

Conclusions

Nigeria is one of the most complex countries in the world in terms of its ethnic and religious diversity and its wide range of oil-driven, socioeconomic disparities. The approximate parity in religious identity demographics makes the country a pivotal state within the global context, especially given its large and growing population. The oil boom since the 1970s has allowed for extremes of wealth and has also created opportunities for nation building and interfaith cooperation, often not possible in a non-energy-producing country. For instance, the fast-track relocation of the capital from Lagos to Abuja during the 1980s and 1990s to accommodate a north-south balance of power would not have been possible in most developing countries, although it has been tried with mixed success in Brazil (Brazilia), Tanzania (Dodoma), and Pakistan (Islamabad).

The underlying African context also has historical and cultural realities that are quite distinctive in terms of transnational Muslim linkages. Since the eleventh century, the state of Borno has been oriented to its Chadian and Sudanic east. Since the fifteenth century, Hausa communities in the north have maintained ties with North Africa. Yet, most Nigerian Muslim ties are with West Africa, especially in the Sahelian zone. In recent times, the links with Saudi Arabia have increased considerably, especially through the pilgrimage process but also as a general alliance in stabilizing the international community system. For historical reasons, Nigeria has had less contact with other pivotal states in the Muslim world, such as Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia. Obviously, Nigeria shares some commonalities with Egypt and Pakistan through their English-language legacy. London continues to serve as a nexus among all English-speaking pivotal states. Contemporary Muslim identities and organizations in Nigeria range from the grassroots-level Sufi brotherhoods and their more recent challengers (the anti-innovation legalists, such as the Izala) to the more recent student, youth, and women's organizations. National umbrella organizations, often designed on federalist principles to accommodate regional and subnational realities, have tried to create a sense of unity within the ummah across very disparate groups. As such, they tend to be part of the establishment, including traditional rulers and modern-sector professional groups.

Occasionally, there has been a backlash within the Nigerian ummah to the rapid socioeconomic changes. The most violent conflict was in December 1980 and thereafter, between Maitatsine followers based in Kano who drew

on pre-Islamic cult practices and Muslim authorities. Maitatsine objected to anything modern or Western during the height of the oil-boom period, including bicycles and wristwatches!

Subsequently, the so-called Shiites (or Ikhwan) have challenged both traditional and secular Muslim authorities, taking their inspiration from the Iranian revolution. The Ikhwan have been a small minority in places like Zaria, Kano, and Sokoto. Yet, they have obvious appeal to a younger generation of semieducated northerners disillusioned with the Muslim establishment and its Sunni legacy. They serve as an international role model with an anti-Western slant and large financial resources. To reach these youths and others, Iran broadcasts an active radio program in Hausa aimed at West Africa, and Ikhwan adherents disseminate English publications in Nigeria. In addition, these youths are attracted to certain aspects of Shia ritual and practice, such as the Ashura festival. And there are the obvious disjunctions created between an Islamic ideal and the rapid changes of the oil-driven economy

More recently, the so-called Taliban network, taking their inspiration from the former Afghan regime, has challenged local- and state-level authorities in the far north, especially in Yobe, Borno, and, more recently, Kano State. The network may be small, but it has shown it can confront the police with armed violence. The Nigerian Taliban has emphasized to local populations that it is not against civilians but only agents of the state. While there is no evidence at this time of an al-Qaeda connection, the vision of setting up a pure Islamic state, as a corrective to the injustices of this world, is an ongoing challenge. This is primarily a "hearts and minds" issue for Nigerians—rather than a military issue—related to the nation-building challenges mentioned throughout this study. Clearly, local governments (and traditional leaders) need to be engaged and develop appropriate responses in order to forestall wider violence. The Nigerian police may fly planes over Kano to try to find the Taliban, but it is hard to imagine that local governments could not have been more actively engaged in the process.

The underlying reality of nation building in West Africa is that national boundaries are porous and historically arbitrary. Nigeria's domestic and transnational domains clearly overlap. Nigeria's capacity for leadership in West Africa and in the larger African context depends not only on official governmental actions but also on the web of nonstate links that characterize the region. Some of these are ethnic, but many are transethnic, especially in the Muslim areas. The legacy of transnational, long-distance trade in places such as Kano may turn out to be a valuable asset as larger economic and political unions are envisioned. Also, the increased links with Mecca and Medina are a natural consequence of centuries of Islamic heritage and the opportunities provided by oil revenues.

Yet, transnational networks within Africa, the Muslim world, and/or within the global economy also raise concerns at all levels in terms of pos-

sible extralegal abuses, whether drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling, or the potential flow of persons with terrorist intentions. The need for a global vision should be part of public-education endeavors and wise and balanced political leadership, with one foot in the historical cultures of Nigeria and one foot in the twenty-first-century global environment—a new form of Vision 2010.¹

The Muslim community in Nigeria has historically been committed to the unity of Nigeria since independence in 1960 and to cooperation with non-Muslim compatriots. Despite the sectarian tensions that sometimes emerge, especially in northern Nigeria, the commitment to “keeping Nigeria one” has always prevailed.² The central tendency in national politics has been a form of progressive-conservatism, which has been built on the need for cross-regional tolerance and coalitions. The Muslim community in Nigeria is also committed to forms of federalism, ranging from the early regionalism of the First Republic to the thirty-six-state federalism of the Fourth Republic.

This monograph has argued that the five challenges of nation building in Nigeria must be addressed in order to avoid some of the system breakdowns of the past. The top priority is establishing a workable political system. This is not just a matter of formal models, whether borrowed or home grown. It is the challenge of moving toward a system of democratic federalism that is organic to the needs of Nigerians. Whether federal character provisions, or budget allocation formulae, or leadership rotation principles, or other forms of power sharing will be sufficient to ensure an inclusive level playing field remains to be seen. Most important is the sense of fair play, equity, and participation in the national endeavor, including on the religious dimension. This requires leadership. The presidential election of 2007 may have fulfilled the goal of equity between north and south representatives, but it hardly met the goal of fair play.

Rule of law issues are complex in Nigeria. Constitutions in some predominantly Muslim countries often have a boilerplate provision indicating that no law shall contravene sharia. While this formality is not likely in Nigeria, it is also not possible to ignore the sharia legacy in Nigeria. The rule of law, in essence, is one of equality before the law. Political sharia, which is used to target the poor, or women, or the opposition party, is not sharia, which is a way of life, in which the individual and society as a whole are responsible for encouraging justice and fair play. Nigerians will have to debate and craft

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1. See Mahmud Tukur, *Leadership and Governance in Nigeria: The Relevance of Values* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999). Also, the chapter by Tukur on leadership in Robert I. Rotberg, ed., *Crafting the New Nigeria: Confronting the Challenges* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2004).
 2. See Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993). Kukah is a Roman Catholic priest and an active liaison between ethnoreligious communities in Nigeria.

the way in which sharia fits into the larger framework of constitutional law. Meanwhile, the experimentation with multiple jurisprudential systems at the state level is a positive development, assuming that appeals processes are in place to allow redress of grievances and penalty options do not violate international norms, including those within the OIC.

More broadly, rule of law must be seen to apply to the business world and to the electoral process. Since 2004 Nigeria has moved toward a domestic corrupt-practices set of laws that are well intentioned but remain to be tested in the legal system. In terms of electoral law, the election of 2003 was contested in the courts for more than two years before a final verdict was rendered. (The old phrase, “justice delayed is justice denied,” comes to mind. The incumbency advantage of delay is obvious.) Yet the acceptance of the Supreme Court decision in July 2005 by the opposition parties speaks well for the emergence of a sense of rule of law. The postelection period after May 29, 2007, takes on special importance in terms of whether legal or extralegal means of redress will be employed. The decision of the Supreme Court in June 2007 to reinstate the former governor of Anambra State—who was only instated by the courts one year before the 2007 election—was widely hailed as a positive assertion of the role of an independent judiciary.³

A capacity for conflict mitigation, management, and resolution is crucial. Often this is done through political means and hence the maturity of the political actors is determinative. But the capacity for civil society to enhance mechanisms for conflict mediation also needs to be addressed. These capacities may reside in local NGOs, in educational peace committees, or in the long-term commitment of traditional emirs and chiefs. Obviously, a vibrant sense of rule of law is part of conflict-resolution capacities. But law is only one part. The alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms of mediation and arbitration are perhaps even more salient in the Nigerian context.

The full range of challenges of economic development is beyond the scope of this monograph. Yet in an oil-rich country, the balance between public and private endeavors and the issue of “even” development are central. While some countries—such as China in the 1990s—have allowed coastal areas to develop first, the complex demographics of Nigeria, coupled with the legacy of democratic federalism, have required that interior areas be given equal access to resources and investment. The further challenges of facilitating economic and educational opportunities for the poor and of encouraging the growth of a middle class remain. Clearly, a middle class, however defined, is a necessary component in the other challenges, such as democratic federalism, rule of law, and conflict resolution. If middle-class professionals tend to

3. The court reinstated the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) governor rather than the presumed winner of the 2007 election from the PDP.

vote with their feet and move abroad, the economic and political capacities of Nigeria are diminished. How the large Nigerian diaspora will contribute to the economic development of Nigeria remains to be seen.

Part of the hesitation of the diaspora and part of the frustration within lower socioeconomic groups in Nigeria is the sense that corruption is endemic. This is the fifth challenge in nation building and is an especially salient one in an oil economy. The emergence of a super-rich class, with questionable access to government resources, is hardly a portent of social stability. Clearly, political leadership, rule-of-law principles, transparency, and accountability are crucial. The accountability factor is enhanced by a vibrant opposition party and by a free press that can hold governmental feet to the fire and facilitate public scrutiny. The engagement of civil society is the ultimate corrective on abuse of powers, including economic power.

The rapid pace of change in Nigeria makes it hard to project alternative futures. Yet the usual range of scenarios—the good, the bad, and the ugly—should be obvious to governments, corporations, and political leaders. The central question in Nigeria has always been, can (or should) the country stay together?

This monograph has argued that this central question, and the ways Nigerians have answered it, defines Nigeria as a pivotal state. The broader implications of dealing with ethnic and religious diversity are obvious in an African and global context. So far, it seems Nigerians have learned when to pull back from the abyss of civil war, based on their experience in 1967–70. However, the younger generation has no real sense of the horror of that war. Hence, there is a need for elder statesmen to remind and nurture the next generation on the consequences of miscalculation. Clearly, almost all of the older generation of military leaders, including those on the former Biafran separatist side, are committed to Nigerian national unity. Whether they will permit civilian politicians to “make mistakes” affecting national unity remains to be seen. Yet, the willingness of retired military officers to participate in the rough and tumble of civilian politics is a positive sign.

How does this complexity affect U.S.-Nigerian relations? The most obvious advice to the U.S. government would be “do no harm.” If Nigeria is pivotal in terms of Muslim-Christian relations, the need to be evenhanded by the U.S. government is obvious. This is complicated by the cross-currents of nongovernmental pressures in the social and political domains on all sides. It is also complicated by the pressures to be proactive on issues of potential terrorism. Since September 11, 2001 (New York and northern Virginia), March 11, 2004 (Madrid), and July 7, 2005 (London), no government will sit back and let terrorists strike and then consider reactive measures. The delicate balance of approaches, ranging from military and police to public education, Track II diplomacy, and nongovernmental mediation, requires far more sensitivity to local realities than is currently evident.

In the long run, local communities in Nigeria will have to take responsibility for their own security issues—hence, the need for the decentralization of police responsibilities in the “serve-and-protect” tradition. This is related to the corruption issue as well. If federal police can be bribed—or if the Nigerian inspector general of police can embezzle large amounts—then local militias or vigilantes will fill the gap and public disillusionment will set in.

The United States needs to engage and normalize its relations with Nigeria at all levels. It must not be pulled into the trap of relying on political actors in Abuja (or in the diaspora) to target those who may turn out to be opposition leaders. The basic requirements for engagement are clear. It should encourage the professional language capabilities of those in the foreign service, especially Hausa, which is the lingua franca in the north; create opportunities for interaction of Americans and Nigerians (including Muslims) through improvements in the visa process; keep the needs of the oil industry in perspective with regard to overall relations; come to grips with the need for deeper understanding of Islam in West Africa, and especially in Nigeria; and set an example of tolerance between people of the book—at home and abroad.