

Research Paper

Leena Koni Hoffmann

Africa Programme | July 2014

Who Speaks for the North?

Politics and Influence in Northern Nigeria



**CHATHAM
HOUSE**
The Royal Institute of
International Affairs

Summary points

- Northern Nigeria is witnessing an upheaval in its political and social space. In 1999, important shifts in presidential politics led to the rebalancing of power relations between the north of Nigeria and the more economically productive south. This move triggered the unprecedented recalibration of influence held by northern leaders over the federal government. Goodluck Jonathan's elevation to the presidency in 2010 upended the deal made by the political brokers of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to rotate power between the north and south, from which the party had derived much of its unity.
- The decisive role played by the power shift issue in 15 years of democracy raises important questions about the long-term effectiveness of the elite pacts and regional rotation arrangements that have been used to manage the balance of power between the north and the south. It also highlights the fragility and uncertainties of Nigeria's democratic transition, as well as the unresolved fault lines in national unity as the country commemorates the centenary of the unification of the north and south in 2014.
- The significance and complexity of challenges in northern Nigeria make determining priorities for the region extremely difficult. Yet overcoming the north's considerable problems relating to development and security are crucial to the realization of a shared and prosperous future for all of Nigeria. Strong economic growth in the past decade has provided the government with the opportunities and resources to pursue thoughtful strategies that can address the development deficit between the north and the more prosperous south as well as creating greater political inclusion.
- When Sharia law was adopted in 12 northern Nigerian states many in the Muslim community envisioned this as a panacea for the complex and messy problems of social injustice, poverty, unemployment and political corruption. However, after the expansion of Sharia the unchanged circumstances of many who had celebrated its signing created even more anger and disaffection towards the state governments that had adopted the new laws. The disappointment with the implementation of Sharia opened up the north's social space for extreme religious ideologies to be seeded and for older strands of radical Islamism to be revived.
- Growing distrust in political leadership, a lack of government presence and chronic underdevelopment created the perfect context for radical groups to take root and flourish in northern Nigeria. Initially a fringe movement that believed in the strict observation of Sharia and providing social and financial help to poor Muslim families, Boko Haram was transformed into the most devastating threat to the northeast's stability during the latter years of the last decade. The connectedness of today's globalized world has allowed local extremists like Boko Haram to graft themselves into universalized debates on Muslim resistance to domination through Jihad in order to puff up their otherwise local profile.
- Northern Nigeria's political leaders, particularly the state governors, must move swiftly and strategically to deliver on repeated promises to invest in infrastructure, education and other social services, as well as encourage new sources of income for the region. Ultimately, the economy, security, stability and health of the north and south are intricately intertwined, and persistent violence and grinding poverty in any part of the country threaten the long-term progress of the whole.

Map of Nigeria



Box 1: Nigeria's north

The north of Nigeria is an area rich in natural solid minerals and agricultural potential. It is home to around 60 per cent of the country's population.^a It covers nearly two-thirds of Nigeria's landmass – approximately 711,828 square kilometres^b – and is twice the size of Germany. Until the first cycle of state creation in 1967, this area was officially designated the Northern Region. However, the history of Nigeria's regions and states is sensitive and complex, and therefore the current classification of 19 of the 36 federal states as 'northern', specifically those lying in the middle of the country, is not without contention. The inclusion of the region's southernmost parts under the label 'the north' has periodically been resisted by the mostly non-Hausa communities living there. There is a preference for the term 'Middle-Belt' to describe the area that runs from Kwara, through the federal capital, Abuja, and down to Benue state.

^a Based on the 2011 population projections by the National Bureau of Statistics, 91.5 million out of nearly 170 million Nigerians – the country's estimated population – reside in northern Nigeria. Since the national census of 2006, the population growth rate appears to have risen much more quickly there than in the south. In 2006, the split of the population between northern and southern states was 53.6 per cent and 46.4 per cent respectively. *National and State Population and Housing Tables: 2006 Census Priority Tables (Vol.1)*.

^b National Bureau of Statistics, *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011*.

Introduction

Northern Nigeria is witnessing an upheaval in its political and social space. Since the country's return to democracy in 1999 a growing number of actors, groups and movements have emanated from the region, all purporting to speak for and represent the best interests of its people. The different and often clashing voices that have emerged from the north include elements of the political establishment, opposition, youth and civil society. At the very far end of the spectrum, it also includes the bellicose voice of a violent insurgency from the northeast corner that is hostile towards the Nigerian state and threatening to wreck the stability and security of the entire region. The ongoing struggle for greater influence, inclusion, accountability and representation in northern Nigeria is central to understanding transformations in the region's politics, especially in the context of its security challenges and a looming general election in 2015.

In 1999, important shifts in presidential politics led to the rebalancing of power relations between the north of Nigeria and the more economically productive south. It was the then election of General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba from the southwest, as civilian president that finalized the critical shift of power from northern to southern Nigeria. This move triggered the unprecedented recalibration of influence held by northern leaders over the federal government and complicated their long-standing dominant position in national politics. In the north, the loss of influence at the centre was the context for the revival of demands for a greater role for Islamic or Sharia law, which culminated in the expansion of the penal codes in 12 northern states between 1999 and 2002, as a strategy for political renewal and a basis for instituting social and economic justice. For some northern actors, Islamic jurisprudence became a populist tool for corraling support in a fast-changing political space and renegotiating power relations.

The ongoing struggle for greater influence, inclusion, accountability and representation in northern Nigeria is central to understanding transformations in the region's politics, especially in the context of its security challenges and a looming general election in 2015.

At the national level, the failure of northern politicians to control the federal government for a single four-year term since 1999 has created a sense of marginalization and frustration – sentiments previously associated with southern politics – among many members of the northern political establishment, who felt their influence and careers had been threatened by the retention of presidential power in the south. Following the sudden death in 2010 of Obasanjo's chosen northern successor, Umaru Yar'Adua, and the promotion and subsequent election in 2011 of his vice-president, Goodluck Jonathan, a southern Christian from the oil-rich Niger Delta, the perception that the north had been systematically outmanoeuvred and disempowered over the past 14 years of democracy became increasingly widespread. Jonathan's elevation to the presidency in 2010 upended the deal made by the political brokers of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to rotate power between the north and south, from which the party had derived much of its unity. Furthermore, the narrative of the north's political exclusion seemed to gain credence as the longstanding economic inequality between it and the south was accentuated by the south's rapid and visible progress.

Jonathan's success in the 2011 presidential election turned out to be extremely divisive, stoking manifestly heightened religious and regional tensions. He drew the least number of votes from the far northern states, which voted overwhelmingly for his northern Muslim challenger General

Muhammadu Buhari.¹ Even after unsuccessfully contesting previous elections in 2003 and 2007, Buhari, a former military president, became not only a symbol for many of northern opposition to the governing PDP, Nigeria's largest party, but also of widespread grassroots outrage over political and economic corruption at all levels of government.

In the aftermath of Buhari's third loss at the polls, demonstrations by his supporters – mostly young Muslim northerners – degenerated into deadly clashes with security forces in Katsina, Kaduna, Kano, Plateau and Bauchi states. The homes and businesses of several members of the northern elite who had openly supported Jonathan and the PDP were attacked, for what the protesters perceived as the betrayal of the north's interests and the failure of democracy to improve their lives.²

The violent rejection of the 2011 election results in the north combined with festering ethno-religious tensions in the far north and the central states to produce 'the most violent election in 50 years of Nigerian history'.³ There was little attention from the international media on these early warning signs of the north's growing disenchantment with its fortunes ten years into the democratization process. Three years on, northern anger continues to simmer but remains unresolved and deeply misunderstood. Too often it is misrepresented in the Nigerian and international media as simply a demand for a northern (specifically Muslim) president. However, the widespread discontent among ordinary northerners with President Jonathan and the northern political elite has more to do with a long-held sense of political and economic marginalization than a desire to see a northerner assume the presidency again. The rhetoric around the need for a northern president is more likely generated by northern politicians negotiating for their own positions or trying to improve their prospects by 'narrowing the pool', as Tukur Baba, a Sokoto-based academic, observes.⁴

Be it the result of lack of experience with the north, lack of policy direction or blockages due to vested interests, the Jonathan administration has been unable to make real progress in understanding and addressing the multiple challenges confronting the region while instability and regional and religious tensions have escalated. Jonathan's appeal to the north's Christian voters ahead of the 2011 election, which was powerfully represented by a photo of him kneeling before a popular Pentecostal Christian preacher,⁵ served to alienate him from many sections of the northern Muslim community.

Located within a general appraisal of Nigeria's 15 years of democracy, this paper provides an analysis of current political and leadership dynamics in northern Nigeria and their impact on local and national challenges. It examines how the historical imbalance in power relations between northern and southern Nigeria has been altered since 1999 by the diminishing national role of northern leaders. Addressing issues beyond the worsening extremist and internecine violence, and considering the broader setting of politics and dissent in the north, this paper discusses how the region's leaders have reacted to their declining influence at the centre and how political strategies and alliances in the region have been reconstructed in post-1999 Nigeria.

¹ Buhari won in all 12 of the far northern states and lost the elections in five of the six north central states and two out of six in the northeast.

² A Kaduna residence owned by Namadi Sambo was burnt down following his election as Jonathan's vice-president. Properties burned in Kano state included the house of the *galadima* of Kano (a traditional leader), the palace of the emir (the highest-ranking traditional leader in the state) and homes owned by a former speaker of the House of Representatives.

³ During post-election violence over 65,000 Nigerians were displaced, 800 killed and 350 churches burnt or vandalized in 10 northern states. 'Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800', Human Rights Watch News, 17 May 2011. The National Commission for Refugees gave a more conservative figure of 33,000 displaced people. 'Post-Election Violence – 33,000 Displaced', *This Day*, 16 June 2011.

⁴ Interview with the author, Sokoto, 22 March 2013.

⁵ 'Jonathan Seeking 7-year Tenure, Meets TB Joshua and Attends Redeemed Church Holy Ghost Congress', *Sahara Reporters*, 19 December 2010.

‘North’ and ‘South’: disharmony in unity

In much of the news and discourse on Nigeria, the country is represented in sharp divisions between a ‘largely Muslim north’ and a ‘predominantly Christian south’. This narrative, while a convenient short-hand, ignores the brimming diversity in both halves of Nigeria and glosses over the intricate ethnic, religious and social ties that have been responsible for holding the country together through many episodes of turbulence. In today’s Nigeria the north and the south are home to an ethnically and religiously mixed population. Across the country Muslims and Christians have co-existed peacefully for decades, and they inter-marry in the southwest where identity is mainly shaped by regional culture and values.

The Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri are the largest groups in northern Nigeria and are predominantly Muslim.⁶ The Muslim population is concentrated in the far northern states but significant numbers of Christians also reside in these states. There are about 160 smaller ethnic groups across northern Nigeria that are mainly Christian⁷ along with a considerable percentage that follow traditional religious practices. Most of the northern population, about 70 per cent, lives in rural agrarian communities but historically significant urban centres such as Kaduna, Kano, Maiduguri, Sokoto and Zaria have attracted diverse people from all over the country.⁸

Northern Nigeria continues to display some of the worst human development indicators in the world. In northeast Nigeria, 71.5 per cent of the population live in absolute poverty and more than half are malnourished, making it the poorest part of the country. Insecurity, desertification and flooding have interrupted farming activities, the main source of income for most northerners. Forty per cent of Nigerian children aged 6–11 do not attend any primary school, and it is northern Nigeria that has the worst school attendance rates, especially for its girls.⁹ The literacy rate in Lagos, Nigeria’s bustling commercial capital, is 92 per cent while in Kano, the north’s commercial capital and Nigeria’s second biggest city, it is 49 per cent. In the northeastern state of Borno, the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency, it is under 15 per cent.¹⁰

In 2010, nine of the 19 northern states had the highest levels of unemployment in Nigeria – some as high as 40 per cent – with young northerners being overwhelmingly more likely to be jobless.¹¹ The worsening challenges with poverty, youth unemployment, poor infrastructure, illiteracy and insecurity are inherently systemic, and a consequence of the collective failure of leaders at all tiers of government to properly deliver public goods and services or to accountably manage public funds.¹²

⁶ The Hausa and Fulani are by far the majority across much of the far northern states with the exception of the northeast, which is dominated by the Kanuri.

⁷ Roman Catholicism and other traditional Christian denominations were first to make inroads into northern Nigeria. Over the past 20 years, Nigerian-founded Pentecostal churches have become very popular among non-Hausa, -Fulani and -Kanuri speaking groups in the region. There have also been a number of Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri converts to Christianity. Pentecostal denominations such as the Living Faith Church and the Redeemed Christian Church of God experienced a boom in the region in the 1990s and 2000s, and are particularly popular with professionals who live and work in the cities.

⁸ This migration trend has been somewhat stalled or in some cases reversed by the collapse of formerly thriving industries, as well as declining commercial activity. Insurgency violence in places such as Maiduguri and Kano and communal conflict across the north-central zone has forced many people to leave these areas.

⁹ *Gender in Nigeria Report: Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria, Actions Issues Policies*, 2nd edition, 2012. British Council Nigeria. http://www.unicef.org/nigeria/children_1937.html.

¹⁰ High-Level International Round Table on Literacy, UNESCO, Paris, 6–7 September 2012, ‘National Literacy Action Plan for 2012–2015, Nigeria’.

¹¹ In 2010, Zamfara state in the northwest recorded the highest rate of unemployment at 42.6 per cent, up from 14.5 per cent the previous year. Overall unemployment in Nigeria was 23.9 per cent in 2010, showing a 10 per cent jump since 2006. National Bureau of Statistics, *Annual Abstract of Statistics, 2011*. Many analysts believe the unemployment figures are significantly higher than reported, particularly in terms of urban unemployment.

¹² A farmer from Benue state summarized it like this: ‘We know that political power alone does not lead to heaven (i.e. economic prosperity)’. Interview with the author, Abuja, 13 March 2013.

Box 2: One north, one destiny: faith, politics and power in northern Nigeria

Islam was entrenched in northern Nigeria for centuries before it rapidly spread southwards following the early 19th-century Islamic jihad of Uthman dan Fodio (1754–1817), a Fulani Islamic scholar, who went on to establish the famous Sokoto caliphate, Africa's largest independent polity. From the time of its inception, the caliphate, which consisted of autonomous emirates, consolidated its political control in many parts of northern Nigeria through Islamic values and practices. During this era, power was primarily legitimized by religious authority. The older Kanem-Bornu empire in the northeast was weakened by the political rise of Sokoto but it resisted total domination. This was, however, at the cost of its leaders being excluded from emerging Islamic networks of power. The opposition of the Kanuri in the northeast to subjugation under Sokoto shaped the relationship between both power structures and is an important backdrop for understanding the violent contestation for control over northeast Nigeria. During the 100-year existence of the caliphate, the hegemony of the Fulani ruling class and its interactions with the local Hausa aristocracy laid the groundwork for their combined political domination of northern Nigeria. This set of power relations remained after the defeat of the Sokoto caliphate by the British and was in fact further strengthened under colonialism.

By 1903 the takeover of the Sokoto caliphate was complete. Its well-established administrative structures were repurposed and progressively standardized to facilitate the British colonial policy of indirect rule. For this to work, the status of local traditional elites was invested with formal and legal authority while the colonial state drew upon their social and religious legitimacy. Although colonial arrangements narrowed the influence of traditional religious authority in northern Nigeria – eventually limiting Islamic law to only civil matters – the delicate balance of indirect rule was dependent on this layer of authority staying in place.

This accommodation had an important impact on non-Hausa-Fulani, non-Muslim communities in the region, which had long struggled to assert their independence and distinctiveness in the face of emirate power. For these smaller, politically constrained groups, colonial rule had the unintended consequence of driving up conversions to Christianity, which could be interpreted as an expression of protest against the reinforcement of emirate administration. At the same time it encouraged the suppression of non-Hausa-Fulani cultural identities so much that, when Nigeria became independent in 1960, the Hausa language, political culture and values had been widely assimilated by minority groups – but so was the fear of continued marginalization in a self-governing Nigeria. The swell of contemporary demands and competing claims to political autonomy, economic rights and opportunities from various communities in northern Nigeria has its roots in this fraught past.

Similarly within the northern Muslim community, internal disagreements produced divisions between groups aligned with the two-centuries-strong Sufi heritage of the Sokoto caliphate and those who held a range of hardline to moderate 'reformist' views. This led to the exclusion of Muslim leaders and groups that fell into the latter category from local mainstream power structures. Even though over time some 'reformist' elements were co-opted and absorbed into the established system of religious and political authority, others who maintained their dissension were systematically pushed out to the margins and also rendered politically voiceless. The layers of political, social, religious and even doctrinal grievances produced during these successive phases still impact upon present-day power relations in northern Nigeria and have been heavily appropriated in the past three decades of ethnic and faith-based political identity conflicts in the region.

Many political elites, past and present, have accumulated personal fortunes through resilient, deeply rooted systems of political patronage that are wired into the booming oil industry in the south. Today, Nigeria is contending not simply with a growing gap between its northern and southern halves but also with the polarization between Nigeria's diverse population and an affluent minority that is seen – regardless of its ethnic or religious background – as becoming out of touch, self-serving and corrupt once launched into the wealth and comfort of the federal capital city of Abuja.

Box 3: Independence and beyond: competition and coexistence

After being isolated from each other under colonial rule, independence in 1960 was intended to reset political relations between Nigeria's regions by bringing them together in a national government at the centre. Instead it exposed how persistently the 'Nigeria project' would be challenged by regional disparities in political, educational and material development.

In the south, a greater openness to Christianity and Western-style education had created a society less distrustful of modernization ideologies and more ready to accept Western notions of enlightenment and nationhood. Many in northern Muslim communities had retained a strong suspicion of outside influences and the common response to secular notions of governance was either resentment or ambivalence because of their association with Christianity or wholly unacceptable innovations. A stronger religious identity over ethnic or local ones began to take root among northern Muslims. With time, as well as the influx of various forms of Islamic schools of thought, ethnic and national identity became less of a unifier among northern Muslims. On the other hand, the post-independence experience of southern groups like the Yoruba, Igbo and Ijaw led to increasing ethno-nationalism in response to their perceived social and political exclusion.

Under the leadership of Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, the sardauna of Sokoto and a descendant of Usman dan Fodio, the Northern People's Congress (NPC)^a became the region's main political party and assumed the principal position in a coalition at the centre.^b The NPC-led government pursued an ambitious and controversial 'northernization' policy, which was guided by the sardauna's grand vision of 'One North, One Destiny' and aimed at unifying the region. Today, many older northerners consider the sardauna as one of the region's greatest leaders and reflect upon the era of his premiership as the golden age of northern pride and unity.^c

Yet despite some foundational good intentions, Nigeria's First Republic was eventually brought down by the heightened salience of ethnicity and religion in its politics, and by the corruption and repressive actions of its leaders. Still, during its course, through a messy mix of enticement and coercion, northern elites experienced more strategic success in constructing political networks that not only stemmed from the region's dominant ethnic identity, but also cultivated intra-elite cooperation at the regional level.

^a Although the NPC strategically built alliances with many of its challengers, it faced stiff political opposition from northern-based competitors such as the Northern Peoples Progressive Union (NEPU), a radical anti-aristocracy party, and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), a platform for minorities. And although opposition parties in the north were treated with deep hostility by the ruling NPC, the northern radical tradition of the NEPU leadership and later the People's Redemption Party (PRP) channelled the restive voices of the broad masses of northerners, the *talakawa* (commoners), and challenged the establishment up until the 1990s.

^b The Igbo-dominated National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) seemed a more appealing partner for the NPC. A partnership with the Yoruba-dominated Action Group (AG) was unlikely because the southwestern party and its national leader, Obafemi Awolowo, were perceived as condescending towards the north and too radical for any alliance with the conservative NPC to last.

^c Despite this accomplishment, the sardauna's grand vision for the north fell short of initiating major political reforms to address the demands of minorities for local autonomy. His passionate efforts to promote Islam in the region as well as proselytize non-Muslim minorities were also less appreciated and created national anxiety over what many perceived as a grand plot to transform Nigeria into an Islamic state. Deep tensions within the northern Muslim community, particularly between the Qadiriyya and Tijaniyya brotherhoods, sparked several clashes, adding up to a picture of a north which was only tenuously united.

The decline of military rule and the rise of power rotation

Since Nigeria's independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, its political history has been considerably influenced, and often dominated, by elites from the north. Under civilian and military rule, northern-dominated political networks were more successful at controlling national power. This was achieved through inter-ethnic bargaining and political accommodation with important Middle-Belt and southern leaders in sharing power and resources at the national level. However, the concentration of national power in the hands of northern leaders has been a historical source of grievance for southern Nigerians and became the foremost issue when the country was abruptly thrust into a transition to democracy in 1998.

Faced with overwhelming national pressure and internal crisis, important leaders in the north acknowledged the fragile state of Nigeria's unity and demonstrated openness to a negotiated shift of presidential power to the south.

The decision of a northern military president, General Ibrahim Babangida, to annul the 1993 presidential election – the culmination of a six-year democratic transition programme – in which Moshood Abiola, a wealthy southwestern Yoruba Muslim, was widely accepted as the winner, proved a tipping point. It entrenched the perception of a deep and unyielding bias against the south on the part of the northern – particularly Hausa and Fulani – elite that was perceived to have benefited the most from military rule. The pro-democracy movement that mushroomed in the aftermath of the annulled election became entangled in contentious narratives of a north-versus-south struggle for control over presidential power. For many in the southwest, the evidence of an anti-Yoruba bias within the northern-dominated military was indisputable.

Under the succeeding military regime of General Sani Abacha (1993–98), one of Nigeria's most corrupt and repressive leaders, the notion of Yoruba marginalization was further solidified by the imprisonment of Abiola and the rampant detention, torture and murder of Abacha's critics. This continued until Abacha's mysterious death in 1998 whereupon Nigeria found itself at a crossroads of political change.

Many in the south saw the opening brought on by the death of Abacha as a critical opportunity to review Nigeria's balance of political power. The death in custody of Abiola – who had become a symbol of Yoruba persecution and exclusion from political power¹³ – energized the national discourse and strongly shaped the eleven-month transition under the military administration of General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Faced with overwhelming national pressure and internal crisis, important leaders in the north acknowledged the fragile state of Nigeria's unity and demonstrated openness to a negotiated shift of presidential power to the south. The northern political establishment assented to a tacit arrangement in which the region's politicians would refrain from contesting in the 1999 presidential election. This was largely designed to halt the haemorrhaging of the north's political credibility and repair severely damaged relations between it and the south.

¹³ Leena Hoffmann and Insa Nolte, 'The Roots of Neopatrimonialism: Opposition politics and popular consent in southwest Nigeria', in Wale Adebawale and Ebenezer Obadare (Eds), *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: Critical Reinterpretations – A Festschrift for Richard Joseph* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

Box 4: Diversified power and influence in northern Nigeria

Democracy Day on 29 May 1999 marked the beginning of a sea change in northern influence over national affairs. But, more importantly, it represented the culmination of incremental changes that had already begun to reconfigure the north internally. For this reason Nigeria's return to democracy was not by itself a transformative event for the north, but its impact on power relations and structures in the region can be best understood in the context of prior occurrences, particularly the fragmentation of Nigeria's regions into states and the expansion of the military.^a

First introduced to weaken and discourage secession attempts in a post-civil war Nigeria, the increase of federal units by successive military governments – from 12 to 36 by 1996 – shrank the political influence of majority ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani over minorities by enhancing the administrative autonomy of the latter. This was especially the case in north-central states like Kaduna, where the population size of minority and majority groups was more or less equalized, and in others like Benue and Kogi, where the Hausa-Fulani became a minority group.

Since much of the national influence of the Hausa-Fulani was derived from their dominance of the north through the past entrenchment of Hausa-Fulani/Islamic political culture, the creation of first six and finally 19 northern states splintered them as a political bloc. At the same time it elevated the status of many minority groups within the newly created states, strengthened formerly repressed local political structures and integrated northern minority elites into national networks of power.

Bankrolled by an increasingly centralized federal government that controlled the nation's oil-boom profits, the new states and local government areas provided classic opportunities for the distribution of state resources and patronage to local leaders and groups that expressed public support for the military. Traditionally, new federal and local units received a centrally allocated take-off grant, and a raft of lucrative government contracts, appointments and civil service jobs became readily available. In this context, the increase of federal administrative units became an important political instrument not only for addressing the fears held by minorities of political and economic exclusion, but also for rewarding and strengthening the position of allied local elites and groups through privileges and state benefits. This process of redistributing power, controlled by the military government, had the important consequence of increasing the number of people with access to state resources and the capacity to establish power bases for themselves in the region.

Alongside the ballooning of Nigeria's treasury during the oil boom of the 1970s was a dramatic increase in the size of government. The expansion and transformation of the civil service from the 1970s to 1990s also created pathways of influence for new sections of the educated northern elite and led to the subsequent incorporation of many of its members into the mainstream political class. This benefited certain members of northern minority groups who were promoted to senior government positions or made 'super' permanent secretaries in an array of newly established government agencies and directorates. During the transition to democracy in 1998–99, many high-ranking government officials who had served in the preceding military regimes found new relevance by transforming themselves into important representatives and brokers for their communities.

^a By the end of the civil war in 1970, the size of the army had swelled to 250,000 from 10,000 in 1967. The majority of the new recruits were northerners, mainly from minority groups in the region. During the long period of military rule, many northern minority army officers played central roles in government as either federal ministers or military state governors. These influential positions allowed them accumulate substantial economic resources to establish themselves as important leaders of their communities. The heavy involvement of several non-Hausa-Fulani army officers in party politics from 1998 demonstrated that new configurations of power had emerged in the north.

All three of the main political parties that emerged in 1998 displayed sensitivity to Yoruba ethnic grievances by reserving their presidential tickets for Yoruba candidates. The PDP, a broad and very well organized coalition of old-guard politicians, retired military officers and business people, backed the candidacy of Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state who was well regarded by many top northern leaders. Obasanjo defeated his main competitor – a fellow Yoruba – and was elected on 27 February 1999 as the first civilian president in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. His acceptance in the north had more to do with the close political and personal ties he had forged during his time as military ruler. For this reason, though, Obasanjo was rejected in his own southwest region, where he was perceived as a northern stooge and failed to attract many votes.¹⁴

The pacted nature of Nigeria’s democratic transition, which produced the country’s first Yoruba presidency, succeeded in reducing the degree of exclusion of Yoruba elites from national networks of power. Yet this elite bargain failed to establish an open and popular framework for regulating how political power, national resources and state revenues ought to be distributed between the regions. Thus in certain ways the handling of the return to civilian rule complicated rather than resolved the main sticking points in Nigerian politics. Many southern elites, particularly from President Jonathan’s region, the Niger Delta, are now also closer to power and have bound up their political agendas into the rightness of power rotation, and virulently make arguments about it being their turn to hold onto power for at least two presidential terms.

At the same time, the 1999 general elections created an opening for even more political actors to exercise influence over local and state-level affairs. Of the 36 state governors to emerge, the north accounted for 19. In the national Senate, 57 of the 109 senators who were elected were from the north as were 178 of 360 members of the House of Representatives. The region’s 413 local government areas produced that many chairs along with hundreds of state-level legislators and local government councillors. The dramatic increase in the number of individuals with access to government and the financial resources of elected office further contributed to transforming the traditionally closed nature of power in the north.

Democracy and pacted politics: northern Nigeria’s political fragmentation

The elite pact to shift control over the centre to the south contained within it the seeds of the north’s political undoing. Soon after Obasanjo’s inauguration in 1999, he overhauled the armed forces, retiring officers who had held senior positions in the past military regimes. This move, though primarily directed at preventing military interventions in politics in the future, severely weakened the north’s military elite and by extension the region’s longstanding strength in the army. Seeking to shore up his popularity in the Yoruba southwest, Obasanjo appointed a new cadre of military intelligence officers, many drawn from his immediate constituency. This and many other policy decisions and appointments boosted Obasanjo’s popularity in the southwest and stirred perceptions in the north that his administration was pursuing a deliberate anti-northern agenda. Key ministerial posts in defence and finance were assigned to northerners but this did not stem accusations that Obasanjo had favoured the southwest.

Feeling sidelined, northern political figures such as Babangida, an influential member of the PDP who had rallied other retired military officers to fund Obasanjo’s campaign and so expected humility and a greater sense of indebtedness from him, accused the president of being aloof and uncooperative. As

¹⁴ Obasanjo won an overwhelming majority of the votes from the north and southeast but was roundly rejected in the southwest. (An additional reason was that he was perceived as being opposed to the progressive politics of the late Obafemi Awolowo, the southwest’s most respected politician.)

a result, in the early stages of Nigeria's latest experiment with democracy, northern political thinking and discourse became framed by suspicion towards the federal government and by Obasanjo's perceived betrayal of the region. More importantly, the dynamics of the governing party and of the opposition parties became locked into the notion of 'zoning' presidential power; an arrangement that conditioned northern leaders to expect power to return to the region by 2007 and be retained for two terms (eight years). This fell apart in 2010, however, with the death of the northern Yar'Adua, which greatly frustrated the political strategies and networks of northern politicians.

Under Obasanjo, much of the criticism directed at the federal government from northern interests groups tended to echo the bitter frustrations of the region's elite over their perceived diminishing national role.

Under Obasanjo, much of the criticism directed at the federal government from northern interests groups tended to echo the bitter frustrations of the region's elite over their perceived diminishing national role. For example, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), a Kaduna-based northern interest group, was first launched as a platform for seeking practical solutions to the north's socio-economic challenges but by the 2003 election it had become more directly opposed to Obasanjo and its rhetoric openly partisan.¹⁵ In this way, within four years of democratic rule and with the arrangement for power to be retained in the southwest for eight years still in place, the north's political climate had become defined by the fear of permanent political marginalization. But despite the growing resentment towards Obasanjo in the north, a coherent opposition failed to materialize.

Around the midpoint of his second term, Obasanjo's relationship with Vice-President Atiku Abubakar, a wealthy Muslim from the northeast and influential figure in the Katsina-based People's Democratic Movement (PDM), an important northern-based political machine built around the legacy of the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua, had become severely strained.¹⁶ The Nigerian media widely reported that Obasanjo felt threatened by the political clout and ambitions of Abubakar, the most senior northerner in his government, and was unsure that he would be able to maintain control of the PDP if Abubakar further strengthened his position. The rivalry between Obasanjo and Abubakar also became entangled with growing accusations against the president of a grand scheme to extend his time in office by an unconstitutional third term,¹⁷ and of designing 'an architecture of mischief against the north's economic and political interests'.¹⁸

Over the course of Obasanjo's two-term presidency, the PDP became increasingly factionalized along regional lines as Nigeria approached the 2007 election. The internal dynamics of northern politics were further destabilized by Obasanjo's decision to back Shehu Musa Yar'Adua's younger brother, Umaru Musa, as his northern successor over Abubakar. Yar'Adua's victory over Abubakar in the controversial and deeply flawed polls of 2007 dealt a devastating blow to the PDM, which had played a central role in both of Obasanjo's electoral successes in the north but became divided and significantly weakened by the contest between Abubakar and Yar'Adua.

¹⁵ During this time other groups emerged with a similar focus on the region. They include the Northern Elders Forum, the Middle Belt Forum, Northern Youth Council, Northern Union and Kaduna Discussion Group.

¹⁶ Yar'Adua served as deputy leader when Obasanjo was Nigeria's military ruler in the 1970s. Both were later jailed after being accused of plotting a coup against General Sani Abacha.

¹⁷ 'Nigeria; Signs of Obasanjo third-term bid stir already boiling pot', Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) News Report, 17 March 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/58473/nigeria-signs-of-obasanjo-third-term-bid-stir-already-boiling-pot>.

¹⁸ Interview with a former senior member of the PDP from the north-central zone, 13 March 2013, Abuja, Nigeria.

The damage to the PDM was mirrored in many other northern-based political groups, which were also divided by the internal strife resulting from the candidacy of three very influential northern politicians in 2007 – Abubakar, Yar’Adua and Buhari. The three-way contest not only succeeded in causing further divisions in political support and opinions in the north, but also contributed to diverting media focus from the worsening economic problems of the region to the more sensational intra-elite competition for control over presidential politics. Additionally, the political weaknesses of each of the northern candidates underscored the challenges the north faced in finding a credible nationally prominent leader.¹⁹

Following the death in office of Yar’Adua in 2010, public dissatisfaction was further stirred by the backroom political deals that became even more prominent in the national conversation. This was evident in the aftermath of Jonathan’s elevation to the presidency, with much of the political discourse among the northern elites centred on the exigency for a president to emerge from the region in 2011. Because Yar’Adua had been expected to remain in office for eight years, Jonathan’s promotion interrupted the delicate zoning agreement of the PDP, and this forced northern elites to explore other ways of asserting their interests.

In an attempt to regain political ground and present a united front, northern politicians in the PDP came together to create the Northern Leaders’ Forum, which anointed Abubakar as the region’s consensus candidate for the 2011 election. The undemocratic process that led to Abubakar’s selection to represent the region in the PDP primaries showed that the northern faction of the PDP overestimated their influence over political opinions and choices in the north, and underestimated the level of anti-PDP sentiment across the region.²⁰ Mainstream northern politicians were deaf to growing discontent across the north with the quality of democratic governance, which had only deepened after the election of 2007. Founded in 2009, the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), Buhari’s presidential platform, capitalized on the rising tide of northern frustration – appealing especially to young voters – to strengthen its candidate’s position in the region.²¹

To a degree, the eruption of post-election violence across the north in 2011 echoed wider dissatisfaction in the region with leaders who had claimed to represent its interests in national politics. It is impossible to rule out that some of the protests were premeditated and perhaps instigated by politicians who had suffered defeat at the polls. Nevertheless, anger over the north’s economic stagnation and the quality of democratic representation was overwhelmingly directed at the region’s elites.

It did not spare its traditional leaders either. Although it has been a long time since the northern emirates enjoyed the level of prominence conferred on them before and during colonialism, these institutions had retained respect and legitimacy in post-independence Nigeria. Because of their closeness and appeal at the grassroots level of politics, past military and present civilian governments alike have sought the endorsement and support of traditional leaders in order to legitimize their political ambitions. In the past 15 years of electoral politics the perceived involvement of traditional leaders in partisan politics has led to criticism that once-respected figures have traded their independence and impartiality for the trappings of government power. This has contributed to deepening concern among many northerners of a widening disconnect between them and their leaders.

¹⁹ Abubakar’s political vulnerability stemmed from his broken relationship with Obasanjo and corruption charges made against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Yar’Adua was vulnerable owing to his lack of personal charisma and political energy, and Buhari owing to his hardline political persona, baggage from his past military regime and poor appeal in the south.

²⁰ ‘Consensus Candidate Not Collective Agreement of the North – Shettima’, *Daily Independent*, 26 November, 2010.

²¹ Buhari’s popularity in the north accelerated the CPC’s expansion across the region, particularly in Bauchi, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina and Kebbi states.

Box 5: Northern governors, budgetary allocations and the resource control debate

The revision of the federal redistributive formula in 1999 doubled the allocations received by state and local governments, which altered the balance of power between the federal and state level. Under the current formula, state governors are in control of budgets that are often much larger than those of some West African countries. Currently 13 per cent of oil revenues first goes to the oil-producing states according to the derivation principle, and of the remaining revenues, the federal government receives 53 per cent, state governments 27 per cent and local government areas 20 per cent. Revenue collected from customs, excise and corporate income taxes are split using the same formula without applying the derivation principle. The significant economic power being transferred into the hands of state governors gives them considerable capacity to effect visible change. For instance, the responsibilities for schools, basic health care, water provision, sanitation and most local roads lie with the state governments.

Although the 19 northern states collect approximately half as much federal revenue per capita as their counterparts in the Niger Delta, the monthly federal allocations that have gone to them since 1999 are the most federal revenue the region has ever received. This has placed a high expectation on northern governors to invest in major infrastructural development and job creation.

Many in the north feel the governors and local government officials have not responded to this expectation, and this has contributed to the failure of the consolidation of democracy in the region. Northern governors have repeatedly complained about the fairness of the revenue allocation formula and have continued to demand that the arrangement be revised. This contention has become a defining feature of the competition between northern and southern elites. The northern governors' position, together with the absence of a robust development agenda for reviving the region's economy, have also denied them any real clout with the federal government, which has contributed to undermining their authority and sincerity in the public eye.

The current distribution formula is unlikely to change in the near future, which means that the energies of northern state governments, currently too centred on increasing their federal allocations, would be better served by a proactive focus on increasing internally generated revenues. In addition, northern decision-makers have organized themselves into regional and subnational formations that, if well focused, could interact more productively with the federal government as well as effectively coordinate region-wide initiatives. These formations are the Northern State Governors Forum, Northern Senators Forum, Northern Local Government Chairmen's Forum and the Conference of the Speakers of the Northern States Houses of Assembly.

Spiritual agendas and state power: in pursuit of justice

Popular support for the reintroduction of Sharia penal codes in northern Nigeria represented the enduring appeal of Islamic governance in certain sections of the Muslim community as a basis not only for ordering society but also for social and political renewal.²² When Sharia was signed into law many in the Muslim community envisioned this as a panacea for the complex and messy problems of social injustice, poverty, unemployment and political corruption.

²² The argument for the expansion of Sharia law was also motivated by unresolved anger at the relegation and subsequent decline of Islamic education and the overall influence of Islam on society since colonialism.

However, after the expansion of Sharia the unchanged circumstances of many who had celebrated its signing created even more anger and disaffection towards the state governments that had adopted the new laws. The disappointment with the implementation of Sharia opened up the north's social space for extreme religious ideologies to be seeded and for older strands of radical Islamism to be revived. These circumstances were further exacerbated by the perceived collusion and participation of previously respected Muslim leaders in state-level networks of political corruption. An older Muslim teacher who had supported the return to Sharia in Sokoto state in 2001 expressed his disappointment that 'it was all politics. The Muslim clerics [now] just collect monthly subventions'.²³ Also many of the northern governors who incorporated Sharia into their states' laws were criticized for implementing it for political gain and as a vehicle for seeking re-election.

Growing distrust in political leadership, a lack of government presence and chronic underdevelopment created the perfect context for radical groups to take root and flourish in northern Nigeria. Initially a fringe movement that believed in the strict observation of Sharia and providing social and financial help to poor Muslim families, Jama'at ahl al sunna lil' dawa wal' Jihad,²⁴ nicknamed Boko Haram, was transformed into the most devastating threat to the northeast's stability during the latter years of the last decade. The origins of Boko Haram are in the north's long history of dissidence through radical ideology, and sometimes violence, and in movements that have periodically emerged since the 19th century with virulently anti-state agendas.²⁵ Boko Haram's transition from fringe group to violent insurgency in 2009 followed the escalation of tensions with state authorities, in which extrajudicial killings featured heavily. Since then the Nigerian government has been drawn into an open war with its members, which have resulted in thousands of deaths, tens of thousands of casualties and millions of displaced people.²⁶ The trajectory of Boko Haram's insurgency and the extensive scale of violence are the worst Nigeria has seen since the 'Yan Tatsine movement that grew out of Kano in the 1960s.

Arguably, the connectedness of today's globalized world has allowed local extremists like Boko Haram to graft themselves onto universalized debates on Muslim resistance to domination through Jihad in order to puff up their otherwise local profile.

In its military efforts to root out Boko Haram in the northeast, the federal government is losing sight of the fact that the group is decidedly local, with the region being the group's operational priority despite its avowed wider regional or national ambitions of establishing an Islamic state. Arguably, the connectedness of today's globalized world has allowed local extremists like Boko Haram to graft themselves onto universalized debates on Muslim resistance to domination through Jihad in order to puff up their otherwise local profile.²⁷

The manner in which President Jonathan's administration has responded to the insurgency has contributed to strengthening a narrative around injustice that is undercutting its overall aims;

²³ Interview with the author, Sokoto, 22 March 2013.

²⁴ In Arabic this roughly translates into 'The People for the Sunnah of the Prophet [Muhammad] and for the Propagation [of Islam] and Jihad'.

²⁵ For analysis of religious dissidence in northern Nigeria see, Murray Last, 'From dissent to dissidence: the genesis and development of reformist Islamic groups in northern Nigeria', Interfaith Relations in Northern Nigeria Policy Paper No 2, March 2013 and Murray Last, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram', Muslim Institute, <http://www.musliminstitute.org/blogs/travel/nigerias-boko-haram-professor-murray-last>.

²⁶ 'Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency', International Crisis Group, Africa Report No 216, 3 April 2014.

²⁷ David Jacobson, Atta Barkindo and Derek Harvey, 'What gives Boko Haram its strength', CNN, 12 May, 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/05/11/opinion/jacobson-boko-haram-strength/>.

particularly as top army officers and the president continue to dismiss allegations of attacks on civilians despite credible evidence to the contrary, adding to the justice deficit in the northeast.²⁸ In the worse-hit villages and towns of the northeast, the impact of the security response on communities has contributed to feelings of being ‘under attack’, and to civilians thinking they are being ‘held responsible’ for the actions of Boko Haram.²⁹ The security failings of the military are not solely due to laxity. Other causes include low morale,³⁰ poor intelligence and training, institutionalized corruption and the lack of necessary hardware despite Nigeria’s vast security budget. Federal military spending has been considerably boosted in the past three years and stands at \$6.25 billion for 2014. Many analysts argue that a significant proportion of this money remains in the hands of top military officials or is distributed among a growing number of defence and security contractors.³¹ The federal government’s dwindling political traction in the northeast and its limited legitimacy with local communities in the area will directly determine the success of its new ‘soft approach’ to counter-terrorism, unveiled in a March speech by Sambo Dasuki, the national security adviser.³²

Fear and insecurity have become normal in many parts of the north. But declining personal security has been a daily reality of life in much of Nigeria for some time. Insecurity has spread through the very fabric of northern life, and elsewhere, as the roads have become more dangerous, the health services less reliable and the public sector more vulnerable to corruption. The hardness of the Boko Haram threat is evidence of the disastrous consequences that can occur when leaders who have the power and resources to do so fail to alleviate extended periods of economic hardship.

Box 6: Civil society in northern Nigeria

Northern civil society is not yet as visible and vigorous as its counterpart in the south but there are important groups that have been instrumental in channelling the voices and opinions of northern citizens. There is a growing northern media, networks in academia, and faith and interfaith groups devoted to issues of citizens’ rights, gender equality, poverty, social injustice and democratic participation. Groups such as the Arewa Research and Development Project, a network of northern-based academics established in 2012, have an agenda to provide research-based content for influencing decision-making processes in the north. Although many of these groups struggle with limited resources and are still consolidating formal channels for influence, some of them, like the Federation of Muslim Women’s Associations in Nigeria, an influential body that was started in 1980, have achieved significant successes in shaping educational policies, including nomadic literacy programmes. Other high-profile groups include the Interfaith Mediation Centre, the Network for Justice and the Civil Rights Congress.

²⁸ Amnesty International Canada, ‘War crimes and crimes against humanity as violence escalates in North East’, 31 March 2014, <http://www.amnesty.ca/news/news-releases/nigeria-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-as-violence-escalates-in-north>.

²⁹ A recent Human Rights Watch Report presented evidence that Nigerian forces were responsible for serious human rights abuses against citizens unconnected to the insurgency; these included extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions. Human Rights Watch, ‘Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Forces Abuses in Nigeria’, October 2012.

³⁰ In May 2014 Nigerian soldiers based in Maiduguri opened fire on their commander at the Maimalari barracks. The shooting indicated tensions between higher- and lower-ranking officers fighting the insurgency and especially the frustrations of the soldiers on the streets who feel abandoned by their superiors and overwhelmed by Boko Haram’s tactics. ‘Nigeria soldiers “fire at army commander in Maiduguri”’, BBC News, 14 May 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27417778>.

³¹ This view has been echoed in the above mentioned International Crisis Group report, which highlighted ‘allegations that substantial sums are pocketed from the defence and security appropriations by government officials, security chiefs and the contractors supplying military hardware’.

³² ‘Nigeria: FG announces “soft” counter-terror strategy’, *Daily Trust*, 19 March 2014.

Rising south, stumbling north: Nigeria's economic growth

In 2014, after the first recalculation of Nigeria's GDP in more than two decades, the country overtook South Africa to become Africa's biggest economy and the 26th-largest in the world, nearly doubling in size from \$292 billion to \$510 billion, reflecting growth in the service sector in particular. Nigeria's rosy economic outlook, population size and leadership position in West Africa suggest that it is on the cusp of becoming a powerful consumer country and a global influencer of political and strategic importance.³³

Notwithstanding a decade of macro-economic gains in the areas of trade and agriculture,³⁴ however, the sluggish pace of poverty reduction,³⁵ welfare improvement,³⁶ infrastructure development and job creation³⁷ (particularly for young Nigerians) point to a worrying trend: new wealth is not reaching the country's poor. South Africa's GDP per capita is still considerably higher at \$7,352 than Nigeria's \$2,722 and the country produces 40,000 megawatts of electricity for its 50 million people³⁸ while Nigeria, with a population more than three times larger, generates just over 4,000 megawatts.³⁹ With the current rate of population growth in Nigeria at 2.4 per cent each year according to UN figures, a fast-growing number of citizens could face a future of severe financial and social distress because of the widening gap between economic growth and social welfare indicators.⁴⁰ Nigeria may have a booming economy on paper but the proceeds of this growth remain very unequally distributed – more so than at any time during military rule. But it is not that those were better times; governing institutions have simply declined continuously. Eighty per cent of the nation's wealth is unsustainably concentrated in the hands of just one per cent of the population.⁴¹

While there are limited data that show the geographic spread of Nigeria's economic success, there seems to be a noticeable concentration in the southwest region, specifically in Lagos state, which has approximately seven per cent of the national population. So remarkable is the trajectory of economic growth in Lagos that the state has seen a reduction in poverty from an estimated 44 to 23 per cent between 2004 and 2010.⁴² This drop is made more impressive by the fact that half of Nigeria's 36 states have experienced an increase in poverty during the same period. Furthermore, 16 of the 19 states in the north have seen poverty rates double since 1980.⁴³ Therefore, looking at all of Nigeria through 'Lagos-tinted' glasses produces misleading conclusions. Lagos, which generates 60 per cent of Nigeria's economic activity, has never been an accurate barometer for understanding the country's

³³ Longstanding contributions to peacekeeping efforts throughout West Africa have earned Nigeria high regard in the region, and over the past decade the wide popularity of Nigerian film and music has boosted the country's considerable 'soft power' across the continent.

³⁴ World Bank, *Nigeria Economic Report 2013*.

³⁵ The national poverty level has gone from 65.5 per cent in 1996 to 69.0 per cent in 2010. Also, 66 per cent of the rural population is stuck beneath the poverty line of \$1 a day. In terms of income distribution, Nigeria is among the 30 most unequal countries in the world. See *Gender in Nigeria Report 2012*.

³⁶ Nigeria ranked 153 out of 186 countries in the 2013 United Nations Human Development Index.

³⁷ Unemployment climbed by 3 percentage points in 2011 from 21 per cent in 2010. In the two largest age brackets, from 15 to 24 years and from 25 to 44 years, the rate are 38 and 22 per cent respectively.

³⁸ US Energy Information Administration, 'South Africa', 28 February 2014, <http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=SF>.

³⁹ Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, 'NERC Reviews Tariff', 26 May 2014, <http://www.nercng.org/index.php/media-and-publicity/press-releases/227-nerc-reviews-tariff>.

⁴⁰ The current level of investment in infrastructure and social services falls short of meeting the needs of a fast-growing population. Nigeria is set for tremendous population growth over the coming years and is anticipated to have the third-largest population in the world by 2050, with 400 million people. United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2013). *World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision, Volume I: Comprehensive Tables*. ST/ESA/SER.A/336. http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/trends/WPP2012_Wallchart.pdf.

⁴¹ World Bank, 'African Development Indicators 2012/13', 2013.

⁴² World Bank, 'Nigeria Economic Report', No 1, May 2013.

⁴³ See *Gender in Nigeria Report 2012*.

economic climate.⁴⁴ Over the past decade and a half, southern businesses have benefited from liberal market reforms while many of the north's state-owned industries especially in Kano, the region's commercial capital, and Kaduna have collapsed.⁴⁵

Box 7: The deindustrialization of the north

Starting with the Structural Adjustment Programme of 1986 and the liberalization of the economy through the 1990s, which led to a flooding of Nigeria by cheap Asian textiles and other goods, local industries in the north were thrust into an environment they were ill-equipped to compete in and this led to their end. Compounded by the challenges brought on by poor electricity supply and a deteriorating transport infrastructure, a large number of factories shut down in the early 2000s and hundreds of thousands of workers lost their jobs. The costs of power, water and maintenance of infrastructure rose rapidly for Nigeria's strategic non-oil industries in the north, and goods from overseas were simply more competitively priced. These factories, among a host of state-owned ventures established in the 1960s and 1970s, were part of a regional effort to close the economic gap between the north and south. According to a survey by the Kano Ministry of Commerce, in 2004 alone 48 of the 134 companies in the state collapsed.^a The collapse of the north's textile industry also decimated cotton production in the region, a key agricultural good that was farmed in 11 northern states.

Since 2000, the major state-owned businesses that have been lost in northern Nigeria have included the majority of the textile companies and New Nigeria Newspaper. Several sugar companies were privatized but eventually also went out of production. Bank of the North failed to meet the Central Bank directive for all banks to reach a capital base of \$15.3 million and was later assimilated into Unity Bank, a southern-based bank with a nationwide presence. The closure of Bank of the North signified the weakening of the region's stake in Nigeria's banking industry.

^a The 'Collapse of Industries in Nigeria', *Daily Trust*, 27 December 2004.

Compared with the south, there have been less direct federal government investment in infrastructure in the north.⁴⁶ Lagos has attracted much of the over \$20 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) that has come into Nigeria in the past three years. The north's overall share of the \$5.6 billion in FDI in 2013⁴⁷ is modest by any standard of comparison with states in the south.⁴⁸ Northwest Nigeria only has a quarter of the formal banking coverage found in the southwest.⁴⁹

A recent UNESCO report recommended that governments in sub-Saharan Africa commit at least six per cent of GDP and 20 per cent of public spending to education. Nigeria currently spends just 1.5 and six per cent respectively, less than almost any other African country.⁵⁰ This has a direct impact on the quality of labour potential investors in the north will have to work with and on productivity growth in the long run. Investments in vocational training that is relevant to today's changing world can turn Nigeria's young population into a skilled and reliable workforce and an even greater asset for the country's future.

⁴⁴ See Elizabeth Donnelly, 'Nigeria: big problems but a big future', *The World Today*, August and September 2012.

⁴⁵ 'Blighted economy in Nigeria's north fuels brutal insurgency', *Financial Times*, 13 May 2014.

⁴⁶ In the 2014 federal budget, the government proposed \$12 million for a new Federal Initiative for the North-East. It, however, spent double this amount in hosting the World Economic Forum in Abuja in May 2014. Tolu Ogunlesi, 'Nigeria: Beyond Boko Haram', *The Africa Report*, 25 April 2014.

⁴⁷ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *World Investment Report 2014: Investing in the SDGs: An Action Plan*.

⁴⁸ Investment in northern Nigeria may soon get a boost as Aliko Dangote, Africa's richest businessman, who hails from the city of Kano, recently announced a four-year plan to invest \$2.3 billion into sugar plantations and rice fields in the region.

⁴⁹ 'Grain Fish Money: Financing Africa's Blue and Green Revolutions', Africa Progress Report 2014, Africa Progress Panel.

⁵⁰ UNESCO, 'Education for All Global Monitoring Report', Policy Paper 12, March 2014. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002270/227092e.pdf>.

Conclusion

The significance and complexity of challenges in northern Nigeria make determining priorities for the region extremely difficult. Yet overcoming the north's considerable problems relating to development and security are crucial to the realization of a shared and prosperous future for all of Nigeria. Strong economic growth in the past decade has provided the government with the opportunities and resources to pursue thoughtful strategies that can address the development deficit between the north and the more prosperous south as well as create greater political inclusion. But so far elite focus on the struggle for power in place of a commitment to the social contract with the citizenry has further entrenched the different paces at which Nigeria's regions are democratizing and developing. This has exacerbated stark and long-entrenched regional disparities and inequalities, and furthered a sense of alienation over unity.

Dismissing the problems of the north as self-inflicted or using the argument of the north's long stay in power is unhelpful and taps into inaccurate perceptions of the region that can only reopen old wounds. The north as a region never controlled political power in Nigeria: rather, power has been controlled by the nation's military, which happened to be dominated by northerners. This distinction is important because notions of a northern stranglehold on power since independence impact strongly upon current debates about political instability and economic decline in the north. They have also shaped the language and rise of southern politicians since the return to democracy in 1999.

The new and considerable focus on northern Nigeria has zoomed in on the repeated violent manifestations of insecurity and instability in the region. Whether these are related to the Islamic insurgency in the northeast or communal clashes between farmers and nomadic pastoralist communities in the north-central area, this angle often obscures the real causes and facilitators of the region's instability. This is to say that the real threats to security, across the north in particular, are locally rooted and have multiple causes.⁵¹ Years of large-scale unemployment, decaying infrastructure, endemic poverty, systemic corruption and increasing violence have created even deeper social and economic divisions, and contributed to a growing frustration with the lack of dividends from democracy, especially as life has become harsher for most northerners. The rise of Islamic activism, which culminated in the expansion of Sharia penal codes in the far north, and the scourge of violent extremism have their roots not only in a general sense of disappointment with secular models of governance, but also in the reality that with each electoral cycle the state has retreated even further from society.

Given the educational and economic disparities between the north and south, the everyday life of northern Nigerians is little profiled in the media and largely misunderstood, leading to a narrow focus on insecurity and common external perceptions of the north as a volatile and dangerous region. However, tales of violence and of the widely felt effects of emergency rule in the northeast corner do not add up to half the north's story. Despite the rising risks to life and security that they face, the people of the north still try to go from day to day with courage, pragmatism and dignity.

Northern Nigeria's political leaders, particularly the state governors, must move swiftly and strategically to deliver on repeated promises to invest in infrastructure, education and other social services, as well

⁵¹ 'Enough is Enough: Let's work together to stop them killing our children', Jibrin Ibrahim, posted to Newsdiaryonline, 20 April 2014. <http://newsdiaryonline.com/enough-enoughlets-work-together-stop-killing-children-by-jibrin-ibrahim/>.

as encourage new sources of income for the region. The south's economy cannot and should not carry that of the north, and northerners would not wish it to do so. The current context is denying valuable economic opportunities for northern businesses in the south and for southern businesses in the north, and beyond into neighbouring countries. Ultimately, the economy, security, stability and health of the north and south are intricately intertwined, and persistent violence and grinding poverty in any part of the country threaten the long-term progress of the whole.

Northern Nigeria has many of the components needed for it to steer its way out of poverty and insecurity. These include vast agricultural potential, mineral resources, untapped oil deposits and human resources. Before crude oil was discovered in the Niger Delta, Nigeria derived much of its national revenue from agriculture, the north's greatest strength. Despite the ambitions of the current government's Agricultural Transformation Agenda, launched in 2011, spending on agriculture is still only 1.6 per cent of the national budget.⁵² Real transformation that can impact on the north's big challenges with rural poverty will hinge on more ambitious, long-term, systemic changes rather than well-intentioned yet poorly financed stopgap solutions.

Unless there are more concerted efforts to open it up to trading and engaging with the outside world, northern Nigeria's fall into wider instability will be even harder to stop.

The security situation is a legitimate consideration for engagement with northern Nigeria but shutting the region out from foreign investment, greatly needed in the agricultural sector, will only exacerbate underlying drivers of conflict. Unless there are more concerted efforts to open it up to trading and engaging with the outside world, its fall into wider instability will be even harder to stop.

If President Jonathan were to seek and win another term in office, his legitimacy and national mandate would be weakened if popular participation were restricted in parts of the north because of the ongoing insecurity. With the May 2014 extension of the state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states – all controlled by the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC) – the political space in these states may become even more severely restricted. The Independent National Electoral Commission will probably face serious practical hurdles in facilitating the participation of voters in these states. The federal government is likely to be unable to guarantee the safety of election officials or observers in many parts of these states. Yet it is vitally important that the voices of these vulnerable northern communities are heard and their opinions included. Jonathan's presidency and his international standing will be largely evaluated on the basis of his ability to curb the Boko Haram threat, bring calm to the northeast, and better manage the sharp ethnic, regional and religious polarization taking place in the country. Yet, as Nigeria approaches elections in February 2015, it is likely that reviving the north's economy will take a backseat to electoral manoeuvring. In terms of northern Nigeria's future beyond the elections, the pivotal issue that should anchor the national conversation is whether its regional leaders – chiefly at the state and local levels – can be held to their election promises, made to prioritize good and transparent governance and take state-level corruption seriously.

The decisive role played by the powershift issue in 15 years of democracy in Nigeria raises important questions about the long-term effectiveness of the elite pacts and regional rotation arrangements that have been used to manage the balance of power between the north and the south. It also highlights

⁵² 'Grain Fish Money'.

the fragility and uncertainties of Nigeria's democratic transition, as well as the unresolved fault lines in national unity as the country commemorates the centenary of the unification of the north and south this year. Since the long and devastating civil war that ended in 1970, regional and religious relations have arguably never been as strained as they are now. More than at any time in the past five decades of independence, the reversal of the north's political, economic and humanitarian crisis will be central to Nigeria achieving true national cohesion for the first time in its history.

Annex: key northern power players

Muhammadu Buhari

In 1983 General Buhari became head of state following a coup. He received initial support for his policies of austerity and zero-tolerance of corruption but his government attracted accusations of authoritarianism, ethnic bias and repression. Later Buhari headed the Petroleum Trust Fund set up by Sani Abacha but later scrapped by Olusegun Obasanjo. He ran unsuccessfully for the presidency in 2003 and 2007 on the platform of the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and in 2011 with the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC).

Extent of influence

Buhari remains one of the north's most influential figures and his political image has softened since the creation of the opposition party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) in February 2013. Through his growing closeness with one of the southwest's biggest kingmakers, Bola Tinubu, Buhari has improved his appeal in the southwest but his image in the southeast and south-south remains poor. As the fulcrum of the APC in the north, Buhari will have significant influence over the composition of the party's presidential ticket and in drumming up support for the party's nominees in the north. It would not be a surprise if Buhari commandeers the top ticket for himself in 2015, although a fourth presidential campaign may not electrify the APC base or stir up the kind of excitement the party needs to create for its first appearance in a presidential race. Buhari may also overestimate his gains in the south, particularly in the southeast and among Christians in the north. His vocal support for the spread of Sharia jurisprudence as an antidote to corruption is still a source of discomfort among Christian voters who remain suspicious that a radical Islamist agenda is unfolding in the country.

Nuhu Ribadu

At 53 years old, Ribadu is a relatively young national figure. He is a former police officer who built up a reputation through an impressive yet slightly controversial five-year tenure as chief of the anti-corruption agency, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). For some, Ribadu and the EFCC were stooges for Obasanjo and mainly targeted the former president's political enemies. Ribadu was sacked by Yar'Adua in 2008 and soon left Nigeria because he claimed there were assassination attempts made on him by corrupt politicians he had pursued. He ran for president in 2011 and fared badly on the ticket of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

Extent of influence

Ribadu is still seen as an energetic national figure but lacks a core constituency. His popularity seems greatest outside the country and among Nigerian users of social media. He declared his support for the APC by formally joining it in February 2014. He has since been a vocal advocate and campaigner for the party.

Nasir El-Rufai

Following a successful career as a quantity surveyor, El-Rufai served as the director-general of the Bureau of Public Enterprises and then as minister of Abuja from 2003 to 2007. El-Rufai was a prominent member of Obasanjo's economic team and as Abuja minister was credited for major

sanitation efforts and reconciling town planning decisions with the city's original master plan. He alienated many influential people in Abuja by authorizing the demolition of several properties that were built on illegally allocated land. However, the impact of the demolitions was most felt in Abuja's satellite towns, which are inhabited by low-income earners.

Extent of influence

Since leaving public office, El-Rufai has styled himself as a strong critic of the federal government and particularly of President Jonathan. He says he is not interested in any political office and has voiced support for a fourth run for the presidency by Buhari. His popularity and appeal in northern Nigeria is shaky and it is unlikely that he will be anointed as the 'next Buhari'. He is closely associated with southern, particularly Yoruba, politicians like Tinubu and the dynamic Lagos state governor, Babatunde Fashola. He was also a vocal supporter and celebrator of former Central Bank governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's elevation to emir of Kano and speaks often of their close friendship. El-Rufai is a member of the APC and served as its acting deputy national secretary. He is also a prominent voice in the local campaign, #bringbackourgirls, which has been pressuring the Nigerian government to rescue the abducted Chibok girls. If Buhari were to run again, El-Rufai would be an asset to his campaign because of his influential presence in social media. However, El-Rufai has eroded some of the reputation he built up as Abuja minister through very personal attacks on the president and other government officials.

Bukola Saraki

Saraki served as a two-term PDP state governor in Kwara. Before becoming governor, Saraki pursued his medical training and career in the United Kingdom and returned to Nigeria to take up the directorship of Société Générale (Nigeria) Limited. His tenure at the bank ended in controversy as well as the collapse of the bank. He inherited the Saraki political dynasty in Kwara and Kogi states, and influenced the governorship elections in both states. He succeeded his sister, Gbemisola Saraki, as the senator for Kwara Central in the 2011 elections.

Extent of influence

Saraki is wealthy and very popular in the cluster of northern states around Kwara and in the southwest. However, he has been unable to build strong regional or nationwide appeal. He is a prominent member of the APC and is in a position to shape the party's chances in the north-central zone. He influenced the governor of Kwara, who owes much of his political success to Saraki, to leave the PDP – along with several elected and unelected members – for the APC. Saraki has presidential ambitions and will most likely be a strong contender for the APC presidential ticket. Even if he is unable to get onto the party's presidential ticket, the APC needs Saraki to win in Kwara and Kogi states.

Atiku Abubakar

Abubakar served in various government positions before his election as Obasanjo's vice-president from 1999 to 2007. He owns a wide array of business interests and a major stake in the American University of Nigeria, Adamawa state, which he helped establish in 2003.

Extent of influence

Abubakar is one of the wealthiest northern politicians. He was in the forefront of the splinter group that left the PDP in the latter half of 2013 and formally joined the APC in February 2014. There is a very strong likelihood that Abubakar is interested in the APC presidential ticket. He has been a prominent critic of President Jonathan's government but not many northerners see Abubakar as a credible representative for the region, and his frequent floor-crossing has created an image of political flakiness. However, Abubakar's mixed reception in the north has never really hindered his political ambitions.

Ibrahim Babangida

Retired General Babangida overthrew Buhari in a palace coup in 1985. He was the military head of state until 1993 when he handed power over to an interim government following the uproar over his annulment of the presidential election. Despite his unpopularity since the end of his regime, Babangida remains Nigeria's political cat with nine lives. Since the return of democracy in 1999, he and his network of generals have avoided investigation by Nigeria's anti-corruption agencies and have kept themselves active on the political stage in various capacities. Some like Theophilus Y. Danjuma, Obasanjo's minister of defence from 1999 to 2003, have been appointed to senior positions in civilian government, while others like Babangida remained somewhat in the background but were still able to play a decisive role. Babangida is extremely wealthy and is well known for generously supporting the political careers of people in his network.

Extent of influence

Babangida and his close network of former military officers have managed to retain and in some cases increase the wealth they amassed while in power. He has continued to feature prominently in the PDP and in national politics, and flirted with the idea of a presidential run in the 2007 and 2011 elections. He has, however, yet to overcome his image as a deeply divisive national figure. Babangida has a large network of loyalists who owe their wealth and good fortune directly to him. Northern politicians generally avoid criticizing him or bringing up the faults of his presidency. He has only quietly expressed his disappointment with the Jonathan administration. Despite his fairly consistent political presence, Babangida is only able to exercise modest influence on northern and national politics. His association with the APC is unclear although he welcomed its emergence and called the party an alternative to the PDP. Babangida will find it hard to resist a role in political processes ahead of the 2015 general elections. He may spread his support across both the PDP and APC while remaining in the background – a place he appears to be most comfortable.

Sanusi Lamido Sanusi

In June 2014 Sanusi was named the emir of Kano, one of the highest honours in the northern traditional establishment, and is now the second most influential Muslim leader in northern Nigeria. Sanusi served as governor of Nigeria's Central Bank – until his suspension last year – and remains an internationally respected banker. He was named the Banker of the Year in 2010 and a *TIME Magazine* 100 Honouree in 2011. From the time of his appointment in 2009, Sanusi teamed up with the current finance minister in spearheading dramatic banking-sector reforms. Last year he criticized the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation for failing to remit all of Nigeria's earnings from oil, which usually accounts for more than 75 per cent of national revenue, to the government's purse and

of running a fraudulent kerosene subsidy scheme. The contention between Sanusi and the Jonathan administration worsened over disputes about the size of the shortfall from January 2012 to July 2013 and led to his suspension as Central Bank governor in February 2014 and the seizure of his passport.

Extent of influence

Sanusi is still seen as one of the north's best and brightest public figures. Although his new position demands conservatism and gives him little constitutional power, by its very nature it will allow Sanusi to influence political processes in Kano and across the north. Sanusi's predecessor, Ado Abdallahi Bayero, kept himself away from the political limelight and tried to avoid taking sides. Sanusi's ascension, at the height of his criticism of the federal government, means that it will be a lot harder for him to stay away from controversy. His words will be endlessly parsed for hidden political meaning. However, Sanusi can use his intelligence, charisma, new stature and international connections to attract much-needed private-sector investment to the north and drive many social causes.

Aminu Waziri Tambuwal

Tambuwal is a lawyer and currently the speaker of the House of Representatives. He won his seat to represent Kebbe/Tambuwal in Sokoto state in the northwest on the PDP platform in 2011. His selection as speaker upended a zoning arrangement that had allocated the position to the southwest. Tambuwal has served in the National Assembly since 2007 and is well respected for his willingness to work with legislators across the aisle.

Extent of influence

Tambuwal is relatively new to power politics but is seen as one of the most dynamic northerners currently in government. In his leadership of the House, he has not shied away from holding a different opinion from the president and harshly criticized the Jonathan administration during the \$6.8 billion fuel subsidy scandal in 2012, which implicated some of the president's closest allies. In some circles Tambuwal is talked about as a potential challenger to Jonathan for the PDP presidential ticket, but he has stayed away from conversations about his plans for 2015 and appears to be privately assessing his chances. Many commentators argue that an inside job to block Jonathan from running again in 2015 will be more successful than the APC's plan to bring down the PDP. If this idea gains traction, Tambuwal will be an interesting alternative to Jonathan as the face of the PDP, particularly in the north, in 2015. There is also the strong possibility of Tambuwal crossing over to the APC. This is a likely scenario because many already see Tambuwal as an APC member-in-waiting and a guaranteed presidential ticket might be just the assurance he needs to join the opposition.

Sule Lamido

Lamido is a career politician who served as foreign minister in Obasanjo's government from 1999 to 2003. He was elected as the PDP governor of Jigawa state, northwest Nigeria, in 2007 and re-elected in 2011. He is one of 12 northern governors who have been in office for the maximum period of two terms.

Extent of influence

Lamido is a close friend of Obasanjo and the former president has hinted at his suitability as Jonathan's running mate in 2015 in place of Vice-President Namadi Sambo. Last year Lamido was

thought to be considering jumping ship to the APC but he did not make the move alongside the five PDP governors who defected. With his counterpart in Niger state, Babangida Aliyu, Lamido appears to be eyeing the PDP presidential ticket and could mount a serious challenge to a second term for Jonathan. The PDP's dwindling popularity in the north could work in his favour. But Lamido does not appear to have accumulated much political clout in the north during his two-terms in office but that could be bolstered if he receives the backing of northern sections in the PDP. Even if Lamido and Aliyu fail to attract enough support in the PDP for their own nominations, their criticism of Jonathan's leadership of the party could see them put their weight behind a new candidate (perhaps Tambuwal) to represent it in 2015.

Rabiu Musa Kwankwaso

Before starting his political career, Kwankwaso worked in the Kano state civil service as an engineer, moving up the ranks over nearly two decades. He was elected in 1992 as a member of the House of Representatives, becoming deputy speaker, during Nigeria's short-lived Third Republic. Kwankwaso was first elected PDP governor of Kano state in 1999 and lost his re-election bid to Ibrahim Shekarau in 2003. President Obasanjo appointed him as his defence minister from 2003 to 2006. He then served as the president's advisor on Darfur and Somalia, and later as the representative of the northwest in the Niger Delta Development Commission. Kwankwaso returned to the Kano state house in 2011 as PDP governor.

Extent of influence

Kwankwaso was at the forefront of the dramatic move of five governors from the PDP to the APC last year and is one of the leading northerners in the opposition. He is seen as a top contender for the APC presidential nomination and his popularity in Kano and with the northern traditional establishment gives him an advantage over other northern contenders. Kwankwaso's governorship of Nigeria's most populous state and the north's commercial capital also sets him above his peers who may also be considering a presidential run. More significantly, he is regarded as an alternative to Buhari who could have greater appeal with northern Christians and southerners. Kwankwaso is remembered for taking a more moderate approach to implementing the Sharia penal code in Kano during his first term and for being sensitive to the state's cosmopolitan nature and history of religious violence. He has navigated Kano's proclivity for radical politics and established a substantive political base across the state. Kwankwaso's credentials as one-time defence minister could add to his appeal within the APC but Nigeria's next election will be traditional in terms of being more a contest of personalities than ideas or policy effectiveness. Kwankwaso is currently in open confrontation with Jonathan and has accused the president of stirring trouble in Kano. In April 2014 he led a group of broom-wielding state government officials in a sweeping exercise at a venue in Kano where the president had attended a PDP rally.

David Mark

Retired Brigadier General Mark is the president of Nigeria's Senate and was elected for a fourth term representing the Benue South constituency, Benue state. He is a very influential member of the ex-military cadre and participated in nearly every coup in Nigeria since the 1970s. Mark has held several senior positions in government and was minister of communications in the 1980s. He supported Obasanjo's attempt to change the constitution to allow a third presidential term and owes his senate office to the former president.

Extent of influence

The worsening security crisis in northern Nigeria could be an avenue for Mark, the third person in line for the presidency according to the constitution, to step into a new role or assume new significance. Several generals such as Obasanjo have been very critical of the government's handling of the Boko Haram insurgency and could push Mark to challenge Jonathan for the party's nomination. He is, however, a strong ally of the president and could instead feature in a backup plan for a manageable exit if Jonathan is forced to concede power to the north in 2015. Mark's strong military credentials and Middle-Belt background put him in an important contrast to Jonathan in the north, particularly for people concerned that the insurgency will get more deadly in the run-up to the 2015 elections. Mark has deep, nationwide political and military ties, and as a Christian from a minority ethnic group can appeal to north and south. His appeal will most likely be strongest across the north-central states and reflect the aspirations of some for a Christian candidate from the Middle-Belt to represent the north. The candidacy of Mark, the most successful and visible ex-military person in government, could also boost the image of the nation's army, which has been affected by the worsening security crisis.

Namadi Sambo

Vice-President Sambo has a degree in architecture from the north's most prestigious university, Ahmadu Bello University, located in his home state, Kaduna. He has held top positions in the Kaduna state civil service and was the PDP state governor from 2007 to 2010. His election as governor upset many in the non-Hausa/non-Muslim communities of southern Kaduna, who had supported one of their own. Jonathan's promotion to president following Yar'Adua's death in 2010 prompted a search for a northern Muslim candidate for the deputy spot to balance out the presidency. Sambo fitted the basic profile and was a non-threatening partner to Jonathan, who was equally inexperienced when he was selected to run alongside Yar'Adua.

Extent of influence

Sambo has followed the example of his immediate predecessor by avoiding any rivalry with the president. He has proved himself the opposite of Atiku Abubakar, Obasanjo's feisty deputy from 1999 to 2007. His vice-presidency has been controversy-free – and for many, lacking any energy or real motivation. The Boko Haram insurgency and the broader security threats in the north have been missed opportunities for Sambo, as the highest-ranking northerner in government, to display leadership qualities and win more support for the government's strategy in the region. The violent aftermath of the 2011 elections was also a missed opportunity for Sambo to calm regional tensions and bring Jonathan closer to the northern grassroots. There has been much talk about the need to replace him as Jonathan's running mate in 2015 with a candidate with more allure and deeper connections in the north. Jonathan may well have to heed this advice if he chooses to run and, more importantly for him, to build a campaign that connects with poor northerners, a key constituency and source of restiveness. For the time being, Sambo's weaknesses in terms of a seeming lack of ambition, charisma, political skill and personal leverage are the reasons behind his successful relationship with the president.

The 19 northern governors in 2015

Nigerian governors are extremely powerful and the 19 who will emerge in 2015 in the north will be the key state actors to address the region's multiple challenges. Only seven of the current governors in the north are eligible for re-election (in Borno, Kaduna, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Yobe and Zamfara).

This means that the next election will see the biggest turnover of governors in the region since the start of the Fourth Republic. The second-term and new governors who will be inaugurated in about ten months will have the opportunity to formulate new strategies to address the root causes of the insurgency in the northeast as well as the growing conflicts between nomadic pastoralists and farmers in the region. Additionally, the 19 state governors have the opportunity to use their substantive budgetary allocations and the platform of the Northern States Governors Forum to better coordinate and implement policies for tackling their common problems with youth unemployment, low literacy levels, infrastructural deficits and poor health and social services.

About the author

Leena Koni Hoffmann is a Marie Curie Research Fellow at CEPS/INSTEAD, Luxembourg. She was an Eranda Junior Research Fellow with the Africa Programme at Chatham House in 2013. Her research focuses on democracy, governance and political corruption in Nigeria. She holds a PhD from the University of Birmingham (Centre of West African Studies). Her doctoral thesis, titled 'Big Men and the Big Pot at the Centre: Patronage Politics and Democracy in Nigeria', examined the diverse local roots and regional variations of 'godfather politics' and their transformations in post-1999 Nigeria. She is currently working on a BORDERPOLITICS research project funded by the Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR) Luxembourg, which looks at the impact of local politics on cross-border trade in West Africa.

Acknowledgments

The author is grateful for the encouragement and insights of many citizens, scholars, researchers, activists and 'watchers' of Nigeria during the framing, researching and writing of this paper. These individuals generously shared their uncommon passion for and knowledge of northern Nigeria, which deepened her understanding and appreciation of the region and its challenges. Special thanks to Elizabeth Donnelly and the two peer reviewers for their painstaking attention and perceptive comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The author would also like to thank Bolaji Abdullahi and Mark Amaza for a series of helpful discussions and feedback. The research and publication were funded by the Eranda Foundation.

About the Africa Programme

The Africa Programme at Chatham House develops independent policy-focused research on issues affecting individual states of Africa, their relations in the international system and African regional and continental politics.

Since its establishment in 2002, the Africa Programme has grown to become the world's largest independent centre for policy research and debate on Africa's international politics. With the transformation of Africa's international position, the Programme has worked to improve the quality of information available to international policy- and decision-makers.

The Programme's research priorities emphasize issues affecting individual African states and the continent as a whole that are currently under-researched, and the major African issues of main interest to the international community.

Current research areas include:

- Governance and transparency
- Piracy and armed non-state actors
- Africa and international system
- Peace and security
- Resources and society

The Africa Programme has an international network of research partners around the world and works closely with other institutes to promote analysis with a global perspective.

Programme events provide the opportunity to engage world-renowned figures from across Africa and beyond to come and offer their perspectives on issues pertinent to the national, regional and international politics of the continent. More information is available at www.chathamhouse.org/africa.

Independent thinking since 1920

Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, is an independent body which promotes the rigorous study of international questions and does not express opinions of its own. The opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author(s).

© The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2014

Cover image © Leena Koni Hoffmann

The Royal Institute of International Affairs
Chatham House
10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE
T +44 (0)20 7957 5700 F +44 (0)20 7957 5710
contact@chathamhouse.org www.chathamhouse.org

Charity Registration Number: 208223