

Security During Nigeria's 2015 National Elections:

What Should We Expect From the Police?

William Rosenau, Emily Mushen, and Julia McQuaid

March 2015

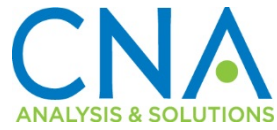


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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Schroden'.

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Executive Summary

On March 28, 2015, Nigeria's sitting president, Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party, is scheduled to face Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress party in what is being called the most competitive presidential contest since the founding of the Fourth Republic and the country's return to democracy in 1999. Developments in Nigeria are of particular importance to U.S. policymakers and the international community more generally, given the country's vast size and population, oil resources, and the presence of the insurgent group Boko Haram. Speaking in Lagos in January, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared that the upcoming elections are "the most important elections that this country has held."

Violence before, during, and after elections has been a feature of Nigeria's political landscape since the 1940s. The federal government's first line of defense against election violence is the Nigeria Police Force (NPF). By most accounts, the NPF was ill prepared for the protracted violence that followed Jonathan's election in 2011. That violence, and the intervention of the army to restore order, cast a shadow over the democratic process. The performance of the NPF will be one criterion for judging the broader political success of the 2015 presidential contest.

As in 2011, Nigerian security officials have promised to deploy vast numbers of policemen to provide security, and have stressed the importance of preventing the kind of violence that marred the 2011 elections. Our research into the NPF suggests that there is little reason for optimism. In the view of many observers, the NPF remains plagued by corruption, inadequate training, and a lack of resources. Incompetence, predatory behavior, and widespread human rights abuses have deeply alienated the force from the population the NPF is intended to serve. These factors have made it next to impossible for the NPF to develop the intelligence information necessary to anticipate and thwart election-related violence. Therefore, our research suggests that expectations about the NPF's performance in the upcoming elections should remain low.

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Glossary

APC	All Progressives Congress
CID	Criminal Investigation Division
DFID	Department for International Development
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
IGP	Inspector-General of Police
INEC	Independent Nigerian Electoral Commission
JTF	Joint Task Force
MOPOL	Police Mobile Force
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	Native Authority Police
NDLEA	National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
NFP	Nigeria Police Force
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PSC	Police Service Commission
SSS	State Security Service
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Introduction

On March 28, 2015, Nigerians are scheduled to go to the polls. The sitting president, Goodluck Jonathan of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), is slated to face the All Progressives Congress (APC) party's Muhammadu Buhari—Nigeria's military ruler from 1983 until 1985—in what is being called the most competitive and fractious general elections since the country's return to democracy in 1999.¹

Given Nigeria's political and economic importance—among other things, it is the continent's largest oil exporter—the upcoming elections are of considerable interest well beyond the country's borders. As U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry declared in Lagos in January, Nigeria is “an increasingly important strategic partner” for the United States, adding that the country “has a critical role to play in the security and prosperity of this continent and beyond.”²

The elections, originally scheduled for February 14, were postponed by the Independent Nigerian Electoral Commission (INEC) a week before voting was to begin.³ According to the commission chairman, Jonathan's national security advisor urged the INEC to delay the vote, citing dangerous conditions in northeastern Nigeria and the inability of federal authorities to guarantee security.⁴ Few observers have accepted this explanation at face value. According to many analysts, the

¹ “Election Violence Feared in Nigeria President's Stronghold,” Voice of America, January 30, 2015, <http://www.voanews.com/content/election-violence-feared-in-nigerian-president-stronghold/2620647.html>, accessed February 1, 2015.

² U.S. Department of State, “Remarks at a Press Availability, Lagos, Nigeria,” January 25, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/01/236287.htm>, accessed February 4, 2015.

³ Elections take place in two stages: In the national elections, voters choose a president as well as representatives to the National Assembly. In the subsequent state elections, Nigerians elect governors and state assembly members.

⁴ “Full Text of Prof Jega's Statement on Election Postponement,” *Vanguard* (Lagos), February 8, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/02/full-text-prof-jegas-statement-election-postponement/>, accessed February 10, 2015.

postponement was a political ploy by the president to buy time to revive his lagging campaign against Buhari.⁵

To be sure, election-related violence is already underway. On January 11, explosions rocked the APC secretariat building in the Okrika Local Government Area, Rivers State, in southeastern Nigeria (Figure 1).⁶ On February 2, a bomb killed two people and wounded 18 at a stadium in the northeastern city of Gombe shortly after Jonathan left a campaign event there.⁷ Officials in each party have accused the other party of masterminding the pre-election attacks.⁸ And the insurgent group Boko Haram, having long denounced elections as a “pagan practice incompatible with the Islamic state,”⁹ is increasing its attacks in the run-up to the election.¹⁰

⁵ See for example Remi Adekoya, “Nigeria’s Elections: Democracy Postponed,” *The Guardian* (London), February 8, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/08/nigeria-elections-democracy-postponed-goodluck-jonathan>, accessed February 10, 2015; and International Crisis Group (ICG), “Nigeria’s Elections: A Perilous Postponement,” February 12, 2015, <http://blog.crisisgroup.org/africa/2015/02/12/nigerias-elections-a-perilous-postponement/>, accessed February 16, 2015.

⁶ “2015 Election Violence: APC Rivers Secretariat Bombed,” *The Call*, January 12, 2015, <http://thecallng.com/2015/01/2015-election-violence-apc-rivers-secretariat-bombed/#>, accessed February 2, 2015.

⁷ Afolabi Sotunde, “Car bomb Explodes in Nigeria’s Gombe after Jonathan Rally,” Reuters, February 2, 2015, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/02/02/uk-nigeria-election-violence-idUKKBN0L61HC20150202>, accessed February 3, 2015.

⁸ Henry Umoru, “APC, Buhari behind attack on Jonathan in Katsina—PDP,” *Vanguard* (Lagos), January 22, 2015, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/01/apc-buhari-behind-attack-jonathan-katsina-pdp/#sthash.Hps6JJD7.dpuf>, accessed February 2, 2015.

⁹ Phil Hazelwood, “Nigeria Braces for More Boko Haram Attacks in Election Buildup,” AFP, February 1, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/nigeria-braces-more-boko-haram-attacks-election-buildup-005303168.html>, accessed February 3, 2015. For more on Boko Haram, see Patricio Asfura-Heim and Julia McQuaid, *Diagnosing the Boko Haram Conflict: Grievances, Motivations, and Institutional Resilience in Northeast Nigeria* (Arlington, VA: CNA Corporation, January 2015).

¹⁰ According to a U.S. State Department spokesman, Boko Haram “has tended to, particularly around something like an election, use political issues or sensitivities to try to enflame tensions.” Quoted in “Boko Haram: Nigeria Election Likely Factor Behind Increased Attacks—U.S.,” *Premium Times* (Abuja), January 14, 2015, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/174878-boko-haram-nigeria-election-likely-factor-behind-increased-attacks-u-s.html>, accessed January 30, 2015.

Figure 1. Map of Nigeria



Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/nigeria_pol93.jpg.

During the last presidential election in 2011—also a contest between Jonathan and Buhari—widespread rioting erupted immediately after Jonathan was declared the victor. The chaos quickly overwhelmed the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), which has primary responsibility for election-related security, and only with the intervention of the army was order restored. Although by some measures the 2011 elections were a success—voter turnout was high, for example—the ensuing mob violence, and excessive use of force by the military (including extrajudicial killings) was widely seen as a blot on Africa’s largest democracy.¹¹

Given Nigeria’s history, polling day and the days that follow will almost certainly be marked by political violence. The extent of that violence will depend to some degree on the steps taken by the NPF. To help identify what might happen in the wake of the elections, this paper examines the role of the police in election-related security. As discussed in greater depth below, our research suggests that the NPF’s persistent weaknesses—including a lack of resources, poor intelligence, and violent and predatory behavior against the very people it is nominally serving—mean it is unlikely that the force will adequately anticipate, let alone contain, serious post-election violence.

To provide context for this discussion, this paper explores NPF history, authorities, and structure. It also provides an overview of other Nigerian internal security forces. In addition, this paper outlines recent international assistance to the NPF; identifies major NPF abuses and operational shortcomings; and surveys Nigerian police reform efforts. Finally, the paper examines police operations before, during, and after the 2011 balloting to provide insights into what might be expected from the NPF during the 2015 elections and beyond.

Before beginning, several caveats are in order. This paper does not offer a comprehensive assessment of the NPF. Resource constraints prohibited original, in-country interviews. Official Nigerian documents and publications concerning the NPF are difficult for researchers to access. The NPF is a largely opaque institution, with even the most basic information on its size and budget difficult to come by. Although this paper does draw on some primary sources, it relies largely on media accounts and other secondary material. As such, the reader should bear in mind that our conclusions are largely a synthesis of the observations and analyses of others, albeit organized in a systematic fashion.

¹¹ For more on extrajudicial killings by the NPF and other security forces, see U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013, “Nigeria 2013 Human Rights Report,” <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220358.pdf>, accessed February 27, 2015.

NPF Background

Reflecting a colonial legacy as well as decades of military rule, the NPF is a force for maintaining internal order and promoting personal, ethnic, and party interests rather than a service committed to protecting the public. In pre-colonial Nigeria, the police as a formal institution did not exist. Nevertheless, there was policing: social norms and behavior were regulated by customary, traditional, and long-established institutions such as secret societies, messengers, and palace guards.¹²

The first formal police force emerged in 1861, when British colonial authorities established a small local force to control the restive indigenous population of Lagos Colony. In 1930, the British combined the two regional police forces in the north and the south to create the NPF.¹³ As British control over what is today Nigeria expanded and consolidated, administrators devised a dual system of policing. In Nigeria, as across the British Empire in Africa, colonial officials employed a policy of indirect rule to reduce the cost of administration.

Most of the country was policed by the Native Authority Police (NAP), controlled by traditional rulers and politicians.¹⁴ These local forces—poorly paid, ill equipped, and generally untrained—were populated with “party thugs and stalwarts” who routinely abused the populations they were nominally protecting.¹⁵ In the major cities, the NPF

¹² John Domingo Inyang and Ubong Evans Abraham, “Policing Nigeria: A Case for Partnership Between Formal and Informal Police Institutions,” *Merit Research Journal of Art, Social Science and Humanities* 14, no. 4 (August 2013), <http://issat.dcaf.ch/fre/content/download/54869/887091/file/Police%20services%20Nigeria.pdf> accessed November 17, 2014.

¹³ CLEEN Foundation, *Civil Society Panel on Police Reform in Nigeria 2012: Final Report*, September 2012, <http://cleenfoundation.blogspot.com/2012/10/civil-society-panel-on-police-reform-in.html>, accessed November 12, 2014.

¹⁴ For more on the Native Authority/Local Government Police Forces, see Kemi Rotimi, *The Police in a Federal State: The Nigerian Experience* (Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria: College Press Ltd, 2001).

¹⁵ Etannibi Alemika and Innocent Chukwuma, *Analysis of Police and Policing in Nigeria* (Abuja: CLEEN Foundation, 2004), <http://www.cleen.org/policing.%20driver%20of%20change.pdf>, accessed January 22, 2015. As mentioned below, hired thugs continue to be an important feature of Nigeria’s political landscape. In Gombe state in northeastern Nigeria, “there is the recent re-emergence of ‘yan kalare,’ a group set up by [the] former governor . . . and used as political thugs during his tenure The group is also said to be responsible for the recent

was responsible for maintaining public order and suppressing strikes and other purported threats to colonial administration.

Coercion rather than consent was the foundation for British imperial policing. This approach to policing was distinct from policing in the metropole, which was premised on an ideal of popular consent—“the police are the public and . . . the public are the police.”¹⁶ Rather than serving as cops on the beat, with an intimate knowledge of local conditions, colonial policemen in Nigeria and elsewhere in British Africa typically were outsiders and distrusted by local communities. According to David M. Anderson and David Killingray, the colonial policeman was seen as an imperial agent rather than as a protector of the public: “[He] was seldom the familiar local who knew his beat well and who could use that knowledge to act with discretion, but was rather the feared alien, a man who could be relied upon to carry out the instructions of his colonial masters.”¹⁷

The dual NPF-NAP system persisted through independence in 1960 and into 1966, when Nigeria’s military dictatorship dissolved the local police and absorbed qualified personnel into the NPF. During the first 40 years of independence—a period marked by coups and military rule—the police were seen as a potential threat by the army, and were underfunded and pushed to the political margins by the generals running Nigeria.¹⁸

The colonial legacy of coercion continues to color the NPF—it is a “force” rather than a “service,” as the name and the camouflage uniforms of its officers suggest (see Figure 2).¹⁹ Today, the environment in which the NPF operates is a turbulent one. It includes “ordinary” criminal violence as well as more complex forms that reflect what Alice Hills describes as “political, religious, ethnic, and societal tensions that

pelting of Governor Ibrahim Dankwambo in the State.” “Election Observers Highlight Major Threats to Peaceful Conduct of 2015 Polls in Nigeria,” *Leadership Online* (Abuja), January 4, 2015, Open Source Center.

¹⁶ David Killingray, “The Maintenance of Law and Order in British Colonial Africa,” *African Affairs* 85, no. 340 (July 1986): 424.

¹⁷ David M. Anderson and David Killingray, “Policing the End of Empire,” in David M. Anderson and David Killingray (eds.), *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism and the Police, 1917–65* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 8.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch, “*Everyone’s in on the Game*”: *Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force* (New York: Human Rights Watch, August 2010), pp. 15–16.

¹⁹ Godpower O. Okereke, “Police Officers’ Perceptions of the Nigeria Police Force: Its Effects on the Social Organization of Policing,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 23, no. 3 (1995).

are rooted in Nigeria's poverty, unemployment and competition for land."²⁰ In the Niger Delta in the south, terrorism, communal violence, and a long legacy of human rights abuses by security forces further complicate the policing landscape.²¹ In the country's north, the Boko Haram insurgency has become a major security threat through its control of vast swaths of territory, its attacks on the army and police, and its extreme violence against Nigerian civilians.

Figure 2. Policemen in the Federal Capital Territory



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ngpolice/photos/pb.127243240651077.-2207520000.1421179171./805322639509797/?type=3&theater>.

²⁰ Alice Hills, "The Dialectic of Police Reform in Nigeria," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46, no. 2 (June 2008), p. 218.

²¹ Olly Owen, *The Nigeria Police Force: Predicaments and Possibilities*. NRN Working Paper No. 15 (Oxford, UK: Nigeria Research Network, Oxford Department of International Development, July 2014), <http://www3.qeh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/nrn/nrn-wp15.pdf>, accessed January 15, 2015.

NPF Authorities and Structure

The NPF has broad powers to investigate crimes, to apprehend offenders, to interrogate and prosecute suspects, to grant bail to suspects pending completion of investigation or prior to court arraignment, to serve summonses, and to regulate or disperse processions and assemblies. The NPF is also empowered to search and seize properties suspected to be stolen or associated with crime, and “to take and record for purposes of identification, the measurements, photographs and fingerprint impressions of all persons” in its custody.²² In addition, the NPF has responsibility for conducting what might be termed “crisis operations”—namely, counterterrorism, and, as mentioned above, election security.²³

The authority, administration, and organization of the NPF are provided for in the 1999 constitution and in the Police Act.²⁴ The Nigerian Police Council oversees the organization and administration of the NPF. It comprises a president (who acts as chairman), the governors of the states, the chairman of the Police Service Commission (PSC), and the inspector-general of police (IGP).

²² Alemika and Chukwuma, *Analysis of Police and Policing in Nigeria*.

²³ In counterterrorism operations, the NPF acts in support of its military counterparts. While the relationship between the military and NPF is typically ad hoc, the law allows for more formalized coordination in the form of joint task forces (JTFs), which are created to coordinate the activities of multiple security, military, and law enforcement entities to combat specific threats, such as Boko Haram.

²⁴ “The Structure of the Nigeria Police Force,” <http://www.npf.gov.ng/force-structure/>, accessed December 14, 2014; “Powers and Conduct of Nigerian Police,” *LegalNaija*, September 24, 2013, accessed January 20, 2015; and Police Act, <http://www.placng.org/new/laws/P19.pdf>, accessed January 15, 2015. Police powers, including criminal investigations, interrogations, and crime prevention, are also articulated in Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Procedure Code. Elrena van der Spuy and Ricky Röntsch, *Police and Crime Prevention in Africa: A Brief Appraisal of Structures, Policies, and Practices*. Thematic Analysis Report (Montreal: International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, 2008), http://www.crime-prevention-intl.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Police_and_Crime_Prevention_in_Africa_ANG.pdf, accessed December 18, 2015.

The NPF is Nigeria's largest institution and its largest employer, with an annual budget of roughly \$1.5 billion.²⁵ Estimates of the total strength of the NPF range from 350,000 to 410,000.²⁶ This translates into a range of 1.9 to 2.3 policemen per 1,000 civilians. In contrast, South Africa (with a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$595 billion—roughly comparable to Nigeria's \$478 billion GDP)—has 3.2 police per 1,000. Therefore, by the standards of another rich African country, Nigeria could be considered relatively under-policed.²⁷

The headquarters of the NPF is in the capital, Abuja, and is known as Force Headquarters. It is divided into six functional commands: administration; operations; works; criminal investigations; training; and planning, research, and statistics. The IGP (Figure 3) sits at Force Headquarters as well, using it as his operational and administrative base.²⁸ The 40,000-man Police Mobile Force (MOPOL)—a paramilitary anti-riot unit deployed in squadrons in Nigeria's 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)—falls under Force Headquarters operations command.²⁹

Under Force Headquarters, the NPF is organized into 12 zonal commands, 36 state commands, and then area commands under each state command. Divisional commands fall under area commands, followed by district commands, police stations, and police posts (the lowest unit of organization). Lagos State has the largest force, with over 33,000 officers.³⁰ By contrast, Kano State has only 6,000 officers.³¹ The NPF grew significantly in the early 2000s with a recruiting push to

²⁵ "The Reduced Police Budget and the Forthcoming Elections," *Nigerian Tribune*, March 6, 2014, <http://tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/761-the-reduced-police-budget-and-the-forthcoming-elections/761-the-reduced-police-budget-and-the-forthcoming-elections>, accessed February 5, 2015.

²⁶ See, for example, Nonso Okafo, *Reconstructing Law and Justice in a Postcolony* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 158; and Otwin Marenin, "Styles of Policing and Economic Development in African States," *Public Administration and Development* 34 (2014): 158.

²⁷ *CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>, accessed January 22, 2015; and *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment-Southern Africa* (online subscription required). That said, the Philippines, with a GDP almost the same as Nigeria's (\$454 billion), has a mere 1.3 per 1,000.

²⁸ Network on Police Reform in Nigeria, *Criminal Force: Torture, Abuse, and Extrajudicial Killings by the Nigeria Police Force* (New York: Open Society Institute, 2010), p. 40.

²⁹ "Nigeria: Urgent Need for Police Reform," IRIN, April 18, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95314/nigeria-urgent-need-for-police-reform>, accessed February 5, 2015.

³⁰ *Young People and the Police in Lagos* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2011), p. 18.

³¹ Alice Hills, "Policing a Plurality of Worlds." *African Affairs* 111, no. 442 (January 2012).

increase policing capacity in the country. Overall numbers grew from 110,000 in 1999 to their current numbers over a relatively short period of time.³²

Figure 3. Inspector General of Police, Suleiman Abba



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ngpolice/photos/pb.127243240651077.-220752000.1421179171.830722706969790/?type=3&theater>.

Other internal security forces

A variety of other institutions play significant roles in maintaining public order and regime security. First among these is the Nigerian military—in particular, the army. Under the 1999 constitution, the primary role of the services is the defense of the country against external aggression, but throughout the history of the republic, the armed forces have frequently conducted internal security operations.³³ Although the

³² Ikuomola Adediran Daniel, “Intelligence Information and Policing in Nigeria: Issues and Way Forward,” *Journal of International Social Research* 4, no. 17 (Spring 2011): 483.

³³ Idowu J. Aregbesola, “Internal Security Operations and Human Rights Abuses in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges” (unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan, September 2013), pp. 6-8.

constitution stipulates that the NPF shall be the country's sole police force, an array of other institutions have formal and less-than-formal enforcement powers.

State Security Service (SSS)

The SSS, Nigeria's internal intelligence agency, was established by military decree in 1986, although its origins can be traced to the colonial-era police Special Branch. The remit of the SSS is considerable and includes the prevention, detection, and investigation of espionage, subversion, terrorism, intergroup conflict, and economic crimes with a national security dimension.³⁴ Unofficially, the SSS is also responsible for the surveillance, harassment, and monitoring of the government's political adversaries, including elected officials, journalists, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).³⁵

National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA)

The NDLEA was established in 1989 to curb demand, production, and distribution of illicit drugs.³⁶ NDLEA personnel are deployed at Nigeria's international airports, seaports, and border crossings. The agency has been plagued by rampant corruption, poor training, and a lack of resources. According to the U.S. State Department's 2014 *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Nigeria is a major trafficking hub for illegal drugs, but "[w]eak interagency cooperation combined with a lack of criminal enterprise investigative capacity contributes to the dearth of apprehensions of major traffickers."³⁷ Criminality extends to the agency's upper ranks. For example, in 2010

³⁴ Oba Adetunji, "The Role of the State Security Service (S.S.S.) in Combating of Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism in Nigeria," PowerPoint presentation, SSS headquarters, Abuja, undated, <http://www.cccobin.org/resources/cccobin-presentations/35-meetings-presentations>, accessed November 19, 2014; and Basil Ugochukwu, "The State Security Service and Human Rights in Nigeria," *Third World Legal Studies*, vol. 14, article 5 (1997), <http://scholar.valpo.edu/twls/vol14/iss1/5>, accessed November 17, 2014.

³⁵ See, for example, Festus Owete, "Nigeria Governors Condemn Police, SSS' Partisanship During Elections," *Premium Times* (Abuja), August 16, 2014, <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/166824-nigeria-governors-condemn-police-sss-partisanship-during-elections.html>, accessed November 15, 2014.

³⁶ Rawlings Akonbode Udama, "The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency," *Journal of International Social Research* 6, no. 24 (Winter 2013), http://www.sosyalarastirmalar.com/cilt6/cilt6sayi24_pdf/udama_akonbode.pdf, accessed November 12, 2014.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2014*, vol. 1, <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2014/vol1/222985.htm>, accessed November 20, 2014.

former NDLEA chairman Bello Lafiaji received a four-year sentence for financial crimes, including accepting a bribe to release a suspect held on drug charges.³⁸

Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC)

Created in 1967 during the country's civil war, the NSCDC is a paramilitary force with an assortment of roles and missions, including critical infrastructure protection, disaster relief, and oversight of private security companies.³⁹ The NSCDC's mandate includes the protection of oil installations from theft and destruction. According to press accounts, NSCDC personnel arrested a total of 185 suspected thieves and vandals in Akwa Ibom State, on the country's southern coast.⁴⁰ Finally, the NSCDC participates in election security operations. In January, the NSCDC's commandant-general pledged to deploy 60,000 officers and men across the country for election security.⁴¹

Civilian Joint Task Force

The "Civilian JTF," or *Yan Gora* ("those who hold the cane")⁴² is a local militia used by the Nigerian government as a proxy force in its campaign against the Boko Haram movement in Borno State, in northeastern Nigeria (Figure 4). As of November 2013, according to press reports, more than 1,750 young people have received government-

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, *Corruption on Trial? The Record of Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission* (New York, Human Rights Watch, 2011), <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria0811WebPostR.pdf>, accessed November 20, 2014.

³⁹ "Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (Amendment) Act, 2007, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, May 28, 2007, <http://www.nscdc.gov.ng/index.php/about-nscdc/nscdc-act>, accessed February 10, 2015.

⁴⁰ Etim Ekpimah, "NSCDC Arrests 185 Suspected Oil Thieves in A'lbom," *Punch* (Lagos), January 7, 2015, <http://www.punchng.com/news/nscdc-arrests-185-suspected-oil-thieves-in-aibom/>, accessed February 9, 2015.

⁴¹ Omeiza Ajayi, "NSCDC to Deploy 60,000 Staff, 740 Dogs for Polls," *National Mirror* (Lagos), January 20, 2015, <http://nationalmirroronline.net/new/nscdc-to-deploy-60000-staff-740-dogs-for-polls/>, accessed February 20, 2015.

⁴² Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *Nigeria's Interminable Insurgency: Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis* (London: Royal Institute for International Affairs, 2014), p. 15. The Civilian JTF is also known as the Volunteer Vigilance Youth Groups. "Military Blocks GSM Services Again in Borno," *Information Nigeria*, March 13, 2014, <http://www.informationng.com/2014/03/military-blocks-gsm-services-again-in-borno.html>, accessed November 20, 2014.

sponsored martial arts and “community policing” training.⁴³ The Civilian JTF is one of many “vigilante” groups that operate across the country. Vigilantes are a well-established feature of Nigeria’s security landscape.⁴⁴ Such groups have a variety of roles—protecting property, defending ethnic groups, and working as hired thugs on behalf of political leaders.⁴⁵

Figure 4. Evidence of CJTF presence in Maiduguri, Borno State, December 2013



Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/civilian-security-front-lines-fight-boko-haram/1806319.html>.

⁴³ “Nigeria: Borno State Government Trains 1,000 members of Youth Vigilante for Community Policing,” *Leadership Online* (Abuja), November 19, 2013, Open Source Center.

⁴⁴ “Nigeria’s Vigilante ‘Jungle Justice,’” BBC News, April 28, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8021468.stm>, accessed November 17, 2014.

⁴⁵ Perceptions of communal insecurity have long been a catalyst for the creation of nonstatutory policing groups. So-called night guards (also known as hunter guards)—established by local authorities and neighborhood groups, were a significant presence in western Nigeria from the 1930s through the 1950s. Laurent Fourchard, “A New Name for an Old Practice: Vigilantes in South-Western Nigeria,” *Africa* 78, no. 1 (2008): 20.

External Assistance to the NPF

Nigeria has been a major African recipient of foreign assistance ever since it gained independence in 1960. Since the restoration of democracy in Nigeria in 1999, the United Kingdom and the United States appear to have been the largest providers of bilateral assistance.⁴⁶ While this support does not always target the NPF directly, developing effective policing is often one of the primary goals of foreign assistance in Nigeria.

From 2002 through 2009, the UK channeled roughly \$55 million into strengthening the security and justice sectors in Nigeria.⁴⁷ The Security and Justice Program, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), focused on three areas—security, access to justice, and growth—and emphasized community policing, anti-corruption, and gender equality.⁴⁸ Since then, UK support has been minimal—a casualty of British concerns over human rights and the perceived intransigence of Nigeria’s senior leadership.⁴⁹ More recently, however, the relationship appears to have been rekindled. In July 2014, DFID officials presented the IGP with what the local press termed “strategic guidance” in eight “core areas” of policing, including counterterrorism, integrated intelligence, and community policing.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Multilateral institutions have also supported the NPF. For example, Nigerian policemen, along with police from European Union (EU) countries, participated in the EU Police Services Training program carried out from 2011 to 2013. “EUPST 2012-2013, Italy-2014, Closing Ceremony,” <http://www.eupst.eu/html/news.html>, accessed December 15, 2014.

⁴⁷ House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Extremism and Political Instability in North and West Africa*, written evidence from Professor Alice Hills, May 21, 2013, p. 10.

⁴⁸ Department for International Development, *Security, Justice, and Growth: Programme Achievements and Lessons Learned 2010*, <http://www.j4a-nigeria.org/joomdocs/sjg-achievements.pdf>, accessed December 27, 2014.

⁴⁹ Author’s interview with U.S. Department of State official, Washington, DC, September 14, 2014.

⁵⁰ Wale Odunsi, “Counter-Terrorism: Police Signs Training Pact with US State Department, Receives Guidelines from DFID,” *Daily Post* (Lagos), July 23, 2014, <http://dailypost.ng/2014/07/23/counter-terrorism-police-signs-training-pact-us-state-department-receives-guidelines-dfid/>, accessed December 20, 2014.

American aid to the Nigerian police has been provided in two distinct phases: The first was in the years immediately after 1999, when the U.S. focus was on supporting Nigeria's transition to democracy. Little public information is available on this period. According to one contractor's assessment, the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), an arm of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), developed a program to "improve police performance."⁵¹ OTI work with the NPF appears to have come to a close in late 2001.⁵²

More information is available on the second phase of U.S. police assistance to Nigeria, although the picture is far from complete. In July 2002, the United States and Nigeria signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) under which the United States would provide \$3.5 million to the NPF and other law enforcement agencies, including \$2.6 million for "police reform through provision of technical assistance, training, and equipment."⁵³ By 2005, that figure had risen to \$12.65 million. Like the British program, U.S. assistance emphasized community policing and pilot programs aimed at improving community-police relations in turbulent states such as Kaduna.⁵⁴

More recent U.S. assistance has emphasized counterterrorism, border security, and related activities. The U.S. State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program has trained the NPF to "prevent, detect, and investigate terrorism threats; secure Nigeria's borders; and manage responses to terrorist incidents."⁵⁵ In 2013, according to the State Department, ATA trained more than 120 NPF members in the detection and handling of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).⁵⁶ Last April, the

⁵¹ Arthur E. Dewey and Glenn Slocum, *The Role of Transition Assistance: The Case of Nigeria*. Working Paper No. 325 (Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development/Center for Development Information and Evaluation, January 2002), p. 13.

⁵² Robert I. Rotberg, *Nigeria: Elections and Continuing Challenges*. CSR No. 27 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations/Center for Preventive Action, April 2007), p. 31.

⁵³ Human Rights Watch, *"Rest in Pieces": Police Torture and Deaths in Custody in Nigeria* (New York: HRW, July 2005), p. 72.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72. The United States also supported curriculum development and basic training for recruits at the Kaduna Police Training College.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of State, "Fact Sheet: Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria," May 14, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/05/226072.htm>, accessed December 12, 2014. Nigeria is also a member of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, a U.S.-funded initiative intended to "enhance regional security sector capacity to counter violent extremism, improve country and regional border and customs systems, and build law enforcement and security sector capacity." *Ibid.* Nigeria will also receive counterterrorism assistance from the Global Security Contingency Fund aimed at countering Boko Haram.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2013 - Nigeria*, April 30, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>, accessed December 5, 2014.

United States and Nigeria signed an MOU under which the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will work to improve training at NPF academies.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In fiscal year 2012, 173 NPF units had been cleared to receive U.S. assistance after having been vetted in accordance with "Leahy legislation," aimed at preventing American aid to security forces that violate human rights. U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, "Answer to Questions for the Record Submitted to Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Robert Jackson by Senator Chris Coons," May 15, 2014.

Police Abuses and Operational Shortfalls

For decades, scholars, journalists, activists, and politicians inside and outside Nigeria have criticized the NPF's predatory behavior, corruption, and human rights violations. Indeed, as early as 1966 a Nigerian federal commission reported that "corruption in the Nigeria Police Force is the talk of the nation."⁵⁸ While many of these abuses clearly overstep the law, the NPF operates under very loose authorities that allow for activities that would otherwise be considered illegal in a Western democratic society. For example, the NPF has significant authority to arrest without warrants, as provided in the Police Act (Section 24). Even a person whom someone else suspects of committing a felony or misdemeanor can be arrested without warrant. Similarly, NPF officers can detain any individuals "reasonably suspect[ed]" of any offense.⁵⁹

In the judgment of many analysts, the general culture of impunity surrounding NPF activity and the impotence of the judicial system allow for these systemic abuses.⁶⁰ One of the most controversial provisions that allows for the abuse of NPF authority is Force Order 237. Under this order, the NPF can use lethal force against a detainee who tries to escape or avoid arrest, regardless of the level of threat the detainee poses. While problematic on its own, the abuse of Force Order 237 has led to justifications of extrajudicial killings simply by claiming that a detainee was attempting escape. Because there is so little accountability in the NPF, these activities are almost never questioned.⁶¹ Objections from domestic and international bodies, and efforts to call attention to provisions for human rights in the Nigerian

⁵⁸ Quoted in Otwin Marenin, "Policing Nigeria: Control and Autonomy in the Exercise of Coercion," *African Studies Review* 28, no. 1 (March 1985): 81.

⁵⁹ Police Act, Section 29.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Etannibi E.O. Alemika, *Criminal Victimization, Policing and Governance in Nigeria* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2013), p. 36.

⁶¹ Amnesty International, *Stop Torture*, "Country Profile: Nigeria," May 2014, <https://www.aivl.be/sites/default/files/bijlagen/NigeriaCountryBriefTorture.pdf>, accessed November 20, 2014.

constitution have fostered contention surrounding the legality of Force Order 237. For now, however, it remains operational doctrine for the NPF.⁶²

The Police Act allows for the employment of NPF personnel to protect the property of “any person (including any government department).” The abuse of this provision is pervasive, and in the judgment of many observers contributes to the low regard in which Nigerians hold the NPF. Police are known for working only afternoons, spending their evenings moonlighting for wealthy public figures.⁶³ One source goes so far as to say that the “average policeman sees himself as an appendage of powerful political and economic elites.”⁶⁴ Officers are distracted from their duties by far more menial tasks as well, such as carrying groceries for politicians’ wives.⁶⁵ According to the head of the PSC, nearly a third of the 330,000 police are employed by senior politicians and businessmen as private escorts.⁶⁶

Of all their regular duties, the NPF is perhaps most notorious for their practices at traffic stops. The Police Act allows for the hiring of traffic wardens to serve as part of the NPF.⁶⁷ These officers working on Nigerian roads extort motorists with such frequency and impunity that citizens expect such extortion on a regular basis. This behavior contributes to the poor reputation of the NPF, discourages citizens from calling on the police, and drives the population to seek out other forms of protection.⁶⁸ Consequently, there are a number of privatized and decentralized policing organizations that challenge the government monopoly of force in Nigeria. NPF failures, corruption, and lack of resourcing only drive the proliferation of informal security groups.⁶⁹

⁶² Network on Police Reform in Nigeria, *Criminal Force*, p. 49.

⁶³ “Nigeria’s Vigilante ‘Jungle Justice,’” *BBC News*, April 28, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8021468.stm>, accessed November 17, 2014.

⁶⁴ Lai Olurode, ed., *Election Security in Nigeria: Matters Arising* (Abuja: Independent National Electoral Commission and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2013), p. 42.

⁶⁵ Innocent Chukwuma, *“Motions Without Movement”: Report of Presidential Committees on Police Reforms in Nigeria* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2008), p. 3.

⁶⁶ International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency* Africa Report, no. 216 (Brussels: ICG, April 3, 2014), <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/216-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-ii-the-boko-haram-insurgency.pdf>, accessed January 20, 2015.

⁶⁷ Police Act, Section 59.

⁶⁸ Michael B. Aleyomi, “Is State Police a Panacea to Security Threat in Nigeria?” *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 4 (2013), p. 12.

⁶⁹ David Pratten, “‘The Thief Eats His Shame’: Practice and Power in Nigerian Vigilantism,” *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 78, no. 1 (2008): 4.

The criminal investigation division (CID)—a crucial component of any effective modern policing agency—is notably weak. Its personnel are poorly trained, it lacks proper facilities, and it has not benefited from sweeping advancements in forensic technology.⁷⁰ Like many other police personnel, CID officers tend to be highly corrupt, with officers collecting extorted funds to line the pockets of senior officers.⁷¹ This lack of investigative capability contributes to the NPF’s heavy reliance on torture to extract confessions.⁷² Moreover, the NPF is often accused of extrajudicial killings and other gross violations of human rights.⁷³ MOPOL has a notorious reputation for violence—Nigerians refer to MOPOL as “kill and go” units, owing to their reputation for using excessive force (often gunning people down) and then leaving the area.⁷⁴ In the judgment of many specialists, the excessive use of force by the police (as well as the army)—such as the summary execution in 2009 of dozens of Boko Haram suspects in police custody—has further contributed to the country’s cycle of violence.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Inyang and Abraham, “Policing Nigeria,” p. 55.

⁷¹ Owen, *Nigeria Police Force*.

⁷² Amnesty International, “Welcome to Hell Fire”: *Torture and Other Ill Treatment in Nigeria* (London: Amnesty International, 2014), p. 27; and Hills, “Dialectic of Police Reform,” p. 218.

⁷³ See, for example, “Nigerian Student Body Demand Police Boss Resignation over Extrajudicial Killings,” *Nigeria Police Watch*, July 2, 2013, <http://www.nigeriapolicewatch.com/2013/07/nigerian-student-body-demand-police-boss-resignation-over-extrajudicial-killings/>, accessed February 5, 2015.

⁷⁴ Network on Police Reform in Nigeria, *Criminal Force*, p. 41.

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2012), <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/nigeria1012webwcover.pdf>, accessed January 5, 2015.

NPF Reform

Recognition within the Nigerian government of the NPF's failings, along with widespread criticism from other governments and international organizations, has prompted several internal police reform efforts since Nigeria transitioned to democratic governance in 1999. However, few of these reforms have taken hold in the NPF. The institution lacks the willingness, resources, and enforcement mechanisms necessary to give reforms any degree of staying power.

Nigeria has approached police reform through various avenues over the past several years. In 2006, 2008, and 2012, the federal government established committees to investigate problems in the NPF and provide a set of recommendations to address them.⁷⁶ Similarly, each inspector general of the NPF has come to the position with plans to make changes in the force. While each instance has had its own emphases and goals, reforms have all focused on persistent problems that have plagued the NPF for decades.

However, many of the issues that committees have raised have been more tangible in nature—resource shortfalls, lack of training, and abusive practices. Over time, reform efforts have begun to highlight more systemic and deep-rooted problems, such as politicization at all levels, endemic corruption, human rights abuses, and the emphasis on “regime representation” in the NPF rather than on serving the population.⁷⁷ Still, the Nigerian government remains hesitant to fully recognize the extent of these problems.

Even for those problems that the government has acknowledged, officials have consistently failed to implement identified reforms. Committees have produced rather lengthy sets of recommendations with each reform iteration, but to date the government has not been committed to their implementation, and the impact on the

⁷⁶ This paper will focus on three reform iterations (2006, 2008, and 2012). However, there were similar attempts at reform dating back to 1995. The government did not consider recommendations submitted by the 1995 committee. The 1997 *Vision 2010* Committee also proposed reforms, which the government ignored. In 2002, another round of reforms produced recommendations that were never implemented. For more on these efforts, see Human Rights Watch, “*Everyone’s in on the Game*.”

⁷⁷ Hills, “Dialectic of Police Reform,” p. 223.

NPF has been minimal.⁷⁸ Indeed, “most of the reforms have been described as representing the interests of the government of the day rather than serving the interests of the public they are meant to protect.”⁷⁹ The NPF has long been viewed as an agent of the government rather than a service organization.⁸⁰ To date, reform efforts have failed to address that fundamental issue.

⁷⁸ Alemika, *Criminal Victimization*, p. 31.

⁷⁹ Mahmoud Umar and Usman Bappi, “Community Policing and Partnership: Opportunities and Challenges for Gombe State Nigeria,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 19, no. 6 (June 2014): 12.

⁸⁰ Alice Hills, “Lost in Translation: Why Nigeria’s Police Don’t Implement Democratic Reforms,” *International Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2012): 739.

Election Security and the NPF

In addition to its “routine” policing duties, the NPF is also the lead agency for providing security for voters, candidates, and party workers during elections.⁸¹ Its responsibilities focus on manning polling stations, and the police are deployed by the hundreds of thousands for this purpose (see Figure 5). Violence has been a feature of every Nigerian election since democracy was restored in 1999.⁸² Indeed, elections have helped spark political, ethnic, religious, and communal violence since the late 1940s, when British colonial authorities introduced limited voting. In Nigeria, elections are a matter of “do or die.” In the words of Etannibi Alemika, “politicians turn electioneering and elections into warfare in which violence and ethnic, religious, and other forms of primordial sentiments and prejudices are employed.”⁸³

The widespread violence that accompanies elections is often too much for the NPF to handle. In such cases, military forces can be called on to assist.⁸⁴ The need for military reinforcement is a fairly common occurrence since the NPF cannot be relied on to provide security in challenging environments—the police are known to “melt away” when trouble arises.⁸⁵ If they do stay, they are often part of the problem when it comes to election violence, using their position to harass and intimidate voters aligned with a party opposing the candidate who has paid the highest price for police loyalty.

Election security will be a major mission for the NPF in the 2015 general elections. The success or failure of those elections will in some measure be a function of the performance of the police. Examining NPF operations during the most recent general

⁸¹ Olurode, ed., *Election Security in Nigeria*, p. 73.

⁸² Nkwachukwu Orji and Nkiru Uzodi, *The Post-Election Violence in Nigeria* (Abuja: Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre, 2012), p. 7.

⁸³ Etannibi Alemika, “Post-Election Violence in Nigeria: Emerging Trend and Lessons,” in *Review of Elections Security During the 2011 General Elections in Nigeria: Conference Proceedings* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2011), p. 35.

⁸⁴ U.S. Africa Command, *The Domestic Security Roles of African Militaries: A Review of Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and Angola* (Stuttgart: U.S. Africa Command, December 2011), p. 26.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

elections, held in 2011, can help us anticipate the challenges likely to be present in 2015.

Figure 5. Policemen outside a polling station



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/ngpolice/photos/a.675503825825013.1073741840.127243240651077/720374018004660/?type=3&theater>.

The 2011 Elections

The 2011 elections were widely praised as the best run in the country's history—analysts have lauded their relative transparency, the widespread presence of trained observers, and the unbiased performance of the chairman of the INEC. Even so, the 2011 election period was marred by protracted rioting, arson, murder, and other crimes. By all accounts, the elections were the deadliest in the country's history, with the number of lives lost estimated at more than 800.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800," May 16, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/16/nigeria-post-election-violence-killed-800>, accessed December 9, 2014. According to the Nigerian Red Cross, at least 74,000 were displaced as a result of the unrest. Chioma Gabriel, "Post-Presidential Election Violence: North/South Rally Against Mayhem," *Vanguard* (Lagos), April 23, 2011, <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/04/post-presidential-election-violence-northsouth-rally-against-mayhem/>, accessed December 5, 2014.

Run-up to the elections

In March 2011, ominous signs indicated that the upcoming elections would be violent. Between March 22 and March 25, violence erupted in a third of the country's 36 states, and in April lethal bomb blasts rocked INEC offices near Abuja, as well as targets in Maiduguri, in Boro State, and elsewhere across the country.⁸⁷

Officials assured Nigerians that forceful measures were being taken to ensure that voters, candidates, and election officials across the country would be safe on election day (Figure 6). NPF leaders told reporters that 240,000 police would be deployed in all 36 states to provide security for the first round of voting on April 9 to elect a new National Assembly (a second round to elect a new president would take place on April 16, followed by gubernatorial elections on April 26).⁸⁸ According to government authorities, the army was also deployed in some states to provide additional security.⁸⁹ This massive deployment of police, the army, and other security forces apparently kept violence in check; despite bombings and rioting, voters felt safe enough to flock to the country's 120,000 polling stations.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ ICG, *Lessons from Nigeria's 2011 Elections*, Africa Briefing N° 81, September 15, 2011, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/B81%20-%20Lessons%20from%20Nigeras%202011%20Elections.pdf>, accessed December 21, 2014; and "Nigeria: Article Highlights Increase in Bombings Despite Anti Terrorism Law," *The Neighborhood* (Port Harcourt), March 9, 2011, Open Source Center.

⁸⁸ "Nigeria: Article Discusses Government's Preparations to Conduct Fair Elections," *The Guardian Online* (Lagos), March 31, 2011, Open Source Center.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group, *Lessons from Nigeria's 2011 Elections*. Africa Briefing, no. 81 (Abuja/Dakar/Brussels: ICG, 15 September 2011). According to the ICG, Boko Haram and other Islamist groups were responsible for earlier attacks on senior members of the ruling PDP, the police, religious and traditional authorities, and members of the Christian community. See also, International Crisis Group, *Northern Nigeria: Background to Conflict*. Africa Report, no. 168 (Dakar/Brussels: ICG, December 20, 2010). <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/168%20Northern%20Nigeria%20-%20Background%20to%20Conflict.pdf>, accessed December 6, 2014.

Figure 6. Police patrol in Kaduna, April 2011



Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/nigeria-gubernatorial-vote-to-proceed-despite-unrest--120573379/157960.html>.

Violence erupts

Voting on April 9 and 16 went relatively smoothly. Serious violence broke out only after the INEC declared the Peoples Democratic Party's Goodluck Jonathan president on April 18.⁹¹ Across northern Nigeria, Christians and Muslims clashed. This violence reflected the country's profound religious, ethnic, and regional cleavages. Deep-rooted fears that a president will use his office to favor his home region at the expense of other sections has led to "zoning" and other formal and informal arrangements for sharing power on a revolving basis.⁹² Many northerners believed

⁹¹ "Nigeria: INEC Declares Jonathan Winner of Polls," *African Elections Project*, April 18, 2011, http://africanelections.org/new_news.php?nid=227, accessed December 10, 2014.

⁹² Jidefor Adibe, "The 2015 Presidential Elections in Nigeria: The Issues and Challenges," in *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent in 2015* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution/Africa Growth Initiative, January 2015), <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Reports/2015/01/foresight%20africa/nigeria%20elections%20adibe.pdf>, accessed February 5, 2015.

that Jonathan, a southern Christian, should have chosen not to stand and conceded the presidency to Buhari, a northern Muslim.⁹³

Three days of riots and sectarian killings rocked the states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.⁹⁴ In Kaduna, one community leader told reporters that “the killing was unbelievable and the destruction is colossal.”⁹⁵ Journalists and others characterized the perpetrators as young, male, poor, and “possibly intoxicated young thugs.”⁹⁶ Across much of the north, authorities imposed 24-hour curfews and ordered military patrols in an attempt to restore order. Outside the north, unrest was on a relatively small scale. In and around the capital, “irate youths” barricaded roads and attacked motorists during protests against the defeat of retired General Muhammadu Buhari, the All Progressives Congress candidate for president.⁹⁷

The NPF response

Despite public assurances by the NPF that it would contain election-related unrest, the police were both unprepared for and overwhelmed by the events that followed Jonathan’s election.⁹⁸ In the capital of Kano State, policemen using whips and then teargas failed to disperse machete-wielding rioters, who went on to burn down houses, churches, and the palace of the emir of Kano.⁹⁹ Published accounts suggest that it was soldiers rather than policemen who were responsible for finally restoring

⁹³ Dorina Bekoe, *Nigeria’s 2011 Elections: Best Run, but Most Violent*, Peacebrief, no. 103, U.S. Institute of Peace, August 15, 2011, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PB%20103.pdf>, accessed November 14, 2014.

⁹⁴ Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800.”

⁹⁵ Quoted in “Nigerian Unrest Kills More Than 200 in Post-Election Unrest,” AFP World Service, April 20, 2011, Open Source Center.

⁹⁶ Quoted in International Crisis Group, *Lessons from Nigeria’s 2011 Elections*.

⁹⁷ “Nigeria: Nasarawa State Witnesses Post-Election Violence,” *This Day Online* (Lagos), April 19, 2011. Buhari, a northern Muslim, will contest the 2015 election as the APC candidate. “Muhammadu Buhari to Contest Nigeria Election for APC,” BBC News, December 11, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30429366>, accessed December 12, 2014.

⁹⁸ “Nigeria: Police Spokesman Says Ongoing Violence in North not Religious or Ethnic,” BBC World Service, April 18, 2011, Open Source Center; and “Nigeria: Police, Army Pledge to Provide ‘Adequate’ Security During 26 Apr Polls,” *The Guardian Online* (Lagos), April 1, 2011, Open Source Center.

⁹⁹ “Violence After Presidential Elections: Kano State,” *Safer Nigeria Resources*, April 18, 2011, <https://saferafriagroup.wordpress.com/category/electoral-violence/page/5/>, accessed December 5, 2014.

order. “[I]t was often not until soldiers were deployed to affected areas that the violence was halted,” according to Human Rights Watch.¹⁰⁰

Several factors account for the failure of the NPF to quell the violence. First, the force lacks the capabilities, will, and training to prevent and control outbreaks of violence on the scale of what was seen during the 2011 post-election period. Second, the NPF senior leadership deployed the force in ways that contributed to the protracted violence. The MOPOL seems to have been employed not as a deterrent, but only after rioting had broken out—and even then in a very limited way, according to press accounts. For example, authorities sent 400 members of MOPOL to Kaduna State—a relatively small number, given the scale of the unrest there.¹⁰¹

Moreover, the NPF appears to have concentrated its manpower resources in the FCT and Lagos State. In the FCT, the NPF deployed a “joint police patrol team” composed of MOPOL, anti-terrorism units, and bomb squads in Abuja and the satellite towns.¹⁰² No doubt this reflected reasonable concerns about maintaining security in Nigeria’s political and commercial capitals. And, with some relatively minor exceptions, order was maintained in the FCT and Lagos—demonstrating, perhaps, that the NPF, under the right circumstances, can provide a measure of public safety.¹⁰³ However, these apparent successes involved tradeoffs: specifically, there were fewer police to deploy in the restive north of the country.

Finally, police intelligence was a major gap for the NPF and for the country’s other security forces. The lack of prior information, according to some observers, contributed to the police being overwhelmed and unable to control the violent unrest that went on for 72 hours until the army stepped in.¹⁰⁴ This intelligence gap reflects deeper institutional weaknesses in the NPF. Under the NPF’s so-called general duty paradigm, policemen rarely serve in their home states, and so they typically lack the

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch, “Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800.”

¹⁰¹ “Presidential Election Fallout: 43 Killed, 4,500 Displaced,” *ConnectAfrica*, April 20, 2011, <https://connectafrica.wordpress.com/>, accessed December 5, 2014. Human rights organizations accused the security forces of using extrajudicial killings to regain control of the city. “Nigeria: Human Rights Groups Accuse Army, Police of Abuses During Election Riots,” AFP World Service, May 6, 2011, Open Source Center.

¹⁰² “Nigeria: Police Says [sic] Normalcy Returns to Abuja,” Radio Nigeria, April 18, 2011, http://migs.concordia.ca/Media_Monitoring/documents/Nigeria_Domestic_Media_Monitoring_April_18-April24_2011.pdf, accessed December 6, 2014.

¹⁰³ CLEEN Foundation, *Policing Elections in Nigeria: Assessment of the Role of the Nigeria Police Force in Elections in Nigeria* (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, 2010), p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ Carl Dundas and Jide Ojo, “Nigeria’s Experience with Electoral Violence,” in Almami Cyllah, ed., *Elections Worth Dying For? A Selection of Case Studies from Africa* (Washington, DC: International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2014), p. 185.

language skills and web of social connections needed to develop intelligence. According to one Nigerian expert, “If you don’t speak the local language armed robbers may be planning an operation in a beer parlour and a policeman who is a stranger in that environment cannot gather information.”¹⁰⁵ As during the colonial period, members of the NPF are essentially outsiders—feared and distrusted in equal measure.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Chukwudi Nweje, “How Security Agencies Can Sustain Nigeria’s Democracy,” *Daily Independent* (Lagos) <http://dailyindependentnig.com/2014/10/security-agencies-can-sustain-nigerias-democracy/>, accessed December 8, 2014.

Conclusion: The 2015 Elections and Beyond

For the 2015 elections, the NPF plans to deploy approximately 300,000 officers for election security operations. According to the current IGP, the NPF's role is to be the same as it has been in past elections: maintain law and order, and protect lives and property.¹⁰⁶

The police performance during the last general election raises a number of themes that policymakers and analysts should be alert to as they work to understand the security dynamics of the 2015 polling. Widespread violence coupled with NPF ineptitude made for tumultuous 2011 elections. Despite the IGP's urging that similar levels of violence must not be allowed this time, there is little to suggest that this dynamic will be different in 2015. As in the past, the authorities have vowed to deploy massive numbers of police across the country.¹⁰⁷

Our research into the NPF suggests that expectations for NPF performance in the upcoming elections should remain low. Police reform has been a stated government objective in every administration since the nation gained independence in 1960. However, as many analysts have highlighted, problems in the NPF are pervasive and systemic, and efforts to address them have faltered with each attempt. Recent unrest only adds to the likelihood that the NPF will be unprepared to meet the challenges of the 2015 elections. For example, in response to arrests following an attack on Jonathan's campaign buses, protesters set a local police post on fire.¹⁰⁸

A number of factors are likely to contribute to the security challenges surrounding the 2015 elections. The postponement of the elections is likely to exacerbate already considerable tensions between the PDP and APC, and according to the International

¹⁰⁶ "Nigeria: Police Chief Cautions Against Violation of Electoral Act," *This Day Online*, January 14, 2015, Open Source Center.

¹⁰⁷ "Nigeria: Police, Civil Defense Corps to Deploy 360,000 Personnel for February Elections," *Punch Online* (Lagos), January 18, 2015, Open Source Center.

¹⁰⁸ "Nigeria: Explosion Hits Opposition APC Offices in Rivers State," *Punch Online*, January 12, 2015, Open Source Center.

Crisis Group could contribute to increased violence.¹⁰⁹ Boko Haram and other extremist groups will almost certainly work to maintain a violent presence during and after the elections. According to an election security assessment by the CLEEN Foundation, the states of Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, and, to a lesser degree, the FCT are likely to be violent “hotspots” in 2015, as they were in 2011.¹¹⁰ By all accounts, however, the federal government’s intelligence picture remains clouded and incomplete, making it unlikely that the security forces will be able to anticipate and thwart election-related violence perpetrated by terrorists, party officials, vigilantes, and ordinary criminals hired to intimidate candidates and voters.¹¹¹

Looking beyond the elections, what can we expect from the NPF? Assistance from the United States and the United Kingdom—quite limited in recent years—seems to have done little to advance objectives such as improving NPF performance, promoting respect for human rights, and fostering a democratic policing model built on public service and popular legitimacy.¹¹² According to the Congressional Research Service, the Nigerian government has been sensitive to perceived U.S. meddling in the country’s internal affairs and “dismissive of certain training offers.”¹¹³

Despite international concern and widespread discontent in Nigeria over the NPF’s performance, the force appears largely impervious to structural change. Ultimately, the NPF appears committed to its original mandate—namely, ensuring regime survival in the face of the ethno-religious violence that has roiled the country for decades. As a result, says Innocent Chukwuma, the Nigerian police remain a force designed “to repel rather than to serve the people.”¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ See the International Crisis Group’s blog on “Nigeria’s Elections: A Perilous Postponement,” <http://blog.crisisgroup.org/africa/2015/02/12/nigerias-elections-a-perilous-postponement/>.

¹¹⁰ CLEEN Foundation, *Election Security Threat Assessments: Towards 2015 Elections*, 6th ed. (Lagos: CLEEN Foundation, October 2014), <http://cleenfoundation.blogspot.com/2014/10/election-security-threat-assessment.html>, accessed November 20, 2014.

¹¹¹ For more on Nigeria’s informal police institutions, see Inyang and Abraham, “Policing Nigeria.”

¹¹² Hills, “Lost in Translation,” pp. 739-740.

¹¹³ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*. RL33964 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 5, 2014), p. 20, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33964.pdf>, accessed February 1, 2015.

¹¹⁴ Innocent Chukwuma, “Reforming the Nigerian Police: Issues at Stake,” in Chris Ferguson and Jeffrey O. Isima, eds., *Providing Security for People: Enhancing Security through Police, Justice, and Intelligence Reform in Africa* (Shriveham, UK: Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform, 2004), p. 42.

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