

Polity IV Country Report 2010: Nigeria

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td colspan="3">11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td colspan="3">No</td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	4	4	0	Democ:	4	4	0	Autoc:	0	0	0	Durable:	11			Tentative:	No			
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SCODE	NIG	CCODE	475	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
2	2	4	5	2	0																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date	16 June 1998		Begin Date	29 May 1999																					
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution	1999																								
Executive(s)	President Goodluck Jonathan (PDP); directly elected 16 April 2011; 58.89%																								
Legislature	Bicameral; House of Representatives (360 seats; directly elected; most recent elections, 14 and 21 April 2007) People's Democratic Party (PDP): 262 All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP): 62 Action Congress: 32 Other parties: 4 Senate (109 seats, 3 from each state plus 1 from Abuja; directly elected; most recent elections, 14 and 21 April 2007) PDP: 85 ANPP: 16 Action Congress: 6 Other parties: 2																								
Judiciary	Federal Supreme Court																								

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Transitional or Restricted Elections (7)

The military has long played an integral role in the conduct of Nigerian politics. Senior members of the armed forces dominated Nigeria politics from independence in 1960 until 1998, with only nine years of

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

civilian government. Despite repeated efforts to install democratic institutions in Nigeria, ethnic-based factional tensions, endemic corruption and the overtly political ambitions of the military all worked to weaken the fragile mandate of civilian rulers. General Sani Abacha seized power in 1993 and established a military dictatorship in Nigeria. However, General Abacha died suddenly in June 1998 and political power was quickly transferred to General Abdulsalam Abubakar. Quite unexpectedly, General Abubakar initiated a guided transition to general elections and civilian rule in Nigeria. General Abubakar, building on the limited political reforms established by Abacha in 1996, overhauled and reinvigorated the party system in Nigeria. After fifteen years of repressive military rule, a democratically elected government was sworn in on 29 May 1999. While the presidential election of February 1999 was marred by voting irregularities and acts of political intimidation and violence, most international and domestic observers accepted the outcome of this balloting as reflecting the will of the people.

Presidential elections were once again held on 19 April 2003. These elections, won by Obasanjo, were disputed by the opposition. Local and international observers, while unwilling to call the elections fraudulent, nevertheless, noted serious breaches of the electoral process (particularly in southeastern Nigeria). Twenty parties launched an unsuccessful attempt to petition the courts to overturn the results.

Despite Obasanjo's electoral victory in 2003, since these flawed election the President's position has become increasingly tenuous. In October 2004 four military officers and a civilian were charged with plotting to kill President Obasanjo by shooting down his helicopter with a missile. Moreover, in early 2005 the chairman of Nigeria's ruling party was forced to resign from his post under intense pressure from the President after he had warned Obasanjo that his government was becoming increasingly unpopular and that the prospects for a coup were extremely high. Public disapproval of Obasanjo increased in 2006 and in May 2006 the legislature blocked a constitutional amendment that would have allowed him to contest the 2007 election. On 21 April 2007 Umaru Musa Yar'Adua of Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party was elected president in elections that were seriously marred by improprieties by the PDP-controlled government. The opposition remained highly fragmented and was unable to sustain a challenge of the election results. On 23 November 2009 President Yar'Adua left the country to receive medical treatment, leaving the running of the country to his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan.

Following a prolonged illness of President Yar'Adua, on 9 February 2010 the National Assembly transmitted temporary presidential power to Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan. Yar'Adua died on 6 May 2010 at which time Jonathan was sworn-in as the official President of Nigeria. In January 2011 Jonathan competed in a hotly contested primary campaign against ex-Vice-President Atiku Abubakar. The primary contest between these two men laid bare the deep ethnic and regional tensions within the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) and has made the North-South division a significant political issue in the upcoming general elections scheduled for 2011. President Jonathan is the first president from Nigeria's southern, oil-producing Niger Delta region. Originally picked by President Yar'Adua, a northerner, for the position of Vice President, Jonathan is a Christian from the Ijaw ethnic group. In defeating Abubakar, a northerner, in the PDP primary, Jonathan undermined the long-standing PDP tradition of alternating presidential power between representatives of the north and the south of the country. Under this unwritten rule, the candidate from the PDP, the party that has won every presidential contest since the return of electoral politics in 1999, should be from the north of the country. Abubakar played up the ethnic symbolism of his candidacy in the primary yet was unable to secure enough support of the party faithful to win the nomination.

Executive Constraints: Substantial Limitations (5)

The three branches of government largely acted independently during President Obasanjo's first years in office, however, the continued political influence of the military and the tense relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government have been a constant threat to the stability of this fledgling democracy. Despite Obasanjo's substantial majority in the legislature, the President has not been able to exercise executive authority without legislative oversight and consultation. The legislative branch, in conjunction with the judiciary (which has been undermined by years of neglect, corruption and politicization), have been relatively effective in establishing a modicum level of horizontal accountability to the Nigerian political system.

In August 2002 the legislature gave the President fourteen days to resign or face impeachment proceedings, alleging several constitutional breaches by Obasanjo. President Obasanjo ultimately defused this tense political situation by accepting the mediation of former civilian president Sheho Shagari and former military ruler General Gowon, to get the legislature to back down. The main impetus behind the

impeachment process, which few political observers viewed as likely to pass, was to rattle the President and curb his efforts to consolidate power. Despite this visible display of political authority by the legislative branch in 2002, the lack of a strong party system in Nigeria continues to undermine the mobilization capabilities of opposition forces within the National Assembly that would be necessary to be an effective counterweight to presidential power. Moreover, the April 2003 elections provided significant gains for the President's party and handed some of his most vocal opponents in the legislature crushing defeats. This turn of events seemed to set the groundwork for a more harmonious relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government over the next few years. In 2006, however, the legislature refused President Obasanjo's attempt to alter the constitution in order to remain in office for a third term. Obasanjo's decision to step down, adhering to constitutional guidelines, demonstrates that the legislature maintains substantial limitations on executive power.

Political Participation: Gradual Transition from Un-institutionalized Competition (5)

The Nigerian state incorporates over 250 ethnic groups and has a post-colonial history of factional political conflict. The most intense ethnic divisions have historically revolved around the Hausa-Fulani (Muslims from the northern states), members of the Igbo ethnic (southern "Christians"), and the southern-based Yoruba tribe. The core division within the Nigerian polity over the past forty years pits the politically dominant Muslim states of the north against the economically advantaged "Christian" south. This core factional division has given strong impetus for strict military rule in this country. While democracy has been tried on several occasions, its reign was inevitably shortened by endemic corruption, ethnic favoritism and, ultimately, military intervention (which, in most cases, continued the course of corruption and ethnic favoritism pursued by their civilian predecessors). In its most recent incarnation, democracy in Nigeria has, at least so far, avoided the naked ethnic dimensions of the past. While factional tensions continue to underlie politics in Nigeria, the new democratic regime has attempted, albeit not always successfully, to accommodate ethnic demands without weakening central state authority.

After fifteen years of blatant ethnic-based military rule, the return to democracy in Nigeria in 1999 reflected a general rejection of northern hegemonic domination and has triggered increased pressure for a regional "power shift" in Nigerian politics. While President Obasanjo (who is of Yoruban descent) has actively sought to downplay the role of ethnicity in Nigerian politics, nevertheless, factional struggles and violence have intensified under the new democratic regime. Political parties continue to be formed around ethnic markers and numerous ethnic-based vigilante groups have assumed responsibility for crime control and other government functions throughout the country as the power of the central state to penetrate society has weakened and the level of political and communal violence has escalated. Over 10,000 individuals have been killed in communal violence in Nigeria since 1999. As a response to this rising level of factional conflict within the country, federal troops have been used to quell civil unrest in thirteen of Nigeria's thirty-six states in recent years. Signaling the continuing weakness of human rights in Nigeria, as the number of attacks on federal government troops has increased, the number of reprisal killings by these forces has also escalated.

While the factional divisions that have long defined the political landscape in Nigeria are not currently institutionalized in a repressive ethnic-based regime, nevertheless, Nigeria's nascent democracy continues to be plagued by ethnic friction, regional contention, economic scarcity and religious polarization. Three regionally divisive and politically explosive issues threaten the new democratic order in this country: (1) the institutionalization of the sharia (Islamic law) in the predominantly Muslim north; (2) the fight over oil profits between the central government and the southern residents of the Niger Delta; and (3) the agitation for true federalism in southern Nigeria generally.

First, recent efforts to impose the Sharia in the northern states (Bauchi, Borno, Jigawa, Niger, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara) has sparked resistance by the region's Christian minority communities and has triggered rising levels of violence throughout the country. This sectarian violence has been greatest in the northern and central regions of Nigeria. Longstanding political and economic animosities between the dominant Hausa-Fulani and the large number of non-Muslim groups residing in these areas have converged in recent years with a revival of Islamic fundamentalism ethnic nationalism to produce an explosive political situation. Hundreds have died and thousands have been displaced in civil unrest in these regions over the past few years. Under British rule the 150 "Christian" ethnic minorities residing in the central regions of the country were placed under the political domain of the Hausa-Fulani in the Northern Region. While the direct political dominance of the northern-based Sokoto Caliphate over the minority groups of the central regions waned over the course of post-colonial era, nevertheless, these

groups remained culturally – and in many ways politically – subservient to their Muslim countrymen. Tensions between these groups have been exacerbated in recent years by the migratory tendencies of the Hausa-Fulani, who are mainly traders and farmers. Motivated by economic opportunity and by the relentless southward march of the Sahara Desert on the cattle grazing lands of the northern states, a massive southward migration has occurred over the past two decades. These Hausa-Fulani “settlers” have come to establish large communities in the central states and have gained increasing levels of economic and political power within the region.

Economic and political grievances between the “indigenous” and “settler” communities in the central states has exploded into violence in recent years as the northern states have pursued a policy of implementing Islamic law. The implementation of the sharia is widely perceived by the non-Muslim minority groups throughout the northern and central regions as a move by the Hausa-Fulani to achieve cultural hegemony over them. Moreover, as the February 2002 ethnic clashes in Lagos demonstrate, the escalating levels of sectarian violence in the north and central regions has increasingly come to jeopardize the tenuous hold on power by the democratically elected central government. Increasingly, groups such as the Oodua People’s Congress (OPC), a militia which purports to defend Yoruba interests in the south of the country from Muslim influences, has come to challenge the legitimacy and political authority of the newly established federal government. It is estimated that during President Obasanjo’s first four years in office (1999-2003), well over 10,000 people have died in clashes between Muslim and Christian communities (however, government statistics place the death toll in the Plateau state itself at more than 53,000). However in November 2004 the six-month old state of emergency in the Plateau was rescinded as a tenuous peace took hold in the state. Sectarian violence broke out once again around Jos in late 2009 and early 2010. More recently, an Islamist militant group calling itself “Boko Haram” emerged in the north centered on Maiduguri; it had been founded in 2002 but embarked on a series of violent attacks in 2009 that triggered a military offensive in late July that resulted in up to 1000 killed including its leader. The group has since reorganized itself and continues to engage in regular attacks.

Second, the struggle for the control of oil revenues (which account for over eighty percent of national exports and central government revenues) derived from the Niger Delta has the potential to further fractionalize the Nigerian state. The desperately poor and underdeveloped 70,000 square kilometer Niger Delta, where the River Niger breaks into a series of rivers as it empties into the Atlantic Ocean, produces over ninety percent of the country’s crude oil. Over the past decade armed groups have targeted the oil facilities of the Delta in an effort to force the central government to allow them greater access to the oil wealth generated from their region. Such efforts by residents of the Niger Delta to retain control over their oil revenues have been actively rejected by the central government. The central government fears that such a regional-based resource regime would increase economic disparities between this oil-rich region and the rest of the country (dominated by the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo communities) and trigger ethnic-based factional fighting. Economic tensions within Niger Delta have also triggered intense political rivalries among the residents of the Delta itself and have resulted in brutal government repression.

Rival ethnic Ijaw and Itsekeri militias have been the primary participants in the instability in Niger Delta region. Over one thousand were killed in ethnic fighting between the two groups in 2004. This violence stems largely from personal differences among the leaders of each group as well as disputes over control of the illegal trade in crude oil stolen from pipelines crisscrossing the delta. The Ijaw is the largest ethnic group in the region but claim that the Itsekeri are favored by central authorities. The Ijaw have mounted a sustained campaign of disruption and intimidation in the Delta region since 2004 in their attempt to force the government to increase the share of oil revenues expended on regional development.

Finally, the violent struggle in the Niger Delta is only a small component of the broader campaign in southern Nigeria for “true federalism.” While Nigeria is constitutionally a federal republic, in recent years the southern governments have actively lobbied for greater regional autonomy. This movement for greater federalism has not only been rejected by the central government but also by the nineteen northern states, which are more dependent than their southern counterparts on the current system of distributive federalism. The ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria effected the run-up to the April 2011 presidential election. The northwest zone of the country (Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano and Jigawa) is seen as the largest voting bloc in the country, although no single party has won all the seats in a general election since 1999. Currently, the PDP controls all states but Kano in the zone, but the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), led by presidential candidate Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, has gained widespread support among northern residents. Most of the region’s residents are said to be passionate about

a Northerner regaining presidential power. The CPC has actively used religious and regional appeals as a tool to mobilize support for the 9 April 2011 presidential election.