

NIGERIA WORKSHOP

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The Geopolitical Assessments Series seeks to explore those issues, nation states, and areas of the world that are of special importance to the United States. The future security environment that affects the United States and its allies is highly dependent on the behavior of states and how their citizens perceive various issues that affect them both internally and externally. To this end, the workshops seek to examine a state's current leadership and population, their motivations and perspectives, their history, their behavior patterns and drivers, their current critical issues, and optimum U.S. policy options toward that country.

In conducting the workshops, Panel Members principally from academia and sometimes from the military, government, and industry come together for a 1- or 2-day moderated discussion session. SAO personnel lead the discussion through a series of questions posed to the panel. In addition to documenting verbal discussions, the workshop provides computer software for offline anonymous discussions among Panel Members and workshop observers.

DISCLAIMER

This workshop reflects the personal views of the panel discussants. The opinions presented herein are intended to identify and explore a broad range of ideas and issues. They do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University (JHU), JHU/APL, its sponsors, or any other public or private organization.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

NIGERIA WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES AND CONDUCT

The purpose of the Nigeria Workshop is to assist APL in better understanding:

- Key factors—political, economic, social, and religious—that shape developments in Nigeria
- Key institutions, groups, and personalities in Nigeria
- Prospects for and obstacles to Nigerian domestic stability and economic development
- Nigerian views of itself and the United States
- Opportunities and priorities for U.S. support to Nigerian development

The 10 experts who made up the Panel were drawn from the academic community. Individual members were nationally and internationally recognized authorities in African affairs in general and Nigeria in particular. As a group, the Panel Members brought new perspectives, challenging insights, and “out-of-the-box” thinking, which are not always readily available.

Panel discussions were focused on five general issues:

- Nigerian Political System
- Nigerian Economic System
- Nigerian Social Dynamics
- Nigerian Views of the United States
- U.S. Policy Issues

NIGERIA IN PERSPECTIVE

With approximately 150 million people, Nigeria is one of Africa’s most populated countries, accounting for over one-half of West Africa’s population in particular. It is home to about 250 ethnic groups. With respect to religion, the country is almost evenly split; there are about 70 million Muslims, primarily in the North, and 70 million Christians, primarily in the South.

The Nigerian economy is centered on the production and export of oil and, to a lesser degree, liquefied natural gas. In recent years, approximately 80% of federal government revenues and almost 90% of export earnings have derived from the oil businesses. Nigeria is the 50th-largest export market for U.S. goods and the

14th-largest exporter of goods to the United States. Oil and, to lesser degree, gas are the major U.S. imports from Nigeria, amounting to nearly 46% of Nigeria's daily oil production and approximately 11% of total U.S. oil imports.

Based on its size and wealth, Nigeria represents a key factor in the stability and development of West Africa. Nigeria is a major player in all of West Africa's political, economic, and military institutions, including regional peacekeeping missions. However, several major obstacles have inhibited Nigeria's internal maturation. First, terrorist activities and thievery by insurgent groups and criminal gangs in the South have significantly curtailed Nigeria's oil production to a level far short of existing capacity. Second, increased activities by external Muslim radicals in Northern Nigeria have exacerbated North–South cleavages and raised fears that Northern Nigeria could become a major launchpad for Muslim radicals within and beyond Nigeria.

In view of Nigeria's critical roles in West Africa and its importance as a source of U.S. oil imports, it is appropriate to assess the domestic trends within Nigeria and U.S. policies toward Nigeria that might assist Nigerian development.

PANEL MEMBERS

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DISCUSSION FORMAT

The workshop centered around free-wheeling give-and-take among the Panel Members on the issues of interest. There were no formal presentations. In addition to oral discussions, each Panel Member was provided with an individual laptop computer running groupware that permitted supplementary comments on oral discussions and/or the development of sidebar issues. Both forms of input were encouraged in order to capture the widest documentation of Panel Member opinions possible. In all instances, the panel's oral remarks and typed comments were documented on a nonattribution basis.

Because of the complexity of the issues covered, two ground rules were established. First, the discussions were oriented toward higher level insights, observations, and assessments. The discussions were not intended as an exercise in data gathering. Second, discussants were asked to express their views and assessments in terms of "the most likely" and "the least likely." Although this may have minimized the nuances of some difficult issues, it tended to avoid less useful "on the one hand/on the other hand" observations.

The Moderator opened each of the topics for discussion with a brief introduction to focus the thrust of the exchange. In addition, the Panel Members were presented with a set of potential "Initial Issues for Discussion," which were intended to provoke, but not direct or delimit, the discussions. The majority of the time was then given to panel discussions. At the end of each topic discussion, a few minutes were given to questions from the in-house and invited observers.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIGERIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Overall, the Panel Members considered that Nigeria has only begun to develop a true sense of national identity that transcends regional, local, tribal, and religious identities. In this sense, Nigeria remains a fragile entity at the center, with considerable competing forces at the outer rim.

Despite some advances in the judicial system and the rule of law, corruption remains endemic to all major elites and institutions, including those with primary responsibility for Nigerian political and security responsibilities.

Nigeria lacks the internal cohesion and national commitment to undertake wide-ranging reforms. As long as the central authorities lack the will and commitment to share energy revenues with the Niger Delta states, anti-government insurgencies and gangs will continue to earn popular support and expand their sway.

NIGERIAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Major obstacles to domestic economic growth include: (i) lack of adequate transportation infrastructure, (ii) lack of adequate electric power generation, (iii) lack of foreign investment attributable, in part, to perceptions of pervasive corruption, (iv) lack of protection for property rights, and (v) too much political involvement in business.

Oil and gas account for 97% of Nigerian foreign exchange and 80% of government revenues. A major issue of contention in Nigeria is the poor dispersal of energy revenue profits and benefits from the national government to the state governments, especially to the Muslim-dominant states in the North and the Ijaw-dominant states in the South. Panel Members noted that even with an adequate distribution of revenue, it would take 10-15 years to develop the North and South into viable and sustainable regions.

NIGERIAN SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Ethnically, Nigeria contains approximately 70 million Muslims and 70 million Christians. At the national level, power-sharing arrangements have minimized religious competition. However, at the local level, especially in the middle belt region, religious conflicts arise periodically.

NIGERIAN VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES

Although America has great appeal for the average Nigerian citizen, Nigerians are very sensitive to and suspicious of U.S. involvement in West Africa, especially U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and its role in the region. Nigerians at all levels are strongly opposed to a direct U.S. military presence in Nigeria.

From the Nigerian perspective, noted the Panel Members, the basic characteristics of a "good" U.S. policy would include, first and foremost, being respectful to Nigeria, especially Nigerian sovereignty. The United States should treat Nigeria as a true partner, not a regional client in need of aid.

A key corollary is limiting the size of any direct and overt U.S. military presence.

U.S. POLICY ISSUES

Aside from oil, long-term U.S. interests in Nigeria include the development of national and regional stability and the building of closer relations with the Nigerian Muslim community.

In the Panel's view, U.S. policy in Nigeria should:

- Encourage electoral reform.
- Assist in the development of a peace process for the Niger Delta region.
- Build trust so that military diplomacy can be seen as a positive tool to advance mutual interests.
- Continue humanitarian aid in conjunction with non-government organizations (NGOs).
- Vastly increase the U.S. diplomatic presence, relative to the U.S. military presence, by establishing more American Cultural Centers with libraries, Internet access, etc.
- Encourage U.S. corporations to continue to provide social development funds for the Niger Delta.

DETAILED DISCUSSIONS

NIGERIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

Initial Issues for Discussion

- What are the primary motivations of Nigerian leaders? How do these motivations coincide with the motivations and drivers of the populace? What are the major disconnects?
- What are the key impediments to the development of democracy in Nigeria? What would be the essential characteristics of "Nigerian democracy"? What Western model of "democracy" would most approximate a "Nigerian democracy"?
- Which relationships are the most critical for the efficient functioning of the Nigerian political system:
 - The North–South relationship?
 - The Muslim–Christian relationship?
 - The Federal–State relationship?
 - Other?
- In addition to President Yar'Adua, who are the most important Nigerian decision-making individuals and institutions? What are the sources of their authority and influence?
- What are the nature, sources, and intensity of cleavages among political elites?
- What are the sources and impact of corruption in the political system? What is necessary to end the theft of oil revenues—estimated to be approximately \$400 billion since 1960—by corrupt officials?

Key Points from the Panel Discussions

Nigerian Motivations and Goals

According to Panel Members, the prime motivator among Nigerian political elites is to gain and retain power. To do so, political elites must maintain the existing patrimonial system and, in turn, they expect self-aggrandizement (for example, "cash and carry"). Leadership interests do coincide with those of the populace as far as maintaining Nigeria as a single nation, with a good level of security, economic development, and spirituality. This cash and carry system does hold the elites together but disconnects them from providing services to the population. Religious entities partially fill this vacuum.

Nigerian Democracy

In Nigeria, democracy has taken the form of a three-tiered federation with one central government, 36 states, and 774 local governments. There are substantial concerns about power and revenue sharing in this system. To succeed as a democracy, Nigeria needs a viable opposition party.

Nigerian Group Relationships

The most important relationship is between the North and the South, which is readily apparent in the presidential rotation system. Federal–State relations also are important because of revenue sharing and constitutional issues. Other important relationships include those between civil and military institutions as well as those between Muslims and Christians.

Nigerian Decision Makers

At the national level, political elites are the most influential decision makers. Within the political elite, however, there is great fluidity. For example, a recent legislative election had an 80% turnover because political “kingmakers” did not renominate sitting legislators. Other elites include the younger and more technocratic state governors, business and private sector leaders, and the traditional rulers and retired military officers who are increasingly becoming part of the business elite.

Nigerian Political Cleavages

Great tensions exist between the central and state governments. There has been some discussion of whether Nigeria should return to “True Federalism,” which would cut the existing number of states in half but would provide each with more autonomy.

Nigerian Political Corruption

Despite some advances in the judiciary system, corruption remains endemic. External perception of this corruption impedes necessary private and governmental investment in the country.

NIGERIAN ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Initial Issues for Discussion

- What effects do you see the substantial drop in the price of oil having on the political and economic system? Is there any potential for political crisis or other destabilization that could result from this drop?
- In addition to oil, what are potential, perhaps underdeveloped, sources of Nigerian economic growth? What are the prospects for and obstacles to (for example, political, constitutional, or institutional) external assistance in developing these sources?

- What factors have prevented Nigeria—the world’s fifth-largest oil producer—from initiating and maintaining substantial economic growth? What would be necessary to eliminate these obstacles?
- What Nigerian groups would be most receptive to external economic and humanitarian assistance?
- Can Nigeria sufficiently diversify its economy to insulate itself against or at least mitigate the impact of a significant downturn in world oil prices?

Key Points from the Panel Discussions

Nigerian Oil Revenues

Oil accounts for approximately 97% of Nigeria’s foreign exchange and approximately 75-80% of government revenues. Volatile oil prices could be devastating to economic growth, especially with a long global recession or greater success in global conservation. Complications have developed over the fact that the Federal–State distribution of oil wealth has gone from 50/50 to an arrangement where the full amount goes directly to federal government, which then redistributes about 13% back to producing states.

Nigerian Economic Development Options

Nigeria needs to diversify its sources of foreign exchange beyond oil. Alternative development options include agriculture, especially since displaced farmers from Zimbabwe have been moving to Nigeria. There also are significant coal and gold deposits that could be extracted. Much more also could be done to further develop Nigeria’s manufacturing sector, which could then serve not only the large West African market but also worldwide markets.

Nigerian Economic Growth Obstacles

Primary obstacles to Nigeria’s growth include:

- Lack of appropriate transportation infrastructure (railways were destroyed by the military)
- Lack of adequate electrical power generation
- Lack of investment attributable, in part, to perceptions of pervasive corruption
- Insecure property rights
- Too much political involvement in business

External Assistance

Humanitarian assistance should help combat malaria (the number one killer in Nigeria) and HIV/AIDS. However, some external aid operations have been undermined by conspiracy theories about Western pharmaceuticals being randomly tested on Nigerians. Foreign help also is needed to build Nigeria’s infrastructure. However, Panel Members agreed that no amount of external assistance could negate the need for better and more Nigerian leadership at all levels of government.

NIGERIAN SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Initial Issues for Discussion

- Do Nigerians generally have a shared sense of national identity and national cohesion? What are the major competitors to a shared sense of national identity and national cohesion? How strong is national cohesion in Nigeria?
 - What are the major cleavages in Nigeria that impede Nigerian integration and development?
 - What are the sources (for example, political, economic, religious, institutional) of these cleavages?
 - What would be necessary to moderate and manage these cleavages?
- Do the Nigerian government's economic policies exacerbate or mitigate the intensity of these conflicts?
 - What would be necessary to achieve a cessation of hostilities between the Nigerian government and the rebels/criminal gangs, especially the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)?
 - What are the sources and intensity of public support for the rebels/criminal gangs in the South?
 - Would the United States or a specific American, such as Jimmy Carter, be acceptable as a mediator in negotiating an armistice and eventual end of hostilities?
- What role does Islam play in Nigeria?
 - Are the conflicts in Northern Nigeria essentially religious in nature or economic in origin?
 - How does the Nigerian public view potential Al Qaeda-supported transnational jihadism in the North?

Key Points from the Panel Discussions

Nigerian National Identity and Cohesion

The Nigerian identity is complex and involves a combination of ethnic, religious, hometown, and national factors. Nigerians like to think of themselves as citizens of a large, powerful regional player, which provides something of a unifying factor. Even decades of military misrule and consequent pro-democracy demonstrations in the 1990s contributed to a growing sense of national identity.

Nigerian Cleavages That Impede Integration and Growth

Nigeria is a country of about 70 million Muslims and 70 million Christians. There appears to be competition between the religions, with external actors (for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran) investing in building mosques across the country. Although there are occasional regional flare-ups, there have been no national crises based

on religious cleavages, largely because of power-sharing arrangements. However, conditions may be developing toward a “perfect storm” scenario.

Nigerian Hostilities in the South

To ameliorate hostilities in the South, there seemed to be consensus among the Panel Members that the Niger Delta region must experience both development and security and must do so in tandem. The South is a region that is desperately poor and feels marginalized. However, a “Grand Strategy” for the Niger Delta might take 10-15 years to implement. No such strategy is in place because most of the country is not affected by the violence in the South.

Nigerian Islam in the North

Overwhelmingly, Islam in Nigeria is moderate and functions within a constitutional framework. In fact, the 12-19 sharia states may serve as models for how Islam and democracy can exist compatibly. Although there may be some sympathy for jihadists, as can be seen in the fairly common Osama bin Laden T-shirts, there is little to no active support for Islamic radicalism. In fact, the influential Sultan of Sokoto has stated: “Extremists are non-Muslims.”

NIGERIAN VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES

Initial Issues for Discussion

- How do Nigerians view the United States? What is the basis of Nigerian positive and negative perceptions? How can the United States improve popular perceptions of itself abroad?
- What would Nigerians consider to be essential elements of a “good” U.S. policy toward Nigeria?
- From a Nigerian perspective, what are the key issues in U.S.–Nigerian relations?
- Which economic development and humanitarian assistance projects have most contributed to improving the daily lives of Nigerians and improved the basic stability of the Nigerian government? Why and how?

Key Points from the Panel Discussions

Nigerians' Positive Views of the United States

In general, Nigerians love America and its citizens, educational system, and technology. A personal dislike for President George W. Bush is more intense in the North because of U.S. policies and actions in the Middle East, including the Gulf/Iraq Wars. Nigerians respect Americans and are willing to listen to U.S. input. Nigerian views of the United States are very likely to improve with the election of Barack Obama, for whom there is great political goodwill.

Nigerians' Negative Views of the United States

The recent establishment of AFRICOM is viewed with some suspicion, primarily with regard to U.S. intentions. Those elites who were educated in the United States did experience racism while here, but there was some question among the Panel Members as to whether firsthand experience with U.S. racism remains an issue in U.S. attitudes toward Nigeria.

Nigerians' View of a "Good" U.S. Policy Toward Nigeria

The basic characteristics of a "good" U.S. policy include:

- Being respectful to Nigeria, and respecting its sovereignty as well
- Showing a willingness to engage Nigerians without dictating to them
- Viewing Nigeria as a true partner versus a regional client in need of aid (for example, by assisting with capacity building, such as local policing initiatives)
- Limiting the size of any direct and overt U.S. military presence

U.S. POLICY ISSUES

Initial Issues for Discussion

- Aside from oil, what are the long-term U.S. interests for assisting Nigerian development? Would Nigerian development improve (or impede) U.S.–Nigerian relations?
- Beyond oil purchases, what leverage does the United States have for influencing Nigerian policies and priorities?
- What should be the primary goals and objectives of U.S. policy toward Nigeria? What should be the primary focus—political, economic, social, security—in U.S. policy toward Nigeria?
- From a U.S. perspective, what current "realities" in Nigeria should the United States seek to foster and enhance? What "realities" should the United States seek to dissuade or redirect? What "realities" would be most detrimental to U.S. long-term interests?
- From a U.S. perspective, what programs, projects, and/or structures would you recommend as means to improve U.S.–Nigerian relations?
- What past or current U.S. programs have been most beneficial in assisting Nigeria? What were the factors for success?
- What past or current U.S. programs have been least effective in assisting Nigeria? What were the factors for failure?
- What specific programs should the U.S. government undertake in Nigeria? What Nigerian groups would most benefit from these programs? What problems or deficiencies would these programs moderate/solve? How would the moderation/solution of these problems benefit Nigeria and U.S.–Nigerian relations?

- What are the key impediments to U.S. government policies and programs for assisting future Nigerian development? Is direct and overt U.S. government assistance a major impediment? Are there substantial advantages to indirect U.S. government approaches that work through international government organizations (IGOs), NGOs, European states, etc?
- Are there specific programs for which indirect approaches are more beneficial than direct U.S. government approaches and involvement?
- In addition to programs and projects, what structures and/or joint activities would you recommend as a means to improve U.S.–Nigerian relations?
- What are other international actors doing in Nigeria? Is there anything that we can learn from their experiences? Are there actors who should be seen as potential partners? Are there actors who are actively preventing economic development and nation-building?

Key Points from Panel Discussions

Long-Term U.S. Interests in Nigeria

- Aside from oil (the United States receives 5% of total consumption from Nigeria), long-term U.S. interests in Nigeria include:
 - National and regional stability, which precludes economic dislocation and refugee flows and prevents failed or ungoverned states from being used by terrorist groups as safe havens
 - Building closer relations with the 70-million-strong Muslim community and potentially viewing the sharia movement as a model for the compatibility of Islam and democracy

U.S. Policy Recommendations

- Encourage electoral reform.
- Assist in the development of a peace process for the Niger Delta region, including advocating mediation with the United States in a supporting role.
- Partner with Nigeria to build trust, especially using military diplomacy as a positive tool to advance mutual interests.
- Continue humanitarian aid in conjunction with NGOs.
- Vastly increase the U.S. diplomatic presence, in contrast to the U.S. military presence, by establishing American Cultural Centers, which would provide libraries, Internet access, etc.
- Encourage U.S. corporations to continue to provide social development funds for the Niger Delta.

PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

THE MODERATOR

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PANEL MEMBERS

Dr. Olayiwola (Layi) Abegunrin, Professor of International Relations and African Studies, Department of Political Science, Howard University. Dr. Abegunrin's research and publications focus on international relations; African politics, political economy, and economic development; and U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. He taught international relations at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria (1980-1996), and he was Chair of the Department of International Relations from 1986 to 1988. From 2001 to 2002, Dr. Abegunrin was an Adjunct Professor in the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia. He has studied international relations, African studies, history, and political economy, and he holds a Ph.D. from Howard University.

Dr. Akanmu G. Adebayo, Executive Director, Institute for Global Initiatives, Kennesaw State University, and Professor of History, Department of History and Philosophy, Kennesaw State University. Dr. Adebayo previously served as Assistant Director of International Programs at Kennesaw State University from 1995 to 1997; Visiting Professor at York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, from 1991 to 1992; and Senior Lecturer at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, from 1980 to 1991. Dr. Adebayo received a B.A. and M.A. in history from the University of Ife, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, as well as a Ph.D. in history from Obafemi Awolowo University.

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Dr. Ousmane Kane, Associate Professor, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University. From 1994 to 1995, Dr. Kane was a Visiting Professor at the University of Kansas. He is a specialist in comparative politics, political anthropology, African political economy, Islamic politics, and transnational migration and religion. Dr. Kane received a diplôme, an M.Phil., and an M.A. in translation and documentation from Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle. He also received a Ph.D. from the Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris.

Dr. Darren R. Kew, Professor of Dispute Resolution, University of Massachusetts Boston. Dr. Kew studies the relationship between transformative conflict resolution methods and democratic development, particularly in terms of democratic institution building in Africa and the growth of political cultures that support democracy. He has worked with the Council on Foreign Relations' Center for Preventive Action to provide analysis and blueprints for preventing conflicts in areas around the world, including Nigeria, Central Africa, and Kosovo. Dr. Kew received a Ph.D. from Tufts University.

Dr. Deirdre LaPin, Fellow, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Dr. LaPin also serves as an advisor to the World Bank on its program strategy for the Niger Delta. Previously, she served as Sustainable Development Manager, Shell International for Petroleum Development Oman, from 2002 to 2003; Corporate Community Development Advisor, Shell Petroleum Development Company, Nigeria Ltd., from 1997 to 2001; and Senior International Development Advisor, U.S. Agency for International Development, from 1993 to 1996. For 5 years in the Niger Delta, she led a major oil company in the design, staffing, implementation, and evaluation of a \$60 million/year corporate sustainable community development program serving the oil-producing region. Dr. LaPin received a B.A. in French/history from Agnes Scott College, an M.A. and Ph.D. in African studies (anthropology) from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and a postdoctoral certificate and a Master of Public Health degree from The Johns Hopkins University.

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Dr. Susan O'Brien, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Florida. Dr. O'Brien joined the University of Florida Department of History in fall 2003, after teaching at Penn State University from 2000 to 2003. She received a Ph.D. in African history from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, an M.A. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and a B.A. from Williams College.

Dr. John Paden, Professor of International Studies and Professor of Public and International Affairs, George Mason University. Dr. Paden has served as Director of African Studies at Northwestern University; Professor of Public Administration at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaira, Nigeria; and founding Dean of the Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. He served as an international observer during the Nigerian presidential elections in 1999 (Kaduna), 2003 (Kano), and 2007 (Katsina). Dr. Paden received a B.A. in philosophy from Occidental College, master's degrees in philosophy, politics, and economics from Oxford University, and a Ph.D. in politics from Harvard University.

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