GOVERNING NIGERIA:

CONTINUING ISSUES AFTER THE ELECTIONS

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Africa Depends on Nigeria

"The disintegration of Nigeria means the end of Africa. Nigeria is Africa. It is Africa's beacon of hope," said President Yahaya Jammeh of the Gambia in mid-December, 2002. The destinies and growth of all of the countries of West Africa, he continued, were "tied to the destiny of Nigeria." If Nigeria falls, "that will be the end of Africa."

From Washington's point of view, Nigeria is critical to U.S. national security interests both because it is a linchpin of modern Africa's shift from autocracy toward democracy, and because it supplies about 7 percent of U.S. oil imports. If Nigeria weakens, and takes on more of the anarchical qualities of a failed state, America's energy security will be dangerously compromised. In Nigeria, communal violence, widespread insecurity, and corrupt leadership all jeopardize steady flows of petroleum.

In the months since Washington and President Jammeh articulated their concerns and the concerns of so many who want Nigeria to succeed, Africa's most populous country held elections in April 2003 for parliament, for governorships, and for the presidency. Although the European Union and other international observer teams pronounced the electoral process seriously flawed in several southern states, especially in the Niger Delta, President Olusegun Obasanjo's overwhelming reelection against former President General Muhammadu Buhari and a clutch of less well known candidates is secure. As the *Economist* headlined, "the poll was dirty, but the more popular man won."[1] Others believe that the questionable way in which the register of voters was compiled and primary elections were mishandled suggests that no one really knows what the true results of the presidential balloting might have been, especially if the exercise had been clean.

Likewise, the fact that Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party easily won a legislative majority is suspect. The size of Obasanjo's and the PDP's victories nationally. and, particularly, in the Delta (where he received an amazing 100 percent of the votes in many places) are questionable. Many of the results of the races for state governor are also criticized by observers and knowledgeable Nigerians. In a number of constituencies, especially in the south, there were reports of polling places never opening, ballot boxes being stuffed or stolen, unusually high numbers of people casting ballots, voters being intimidated, gunfights, and other, often blatant, breaches of electoral norms.

For Nigerians, it was business as usual. According to Festus Okoye, who headed the Transition Monitoring Group during the elections, there were no values in the election. "There [were] no principles. It's only who gets power. Nothing more. It's a shame." Olubunmi Dipo-Salami, of the women's rights group Baobab,

[1] "The People Disagree," *The Economist* (26 April 2003), 41.

was also critical. "Elections will happen, and it will make people realize that we don't have democracy. It's civilian rule that we have."[2]

Despite the violence that accompanied the April poll, Nigeria showed that it could conduct two elections in a row, and thus continue the relatively peaceful transition from military to civil rule that was begun in 1999. Nevertheless, as this report shows, the concerns of the forty Nigerians and other experts on Nigeria who discussed the future of their country at a conference at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government in December 2002, and of President Jammeh and others, still remain. To a woman and man, and well before Nigeria's recent election, they were profoundly disturbed about the current parlous state of Nigerian democracy. Some were pessimistic about better prospects—which all sought for their country—absent major changes in the manner in which Nigeria was governed, secured, and developed. They focused their discussion on what could and should be done to avoid the dark fears of President Jammeh. The *Economist* called their country "still poor, dangerous and disorganized."[3]

The conference was organized by the Program on Intrastate Conflict and Conflict Resolution of the Kennedy School, and the World Peace Foundation. The participants included civil society and human rights leaders from Nigeria, a former head of state, officials from the Office of the Nigerian President, academic experts from Nigeria and the United States, diplomats, and UN officials. There were roughly equal numbers of northerners and southerners, women and men, and persons from the emirates and the non-emirates.[4]

As this Report shows, the conference setting encouraged candid dialogue and constructive debate about how best to solve Nigeria's nine critical governance problems:

Over-centralization. Nigeria, the participants largely agreed, has an over-centralized federal system that devolves too little fiscal or governance autonomy to the thirty-six states. The heavy hand of Abuja, Nigeria's capital, is regarded as retarding growth, being responsible for insecurity, and being antagonistic to meaningful nation-building. Participants did not agree, however, on any particular number of sub-federal entities; numbers other than the existing thirty-six were discussed, and some of the experts suggested a regional rather than a state configuration. In his keynote address to the conferees, former Head of State General Yakubu Gowon, who led Nigeria out of a brutal civil war and served as the country's president from 1966–1975, explained why his regime changed the four regions of Nigeria into twelve states in 1967.

Lack of Transparency. Nigeria's current absence of effective revenue-sharing, in practice, was condemned by nearly all of the participants. Because Abuja arrogates all petroleum revenues, and then distributes them less than

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[2] Both quoted in Somini Sengupta, "Turbulence Stalks Further Nigeria Elections," *New York Times*, 19 April 2003.
[3] "The People Disagree."
[4] Financial support for the conference and the publication of this Report came from the Trustees of the World Peace Foundation and anonymous friends of Nigeria.

transparently, the states become unable to organize their own governance capabilities. Some governors also siphon the funds that arrive from Abuja directly into private pockets.

Lack of Economic Diversification. Nigeria is a petrostate, with all the deficiencies that are implied by that apparent largesse. Nigeria once grew all of its own food and had a thriving agricultural and manufacturing export capacity. No longer. All of the participants wanted Nigeria urgently to diversify its economy. Only by so doing could Nigeria become an economic powerhouse, and lead much of Africa toward improved growth prospects. It was sharply noted that Nigeria had failed to organize itself to take advantage of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act, or to prepare itself to qualify for help under the U.S. Millennium Challenge Account.

Corruption. Many participants decried corruption in Nigeria, and the inefficiencies and disincentives for foreign and domestic investment that corruption breeds. Few quarreled with Transparency International's perception of Nigeria as the second most corrupt country in the world, slightly better than Bangladesh. Everyone agreed that corruption would be reduced only when Nigeria's senior political leaders acted against those of their associates who were outrageously corrupt. Making examples of political crooks was necessary.

The Shari'a. Participants agreed that the move since 1999 by twelve northern states to extend the application of *shari'a*, or Islamic law, from customary and family civil issues to criminal offenses was a key challenge facing the country. Some participants noted that Nigeria's corruption and prevailing lack of accountability explained the desire of northern Muslims to expand the traditional use of the shari'a. It was originally expected that the use of the shari'a would mean punishment for high-level embezzlers and other corrupt rulers. Unfortunately, that has not turned out to be the case; the governors of the twelve northern states that have introduced the shari'a for criminal matters since 1999 have done so as populists, not in order to clean up the pervasive official criminality in their states.

How the north-south split on the use of the shari'a will be resolved, given its questionable constitutionality, was unclear to the participants at the conference. But its controversial application in cases of adultery and theft has exacerbated underlying Christian-Muslim antagonism over resources and opportunity (not over religion, per se), and added to the pervasive national feelings of individual human insecurity.

Lack of Human Security. Many Nigerians at the meeting were anxious about human security in Nigeria. The greatest failing of the government, many said, was its patent inability to provide this key public good—security of person. Some of the participants called for the unbundling of the national policing system, with states being given responsibility for local policing (akin to the American model). That would mean better-run state governments.

Human Rights. Amnesty International reported late in 2002 that Nigerian soldiers and police had killed thousands of people and tortured many others in

the three years since civilian rule was restored in 1999. The killings, said Amnesty, were part of a strategy "to stem the rise of criminality and intercommunal conflicts." Its horrific excesses were ignored or brushed aside. The remarks of many Harvard conferees echoed the Amnesty conclusions, but also viewed the persistent pattern of human rights violations at all governmental levels as a mark of the country's current anomic and amoral behavior. Several participants strongly condemned the "evil" character of many of their country's leaders.

National Conference. Some, but by no means all, of the participants urged the convening of a national conference to develop a reform strategy for Nigeria. The existing Nigerian constitution of 1999, based on the 1979 constitution, was widely regarded as less than legitimate. It was introduced by a military regime, and never ratified by the people of Nigeria as a whole. A national conference, akin to a constitutional convention, would provide a method of legitimizing new constitutional arrangements. All agreed that major constitutional reform was needed, however achieved.

Leadership. Nigerians had hoped for strong and decisive leadership from President Olusegun Obasanjo. It was unclear to the participants why President Obasanjo had succeeded in that regard less than hoped, but many felt that it was a continuing issue for his second term.

Obviously, Nigeria's voters in April 2003 did not necessarily endorse Obasanjo's leadership. Possibly they liked Buhari and other candidates less than Obasanjo. Or they simply may have opted for the status quo, and for a Christian over a Muslim, a southerner over a northerner.

—Robert I. Rotberg

REPORT OF DISCUSSIONS

NIGERIA: UNITY, GOVERNANCE, LAW, AND CONFLICT
Conference: December 12–14, 2002
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Cambridge, MA

A summary, rather than a transcript, of the conference discussion follows. There was space only for a selected appreciation of the many individual contributions. Participants were provided with an opportunity to review this summary before publication.

I. National Conference: Nationality and Unity

Most of the group agreed that Nigeria should remain one country. Some participants were less confident, however, that the country could remain united. Sklar suggested that there is a Nigerian federal dream comparable to the Indian dream and the American dream. Nigeria is the fifth largest federation in the world, where a constitutional democracy is being tested in a large, multicultural context. Success or failure could have a great impact for better or worse for the West African region and beyond. The government is now challenged to be representative, diverse, and accountable. These challenges are as difficult as was the challenge of self determination fifty years ago.

Dent argued that Nigeria is held together by federalism, which can bring together people of different identities in one political whole. Although federalism achieved some success in Nigeria, there are situations where the disease of separation and mistrust is so strong that separation is a necessity, as in the north and south of the Sudan. In the history of Nigerian political thought, there have been two rival approaches to the question of national identity: ethno-lingual identity and a national identity separate from ethno-lingual concerns. This contrast provides a major dividing line in Nigerian thought, and the debate has yet to be resolved. Some participants felt that most Nigerians could live with either outcome, however it might be resolved.

There was strong debate over whether, at this point in its history, Nigeria needs a sovereign national conference (to rewrite the constitution and to reorganize governmental structures), a national conference (leaving the constitution in-

tact but discussing and possibly reorganizing governmental structures), or an overhaul of the existing system without a major conference.

Sagay felt that a new constitution is necessary because the current constitution was formulated under a military regime and therefore is illegitimate. He urged that the constitution be streamlined and apply only to the federal system, leaving the states to mandate how local government should operate.

Even those who promoted the idea of a sovereign national conference to deliberate on the constitution recognized that there would be extreme organizational challenges regarding the composition of the conference participants and how they should be selected. The debate was stimulated in the early 1990s by the comparable experience of francophone Africa. The national conference movement began primarily in Nigeria's southern states, but spread across the country. However, achieving consensus on how delegates to such a conference should be chosen is a major hurdle. Should delegates be elected nationally or regionally? Should the focus be on ethno-linguistic groups?

Attempts to use the principle of ethno-linguistic nationality resulted in the formation of large geo-political clusters known as regions or zones. In the past, when large regions were created, the interests of smaller groups were ignored by the groups in power. There are approximately 350 nationalities in Nigeria, although some thinkers have argued that it would be sufficient for political purposes to recognize seventy or eighty ethnic groups. One political group proposed a confederation of ethnic federations. Although such a result is unlikely, it does indicate the complexity of ethno-linguistic thinking in Nigeria.

Sklar observed that, since 1993, six unofficial regions have gained general recognition as political, rather than governmental entities. Three of them are fairly cohesive and three are not. Among the cohesive regions, two (Southeast and Southwest) have strongly autonomous tendencies. Two of the non-cohesive regions (North Central and South South) have defensive tendencies. Meanwhile, twelve of the thirty-six states, distributed among the three northern regions, have adopted Islamic legal systems during the past few years. The resurgence of shari'a has been a powerful stimulus toward reconstruction of the federation on regionalist foundations, leading to reconsideration of the nature of the Nigerian union.

Ekeh feared that the conversation blamed the Nigerian people for their ethnic divisions. He noted that Nigerians were the victims of the conflict, and that it was the culture of the Nigerian state which posed the real problem. Tukur felt that ethnicity was not a major problem in Nigeria, and observed that "ordinary Nigerians are integrating slowly in the cities." He added that, while integrating, ordinary Nigerians need security, employment, education, infrastructure, and economic growth, which they are not receiving from the nation.

Suberu noted that sovereign national conference proponents are starting to drop the word sovereign. He added that there is a desire to develop a new way of reviewing the constitution without questioning Nigeria's commitment to democracy. The constitution was originally developed by the military with input from

civilians. The democratic process was imperfect, but it could still be reviewed and amended.

Fayemi and others felt that a national conference would be helpful at this stage in Nigeria's development, citing an urgent need to initiate a national dialogue process for the first time since independence. Fayemi felt that disillusionment was significant enough that the 2003 elections alone would not resolve Nigeria's underlying problems. The process of a constitutional conference would not undermine democracy, but could enhance it, especially if the conference focused on institutions of state rather than on personalities. Many participants felt that since Nigeria has advanced toward democracy, the focus should be on reforming the current structures of democracy rather than on creating new structures.

Sklar suggested that it would be necessary to chose between a weakened federation with a high degree of autonomy and the exercise of continental power. He identified the former as "low politics," the latter as "high politics." Nigeria, he said, may be happier with low politics, but the cost of such a policy may be the claim to continental leadership.

The question of ownership of Nigeria was discussed. Currently the rulers "own" the state, but they are not held accountable for their ownership. There was a strong feeling that decentralization would restore ownership to the local level, giving people a greater incentive to be responsible for their "share of the pie." There was concern that a national conference and a restructuring would not be useful without proper leadership. Utomi and others insisted that Nigeria needs better leadership to reform the Federation. In 1998, the emerging elite could have offered stronger leadership. Instead, several participants noted, few reforms were pursued, oil remained the key source of revenue, and accountability was largely ignored. The perception of regime legitimacy was devalued so that Nigerians now question whether their leadership is capable of providing services to citizens. Tukur and others noted that the leadership no longer believes that it needs to serve the people in order to stay in office. Several participants added that improving the economy in order to foster a stronger middle class would help to drive change; leaders from a middle class would have a greater interest in the country and in developing its economy.

Kukah felt that Nigeria does not suffer from a crisis of legitimacy. Those who govern believe that they are following the will of the people. Democratization is a process, but Nigerians look at other, older, democracies and are impatient for change to happen more quickly. At the same time, few of those who take from Nigeria are prepared to make sacrifices, or to assume responsibility for their actions. Nonetheless, Obe observed that change must be driven from the bottom up.

Ekeh noted that, historically, both Germany and Japan had a strong culture of state, which survived World War II. With a strong enough national ethic, Nigeria, in turn, should be able to survive its current turmoil.

II. The Federal-State Conundrum: Over-centralization?

Most participants concurred that the current Nigerian governance system is over-centralized. In particular, the lack of oversight and the uncompetitive system of awarding federal contracts have led to patronage, corruption, mismanagement, and waste.

How best to balance power between the federal, state, and local level was hotly debated, though it was clear to all participants that general reform and strong institutions to provide accountability are needed at all levels of government. Some participants argued that overhauling the central system would provide the best solution. Others felt that many of Nigeria's governance issues could be resolved by devolving more power and control over resources to the states. This change would allow each state or region to develop at its own pace; under the present system, Nigeria is only as strong as its weakest state. Some participants suggested restructuring the current federalist state system into a lesser number of geopolitical regions. Still other participants urged greater local/community control in order to involve more Nigerian citizens in the political process, while others cautioned against the possibility of increased abuse of power on the local level. Similarly, opinions were split as to whether the system should be reformed from the top down or from the bottom up, or both.

Paden noted that, globally, federalism is "an idea whose time has come." Any functioning federalist system requires decentralized decision-making powers and functions. Basing a system on ethnicity tends to create long-term problems because the system locks in ethnic relations at a certain point in time without allowing for future demographic shifts.

Nigerian governance has suffered from a combination of problems, one of which is the state system, which suffers from inequities on the one hand, and an equal allocation of resources, regardless of production, on the other. There are inequities between older states and newer states. The newer states gain financial advantages, but often lack strong governance capabilities.

Gowon described how the state system was devised after independence in order to try to remove fears of ethno-political domination. Only six states were created in the south, so there needed to be a corresponding six states in the north. The post-independence government wanted to avoid using the British colonial divisions, but believed in a fairly strong centralized system with extensive powers devolved to the states.

Lewis suggested rethinking the functions of states, and which autonomous powers should be vested in the states. He cautioned, however, that once more power was granted to each state, state performance would by nature become unequal. He recommended linking a state government's stay in power to performance, but noted two caveats: It is important to ensure that state governments

have sufficient capacity to perform their duties, and that a revised system must avoid creating authoritarian-patrimonial structures at the state level.

Citing worsening personal security in Nigeria, some participants suggested a reformed federal police presence. However, several participants noted that because of experience with military regimes, Nigerians have an inherent fear of increasing the strength of the central government and, particularly, the military, despite a feeling that internal national security might be improved with an increased national police presence.

Charlton felt that another major question for Nigeria was whether it could continue to improve at its current slow rate. He expressed concern that the success of government was a function of the soil in which it sat. The West is taking a smaller role in Africa at this point, and the economic situation of Nigeria's neighbors is deteriorating. External factors could force domestic change at a greater pace, potentially resulting in negative consequences.

III. Governance: Questions of Structure and Leadership

The entire group agreed that Nigeria faces numerous challenges to governance, but there was a spirited debate throughout the conference over whether those issues should be addressed by better leadership or structural reform, or, as many participants argued, both.

Dent observed that one of the great ways in which states are held together is leadership, which works in three ways in the African context. He enumerated the power to order (armed forces and constitutional power), influence through discretionary power over resources, and "resonance" (e.g., when a particular government comes to power at the center, its particular ethos may then be reflected in the states).

Umar argued strongly that good leadership would prove essential to overcoming Nigeria's challenges. An ideal leader should be of good moral standing, not corrupt, sound of mind and body, decisive, understanding of democratic norms, hard working, committed to free enterprise, and able to control personal family obligations of the kind that result in patronage. These qualities should apply not only to the president, but to those who surround him. For example, several participants noted that although President Olusegun Obasanjo had a high degree of credibility, he was perceived as being surrounded by corrupt officials. After the 1999 elections, Nigerians had high expectations of Obasanjo's first government, but those expectations were subsequently diminished. Many participants felt that Obasanjo did not take tough enough measures after assuming the presidency, and underplayed the crises faced by Nigeria. Had the seriousness of Nigeria's plight been better explained, citizens might have been less frustrated with the slow pace of development.

Lewis was troubled by the discussion of leadership because no leader can possess all of the desired qualities: "There aren't many Nelson Mandelas." He suggested examining the incentives for leaders and what pushes them to certain courses of action and modes of leadership.

Structural issues raised included oversight and accountability (creating strong, independent institutions), finances (especially reducing federal reliance on oil revenues), revising the constitution, revising the process under which states are created, state equality, and perhaps reconsidering the right/ideal number of states (or abandoning the state system in favor of geopolitical zones), the role of shari'a within the Nigerian constitution, government service capacity, judicial capacity, and strengthening the bill of rights.

Fayemi and others argued that structures and processes were more important to democracy than leadership. They argued that an enduring presidency is the result of good democratic structures that should be able to outlast any one charismatic leader. It was suggested that the relationship between local, state, and federal government must be examined, and institutional structures created to provide accountability at all levels. Constitutional reform and reduced centralization could also prove to be important.

Suberu argued for the development and deployment of institutions and rules, because the long years of military rule had been very destructive. He felt that under the new democracy there had been an advance in governance, but he and many others noted that change had not been rapid enough to satisfy many citizens. The disillusionment with the Obasanjo administration has led to disillusionment with democracy, but the two must be separated and democracy strengthened.

Ezekwesili added that there is no national consensus about what constitutes the national good. After enduring eighteen years of military rule, the public "began to stop thinking," and it would take time for them to "wake up again." She felt that Nigeria had sufficient laws and institutions to deal with its problems, but that the existing institutions must be run in a credible manner and the laws must be enforced at all levels of government.

Participants discussed a number of specific remedies to the structure of states and the federation. Strengthening institutions for oversight and transparency was mentioned repeatedly as one of Nigeria's most urgent needs.

Lewis urged a linking of the performance of states to production, not just oil extraction. At the state level, production and revenue have been divorced under the current system. Government would be more interested in local production if manufacturing produced more of the revenue stream. Thus far, states have not been encouraged to develop their internal resources; they remain dependent on federal funds.

Several participants suggested transforming the thirty-six states into fewer, larger geopolitical regions. Some Nigerians believed that the states as currently constituted are nonviable, and one way to make them more effective would be to

create more collective configurations based on religious and/or ethnic affinities. Others argued that the states could not be entirely disbanded, and that, instead, individual state capacity should be strengthened.

Imam felt that some decentralization is required but that it is not the only answer. Structures and leadership must be built around transparency and accountability, and minimum standards must be met across the country. For example, when Jigawa state was formed, its first action was to take over the one girls' school as its local headquarters. The right to education and women's rights must be enforced at a federal level.

In terms of improving government capacity, Lewis noted Singapore's example, where senior ministers receive two-thirds the salary of what CEOs are paid. This practice attracts many good candidates; Singapore ranks as very non-corrupt on Transparency International's Corruption Index. Although that level of compensation is not available to Nigeria, better pay could provide incentives to encourage competent individuals to enter the public service.

Several participants urged that the state be made neutral from religion. Although disillusioned citizens have been turning to faith-based solutions, ultimately, the state should remain free of religious influence.

Suberu concluded that if the military again regained power in Nigeria, it would cause a severe crisis. There is both a desire for stronger state police forces and a suspicion that such forces could lead to security rule at the state level. Although it is clear that increased personal safety is necessary, revising and expanding the current national police force might be a better solution than creating any independent sub-federal police force.

IV. Nigeria's Economy

The group agreed that Nigeria's economy is in poor shape and excessively reliant on oil revenues. This dependence has resulted not only in a boom-bust cycle for Nigeria, but a lack of economic diversity overall. Nigeria's GDP has declined two-thirds since 1989, and the poverty line encompasses more than 65 percent of the population.[5]

The group questioned why Nigeria has not developed economically. Reliance on oil and state structures were cited as the biggest problem. State revenue and production are sundered under the present system. Oil provides an independent revenue base which has severed accountability to local populations. Sklar urged a reexamination of the oil industry, noting that it would continue to play a major role in the economy nonetheless. Participants asked: Are there more imaginative ways to think about the oil industry and the related transnational linkages? Others urged recognition of the fact that oil is a nonrenewable resource that will someday be exhausted.

[5] World Bank, http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ng2.htm (September 2002).

Another problem with Nigeria's financial structure is that individual states are not organized for development, but for distributive politics, which gives government officials very short term time horizons. Therefore, said Lewis, the short term political strategies of Nigerian elites have made it impossible to provide credible commitments—the basis on which private economic actors (millions of Nigerian farmers and manufacturers) rely for a long term income stream. If there is high risk, private economic actors tend to rely on liquid assets and move capital overseas, a process which counters growth.

The military regime also contributed to Nigeria's economic stagnation. Utomi noted that from 1956–1973 Nigeria grew at 3 percent per year. However, Utomi also observed that although fiscal federalism was a problem under military rule, causing local production to stagnate and the production ethic to disappear, fiscal federalism has continued under a democratic regime. The government has not yet learned to manage oil revenues wisely in order to ensure a steady income stream through periods of high and low oil prices.

The state fosters other poor economic practices. Many participants noted the amount of capital being siphoned away from the economy by a corrupt elite. In addition, Charlton cited high tariffs, which discourage investment in capital equipment, the lack of bank or trade credit, the need to address frictional costs of shipping, currency conversion, and insurance, and a failure to look at the region as a market.

Ezekwesili favored careful government restructuring and cooperation with international institutions. She noted that it is too early to discuss rigid targets with the IMF. She noted that during earlier financial negotiations with the IMF, many voices tried to dictate where the economy should go. By the time that the financial team appreciated that the government could not continue to spend all of its revenues, it was difficult to explain the situation to the state governors, who resented federal control.

Lewis offered four main suggestions for revitalizing Nigeria's economy:

1. Diversification. The Nigerian economy must become more diverse both among sectors and geographically (regional specialization and complementarities).
2. Agriculture. Agriculture should be a foundation for the Nigerian economy. The majority of Nigerians still earn at least part of their livelihood from agriculture and still live in the rural areas.
3. Manufacturing. Domestic investment should support manufacturing for the domestic market and for the regional market as well.
4. Private industry. There are possibilities for information technologies, finance, etc. if government supports private industry.

Lewis suggested that capital is more likely to come from Nigerian expatriates than from other direct foreign investment. Most reliable estimates suggest there is approximately $100 billion available in the expatriate community for invest-

ment. If only 5 percent were invested in diversifying Nigeria's economy, it would constitute a vast increase on current trends.

The government must also support institutional changes to improve the economy. The Nigerian government will need a capable team of decision makers who can help to ensure stable economic policy, agricultural and energy measures, and oversight structures to combat corruption. Social services are another important component of any revitalization of the economy. It is known that issues such as women's education have proved fundamental to economic growth around the world, and these issues must also be addressed in order to improve Nigeria's economy.

Several participants urged promoting a production ethic among Nigerians in order to diversify the economy and increase production. Unemployment is "a time bomb" said Utomi, who added that "agriculture has not achieved the attention that it deserves…Agriculture can provide employment as well as subsistence." Revitalizing the Nigerian economy would not happen overnight or throughout all sectors, but improving some sectors more quickly should improve the overall economy.

It was noted that manufacturing in Nigeria has declined steadily over the past ten years. Williams voiced concern over Nigerians' lack of mastery of the technology for basic manufacturing. He urged education as well as reflection on how to adopt technology from abroad, and suggested that job creation and maintenance in all sectors would prove to be vital in improving Nigeria's economy.

Charlton noted that there are some positive aspects to Nigeria's economic situation, and that Nigeria could provide a services center for the West African region. Nigeria's advantages include a common language, and common accounting, legal, and banking mechanisms (however flawed). He added that Nigerian workers are productive and globally competitive.

V. Corruption

Although the conference participants agreed that Nigeria deserves its international reputation for corruption, they did not believe that all Nigerians are corrupt, nor that the problem is insoluble. Participants felt that corruption stemmed from three main factors: inheritance of colonial institutions and the resultant disconnect between the state and its citizens, poor leadership since independence, and a state dependent on oil revenue.

Nigeria has suffered from inept and often predatory leadership more interested in maintaining central control over Nigeria's resources than in promoting private enterprise. Many other post-colonial nations have grappled with these issues. However, as Ezekwesili noted, for example, Singapore benefited from the strong leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, especially his focus on combating corruption from the top down. In addition, although Singapore was not entirely free of corruption, most of the extorted rents were plowed back into the Singaporean economy rather than being invested outside the country.

Lewis argued that the economically successful Southeast Asian countries were not paragons of low corruption and strong formal institutions. Patronage and corruption existed there, but there were better structures in Southeast Asia to keep them in check. The patronage structure was relatively organized, and there were expectations of performance. Lewis interviewed business people in Jakarta, including U.S. expatriates. He observed that although they had to deal with corruption to do business, they only had to go through one level to find someone to expedite a transaction. In Nigeria, even transactions such as obtaining a driver's license require maneuvering through several layers of officialdom, thus raising costs.

Lewis added that developing Nigerians' notion of rights is very important in fighting corruption. In a study, he asked Nigerians how much corruption was in the system; 98 percent agreed that there was a lot of corruption in Nigeria, and that most government agencies were corrupt. A follow-up question about how often bribes needed to be paid obtained low numbers of responses. When the question was reformulated, the true answer was revealed. For example, many people felt that when riding in a taxi, having to paying a fee at a checkpoint was a part of life rather than a bribe; most Nigerians lack even a sense of entitlement to drive down roads without hindrance from the police. There is no sense of their right to "public service without a shakedown."

Ezekwesili observed that "corruption arises from institutional attributes of the state and political processes." Nigeria lacks oversight of its public resources, providing ample opportunity for corruption to flourish. Along with opportunity, many Nigerians have the strong motive of poverty. Because of the exigencies of day to day existence, many Nigerians have developed survival strategies, including gleaning as much personal benefit as possible from the government. "The culture of public outrage disappeared" as high officials plundered the state and lower officials engaged in what petty corruption they could. It has been mutually beneficial to both groups to ignore each other's corrupt behavior. Most people who currently enter the public arena do so not for altruistic reasons, but in order to make money.

How can Nigeria move away from its corrupt past? All sectors of Nigerian life must be restructured. Utomi suggested realigning both the public sector and civil society to encourage local production and hard work. These values have long been ignored by Nigerian leadership, but are essential to any real anti-corruption efforts. Ezekwesili concurred with other panelists that the Nigerian private sector is shallow. Because so much federal revenue comes from oil, Nigeria has lacked incentives for productivity and creativity. The result has been a cycle of poverty and endemic corruption.

Strict and transparent systems must be developed to monitor federal and state funds. At present it is too easy to access state funds without fear of accountability or sanctioning mechanisms.

Ezekwesili also commented on the dearth of competence in the political and technocratic class. The government must be able to attract competent employees

in order to implement its anti-corruption policies. Asuni suggested that many of the perks of office should be removed so that those who enter politics cannot do so for financial reasons, while others recommended raising the salaries of public servants to attract talent and reduce the need for graft.

Ezekwesili defined President Obasanjo's economic policy as focusing on cleaning up the public sector while also pursuing privatization. Such projects could be accomplished by reducing Nigeria's dependence on oil, and implementing institutional and civil service reform. She believed that massive public sector reform lay at the heart of corruption reform. President Obasanjo has stated his commitment to reform, though many participants (and Nigerians in general) remain skeptical of the president's ability to stem corruption.

Williams observed that while what controls there are on corruption do not seem to work at the national level, at the community level some controls do still work. However, the general tolerance for corruption is high, and must decrease. As he noted, "apples cannot produce oranges." The corrupt regimes of the past several decades have greatly reduced individual Nigerians' sense of responsibility, as well as their faith in the country. If the citizens are unwilling to invest in the country, how can Nigeria expect to attract international investment (outside of the oil sector)?

Williams believed that the best way to enact corruption reform is to increase responsibility at the community level. Communities which develop better resources should be able to benefit from them. If the resources are abused, the local communities would have the knowledge to be able to react. A percentage of local resources could be directed to the state and federal government, but local communities should be the primary beneficiaries.

Under the current system, there are no mechanisms to define the relationship between local and state governments, or to hold them accountable. Williams gave the example of the national assembly. When it entered office, its members were told that they needed a code of conduct. A code of conduct was developed, but never ratified by the house or senate. In a similar manner, Williams was part of a committee, including the president's anti-corruption advisor, to design a blueprint for fighting government corruption. It has yet to be implemented.

Nonetheless, Fayemi suggested that institutions of accountability represent an essential method of dealing with corruption. Although corruption is not specifically a Nigerian problem, Nigeria does have a reputation for being a corrupt society. Corruption must be addressed at all levels. Although the president's efforts to combat corruption are worthwhile, they have been tainted by the office. Community and civil society must also unite to combat corruption. Utomi added that the problem lies in the existing institutions and systems. People will continue to behave in a certain way unless the system is altered.

Ezekwesili and others noted that economic growth and diversification are crucial to reform. It would be easier to reestablish integrity on personal and governmental levels if the basic needs of Nigerians were met.

Charlton recommended eliminating one source of corruption by removing cross border barriers and high tariffs. Such action would instantly create a bigger market for Nigerian goods, lower costs of imports and exports, and remove an incentive for corruption. In his experience, Nigeria has not had a strong enough voice in international trade negotiations. When rapid and thoughtful responses are needed, Nigeria tends not been involved because too many entrenched interests favor maintaining the status quo.

Dent suggested that the first defense against corruption is a good audit. The Nigerian constitution goes out of its way to promote the office of Auditor General and to preserve that office's power. Its power should be utilized.

Several participants felt that the existing anti-corruption act was too weak.[6]

Kukah noted that traditional institutions could play a role in combating corruption and that such institutions are particularly strong in northern Nigeria. However, many of these traditional systems are led by those with strong family ties and responsibilities, which often lead to favoritism and patronage.

Bobboyi and others felt that the focus of efforts to combat corruption should occur at the personal level, in changing the norms of society. Not only must individuals be held accountable for corruption, they must feel that they have a personal stake in the outcome if it is halted.

Gowon noted that his parents gave him a moral education. He went to an elite secondary school, where he had both Muslim and Christian teachers. Those in leadership should adhere to the morality that they were taught from childhood—whether as Christians or Muslims—and bear these teachings in mind in their positions of responsibility. Leadership has the responsibility to lead and live in a moral way. "When I was in power, I knew that I couldn't get rid of corruption entirely, but promised to reduce it as best as possible. Corruption is not just Nigeria's problem, it is worldwide…Leaders should know that they are there to serve, not just exploit."

VI. The Role of Civil Society

Most Nigerians belong to some civil society grouping. The trade unions are the "war horses" of the democratic struggle, said Kew, with about 5 million members. Other civil society groups include business associations, village and community groups, religious groups (over 50 percent), student and academic groups, and the media.

Edozie argued that civil society is quite sophisticated in Nigeria. There are many new action groups which are thriving, demanding, and shaping their own role in the country. The Niger Delta Women's Movement provides an example that might have larger ramifications than appear at first glance. Women there took on the oil companies while the government would not; they urged corporate social responsibility when the government avoided this duty. This example adds a

[6] It was repealed shortly before the 2003 elections.

new dimension of the ethnic question and the question of regionalism. Economic and environmental justice are key questions which should be brought to the fore.

Local action groups are a relatively new phenomenon. Although they have existed since the 1940s, their role has changed. Social movement organizations, NGOs, and community-based organizations are all active in Nigeria. During the 1970s, the Nigerian labor movement strengthened. During the 1980s, a new type of civil society emerged. The 1980s was an unprecedented era of human rights abuses. New organizations arose to promote democracy, constitutional rights, and civil rights activism. As an outgrowth of the civil rights movements, they advocated anti-militarism and democracy. During this period, Obasanjo was jailed for pro-democracy activities.

Now that democracy has been established, implementation is the difficult next step. Civil society organizations play an important role in deepening and consolidating democracy and in articulating the interests of the people and encouraging them to participate. They are watchdogs of democracy, secularity, and accountability. In addition, several participants noted that civil society organizations provide valuable opportunities for individuals to experience democracy at work, whether as a leader or as the beneficiary of the system. Not all organizations are democratically structured, but those that are have a positive effect.

On a broader level, Kew suggested that one must determine how to make the elite's interest the country's interest. Formerly, the elite was held accountable at a regional level, but the military destroyed those links and citizens no longer believe that the government is theirs.

Viable political opposition and civil society must be developed in order to provide alternative power centers which can serve to check government policies and actions. For example, human rights groups' activism spurred the federal government to create human rights and conflict resolution commissions.

Civil society could be active in building coalitions, and bridging cultural and religious divides to cope with larger, longer-term issues—poverty, civil rights, and human rights. Groups Kew studied in the 1990s were often able to work out some of their differences to present a unified front.

Participants noted that Nigeria was all but collapsed in 1998, and it is now in a rebuilding, transitional phase. Civil society was battered and battle-hardened after 1998, and now it must learn to adjust. Civil society was vibrant but divided. Pro-democratic organizations have come back quickly and strongly. Unions and the bar have bounced back a little more slowly. Students have not yet rebounded. There is more specialization, and organizations tend to work with very specific sector objectives.

Participants noted that the media has become much more open. The media consistently promotes transparency and dialogue, although professionalism is still developing and journalists are underpaid. Participants cited some concerns about irresponsibility in the media, but agreed that so far freedom has been

worth it. Participants urged that the media should self-regulate rather than have regulations imposed upon it by the government.

Participants voiced concern about local NGOs facing competition from abroad. The West has established NGOs in Nigeria and provided funding. Some local groups feel that they are being edged out and that competition could pose problems. Local groups need more funding, which sometimes comes from religious movements.

The Pentecostal movement is not yet a coherent political voice, but it is likely to become one. There are opportunities for Christian-Muslim dialogue. Women's movements often offer important, innovative change, and there has been a boom in ethnic associations.

The government-civil society relationship is slowly changing from an adversarial to a bargaining one. The government must become refocused on the public agenda, but has a "top-down" perspective on civil society. Political parties need to form alliances, which could prove difficult as they are not particularly strong.

Edozie suggested that civil society has nurtured the nationalist class and the middle class. Nigerian civil society was the main factor in establishing the democratic transition of 1998. Kew pointed out that civil society's power in the 1990s to overthrow the military government was only effective as part of a broad coalition, which later began falling apart. NGO-based coalitions then abandoned the political arena in order to fight more of a public relations battle. In a democratic regime, civil society could change the direction of the discourse, especially in alliance with political power. Trade unions have proved particularly important in the past. Religious groups could have more impact. Civil society has a strong impact, but one that is difficult to measure. It is important to build alliances with international groups and to use international standards. Nigeria's civil society movements should be publicized and gain funding on an international level, as in the case of the Women's Niger Delta movement.

In addition, urged Imam, groups outside of Abuja and Lagos must become more involved and sustained, and increase their leverage. All groups need to work on financial sustainability and internal democracy (especially making an effort to include women).

The return of the military was a major question for the group and Nigeria as a whole. Some participants felt that the clock is ticking on the return of a military entrepreneur. Can the state/civil society develop quickly enough to provide an alternative to the military?

Kew cautioned that civil society must use peaceful methods—if it does not then it is in a different category. The group felt that the civil society environment should remain open, even if it remains chaotic. A thriving civil society is important to an open, healthy democracy. The government could best play a role as a competent, responsible partner rather than as a regulator.

VII. Human Rights

Manby began by noting that, despite all the problems still facing Nigeria, there is a major difference between military and civilian rule, and civilian rule is undoubtedly preferable. She noted that the lack of consensus on the legitimacy of the 1999 constitution was a fundamental problem facing Nigeria in many policy areas, including respect for human rights. A particularly difficult constitutional issue, leading to many human rights abuses, is what might be called "internal citizenship"—the rights of "indigenes" in an area versus the rights of "settlers." Several participants observed that this issue contributed to a huge array of problems in Nigeria. Manby also noted the human rights challenges in the areas of political and communal violence, justice and security sector reform, the extension of shari'a law to criminal offenses, women's rights, and fulfilling basic economic and social goals. The Niger Delta conflict was in many respects a microcosm of the issues facing Nigeria as a whole.

Imam and others also drew particular attention to women's rights issues. There are multiple issues relating to women which need to be addressed: trafficking in women and girls, early marriage and pregnancy, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, and women's extra vulnerability to institutional collapse (women are less likely than men to have political or economic power to address problems). Infusing more money into the region would not necessarily solve those key issues; women need to gain more control over resources.

Another human rights issue to be addressed is a justice process dealing with abuses during the long reign of the military. Kukah spoke about his work with the panel established to prepare a record of abuses during the period of January 1, 1966 to May 29, 1999. Scholars reviewed the cases, and many Nigerians from around the country had the opportunity to tell their stories. The Nigerian media paid fairly close attention to the commission, transmitting portions of the work live. Unfortunately, however, the report has not yet been published.

Several participants spoke about making an effort to incorporate an African concept of justice. The focus in traditional African contexts is not only punitive but redistributive. In many indigenous societies, if a party is wronged, the other party must "make it back up." This focus enables both parties to move forward; neither is entirely a winner or a loser. Other indigenous methods include using shame as an alternative punishment, as the Hausa do.

Western attention to Nigeria's human rights situation could be very important in improving conditions on the ground. However, outside action has been limited thus far. U.S. and UK leaders have tended to downplay human rights issues, except for the issue of shari'a. The meeting expressed concern that the Bush administration had been uninterested in broaching human rights and environmental issues with oil companies. The U.S. focus on terrorism has also detracted attention from human rights issues in Nigeria.

VIII. Shari'a

Paden suggested that the shari'a states would not call themselves theocracies although they were in the morality business. Sklar understood theocracy to mean a fusion of political and religious authority. If shari'a is the law of a state, theocracy is an accurate designation. However, theocracy does not imply fundamentalism.

Imam observed that often, when people use the term Islamic law, they think of a changeless, God-given law. In fact, Islamic jurisprudence developed over many years in different locales, and there are many differences across societies and time periods. Muslim laws existed for a long time in many Nigerian states, particularly in the North.

Obe added that when shari'a first entered Nigeria, it adapted somewhat to local systems. By the time that the British arrived, there were some Islamic and Nigerian customs already in place. Shari'a has not been fixed and immutable in Nigeria. It has changed to meet colonial systems, the wider Islamic world, and Nigeria's needs. Some punishments, such as stoning, were banned during the British colonial administration. The penal code was adapted to independent Nigeria. Accommodation and compromise have been a feature of Nigerian/Islamic law.

The fundamental issue now is to what extent the constitution is supreme. Some Nigerians have argued that shari'a should operate within the confines of the constitution, while a minority view is that Nigeria should strive for the ideal Islamic state. So far, the adoption of shari'a law does not reflect a trend toward adopting a state religion. Obe noted that the shari'a debate was not a new one. Personal law—marriage, inheritance, divorce, and civil contracts—was discussed in 1977, but not punishment. Finding the middle ground of incorporating some of shari'a law within the constitution is the critical task.

The current situation involves new legislation attributed to shari'a and relating to criminal offenses being added for Muslims in certain states. There are gray areas in the constitution. If parts of the code are not applied to non-Muslims, then technically the constitution has not been violated; however, non-Muslims have already been punished under the shari'a. Other areas of jurisprudence (contract law, etc.) have not been expanded in an Islamic manner.

Umar raised the question of "Why shari'a, why now?" Several trends in Nigeria have contributed to the rise in interest in shari'a. There was little opportunity for imposing shari'a under the military regime, so some Muslim elements wanted to take advantage of the new freedom provided by democracy to increase the role of Islam in Nigeria. Certain Islamic movements have increased, as has Christian fundamentalism. Pentecostal churches and others have been introduced to Nigeria, and are aggressive in attempting to gain new members. Islam experienced a resurgence in part in response to the rise in Christianity, and aggressive demands by Christians for prayer grounds in public places, i.e. equality with Islamic facilities, although Islam specifically requires communal prayer and Christianity does not.

Imam noted that in the North, particularly, there is strong support for the idea of shari'a, not just because of religious identity, but because conditions have been worsening for the average Nigerian. Nigerian Muslims had concrete expectations that development and security would increase under shari'a. Embezzlement, for example, is not a traditional kind of theft dealt with under shari'a. It was hoped that social justice would be better administered, although that has not in fact happened. Said Imam, "The religious card was played by those who had nothing else to offer."

It remains to be seen whether shari'a courts are competent to adjudicate the larger issues facing Nigeria, such as personal security and corruption. It did not appear that shari'a was sufficient to solve Nigeria's problems, and so far there are no indications that it has had a positive effect. However, people remain willing to go to the shari'a courts for small issues where there are no punishments involved.

Popular support for shari'a is primarily in the Southwest and North, the heavily Muslim areas of the country, where politicians continue to manipulate shari'a. In certain states, criticizing the enactment of shari'a is seen as anti-Islamic and not allowed. There was no public consultation when shari'a was introduced, although Imam noted that open discussion is a part of Islam as well as a part of the democratic process.

Obe noted that "once the genie has been let out of the bottle, it cannot be stuffed back in." Having introduced shari'a, it was difficult to maintain government control of it. Once the issue had been raised, it had to be examined at the supreme court level as well as throughout Nigeria in terms of whether the constitution was being upheld, or whether it should be reformed, or amended. For example, women did not have the right to vote at independence because it was seen as a religious issue; women finally were given the right to vote after 1979.

Imam added that arguments about gender equality date back to the Prophet's time and that there is a general lack of education about classical Islamic jurisprudence in Nigeria.

Imam urged that the debate be opened within the Muslim community and across the nation and felt that it is heartening that people are beginning to refuse to be silenced on the issue of shari'a. Ordinary Muslims are beginning to say that shari'a should not be implemented in its current form in their name. Villagers protected one woman condemned to a stoning, which is not a practice outlined in the Qur'an but a tradition tracing back to some Arab and Jewish tribes. Imam noted that as the Jews left this punishment behind, so could Muslims.

Dent proposed a constitutional rather than religious solution, by adding an amendment to the Nigerian constitution prohibiting cruel and unusual punishment, like the eighth amendment to the U.S. constitution, which comes from British law. This solution would solve the problem of the more extreme punishments under shari'a without explicitly mentioning or forbidding shari'a.

Although religion is one rift within Nigerian society, it does not necessarily indicate that Nigeria must split. Umar felt that the country is being held hostage

by an older generation who still champion ethnic causes. Imam added that half of the country has been barred from the discussion, because women were left out. Women must be included in future negotiations.

IX. Personal Security

Asuni examined the complex relationship between peace and development. In doing so, she looked at the World Bank's indicators of violence, and how many of those indicators apply to Nigeria.[7] The World Bank report noted that every society has conflict; the difference lies in how conflict is handled. In Nigeria people are less familiar with nonviolent, political means of dealing with conflict.

Violence risk factors in Nigeria include:

- Militarization and ethnic dominance
- Youth unemployment
- Poverty and economic decline
- Cleavages along ethnic and regional lines
- Internally displaced people/refugees
- Resource control issues
- Environmental degradation
- Economic reliance on one sector (oil)

It was clear to Asuni and others that the World Bank's early warning signs for violence are present in Nigeria. The Fund for Peace's additional indicators included brain drain, economic development along group lines, economic decline, delegitimization of the state, and a decline in personal security.[8]

Other participants reiterated the urgency of some of the above issues. As noted earlier in the report, Nigeria's reliance on oil has led to a host of other problems, including poverty, which is a particularly pressing issue relating to safety. For example, Asuni noted that in the Niger Delta, poverty is so acute that soldiers can be recruited for as little as 100-200 naira per day (US$.80–1.60)

Another key issue for Nigeria is the number of unemployed youth in Nigeria. The lack of employment opportunities for educated youth feeds the increase in insurgents and armed non-state actors.

Participants suggested that civil society needs to be active in enforcing personal security. The Carter Center made an interesting distinction between security agents and security of nationals. Most civil society groups are concerned with

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[7] Shonali Sardesai and Per Wam, *The Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF), Identifying Conflict-related Obstacles to Development* (Washington, D.C., 5 December 2002).
[8] Pauline Baker, H. Weller, and E. Angeli, *An Analytical Model of Internal Conflict and State Collapse: Manual for Practitioners* (Washington, D.C., 1998).

the security of nationals, while some are more concerned with officials' security. Space should be opened for civil society to play a greater role. Civil society and government should cooperate so that social justice might serve as the cornerstone of a safer society.

Reno felt that the nature of Nigeria's civil society has changed, especially since 1985, and that there is a greater use of privatized violence groups. This change not only harms the state, it also kills revolution by crowding out political space. Those who hate corruption end up joining political groups that are then controlled by precisely the same groups that are corrupt. Even those who are interested in curbing corruption end up being co-opted by the system. In addition, the system has been very good at co-opting the elite to give the appearance of legitimacy while simultaneously delegitimizing government.

Citizens have few incentives to take seriously anything that government does, so they try to make do without it. Such a strategy of government has led to profound economic decline and a lack of financial sector reform. Even the Nigerians who are able to obtain an education are not able to take advantage of it because the economy does not value skilled labor.

Because of his other work in the region, Reno looked at the extent to which young, educated men with no job prospects circulate around the region and talk to each other. If regional concerns spread to Nigeria, local issues could become involved, inflaming violence. This pattern has spurred violence in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, and Reno noted that there are many similar factors at play in Nigeria. Reno thought that the way to avoid the effects of high youth unemployment is to channel their energy into politics. Although politicians try to operate in this space, they lack legitimate credentials; it is very difficult to "outradicalize" their competitors, who become correspondingly more radical, as in the northern states, where shari'a was imposed. In contrast, Williams felt that a revolution was unlikely in Nigeria because young men were too interested in entering the patronage network.

Sagay noted that many types of sectarian violence are at play in Nigeria. Some want autonomy for the region. Other conflicts arise because one community has been living in one area for a long time, but are still considered immigrants. Bobboyi examined the historical roots of conflict in Nigeria, and how, in contested areas, even history is contested, i.e., who arrived first and whose claim to the land is valid? There was an impression that the relationships between the ethnic groups in some areas had initially been peaceful, then turned hostile under colonization. However, it is difficult to establish any real evidence of these charges.

Ethnic boundaries came to be more clearly defined around 1900. The idea of developing a homeland under a tribal policy became more prevalent. This issue was complicated by the inclination of colonial officers, who tended to favor more centralized societies, given that they were simpler to administer. Despite historical ethnic conflict, Bobboyi did not believe that the problems of the first Nigerian republic were based on ethnicity.

In examining conflict between different Nigerian groups, it is important to ask whether the conflict is over ethnicity or land. Conflicts tend to appear when one group came to settle in what had been perceived as another group's land. Land is a particularly precious commodity because there are few economic options other than agriculture, which in most instances has not been modernized. Although the people are all Nigerian citizens, some groups have a strong tribal sense of ownership over a particular area. Imam noted that it is important to ask when a settler became a local citizen. Without resolving this question, conflicts will continue.

Additional complications arise in integrating traditional systems into the federal system. Ultimately, Nigerians need to become better integrated and learn how to accommodate different languages, cultures, and religions.

Williams believed that sectarian violence in Nigeria is not as severe as people reported because it is not a collective problem, rather one of many separate cases, which should be treated as such. In most cases, politics at the state or federal level create problems for the resolution of such conflicts. Sectarian conflicts stem generally from the actions of officials in the cities.

Asuni agreed, noting Nigeria's tendency to go to a precipice but not to slip over. However, the issue of indigeneity is highly controversial. Some groups are more capable of integration (e.g. the Yorubas, who are already both Christian and Muslim). Tribal structure plays a role in the ability to integrate. For example, the Jukun structure is rigid, making it difficult to integrate with others. The Tiv are perceived to be domineering; some group characteristics tend to cause antagonism. In order to resolve sectarian violence, a way must be found to protect small groups who feel threatened, while at the same time allowing for a united, federal Nigeria. The constitution says that everyone is a citizen, but in reality not everyone is integrated into the national identity.

Sklar believed that Nigeria is promising, because, like the U.S., it has a great absorptive capacity and an inclusive federal system. Whatever the flaws of the system, all people can contribute to all sectors of society. Although the parties are fragile, the party system has a pattern of long-term stability, answering Reno's question of why the reform movements are not gaining strength. Crises were absorbed and adjusted as Nigeria aged; the country is in fact past its revolutionary age.

Kew added that one must remember that a large portion of Nigeria's population is under the age of twenty, many of whom are attracted to cults and militancy because these phenomena appear to be their only options. However, Kew gave the example of an interview with a militant, who said that he was planning to burn down the local governor's house with the governor in it. Kew asked, "What if the governor offered you a job?" The militant replied that he would take it.

Gowon added that he was involved in resolving some of the religious/ethnic violence in Jos. He believed that there is a clear need for community leaders to educate young people not to be violent. Asuni agreed, noting that civil society can

educate people so that violence is stopped before it reaches the level where the military police must respond in order to restore peace.

Reno concluded that, in some ways, Nigeria is like a small version of India—it has an internal capacity to be able to deal with ethnic divisions. He hoped that his predictions of increased violence (based on other cases) are wrong.

X. AIDS—A Growing Threat

Although Nigeria hosted the Organization of African Unity Summit on HIV/AIDS in 2001, it remains far from implementing an effective policy to combat the spread of the disease. AIDS was not discussed at length during the conference. However, it must be noted that median HIV prevalence in Nigeria has steadily increased from 1.8 percent in 1991 to 5.8 percent in 2001.Over 1 million children have lost one or both parents to AIDS.[9] Although the rates of HIV/AIDS were not as high in Nigeria as many other African countries, Nigeria's large population means that many people are affected by the epidemic.

In a recent report, Nigeria was listed as one of five countries worldwide likely to suffer some of the worst effects of increased cases of HIV/AIDS over the next decade. The report noted that "Nigeria and Ethiopia will be the hardest hit, with the social and economic impact similar to that in the hardest hit countries in southern and central Africa—decimating key government and business elites, undermining growth, and discouraging foreign investment. Both countries are key to regional stability, and the rise in HIV/AIDS will strain their governments."[10]

XI. Conclusions

The participants were very eager to reconvene for a second meeting in Nigeria in order to discuss the many issues in greater detail. They formulated some suggestions for the most urgently needed changes in Nigeria's governance:

- Create jobs for young, unemployed, educated young men. (Although employment for women is desirable, many women are already employed in small scale industry, and unemployed women are much less likely to engage in violent pursuits.) In light of the example of Sierra Leone, unemployed men are a serious and urgent concern.
- Build institutions and reinforce democracy.

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[9] UNAIDS/WHO Working Group on Global HIV/AIDS and STI Surveillance, "Epidemiological Fact Sheets on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections: Nigeria" (Geneva, 2002).
[10] National Intelligence Council, "The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India, and China" (Washington, D.C., 2002), http://www.cia.gov/nic/pubs/other_products/ICA%20HIV-AIDS%20unclassified%20092302POSTGERBER.htm.

- Diversify the economy. Oil production currently drives the economy, but local manufacturing and agriculture must be reinvigorated.
- Regulate government spending. Government spending is based almost solely on the fluctuations of oil prices; spending when the price of oil rises, and crashing when the price of oil sinks. Controls are needed to regulate the cash flow, and the economy must also become more diversified. Thriving local manufacturing economies would mitigate some of the effects of fluctuations in the oil market.
- Find a strategy to deal with HIV/AIDS.
- Create better incentives for public service. Although corruption must be restrained, there should be incentives for talented people to enter the public arena.
- Enforce personal security.
- Strengthen the idea of a united Nigeria. Most citizens over the age of forty agree that Nigeria should remain one nation, but the younger generation is less certain.
- Provide leadership roles for women. Women should be engaged in policy-making and monitoring because women do not share strong clan allegiances. Women could serve well in mediation and reconciliation roles.
- Examine the idea of citizenship and identity. The current divisions and contradictions within Nigeria make effective communication difficult.
- Build a broad consensus for political and economic reform.
- Reduce the size of the government. The government should not be the largest employer in Nigeria. Reducing it would help curtail some of the corruption of the bureaucracy.
- Improve leadership's connection with grass roots movements.
- Inculcate morality and personal responsibility at the government and individual levels.

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