported by many of the vulnerable countries, from small island states and sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom warned of the catastrophic impact of climate change on their citizens. Tuvalu also called for more aggressive action, such as an amendment to the 1992 agreement, which would focus on sharp greenhouse gas emissions and the accepted rise in temperatures, due to the impact the rise in seas. The delegation from Kiribati joined the call by drawing attention to the fact that one village had to be abandoned due to waist-high water, and more such effects were likely to follow. Kiribati's Foreign Secretary, Tessie Lambourne, warned that the people of Kiribati could well be faced with no homeland in the future saying, "Nobody in this room would want to leave their homeland." But despite such impassioned pleas and irrespective of warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that the rise in sea level from melting polar ice caps would deleteriously affect low-lying atolls such as such as Tuvalu and Kiribati in the Pacific, and the Maldives in the Indian Ocean, the oil-giant Saudi Arabia was able to block this move.

Meanwhile, within the developed countries, yet another power struggle was brewing. The European Union warned it would only agree to raise its target of 20 percent greenhouse gas emissions reductions to 30 percent if the United States demonstrated that it would do more to reduce its own emissions. It was unknown if such pressure would yield results. United States President Barack Obama offered a "provisional" 2020 target of 17 percent reductions, noting that he could not offer greater concessions at Copenhagen due to resistance within the United States Congress, which was already trying to pass a highly controversial "cap and trade" emissions legislation. However, should that emissions trading bill fail in the Senate, the United States Environment Protection Agency's declaration that greenhouse gases pose a danger to human health and the environment was expected to facilitate further regulations and limits on power plants and factories at the national level. These moves could potentially strengthen the Obama administration's offering at Copenhagen. As well, President Obama also signaled that he would be willing to consider the inclusion of international forestry credits.

Such moves indicated willingness by the Obama administration to play a more constructive role on the international environmental scene than its predecessor, the Bush administration. Indeed, ahead of his arrival at the Copenhagen summit, President Barack Obama's top environmental advisors

promised to work on a substantial climate change agreement. To that end, United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson said at a press conference, "We are seeking robust engagement with all of our partners around the world." But would this pro-engagement assertion yield actual results?

By Dec. 12, 2009, details related to a draft document prepared by Michael Zammit Cutajar, the head of the Ad-hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action, were released at the Copenhagen climate conference. Included in the document were calls for countries to make major reductions in carbon emissions over the course of the next decade. According to the Washington Post, industrialized countries were called on to make cuts of between 25 percent and 40 percent below 1990 levels -- reductions that were far more draconian than the United States was likely to accept. As discussed above, President Obama had offered a provisional reduction target of 17 percent. The wide gap between the released draft and the United States' actual stated position suggested there was much more negotiating in the offing if a binding agreement could be forged, despite the Obama administration's claims that it was seeking greater engagement on this issue.

In other developments, the aforementioned call for financial support of developing countries to deal with the perils of climate change was partly answered by the European Union on Dec. 11, 2009. The European bloc pledged an amount of 2.4 billion euros (US$3.5 billion) annually from 2010 to 2012. Environment Minister Andreas Carlgren of Sweden -- the country that holds the rotating presidency of the European Union at the time of the summit -- put his weight behind the notion of a "legally binding deal." Meanwhile, Yvo de Boer, a top United Nations climate change official, focused less on the essence of the agreement and more on tangible action and effects saying, "Copenhagen will only be a success if it delivers significant and immediate action that begins the day the conference ends."

The division between developed and developing countries in Copenhagen reached new heights on Dec. 14, 2009, when some of the poor and less developed countries launched a boycott at the summit. The move, which was spurred by African countries but backed by China and India, appeared to be geared toward redirecting attention and primary responsibility to the wealthier and more industrialized countries. The impasse was resolved after the wealthier and more industrialized countries offered assurances that they did not intend on shirking from their commitments to reducing greenhouse gases. As a result, the participating countries ceased the boycott.

Outside the actual summit, thousands of protestors had gathered to demand crucial global warming, leading to clashes between police and demonstrators elsewhere in the Danish capital city. There were reports of scattered violence across Copenhagen and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

Nevertheless, by the second week of the climate change summit, hopes of forging a strong deal were eroding as developed and developing nations remained deadlocked on sharing cuts in

greenhouse gases, and particularly on the matters of financing and temperature goals. In a bid to shore up support for a new climate change, United States President Barack Obama joined other world leaders in Copenhagen. On Dec. 14, 2009, there was a standoff brewing between the United States and China. At issue was China's refusal to accept international monitoring of its expressed targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The United States argued that China's opposition to verification could be a deal-breaker.

By the close of the summit, the difficult process eventually resulted in some consensus being cultivated. A draft text called for $100 billion a year by 2020 to assist poor nations cope with climate change, while aiming to limit global warming to two degrees Celsius compared with pre-industrial levels. The deal also included specific targets for developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and called for reductions by developing countries as a share of their economies. Also included in the agreement was a mechanism to verify compliance. The details of the agreement were supported by President Barack Obama, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

This draft would stand as an interim agreement, with a legally-binding international pact unlikely to materialize until 2010. In this way, the summit in Copenhagen failed to achieve its central objective, which was to negotiate a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on greenhouse gas emissions.

Editor's Note

In the background of these developments was the growing global consciousness related to global warming and climate change. Indeed, as the Copenhagen summit was ongoing, it was clear there was enormous concurrence on the significance of the stakes with an editorial on the matter of climate change being published in 56 newspapers in 45 countries. That editorial warned that without global action, climate change would "ravage our planet." Meanwhile, a global survey taken by Globescan showed that concern over global warming had exponentially increased from 1998 -- when only 20 percent of respondents believed it to be a serious problem -- to 64 percent in 2009. Such survey data, however, was generated ahead of the accusations by climate change skeptics that some climate scientists may have overstated the case for global warming, based on emails derived in an illicit manner from a British University.

Special Entry: Climate change talks in Doha in Qatar extend life of Kyoto Protocol (2012)

December 2012 saw climate talks ensue in the Qatari city of Doha as representatives from countries across the world gathered to discuss the fate of the Kyoto Protocol, which seeks to minimize greenhouse gas emissions. The summit yielded results with decisions made (1) to extend the Kyoto Protocol until 2020, and (2) for wealthier countries to compensate poorer countries for the losses and damage incurred as a result of climate change.

In regards to the second matter, Malia Talakai of Nauru, a leading negotiator for the Alliance of Small Island States, explained the necessity of the compensation package as follows: “We are trying to say that if you pollute you must help us.”

This measure was being dubbed the "Loss and Damage" mechanism, and was being linked with United States President Barack Obama's request for $60 billion from Congress to deal with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy months before. The sight of a hurricane bearing down on the northern Atlantic seaboard, along with the reality of the scope of reconstruction, appeared to have illustrated the economic costs of climate change -- not so much as a distant environmental issue -- but as a danger to the quotidian lives of people. Still, there was blame to be placed on the United States and European countries -- some of world's largest emitters -- for failing to do more to reduce emissions.

To that latter end, there was in fact little progress made on the central issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Had those emissions been reduced, there would have been less of a need to financially deal with the devastation caused by climate change. One interpretation was that the global community was accepting the fact that industrialization was contributing to global warming, which had deleterious effects on the polar ice caps and concomitantly on the rise of sea level, with devastating effects for small island nations. Thus, wealthier countries were willing to pay around $10 billion a year through 2020, effectively in "damages," to the poor countries that could be viewed as the "collateral damage" of industrial progress. But damages today could potentially be destruction tomorrow, leaving in place the existential challenges and burdens to be born by some of the world's smallest and least wealthy island countries.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the representative for the small island nation states at the Doha summit responded with ire, characterizing the lack of progress on reducing emissions as follows: "We see the package before us as deeply deficient in mitigation (carbon cuts) and finance. It's likely to lock us on the trajectory to a 3,4,5C rise in global temperatures, even though we agreed to keep the global average temperature rise of 1.5C to ensure survival of all islands. There is no new finance (for adapting to climate change and getting clean energy) -- only promises that something might materialize in the future. Those who are obstructive need to talk not about how their people will live, but whether our people will live."

Indeed, in most small island countries not just in the Pacific, but also the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have been dominant themes with dire life and death consequences looming in the background for their people. Small island nations in these region are already at risk from the rise of sea-level, tropical cyclones, floods. But their very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming were also at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Increasingly high storm surges can wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Accordingly, the very existence of island nations, such as Kiribati and Tuvalu, are

at severe risk of being obliterated from the map. Yet even with the existential threat of being wiped off the map in the offing, the international community has been either slow or restrictive in its efforts to deal with global warming, climate change, economic and ecological damage, as well as the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees.

A 2012 report from the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Pacific Regional Environment Program underlined the concerns of small island nations and their people as it concluded that the livelihoods of approximately 10 million people in Pacific island communities were increasingly vulnerable to climate change. In fact, low-lying islands in that region would likely confront losses of up to 18 percent of gross domestic product due to climate change, according to the report. The report covers 21 countries and territories, including Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tonga, and recommended environmental legislation intended to deal with the climate crisis facing the small island countries particularly. As noted by David Sheppard, the director general of the Pacific Regional Environment Program that co-sponsored this study: "The findings... emphasize the need more than ever to raise the bar through collective actions that address the region's environmental needs at all levels."

Regardless of the failures of the summit in Qatar (discussed above), the meeting did facilitate a process starting in 2015, which would bind both wealthy and poor countries together in the mission of forging a new binding treaty that would replace the Kyoto Protocol and tackle the central causes of climate change.

For more information on the threats faced in small island nations by climate change and the measures being undertaken to lobby for international action, please see the Alliance for Small Island States available online at the URL: http://aosis.org/

Special Report

COP 21 summit in Paris ends with historic agreement to tackle climate change; rare international consensus formed on environmental crisis facing the planet (2015) --

In mid-December 2015, the highly-anticipated United Nations climate conference of parties (COP) in Paris, France, ended with a historic agreement. In fact, it would very likely be understood as the most significant international agreement signed by all the recognized countries of the world since the Cold War. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement was being distinguished as the first multilateral pact that would compel all countries across the world to cut its carbon emissions -- one of the major causes of increasing greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to global warming, and its deleterious effects ranging from the dangerous rise in sea level to catastrophic climate change.

The accord, which was dubbed to be the "Paris Agreement," was the work of rigorous diplomacy and fervent environmental advocacy, and it aimed to address the climate change crisis facing the planet. As many as 195 countries were represented in the negotiations that led to the landmark climate deal. Indeed, it was only after weeks of passionate debate that international concurrence was reached in addressing the environmental challenges confronting the world, with particular attention to moving beyond fossil fuels and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The success of the COP 21 summit in Paris and the emergence of the landmark Paris Agreement was, to some extent, attributed to the efforts of France's Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius who presided over the negotiations. The French foreign minister's experience and credentials as a seasoned diplomat and respected statesman paid dividends. He skillfully guided the delegates from almost 200 countries and interest groups along the negotiations process, with ostensibly productive results and a reasonably robust deal to show for it.

On Dec. 12, 2015, French Foreign Minister Fabius officially adopted the agreement, declaring: "I now invite the COP to adopt the decision entitled Paris Agreement outlined in the document. Looking out to the room I see that the reaction is positive, I see no objections. The Paris agreement is adopted." Once Foreign Minister Fabius' gavel was struck, symbolically inaugurating the Paris Agreement into force, the COP delegate rushed to their feet with loud and bouyant cheers as well as thunderous applause.

In general, the Paris Agreement was being hailed as a victory for enviromental activists and a triumph for international diplomats, while at the same time being understood as simply an initial -- and imperfect -- move in the direction of a sustainable future. China's chief negotiator, Xie Zhenhua, issued this message, saying that while the accord was not ideal, it should "not prevent us from marching historical steps forward."

United States President Barack Obama lauded the deal as both "ambitious" and "historic," and the work of strenuous multilateral negotiations as he declared, "Together, we've shown what's possible when the world stands as one." The United States leader acknowledged that the accord was not "perfect," but he reminded the critics that it was "the best chance to save the one planet we have. "

Former United States Vice President Al Gore, one of the world's most well known environmental advocates, issued a lengthy statement on the accompishments ensconced in the Paris Agreement. He highlighted the fact that the Paris Agreement was a first step towards a future with a reduced carbon footprint on Planet Earth as he said, "The components of this agreement -- including a strong review mechanism to enhance existing commitments and a long-term goal to eliminate global-warming pollution this century -- are essential to unlocking the necessary investments in our future. No agreement is perfect, and this one must be strengthened over time, but groups across every sector of society will now begin to reduce dangerous carbon pollution through the framework of this agreement."

The central provisions of the Paris Agreement included the following items:

- Greenhouse gas emissions should peak as quickly as possible, with a move towards balancing energy sources, and ultimately the decrease of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century
- Global temperature increase would be limited to 1.5 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial levels and would be held "well below" the two degrees Centigrade threshold
- Progress on these goals would be reviewed every five years beginning in 2020 with new greenhouse gas reduction targets issued every five years
- $100 billion would be expended each year in climate finance for developing countries to move forward with green technologies, with further climate financing to be advanced in the years beyond

It should be noted that there both legally binding and voluntary elements contained within the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the submission of an emissions reduction target and the regular review of that goal would be legally mandatory for all countries. Stated differently, there would be a system in place by which experts would be able to track the carbon-cutting progress of each country. At the same time, the specific targets to be set by countries would be determined at the discretion of the countries, and would not be binding. While there was some criticism over this non-binding element, the fact of the matter was that the imposition of emissions targets was believed to be a major factor in the failure of climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009.

In 2015, the talks faced challenges as several countries, such as China and India, objected to conditions that would stymie economic and development. In order to avoid that kind of landmine, a system Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) was developed and formed the basis of the accord. As such, the Paris Agreement would, in fact, facilitate economic growth and development, as well as technological progress, but with the goal of long-term ecological sustainability based on low carbon sources. In fact, the agreement heralded as "the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel era." As noted by Nick Mabey, the head of the climate diplomacy organization E3G, said, "Paris means governments will go further and faster to tackle climate change than ever before. The transition to a low carbon economy is now unstoppable, ensuring the end of the fossil fuel age."

A particular sticking point in the agreement was the $100 billion earmarked for climate financing for developing countries to transition from traditional fossil fuels to green energy technologies and a low carbon future. In 2014, a report by the International Energy Agency indicated that the cost of that transition would actually be around $44 trillion by the mid-century -- an amount that would render the $100 billion being promised to be a drop in the proverbial bucket. However, the general expectation was that the Republican-controlled Senate in the United States, which would have to ratify the deal in that country, was not interested in contributing significant funds for the cause of climate change.

A key strength of the Paris Agreement was the ubiquitous application of measures to all countries. Of note was the frequently utilized concept of "flexibility" with regard to the Paris Agreement. Specifically, the varying capacities of the various countries in meeting their obligations would be anticipated and accorded flexibility. This aspect presented something of a departure from the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which drew a sharp distinction between developed and developing countries, and mandated a different set of obligations for those categories of countries. Thus, under Kyoto, China and India were not held to the same standards as the United States and European countries. In the Paris Agreement, there would be commitments from all countries across the globe.

Another notable strength of the Paris Agreement was the fact that the countries of the world were finally able to reach consensus on the vital necessity to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Centrigrade. Ahead of the global consensus on the deal, and as controversy continued to surface over the targeted global temperature limits, the leaders of island countries were sounding the alarm about the melting of the Polar ice caps and the associated rise in seal level. Prime Minister Enele Sopoaga of Tuvalu issued this dismal reminder: "Tuvalu's future … is already bleak and any further temperature increase will spell the total demise of Tuvalu. No leader in this room carries such a level of worry and responsibility. Just imagine you are in my shoes, what would you do?" It was thus something of a victory for environmental advocates that the countries of the world could find cnsensus on the lower number -- 1.5 degrees rather than 2 degrees.

A significant weak point with regard to the Paris deal was a "loss and damage" provision, which anticipates that even with all the new undertakings intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and move to a low carbon future, there would nonetheless be unavoidable climate change consequences. Those consequences ranged from the loss of arable land for farmers as well as soil erosion and contamination of potable water by sea water, to the decimation of territory in coastal zones and on small islands, due to the rise in sea level, with entire small island countries being rendered entirely uninhabitable. The reality was that peoples' homes across the world would be destroyed along with their way of life.

With that latter catastrophic effect being a clear and present danger for small island countries, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) demanded that the developed world acknowledge its responsibility for this irreversible damage.. Despite the fact that greenhouse gas emissions and the ensuing plague of global warming was, indeed, the consequence of development in the West (the United States and Europe) and the large power house countries, such as Russia, China and India, there was no appetite by those countries to sign on to unlimited liability. Under the Paris Agreement, there was a call for research on insurance mechanisms that would address loss and damage issues, with recommendations to come in the future.

The call for research was being regarded as an evasion of sorts and constituted the weakest aspect

of the Paris Agreement. Not surprisingly, a coalition of small island nations demanded a "Marshall Plan" for the Pacific. Borrowing the term "Marshall Plan" from the post-World War II reconstruction effort, the coalition of Pacific island nation, which included Kiribati, Tuvalu, Fiji, and the Marshall Islands, called for an initiative that would include investment in renewable energy and shoreline protection, cultural preservation, economic assistance for economies in transition, and a plan for migration and resettlement for these countries as they confront the catastrophic effects of the melting of the Polar ice caps and the concomitant rise in sea level. The precise contours of the initiative remained unknown, unspecified, and a mere exercise in theory at the time of writing. Yet such an initiative would, at some point, have to be addressed, given the realities of climate change and the slow motion calamity unfolding each day for low-lying island nations across the world.

As noted by Vice President Greg Stone of Conservation International, who also functions as an adviser to the government of Kiribati, "Imagine living in a place where you know it's going to go away someday, but you don't know what day that wave's going to come over and wash your home away." He added, "It's a disaster we know is going to happen." Meanwhile, the intervening years promised to be filled with hardship for small island nations, such as Kiribati. Stone explained, "For every inch of sea-level rise, these islands lose 10 feet of their freshwater table to saltwater intrusion," Stone explained. "So it's not just about the day the water finally goes over the island; it's also about the day that there's just not enough water left and everyone has to move off the island." Presaging the future for island nations that could face submersion, Stone said, "If you look ahead 50 years, a country like Kiribati could become the first aqueous nation. possibility of migration. That is, they own this big patch of ocean, and they administer it from elsewhere."

Foreign Minister Minister Tony Debrum of the Marshall Islands emerged as the champion advocating on behalf of small island nation states and a loose coalition of concerned countries from the Pacific to the Caribbean, but with support from the United States. He addressed the comprehensive concerns of small island nations regarding the weaknesses of the deal, while simultaneously making clear that the Paris Agreement signified hope for the countries most at risk. In a formal statement, Debrum declared: "We have made history today. Emissions targets are still way off track, but this agreement has the tools to ramp up ambition, and brings a spirit of hope that we can rise to this challenge. I can go back home to my people and say we now have a pathway to survival." Debrum highlighted the imperatives of Pacific island nations, saying, "Our High Ambition Coalition was the lightning rod we needed to lift our sights and expectations for a strong agreement here in Paris. We were joined by countries representing more than half the world. We said loud and clear that a bare-bones, minimalist agreement would not fly. We instead demanded an agreement to mark a turning point in history, and the beginning of our journey to the post-carbon era."

Debrum of the Marshall Islands espoused the quintessential synopsis of the accord and its effects

for those most likely to be affected by climate change as he noted, “Climate change won’t stop overnight, and my country is not out of the firing line just yet, but today we all feel a little safer.”

Editor's Entry on Environmental Policy:

The low-lying Pacific island nations of the world, including Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, Fiji, among others, are vulnerable to the threats posed by global warming and cimate change, derived from carbon emissions, and resulting in the rise in sea level. Other island nations in the Caribbean, as well as poor countries with coastal zones, were also at particular risk of suffering the deleterious effects of climate change.

Political policy in these countries are often connected to ecological issues, which have over time morphed into an existential crisis of sorts. Indeed, ecological concerns and the climate crisis have also been dominant themes with life and death consequences for the people of island nations in the Pacific. Indeed, the very livelihoods of fishing and subsistence farming remain at risk as a result of ecological and environmental changes. Yet even so, these countries are threatened by increasingly high storm surges, which could wipe out entire villages and contaminate water supplies. Moreover, because these are low lying island nations, the sustained rise in sea level can potentially lead to the terrain of these countries being unihabitable at best, and submerged at worst. Stated in plain terms, these countries are at severe risk of being obliterated from the map and their plight illuminates the emerging global challenge of environmental refugees. In these manifold senses, climate change is the existential crisis of the contemporary era.

Since the time of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there have been efforts aimed at extending the life of that agreement, with an eye on minimizing greenhouse gas emissions, and thus minimizing the effects of climate change. Those endeavors have largely ended in failure, as exemplified by the unsuccessful Copenhagen talks in 2009 and the fruitless Doha talks in 2012 respectively. The success of the COP 21 talks in France, with the adoption of the landmark Paris Agreement in 2015, was regarded as the first glimmer of hope. Not only did the Paris Agreement signify the triumph of international diplomacy and global consensus, but it also marked the start of the end of the fossil fuel era, with the path forward toward a low carbon future reliant on greener technologies. Most crucially, the Paris Agreement stood as the first significant response in recent times to the central challenge of climate change and its quotidian effects on the lives of real human beings across the world.

1. Major International Environmental Accords:

General Environmental Concerns

Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, Espoo, 1991.

Accords Regarding Atmosphere

Annex 16, vol. II (Environmental Protection: Aircraft Engine Emissions) to the 1044 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation, Montreal, 1981

Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP), Geneva, 1079

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), New York, 1002

Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, Vienna, 1985 including the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Depleted the Ozone Layer, Montreal, 1987

Accords Regarding Hazardous Substances

Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa, Bamako, 1991

Convention on Civil Liability for Damage Caused during Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road, Rail and Inland Navigation Vessels (CRTD), Geneva, 1989

Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention), Basel, 1989

Convention on the Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, Helsinki, 1992

Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region (Waigani Convention), Waigani, 1995

European Agreement Concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road (ADR), Geneva 1957

FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, Rome, 1985

2. Major International Marine Accords:

Global Conventions

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention 1972), London, 1972

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by Protocol of 1978 relation thereto (MARPOL 73/78), London, 1973 and 1978

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage 1969 (1969 CLC), Brussels, 1969, 1976, and 1984

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Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), London 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Co-operation (OPRC), London, 1990

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Regional Conventions

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (Oslo Convention), Oslo, 1972

Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources (Paris Convention), Paris, 1974

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention), Paris, 1992

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1974 Helsinki Convention), Helsinki 1974

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Conventions within the UNEP Regional Seas Programme

Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea against Pollution, Bucharest, 1992

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region, Cartagena de Indias, 1983

Convention for the Protection, Management, and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Eastern African Region, Nairobi, 1985

Kuwait Regional Convention for Co-operation on the Protection of the Marine Environment from Pollution, Kuwait, 1978

Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean Sea (Barcelona Convention), Barcelona, 1976

Regional Convention for the Conservation of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden Environment, Jeddah, 1982

Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region, Noumea, 1986

Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Area of the South-East Pacific, Lima, 1981

Convention for Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region, Abidjan, 1981

3. Major Conventions Regarding Living Resources:

Marine Living Resources

Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), Canberra, 1980

International Convention for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), Rio de Janeiro, 1966

International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), Washington, 1946

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Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), Bonn, 1979

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Washington, D.C., 1973

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Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Paris 1994

FAO International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, Rome, 1983

International Tropical Timber Agreement, 1994 (ITTA, 1994), Geneva, 1994

Freshwater Resources

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki, 1992

4. Major Conventions Regarding Nuclear Safety:

Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency (Assistance Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident (Notification Convention), Vienna, 1986

Convention on Nuclear Safety, Vienna, 1994

Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage, Vienna, 1963

5. Major Intergovernmental Organizations

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)

European Union (EU): Environment

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

International Oil Pollution Compensation Funds (IOPC Funds)

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC)

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

World Bank

World Food Programme (WFP)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

World Trade Organization (WTO)

6. Major Non-Governmental Organizations

Atmosphere Action Network East Asia (AANEA)

Climate Action Network (CAN)

Consumers International (CI)

Earth Council

Earthwatch Institute

Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI)

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

Friends of the Earth International (FoEI)

Greenpeace International

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)

International Solar Energy Society (ISES)

IUCN-The World Conservation Union

Pesticide Action Network (PAN)

Sierra Club

Society for International Development (SID)

Third World Network (TWN)

Water Environment Federation (WEF)

Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)

World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

World Federalist Movement (WFM)

World Resources Institute (WRI)

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

7. Other Networking Instruments

Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)

Global Legislators for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE)

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC)

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)

Appendices

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Methodology Note for Demographic Data:

The demographic numbers for cities and national populations listed in CountryWatch content are derived from the Geoba.se website, which analyzes data from the World Bank. The current demographic numbers displayed on the Countrywatch website are reflective of the latest available estimates.

The demographic information for language, ethnicity and religion listed in CountryWatch content is

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-- See also list of News Wires services below, which are also used for research purposes. --

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original Country Reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

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Yearbook of Tourism Statistics, World Tourism Organization. 1998 to present. Madrid: The World Tourism Organization.

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for Economic Data:

Estimates by CountryWatch.com of GDP in dollars in most countries are made by converting local currency GDP data from the International Monetary Fund World Economic Outlook to US dollars by market exchange rates estimated from the International Monetary Fund International Financial Statistics and projected out by the CountryWatch Macroeconomic Forecast. Real GDP was estimated by deflating current dollar values by the US GDP Implicit Price Deflator.

Exceptions to this method were used for:
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Nauru
- Cuba
- Palau
- Holy See
- San Marino
- Korea, North
- Serbia & Montenegro
- Liberia
- Somalia
- Liechtenstein
- Tonga
- Monaco
- Tuvalu

In these cases, other data and/or estimates by CountryWatch.com were utilized.

Investment Overview

Corruption and Transparency Index. URL: http://www.transparency.org/documents/cpi/2001/cpi2001.html#cpi <http://www.transparency.org/documents/

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Trade Policy Reviews by the World Trade Organization. URL: http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/tp_rep_e.htm#bycountry

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Government of Canada Foreign Affairs and International Trade. URL: http://www.voyage.gc.ca/consular_home-e.htm

Library of Congress Country Studies. URL: http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html

Lonely Planet. URL: http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/

Steve Kropla's Online Help For World Travelers. URL: http://www.kropla.com/

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UNICEF Statistical Database Online. URL: http://www.unicef.org/statis/atoz.html

United States Central Intelligence Agency, World Factbook. 2001. Washington, D.C.: Printing and Photography Group. URL: http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html

United States Department of State, Background Notes. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/background_notes/index.html

United States Department of State, Commercial and Business Affairs: Travel Tips. URL: http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/business/cba_travel.html

United States Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. URL: http://travel.state.gov/

World Health Organization. URL: http://www.who.int/home-page/

World News Connection, National Technical Information Service. Springfield, Virginia, USA.

Internet News Service, Xinhua News Agency (U.S.) Inc. Woodside, New York. URL: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/

Note on Edition Dates:

The earlier edition dates are noted above because they were used to formulate the original country reviews and serve as the baseline for some of the information covered. Later editions have been used in some cases, and are cited as such, while other more recent online resources (cited above) contain recent and ever-updated data sets used for research.

Methodology Notes for the HDI:

Since 1990, the United Nations Development Programme, in concert with organizations across the globe, has produced the Human Development Index (or HDI). According to the UNDP, the index measures average achievement in basic human development in one simple composite index, and produces from this index a ranking of countries. The HDI is a composite of three basic components of human development: longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy. Knowledge is measured by combination of adult literacy and mean

years of schooling. Standard of living is measured by purchasing power, based on real GDP per capita (in constant US$) adjusted for differences in international living costs (or, purchasing power parity, PPP). While the index uses these social indicators to measure national performance with regard to human welfare and development, not all countries provide the same level of information for each component needed to compute the index; therefore, as in any composite indicator, the final index is predicated on projections, predictions and weighting schemes. The index is a static measure, and thus, an incomplete measure of human welfare. In fact, the UNDP says itself the concept of human development focuses on the ends rather than the means of development and progress, examining in this manner, the average condition of all people in a given country.

Specifically, the index is calculated by determining the maximum and minimum for each of the three components (as listed above) and then measuring where each country stands in relation to these scales-expressed as a value between 0 and 1. For example, the minimum adult literary rate is zero percent, the maximum is 100 percent, and the reading skills component of knowledge in the HDI for a country where the literacy rate is 75 percent would be 0.75. The scores of all indicators are then averaged into the overall index.

For a more extensive examination of human development, as well as the ranking tables for each participating country, please visit: http://www.undp.org

Note on History sections

In some CountryWatch Country Reviews, open source content from the State Department Background Notes and Country Guides have been used.

Environmental Overview

Environmental Profiles: A Global Guide to Projects and People. 1993. Linda Sobel Katz, Sarah Orrick, and Robert Honig. New York: Garland Publishing.

The Environment Encyclopedia and Directory, 2nd Edition. 1998. London: Europa.

Environmental Protection Agency Global Warming Site. URL: http://www.epa.gov/globalwarming

Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations: Forestry. URL: http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/sofo/en/

Global Warming Information Page. URL: http://globalwarming.org

Introduction to Global Environmental Issues, 2nd Edition. 1997. Kevin Pickering and Lewis Owen.

London: Routledge.

Trends: Compendium of Data on Global Change. URL: http://cdiac.esd.ornl.gov/trends/emis/em_cont.htm

United Nations Environmental Program. URL: http://www.unep.org/GEO/GEO_Products/Assessment_Reports/

United Nations Global Environmental Outlook. URL: http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/media/

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World Directory of Country Environmental Studies. 1996. The World Resource Institute.

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1998-1999 World Resources Guide to the Global Environment by the World Resources Institute. May, 1998.

1998/1999 Yearbook of International Cooperation on Environment and Development. 1998. London: Earthscan Publications.

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Other Sources:

General information has also been used in the compilation of this review, with the courtesy of governmental agencies from this country.

News Services:

CANA Daily Bulletin. Caribbean Media Agency Ltd., St. Michael, Barbados.

Central and Eastern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Central and Eastern Africa.

Daily News, Panafrican News Agency. Dakar, Senegal.

PACNEWS, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association. Suva, Fiji.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Washington D.C. USA.

Reuters News. Thomson Reuters. New York, New York. USA.

Southern Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for Southern Africa.

Voice of America, English Service. Washington D.C.

West Africa Report, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa. 1998-1999

Note: Some or all these news services have been used to research various sections of this Country Review.

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For items in a "Works Cited" list, CountryWatch.com suggests that users follow recommended patterns forindentation given in the *MLA Handbook*, 4th edition.

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Basic form, using an Internet protocol:

Author/editor. *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. Available Protocol (if applicable):Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. *Country Review: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *Country Review:France*. Online. Available URL: http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_country.asp?vCOUNTRY=61 October, 12, 2003.
Note:
This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

Parts of Works

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Author/editor. "Part title." *Title of Print Version of Work*. Edition statement (if given). Publication information (Place of publication: publisher, date), if given. *Title of Electronic Work*. Medium. AvailableProtocol (if applicable): Site/Path/File. Access date.

Examples:

Youngblood-Coleman, Denise. "People." *CountryWatch.com: France*. 2003. Houston, Texas: CountryWatch Publications, 2003. *CountryWatch.com: France*. Online. Available URL : http://www.countrywatch.com/cw_topic.asp?vCOUNTRY=61&SECTION=SOCIAL&TOPIC=CLPEO&TYPE=TEXT. October 12, 2003.

Note:
This is the citation format used when the print version is not used in the reference.

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