Nigeria: Key Issues and U.S. Policy

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Overview. Nigeria is Africa’s most populous country, largest economy, and leading oil producer. Successive U.S. Administrations have described the U.S. partnership with Nigeria as among the most important bilateral relationships on the continent: Nigeria is the United States’ second-largest trade partner and third-largest destination for U.S. foreign direct investment in Africa, and it routinely ranks among the top annual recipients of U.S. foreign assistance globally. Poor governance, conflict, and human rights abuses in Nigeria have attracted attention from Members of Congress and pose challenges for U.S. engagement.

People and Politics. Nigeria is poised to overtake the United States as the third most populous country in the world by 2050, with a population expected to exceed 400 million. Its population of 219 million is ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse. Contestation over the distribution of political power and public resources among this diverse population has significantly shaped Nigeria’s politics and governance system.

Nigeria has been a multiparty republic since 1999, after decades of military rule. Governance has improved in many respects since the 1999 transition, yet repression of political opponents and journalists, corruption, and security force abuses persist. In 2015, Nigeria experienced its first electoral transfer of power between parties with the election of President Muhammadu Buhari. Buhari won reelection in 2019, in polls that featured low turnout, violence, and allegations of pervasive vote-buying and therefore fueled concerns among observers over Nigeria’s democratic trajectory. The next general elections are due in 2023. In Nigeria’s multiparty era, major political parties have often rotated candidates for office, including the presidency, on a regional basis—one of several ethno-regional power-sharing arrangements that distinguish Nigeria’s federal system.

Security. Nigeria faces serious security challenges on several fronts. In the northeast, fighting between government forces and two armed Islamist insurgencies—Boko Haram and an Islamic State-affiliated splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province—has killed tens of thousands of civilians, displaced millions, and involved extensive human rights abuses. In northwest and central Nigeria, an escalation of disputes between herders and farmers has contributed to a deterioration of security conditions characterized by armed criminality, ethno-religious violence, mass abductions for ransom, and emergent Islamist extremist activity, amid rising interethnic and interreligious tensions. In the southeast, violence between security forces and armed separatists killed dozens in 2020-2021. The oil-rich Niger Delta, to the south, has long faced criminality and episodic militancy. The waters off southern Nigeria rank among the world’s most dangerous for attacks on vessels. Insecurity has strained Nigeria’s security forces. Perpetrators of violence have in many cases eluded prosecution, as military and law enforcement authorities often have struggled to investigate and prosecute attacks. Security forces have reportedly committed extensive abuses, exacerbating local grievances and raising challenges for U.S. partnership programs.

Economy. With extensive oil and gas reserves, high potential in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, and a rapidly growing population, Nigeria is arguably equipped to emerge as a global economic powerhouse. Nonetheless, Nigeria faces stark economic and development challenges: it is home to one of the world’s largest extremely poor populations, and a major share of the population lacks access to basic services, such as improved water, toilet, and electricity. Some development indicators have worsened in recent years, amid rapid population growth. Dependence on petroleum exports makes Nigeria’s economy highly vulnerable to changes in global oil prices. Economic shocks linked to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have slowed growth and heightened poverty; the country’s near-term outlook is uncertain as the government struggles to expand COVID-19 vaccinations and as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 has roiled global fuel and food markets.

U.S. Assistance. State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-administered aid allocated for Nigeria included $450 million in FY2020 appropriations, mostly for health programs. This figure does not include regionally- and centrally-managed funds, such as humanitarian aid; the United States has committed over $2 billion in emergency assistance for Nigeria since FY2015. It also excludes funds administered by other U.S. federal departments and agencies, including extensive security assistance administered by the Department of Defense (DOD).

Congress. Recent congressional attention on Nigeria has centered on terrorist threats, elections and other governance issues, human rights, and humanitarian conditions. Some Members have expressed concern over governance and human rights trends, including through legislation in the 117th Congress (e.g., H.Res. 235, S.Res. 241, and §6428 of H.R. 4350 [the House-passed National Defense Authorization Act for FY2022, a provision that was not adopted in the final bill, P.L. 117-81]). Military sales to Nigeria have been a focus of congressional scrutiny; in 2021, some Members of Congress reportedly placed a pre-notification hold on a proposed sale of military helicopters to Nigeria.
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Introduction

With Africa’s largest economy, among the most extensive proven oil and gas reserves in the world, and a population on pace to exceed 400 million by mid-century, Nigeria’s economic and demographic heft position it to play a major role on the regional and global stages. Stark governance and security challenges cloud this outlook, however, amid widening development gaps: Nigeria has one of the world’s largest populations living in extreme poverty, projected at roughly 100 million—nearly half the country’s population, and accounting for about one-quarter of Africa’s poor.1 By virtue of Nigeria’s demographic size and influence beyond its borders, the achievement of major global development aims, such as the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, may depend to a considerable extent on whether Nigeria can reach its vast economic potential. Similarly, the attainment of longstanding U.S. security, development, and public health objectives in Africa arguably hinges on the advancement of such goals in Nigeria.

In recent years, deteriorating security conditions and other challenges have spurred pessimism on the part of some outside observers, as well as among Nigerians: according to Afrobarometer, a regional polling organization, nearly 70% of Nigerians surveyed in early 2020 believed their country was going in the wrong direction.2 Some analysts have argued that Nigeria is a failing or failed state; others disagree, pointing to areas of progress or resilience.3 Such debates are not new—political and security crises have animated periodic concern over Nigeria’s viability and territorial integrity since the country’s independence from the United Kingdom in 1960—and they are likely to persist as Nigeria continues to confront formidable governance, economic, and security challenges. In the meantime, Congress might consider how the United States can best advance U.S. interests and sustain past investments amid deteriorating human rights conditions, rising insecurity, and scarce resources and divergent priorities on the part of Nigerian authorities.

Demography

With an estimated 219 million people, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and sixth most populous globally.4 By 2050, it is poised to overtake the United States as the third most populous country (behind India and China), with a populace projected to exceed 400 million.5 Around three in five Nigerians are below the age of 25, raising the possibility of a “demographic dividend” in the coming decades—contingent upon the capacity of Nigeria’s government and economy to provide a rapidly growing populace with quality services and livelihoods.6

Nigeria’s population is highly diverse, comprising hundreds of ethnic and linguistic groups. There are no official statistics on ethnic or religious affiliation; efforts to collect such data have been

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highly controversial. Nigeria’s largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani, made up of two groups (the Hausa and Fulani) concentrated in the north whose mutual assimilation has led them to be often, but not always, considered as a single bloc in the context of Nigerian politics; the Yoruba, who predominate in the west; and the Igbo, concentrated in the southeast. Nigerians generally refer to groups outside of these three as minorities. Observers describe Nigeria’s population as roughly evenly balanced between Muslims, who are a majority in the north, and Christians, a majority in the south (see “Interfaith Relations and Religious Freedom Concerns”).

**Figure 1. Nigeria**

![Map of Nigeria](image)

**Source:** CRS graphic, using data from the State Department and Esri, a GIS mapping software company.

**Politics and Governance**

Nigeria has been a multiparty republic since 1999, after three decades of military rule punctuated by recurrent coups and intermittent attempts to restore civilian authority. A federation with 36 states, its political structure resembles that of the United States, with a bicameral National Assembly comprising a 109-member Senate and 360-member House of Representatives.

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7 The last census that produced data on ethnic or religious affiliation in Nigeria occurred in 1963 and featured extensive irregularities. Nigeria’s military government annulled the results of a 1973 census exercise, which were widely viewed as fraudulent. Ensuing censuses have excluded questions on ethnicity or religion. Several nongovernment studies have sought to enumerate Nigeria’s ethno-religious demography; their methodologies and results are a subject of debate.

8 The Hausa and Fulani are present in several African countries; the term “Hausa-Fulani” is generally only used when referring to the groups in Nigeria. Some researchers have objected to the “Hausa-Fulani” label. On Hausa-Fulani identity, see Moses Ochonu, “Colonialism within Colonialism: The Hausa-Caliphate Imaginary and the British Colonial Administration of the Nigerian Middle Belt,” *African Studies Quarterly* vol. 10, nos. 2-3 (2008): 98-100.

President Muhammadu Buhari took office in 2015 and won a second four-year term in 2019. A retired army major general from Katsina State in the northwest, Buhari previously took power in a military coup in 1983, before his chief of army staff overthrew him in 1985; he placed second in three consecutive presidential polls before his 2015 victory. His All Progressives Congress (APC) holds majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives and over half of state governorships. The leading opposition party is the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), which held the presidency from 1999 to 2015. Parties are not based on firm platforms; party defections are common, “particularly ahead of elections as politicians jockey for the best platform to secure victory.”

Federalism and Power-Sharing

Over several decades, Nigeria’s political leaders have adopted a number of (formal and informal) institutions that operate to distribute political power and public resources based on ethno-regional inclusion or proportionality. According to one observer, “these efforts have had a major impact on how Nigerians talk about fairness in political life and on how they demand services and benefits from the federal government.” These power-sharing institutions and norms are central topics of discussion in Nigerian political debate and public commentary.

A defining feature of Nigeria’s governance system is the statutory allocation of many federally collected revenues—notably including oil and gas receipts, which account for a large share of such earnings—to state and local governments. State and local authorities rely heavily on these transfers for financing and associated patronage resources. Disputes persist over the distribution of revenues between and among tiers of government. Discontent with the intergovernmental division of fiscal and other authorities—particularly among state and local government officials dissatisfied with the extent of powers accorded to the federal government—has spurred calls for a “restructuring” of Nigeria’s federation, especially to devolve authorities to sub-federal tiers.

Under the “federal character” principle, enshrined in the 1999 constitution, appointments to the civil service and other posts (e.g., the military officer corps) must guarantee “no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups.” A Federal Character Commission (FCC) monitors the geographic distribution of state appointments. According to separate (not legally mandated) conventions, political parties often rotate candidates for office on an ethno-regional basis (a practice known as “zoning”) and, since the 1999 transition to civilian rule, have often nominated candidates for the executive branch to rotate the presidency between north and south after two terms in office (the “rotational presidency”).

15 Nigeria’s Constitution of 1999 with Amendments through 2011, Chapter II, §3.
16 Until 1999, northerners had held the presidency for much of Nigeria’s post-independence history, mostly as military heads of state. In 1993, the military annulled an election that would have resulted in Nigeria’s first government led by an elected president from the south, leading to significant unrest. Some commentators have described the rotational presidency as an important innovation for reducing interethnic tensions and promoting a sense of fairness in the distribution of power; others criticize the convention as unevenly implemented or misguided. See, e.g., Iwok Iniobong, “2023: Nigeria’s power rotation controversy rages, amid clamour for competence,” Business Day, February 25, 2021.
The 2011 zoning controversy followed the 2010 death of incumbent President Umaru Yar’Adua, a northerner. He was succeeded by his southern-born Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, who went on to win reelection in 2011. Many northerners, including some prominent figures within Jonathan’s party, opposed Jonathan’s candidacy on the grounds that a northerner should have held the presidency for two consecutive terms. For an account of this controversy and the post-election violence, see Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800*, May 2011.

On challenges facing non-Indigenes, see annual State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*; see also HRW, “They Do Not Own This Place”: Government Discrimination Against “Non-Indigenes” in Nigeria, 2006.


Senators Menendez, Schumer, Coons, and Booker and Representatives Gottheimer and Pascrell, Jr., wrote to Nigeria’s Attorney General expressing concern over Sowore’s arrest. Other Members also expressed concern. In the 117th Congress, S.Res. 241 (as introduced) notes Sowore’s case in the context of global press freedom threats.

The 2020 #EndSARS Protests

In October 2020, video circulated on social media purporting to document an extrajudicial killing by members of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a police unit that human rights groups had previously accused of abuses. The protests that ensued were among the largest popular mobilizations in Nigeria’s history; the campaign gained steam as celebrities and world leaders, including some Members of Congress, expressed solidarity. The Buhari administration responded by dissolving SARS and announcing other police reforms, while deploying security forces to disperse demonstrations; witnesses accused authorities of recruiting or permitting gangs to attack protesters. The protests culminated on October 20, when police and military personnel reportedly used live fire to disperse demonstrators gathered at the Lekki Tollgate and Alausa areas of Lagos State. Observers accused security forces of killing multiple civilians; in a 2021 report, a state-convened panel of inquiry described the events as a “massacre” and accused authorities stymieing the panel’s investigation. Federal and Lagos State officials have denied reports of civilian fatalities. To date, no security personnel have faced charges for abuses against #EndSARS protesters.

Nigeria has held six general elections since the return of civilian rule. Some observers described the 2019 polls, in which Buhari won reelection, as a regression in Nigeria’s democratic trajectory and a missed opportunity to build on the successes of the 2015 polls—which, despite flaws, were widely considered the most credible in Nigeria’s history. Disinformation, inflammatory rhetoric, and violence marred the pre-election period ahead of the 2019 elections; concerns on election day included vote buying, ballot secrecy violations, and irregularities in ballot collation, according to U.S.-funded election observers. After the polls, the State Department imposed visa restrictions on unnamed individuals “believed to be responsible for, or complicit in, undermining democracy in Nigeria.” In late 2020, the State Department imposed additional visa restrictions on unnamed individuals for undermining subsequent state-level elections in Kogi and Bayelsa States.

The next general elections are due in 2023. President Buhari is ineligible to run due to a two-term limit. Whether Nigeria’s political class will adhere to the rotational presidency arrangement in 2023 is a key question, with implications for political coalition-building and public perceptions of one of Nigeria’s defining power-sharing institutions. After two terms by a president of northern origins, some politicians and commentators argue that the post is “due” to the south. Others contend that Nigeria should abandon the rotation arrangement in 2023.

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22 For more, see CRS Insight IN11525, “Nigeria: #EndSARS Protests Against Police Brutality,” by Tomás F. Husted.
23 Several Members Tweeted in support of the #EndSARS protests and accountability for police abuses in Nigeria. In the 117th Congress, H.Res. 235 would express support for the demands of the #EndSARS protesters, among other aims.
25 Stephanie Busari et al., “‘They pointed their guns at us and started shooting,’” CNN, November 19, 2020.
28 Ibid.
31 Dapo Akinrefon, “Power must shift to South in 2023 - Southern, Middle Belt leaders,” Vanguard, February 11, 2022.
Corruption and U.S. Kleptocracy Recovery Efforts

Corruption in Nigeria is reportedly pervasive, and it has been the focus of extensive research, commentary, and civic activism. Surveys indicate widespread suspicion of public office-holders and other government officials. Various studies have sought to quantify the costs of corruption in Nigeria or in specific sectors of the economy, using various methodologies.

Several state agencies work to combat corruption, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), which has been a focus of U.S. assistance and has collaborated with U.S. agencies in law enforcement actions (see “Cybercrime, Financial Crime, and U.S. Responses”). These agencies have seized billions of dollars’ worth of ill-gotten assets and prosecuted a number of current and former officials. Analysts have identified several challenges impeding their work, however, including political interference, resource gaps, and a slow-moving justice system.

President Buhari, who campaigned on a pledge to root out graft, arguably has amassed a mixed anti-corruption record while in office. During his tenure, anti-corruption agencies have brought charges and/or secured convictions against several high-level officials. The Buhari administration also has worked with foreign partners, including the United States, to repatriate the proceeds of past corruption (see Text Box). Nevertheless, some observers allege that Buhari has tolerated corruption by his own allies; his cabinet includes several figures previously accused of corrupt practices. His government also has maintained the use of certain practices that analysts describe as prone to diversion or waste, such as off-budget funds for security-related expenses.

Text Box

U.S. Kleptocracy Recovery Efforts

The U.S. Government has acted to seize and recover proceeds of corruption in Nigeria located in or laundered through the United States, and to repatriate such funds for the benefit of the Nigerian people. U.S. attention has centered, in large part, on assets acquired by former military leader Sani Abacha and his co-conspirators, who embezzled billions of dollars in public funds during Abacha’s rule (from 1993 until his death in 1998). In 2013, the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a civil forfeiture suit against over $625 million in assets belonging to Abacha and his associates; pursuant to that suit, in 2014, DOJ seized roughly $480 million in assets allegedly laundered through U.S. banks and stored in multiple jurisdictions. DOJ has sought to enforce this judgment, and some seized funds have been repatriated to Nigeria: in 2020, DOJ transferred nearly $312 million seized in the Isle of Jersey, a UK dependency, to the Nigerian government. DOI has seized U.S. assets belonging to other Nigerian elites, including current Kebbi State governor Abubakar Atiku Bagudu, two former governors, and a former petroleum minister.

Some Members of Congress have expressed concern over the possible diversion of funds repatriated to Nigeria. Particular scrutiny has centered on efforts by Nigerian authorities to transfer roughly $110 million in funds seized

34 Afrobarometer, for instance, reports that nearly 60% of Nigerians believe most or all National Assembly members are corrupt (Afrobarometer, Round 7 data). See also Transparency International’s annual Corruption Perceptions Index.
39 DOJ, “U.S. Repatriates over $311.7 Million in Assets to the Nigerian People that were Stolen by Former Nigerian Dictator and His Associates,” May 4, 2020.
40 Letters from Senator Charles Grassley to then-Director Deborah Connor, DOJ Money Laundering and Asset
Interfaith Relations and Religious Freedom Concerns

According to Pew Research Center polling, 93% of Nigerians surveyed in 2019 stated that religion was very important in their lives, among the highest rates globally. As noted above, Muslims and Christians constitute large majorities in the north and south, respectively, though there are significant populations of Muslims in the south, and of Christians in the north. There is extensive intra-religious diversity, such as between and within Sufi, Salafi, Shia, and heterodox Muslims, and Catholics and Protestants of various denominations. Smaller groups of Nigerians practice other global or Indigenous religions or report no religious affiliation. According to the State Department, many Nigerians “syncretize indigenous animism with Islam or Christianity.”

In general, Nigeria has a long history of religious tolerance and nonviolent conflict resolution between faith groups; according to one analysis, “most of the time, and in most places, Nigerians with diverging religious convictions live and work together peacefully.” A 2020 Afrobarometer survey found that a large majority of Nigerian respondents would be content or would not care if their neighbor practiced a religion other than their own. State discrimination along religious lines has periodically roiled interfaith relations, however, and Nigeria has seen violence along religious lines, particularly in religiously mixed zones of the north. That sectarian affiliation and ethnic identity often overlap can make it difficult to distinguish the role of religious animus as opposed to other forms of discrimination (e.g., anti-“settler” ethnic bias) during such events.

In 2019, the Trump Administration placed Nigeria on a “Special Watch List” for religious freedom concerns under the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA, P.L. 105-292, as amended). In 2020, it named Nigeria a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) for “having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom.” Designation as a CPC can result in various punitive measures (e.g., aid cuts), subject to a waiver; President Trump waived any such measures for Nigeria, citing the U.S. interest. The Biden Administration did not

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Recovery Section, April 1, 2020 and June 29, 2020; letter from Representatives Steve Chabot and Christopher Smith to then-Attorney General William P. Barr and then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo, April 15, 2020.


47 Afrobarometer, “Nigerians show high tolerance for diversity but low trust in fellow citizens, Afrobarometer study shows,” March 10, 2021.

designate Nigeria as a CPC in 2021. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent agency created by Congress, criticized Nigeria’s delisting.59

The specific grounds for Nigeria’s CPC designation (and subsequent delisting) were not made public. Annual State Department religious freedom and human rights reports have highlighted various issues related to interfaith relations and religious freedom in Nigeria, including:

**Issues related to sharia law.** Nigeria has a plural legal system in which English law, customary law (derived from customs in ethnic communities), and, in the north, sharia (Islamic) law govern concurrently. Muslims in northern Nigeria have observed a form of sharia for centuries, though the jurisdiction of sharia courts was limited to personal matters (e.g., marital disputes) after independence. After Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule in 1999, several state governments in the north reintroduced sharia criminal codes, which now operate in 12 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory. The introduction of sharia criminal codes was controversial, and prompted interreligious clashes in parts of the north, notably in the religiously mixed Kaduna State.

Sharia courts may not compel participation by non-Muslims, though non-Muslims may elect to have cases tried in sharia courts.50 Non-Muslims and Shia Muslims—a minority in the majority Sunni north (see below)—reportedly have experienced discrimination in the context of sharia enforcement.51 Religious freedom organizations have expressed particular concern over periodic prosecutions of blasphemy, which is illegal under both sharia and customary law.52 Secular courts of appeal have overturned several high-profile blasphemy convictions.

**Anti-Shia repression.** Nigeria’s minority Shia Muslim community is concentrated in the northwest of the country, and many belong to the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), a group led by outspoken cleric Ibrahim Zakzaky, a longtime critic of the Nigerian government. Since Zakzaky’s rise to prominence in the 1970s, he and his supporters have been involved in periodic clashes with state authorities as well as members of the Sunni community, which comprises a majority of Nigeria’s Muslim population. Zakzaky has been arrested on several occasions.53

Human rights groups have repeatedly accused security forces of using excessive force to disperse IMN gatherings. In 2014, for instance, soldiers reportedly fired on IMN members in Kaduna State, killing 35 people, including three of Zakzaky’s sons.54 In 2015, following a confrontation with IMN members over a roadblock, the military reportedly killed nearly 350 IMN members in Kaduna and arrested Zakzaky and hundreds of others, charging Zakzaky with murder and other

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53 The extent of Zakzaky’s ties with Iran, and the possible implications of such ties for Iranian political and religious influence in Nigeria, have been subject to speculation in light of Zakzaky’s professed support for Iran’s government and virulent anti-U.S., anti-Israel, and anti-Semitic rhetoric. Iranian officials have expressed support for Zakzaky, and analysts contend that Iran has provided material support for the IMN, though the extent of such funding is unclear. See, e.g., Donna Abu-Nasr, “As Trump Makes Threats, Iran Makes Friends,” Bloomberg, March 8, 2017; Jacob Zenn, “A Shia “Boko Haram” Insurgency or Iranian Proxy in Nigeria? Not So Fast,” Jamestown Foundation, July 26, 2019.

crimes. Security forces killed dozens and arrested hundreds in response to ensuing IMN protests calling for Zakzaky’s release. A state court acquitted Zakzaky of all charges in 2021.

**Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (IS-WA).** The State Department has designated Boko Haram and IS-WA “entities of particular concern” for committing “particularly severe” religious freedom violations. (For background on Boko Haram and IS-WA, see “Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province,” below.) Boko Haram’s founder preached an “exclusivist” form of Salafist Sunni Islam, rejecting Western influence and Christianity as well as more moderate forms of Islam. The group has threatened and assassinated Muslim leaders, including mainstream Salafis, for opposing the group, and has killed hundreds of Muslims in attacks on mosques. IS-WA split from Boko Haram in part citing objection to the practice of killing Muslims, and has generally focused attacks on state targets and Christians—though it, too, has attacked unaffiliated Muslims and forced local civilians to follow its religious precepts.

Both Boko Haram and IS-WA have threatened, kidnapped, and killed Christians, including clergy and other leaders. They have destroyed numerous churches. Christians were among the victims of two mass kidnappings that have attracted sustained interest from Congress: Boko Haram’s abduction of 276 girls from Chibok (Borno State) in 2014 and IS-WA’s abduction of 110 girls from Dapchi (Yobe State) in 2018. Dozens of those abducted in Chibok remain missing; of those abducted in Dapchi, all have been released except a Christian, Leah Sharibu, whom IS-WA reportedly has kept in captivity due to her refusal to convert to Islam. In the 117th Congress, H.Res. 319 would recognize the seventh anniversary of the Chibok kidnapping and call for the release of the remaining Chibok abductees and of Sharibu.

**Middle Belt violence.** Nigeria’s religiously and ethnically diverse “Middle Belt,” an informal, variously defined zone of central Nigeria straddling the predominately Muslim north and the largely Christian south, has long been a theater for interreligious conflict. For decades, concerns in this region largely centered on recurrent riots and urban violence between Muslims and Christians, often sparked by “an event of religious significance” such as an instance of alleged blasphemy. Such violence has often coincided with ethnic disputes between “Indigenes” and “settlers” over the rightful “ownership” of territory and related issues, such as land use and elections (see “Federalism and Power-Sharing,” above). In the Middle Belt, “Indigenes” are often Christians, of various ethnic groups, while many “settlers” are ethnic Hausa-Fulani Muslims.

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In the past decade, observer attention has focused on intercommunal violence between Muslim, ethnic Fulani herders and Christian farmers (see “Rural Insecurity: Herder-Farmer Conflict and “Banditry”). Many analysts contend that religious ideology generally is not a primary driver of such conflicts, which appear to stem primarily from disputes over resource control pitting “Indigene” groups against “settler” Fulani. Nonetheless, the violence has aggravated sectarian tensions and spurred killing along religious lines. The State Department reports that “Christian groups stated that Muslim Fulani herdsman were targeting Christian farmers because of their religion. Local Muslim and herder organizations said unaffiliated Fulani were the targets of Christian revenge killings.”

**Security Challenges**

The sections below provide overviews of selected security issues in Nigeria that have attracted attention from Members of Congress and other U.S. policymakers. Some challenges, such as the Boko Haram/IS-WA conflict, human and drug trafficking, and financial and cybercrime, have consequences that extend beyond Nigeria’s borders. Some general trends may be observed across patterns of insecurity and government responses:

**Security forces are under strain.** Nigeria’s military is deployed to all 36 of Nigeria’s states on internal security operations, stretching thin a force estimated to comprise 143,000 active duty personnel. Defense spending has risen over the past decade, and the government has expanded its military capabilities with the acquisition of new ground and air assets, but the military often has struggled to restore stability and state authority in zones cleared during periodic offensives. Some analysts have called for extensive military reform to address issues related to funding, leadership, oversight, and personnel training, deployment, and welfare. Surveys indicate low troop morale and discontent with poor equipment and living conditions, infrequent rotation, and other issues. Nigeria’s national police force is under-resourced, and many officers are deployed as private security, resulting in a reliance on the military for law enforcement tasks.

**Corruption is a key challenge.** Procurement fraud, embezzlement, and other forms of corruption have reportedly drained defense sector resources. By many accounts, there is little transparency into defense budgeting and procurement; several military officers have been convicted of self-enrichment. Off-budget expenditures are common. Transparency International has described Nigeria’s legislature as “largely passive and compliant” in its oversight of defense issues.

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Security forces have committed extensive abuses. Observers have accused Nigerian security forces of extrajudicial killings, torture, and other human rights violations.\(^{70}\) Human rights groups estimate that thousands have died in Nigerian military custody since 2011.\(^{71}\) The State Department reports that security force impunity is a “significant problem.”\(^{72}\)

Militia activity has expanded. Vigilante groups have emerged in conflict-affected zones across the country, varying in size, formality, legality, and government backing. In the northeast, for instance, members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (C-JTF), which organized to help combat Boko Haram, have received state support and participated in military operations.\(^{73}\) Human rights organizations have accused vigilantes of extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses, and prospects for their future demobilization are uncertain.\(^{74}\)

Impunity is widespread. Perpetrators of violence often have eluded prosecution, as authorities have in many cases proved unable or unwilling to hold instigators to account.\(^{75}\) Where authorities have intervened, human rights groups have repeatedly accused security forces of conducting arbitrary mass arrests following episodes of violence.\(^{76}\) In some cases, authorities have released suspects without charge once tensions cooled.\(^{77}\) In others, detainees—including thousands arrested for alleged ties to Boko Haram—have remained in pre-trial detention for years, often in inhumane conditions.\(^{78}\) Several thousand Boko Haram suspects faced prosecution in three mass trials held in 2017-2018 that resulted in hundreds of convictions; observers raised concerns with those trials and assessed that prosecutions primarily targeted civilians or low-level offenders.\(^{79}\)

\(^{70}\) See, e.g., State Department, annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* since 2009.

\(^{71}\) AI, “We Dried Our Tears”: Addressing the Toll on Children of Northeast Nigeria’s Conflict, 2020.

\(^{72}\) State Department, 2020 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.


\(^{74}\) Center for Civilians in Conflict, *Civilian Perceptions of the Yan Gora (CJTF) in Borno State, Nigeria*, 2018.

\(^{75}\) For instance, an analysis of commissions of inquiry established following repeated episodes of violence in Plateau State between 1997 and 2014 found that, in general, “the recommendation to the government to investigate and prosecute perpetrators and instigators of violence has not been implemented.” Marjoke Oosterom and Dung Pam Sha, “Commissions of Inquiry in Plateau State, Nigeria,” IDS Working Paper vol. 2019, No. 531, 2019.

\(^{76}\) Annual State Department *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* have consistently documented instances of arbitrary arrests by Nigerian security forces.


\(^{78}\) AI, “We Dried Our Tears.”

Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province

Founded in the early 2000s as a Salafist Sunni Muslim reform movement, Jama’tu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal Jihad (JAS)—more commonly known as Boko Haram, which roughly translates to “Western culture is forbidden”—evolved beginning in 2009 into one of the world’s deadliest extremist groups. Violence involving Nigerian security forces, Boko Haram, and an Islamic State-affiliated splinter faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (IS-WA), is reported to have killed over 40,000 people in Nigeria, mostly civilians, in the past decade. Boko Haram and IS-WA have kidnapped thousands more. Additionally, Amnesty International has estimated that “likely more than 10,000” people, including many children, have died in Nigerian custody during the conflict. Northeast Nigeria has been the epicenter of the conflict (see map above), though violence has spilled over Nigeria’s borders with neighboring Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The State Department has designated Boko Haram and IS-WA as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) and as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

More than a decade since the onset of conflict in 2009, prospects for an end to hostilities remain tenuous. Since splitting from Boko Haram in 2016, IS-WA has come to surpass Boko Haram in capacity and size. As of early 2022, U.N. monitors estimated IS-WA to have 4,000-5,000 fighters. The group regularly attacks military facilities, killing soldiers and looting materiel, and funds itself through raiding, kidnapping for ransom, and taxing local populations and commerce. Primarily active in northeast Nigeria, IS-WA also continues to mount attacks in neighboring countries, primarily targeting local military positions. U.N. investigators report that IS-WA has links to another IS faction, known as IS-Greater Sahara, active in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, though each group appears primarily focused on local aims.

In 2021, IS-WA militants killed Boko Haram’s leader, prompting thousands of people, including ex-Boko Haram fighters, their families, and civilians fleeing Boko Haram-held zones, to surrender to authorities. A number of Boko Haram commanders reportedly joined IS-WA, while one remnant Boko Haram faction remains active around Lake Chad. Other former Boko Haram fighters reportedly have relocated to join criminal gangs or emergent extremist cells based in northwest and north-central Nigeria (see “Rural Insecurity: Herder-Farmer Conflict and “Banditry” below).

Since a wave of casualties in 2018, the Nigerian military has clustered in urban “super camps,” effectively ceding control of rural zones and limiting humanitarian access and civilian protection.

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80 A separate CRS product, CRS In Focus IF10173, Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province, provides more information on this conflict.
83 AI, “We Dried Our Tears.”
85 Ibid.
beyond key garrison towns. Military offensives and air force strikes on Boko Haram and IS-WA positions periodically claim numerous fatalities, but government forces have struggled to restore stability or maintain security in cleared zones. Regional military coordination is considered to have improved since the 2014 activation of the African Union-authorized Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF), comprising troops from Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, though inconsistent regional engagement and low interoperability, among other challenges, are viewed as having limited its effectiveness.87

In 2016, the Nigerian government launched Safe Corridor, a de-radicalization and reintegration program for ex-combatants. Hundreds of men and boys have participated. Analysts have raised a number of concerns related to the program, including with poor screening that has resulted in misclassification of civilians as militants, abuses against participants, and opposition by some officials and communities to the reintegration of ex-militants into society.88 Efforts to reintegrate women and girls formerly associated with Boko Haram and IS-WA have been more limited.89

Nigerian security forces have reportedly committed extensive human rights abuses in the context of counterterrorism operations, including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, and torture.90 Nigeria’s Air Force, which has received U.S. training and equipment, has reportedly killed scores of civilians during air raids.91 Military abuses have posed challenges for U.S. security assistance (see “Security Assistance and Cooperation”).

Humanitarian Conditions in Northeast Nigeria

According to U.N. data, roughly 8.5 million people in northeast Nigeria require humanitarian assistance.92 As of January 2022, an estimated 2.2 million people were displaced within Nigeria, and some 330,000 Nigerians were outside the country as refugees, most in Niger and Cameroon.93 Humanitarian groups have faced severe access constraints and other operational challenges. Boko Haram and IS-WA have kidnapped and killed humanitarian workers and destroyed aid facilities. Nigeria’s military has restricted humanitarian access beyond garrison towns based on domestic laws proscribing engagement with terrorist entities without exception for humanitarian activities. The military has repeatedly accused international humanitarian agencies of supporting terrorists and at times has suspended their operations. Observers also contend that the laws and processes governing humanitarian delivery are onerous and prone to delays.94

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90 See, among others, AI, Stars on Their Shoulders. Blood on their Hands. War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military, 2015; AI, “They betrayed us”: Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved and detained in Nigeria, 2018; HRW, They Didn't Know if I was Alive or Dead, 2019; AI, “We Dried Our Tears.”
Rural Insecurity: Herder-Farmer Conflict and “Banditry”

Rural violence has surged in Nigeria over the past decade, especially in the northwest and central “Middle Belt” regions (see map). The insecurity has defied simple classification. Observers attribute heightening insecurity in part to a rise in conflicts between farmers and herders over resource access and related issues (e.g., crop damage caused by livestock). Such conflicts have intensified in recent years as various socioeconomic, political, and ecological trends have reduced the compatibility of pastoral and farming livelihoods and raised the stakes of competitions for resource access and control.

As such conflicts have intensified, analysts have observed an “erosion of the social and economic fabric that binds together farmers and pastoralists,” and rising tensions and violence along ethnic lines. In the northwest, herder-farmer clashes typically pit ethnic Fulani herders against ethnic Hausa farmers, two predominaely-Muslim groups. In the Middle Belt, as noted above, much of the violence has involved Fulani herders and Christian farmers of various ethnic groups. Hate speech has proliferated, with analysts expressing particular concern over rhetoric that attributes unified, often nefarious aims to the Fulani—a diverse and expansive ethnic group that lives across much of Central and West Africa (see Text Box).

### Fulani Pastoralists in Nigeria

The Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, spanning much of Central and West Africa. In general, Fulani are prominent in cattle rearing—though not all Fulani practice pastoralism, and there is wide variation in Fulani living patterns (e.g., urban or rural, nomadic or settled). As violence involving Fulanis has escalated in Nigeria, some commentators have portrayed the violence as a coordinated effort to “Fulanize” or “Islamize” the country, echoing longstanding complaints among Christian communities in the Middle Belt about perceived domination by Hausa-Fulani Muslims. The prominence of Fulanis in Nigeria’s armed forces, which partly reflects patterns of colonial administration, has stoked such perceptions. That President Muhammadu Buhari is a Fulani Muslim livestock owner has fueled accusations of his support for attacks by Fulani pastoralists.

Many analysts object to characterizations of Nigeria’s Fulani as internally homogeneous and narratives attributing herder-farmer violence to a coordinated religious or ideological agenda on the part of Fulani pastoralists. Local

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95 The Middle Belt is an unofficial, variously defined region; there is debate over which states it includes. This map is not intended to authoritatively demarcate the Middle Belt. In some cases, definitions of the Middle Belt typically only include part of a state’s territory (e.g., southern Kaduna generally is included, while northern Kaduna is not). The CRS graphic above is based on descriptions in Moses E. Ochonu, *Colonialism by Proxy: Hausa Imperial Agents and Middle Belt Consciousness in Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014) and ACAPS, “Nigeria,” among others.


97 Leif Brottem and Andrew McDonnell, *Pastoralism and Conflict*.

98 Michael Nwankpa, “The North-South Divide: Nigerian Discourses on Boko Haram, the Fulani, and Islamization,” Hudson Institute, 2021. For background on tensions in the Middle Belt, see Moses E. Ochonu, *Colonialism by Proxy*.


100 See, e.g., Leif Brottem, “The Growing Complexity of Farmer-Herder Conflict in West and Central Africa,” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, July 12, 2021; Adam Higazi and Zahbia Yousuf, *From Cooperation to Contention*. 

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Mounting herder-farmer violence has provided a pretext for a broader escalation of insecurity in the north and Middle Belt. Ethnic militias have mobilized, and lines between conflict drivers have blurred as violence has grown to encompass resource disputes between herders and farmers, gang-style violence by rival ethnic militia, and opportunistic criminality. In some zones of the northwest, gangs exert territorial control, taxing local populations and, in some cases, providing rudimentary services (e.g., law enforcement).

Domestic media have often referred to the armed groups as “bandit” gangs; reporters and state authorities have increasingly referred to them as “insurgents” or “terrorists” as attacks have escalated. Attacks on villages in the northwest and Middle Belt have periodically claimed dozens of fatalities. In 2020-2021, attackers abducted hundreds of children in a series of high-profile mass kidnappings targeting schools, collecting millions of dollars in ransom and attracting international attention. Gangs also have kidnapped and killed local politicians and security personnel; in August 2021, attackers raided a defense academy and downed a military jet.

In this context, analysts and U.S. officials have expressed concern over the prospects for Islamist extremists to gain a foothold beyond Nigeria’s northeast. Alarm has escalated as Ansaru—an Al Qaeda-affiliated Boko Haram splinter faction and U.S.-designated FTO that appeared dormant as of 2015—has apparently reactivated in Nigeria’s north-central region, and as former Boko Haram members have relocated to the northwest. Researchers assert that cooperation between “bandits” and extremists remains limited, while noting that some gangs have at times recruited or collaborated with Islamist extremists. Most “bandit” gangs appear not to espouse a political or religious ideology, though some have mobilized under the banner of protecting Fulani.

The Buhari administration has expanded military operations in the northwest and Middle Belt, primarily involving Air Force strikes targeting gang encampments, with little discernible strategy to reassert state presence in cleared zones. Meanwhile, attempts to resolve herder-farmer disputes have faced challenges, as a plan to establish grazing reserves to address resource access disputes has been slow to progress amid political opposition and resistance from farmers and herders.

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106 In August 2020, the commander of U.S. Special Operations Command-Africa stated that “we’re seeing al-Qa’ida starting to make some inroads” in the northwest, but provided no further information about the assertion. State Department, “Digital Briefing on U.S. Efforts to Combat Terrorism in Africa during COVID,” August 4, 2020.
Separatism in the Southeast

In 2020-2021, Nigeria’s southeast saw a wave of violence between the Nigerian government and an emergent armed secessionist movement. Known as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the separatists profess an aim to restore the would-be breakaway state of Biafra, which sought to secede from Nigeria in 1967, precipitating the devastating 1967-1970 Nigerian Civil War.\(^\text{111}\)

IPOB was founded in 2012 by Nnamdi Kanu, a dual Nigerian-British citizen. It soon gained supporters primarily through the transmission of pro-secession radio broadcasts from its London-based media operation.\(^\text{112}\) Nigerian authorities arrested Kanu in 2015 for treason and other crimes, and reportedly killed at least 150 peaceful pro-Biafra protesters in the ensuing months.\(^\text{113}\) Kanu secured bail on medical grounds in 2017, and later jumped bail and fled to the United Kingdom and continued his broadcasts. IPOB messaging has sought to leverage historic perceptions of marginalization among the Igbo—Nigeria’s third-largest ethnic group, which led the original push for an independent Biafra—as well as newer grievances, such as disputes between Muslim herders and Christian farmers. (The Igbo are predominately Christian, and Igbo activists have long protested their perceived domination by the northern Hausa-Fulani and other ethnic groups.)

Violence escalated in mid-2020, as government forces conducted raids on IPOB meetings and arrested alleged IPOB sympathizers. IPOB later launched an armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), and in early 2021, suspected ESN militants began attacking state security forces, killing dozens. Amnesty International asserts that government forces killed at least 115 people in security operations in the South East between January and June 2021 and accused security forces of “sweeping mass arrests, excessive and unlawful force, and torture and other ill-treatment.”\(^\text{114}\) In June 2021, Kanu was re-arrested—allegedly in Kenya, though the circumstances of his arrest are unclear. He was repatriated to Nigeria, where he is in detention pending trial for terrorism and other charges. ESN attacks have declined since Kanu’s arrest, though violence has continued in the southeast, including killings of security personnel and brutal enforcement of weekly “sit-at-home” directives, during which criminals prohibit residents from leaving their homes.\(^\text{115}\)

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\(^{112}\) AI, *Nigeria: ‘Bullets were raining everywhere’: Deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists*, 2016.

\(^{113}\) Ibid.

\(^{114}\) AI, “Nigeria: At least 115 people killed by security forces in four months in country’s Southeast,” August 5, 2021.

Insecurity in the Niger Delta and Gulf of Guinea

Nigeria’s Niger Delta (see map), an oil-rich region in southern Nigeria that borders the Gulf of Guinea, has long been a site of political unrest, criminality, and intermittent armed militancy linked to local grievances over perceived neglect, exploitation, and environmental devastation by oil operators. Militant violence peaked in the 2000s, with regular attacks on oil facilities and personnel. In 2009, the government announced an amnesty and introduced a monthly stipend for former Niger Delta militants. The program largely halted attacks on oil facilities, but analysts contend it has failed to address root causes of insecurity—especially the perceived exploitation of local resources without adequate consultation and compensation—and facilitate militants’ reintegration into productive civilian life. Threats and attacks on the oil sector intermittently resurge: in 2016, for instance, renewed attacks on oil facilities pushed oil production to a 30-year low.

The Niger Delta faces an array of additional security challenges. These include gang violence by secretive syndicates commonly known as “cults” or “confraternities,” intercommunal clashes, and violence related to political rivalries. The waters offshore of the Niger Delta are among the world’s most dangerous for attacks on vessels; abducted crewmembers can be harbored for days or weeks within the Niger Delta’s network of creeks and mangrove forests pending ransom, while cargo stolen at sea is resold in a robust onshore black market. Oil theft, known as “bunkering,” from oil pipelines for artisanal refinement and black-market sale is a key challenge that reportedly involves criminal networks, politicians, state security personnel, and oil workers.

Trafficking in Persons and Narcotics Trafficking

**Trafficking in Persons.** Nigeria is a source, transit point, and destination for human trafficking. In its Trafficking in Persons report for 2021, the State Department ranked Nigeria on Tier 2, meaning it does not fully meet standards for eliminating trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. This represented an upgrade from 2020, when Nigeria ranked on the Tier 2 Watch List; the State Department attributed the improvement to “overall increasing efforts” to curb trafficking. Trafficking cases at times make global headlines, such as occasional discoveries of “baby factories,” a reportedly widespread practice in which women are held against their will, raped, and forced to deliver babies to be sold for illicit adoption. Edo State, in the southwest, is a hub for international sex and labor trafficking to Europe, particularly Italy, typically via Libya.

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116 A separate CRS product, CRS In Focus IF11117, *Gulf of Guinea: Recent Trends in Piracy and Armed Robbery*, provides more detail on maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea.
117 For a historical overview, see ICG, *Fuelling the Niger Delta Crisis*, 2006.
Narcotics Trafficking. Narcotics trafficking is another key challenge, and a longstanding focus of U.S. law enforcement assistance. Nigeria is a source, transit point, and destination market for drug trafficking, including of illicit recreational drugs (e.g., cocaine and heroin) as well as real and counterfeit opioids and other pharmaceuticals (e.g., tramadol, codeine, and anti-malarials).123

Cybercrime, Financial Crime, and U.S. Responses

Cybercrime in Nigeria has been a focus of U.S. law enforcement assistance and justice sector actions. Nigeria is a global hub for cybercriminal activity, including “419 scams”—advance-fee fraud nicknamed for the article in Nigeria's penal code that outlaws fraudulent e-mails—as well as business email compromise (BEC) attacks and identity theft. Nigerians also are prominent in “romance scams,” in which conspirators defraud victims via fake online romantic relationships.

U.S. and Nigerian authorities have collaborated to crack down on cybercrime, and coordinated U.S.-Nigerian law enforcement operations have led to hundreds of arrests. U.S. authorities have brought charges against a number of Nigerian nationals for internet fraud and money laundering. In a prominent case, U.S. authorities charged social media influencer Ramon Olurunwa Abbas (alias “Ray Hushpuppi”) with conspiring to engage in money laundering; DOJ also mentioned Abbas as a co-conspirator in a scheme to launder money for North Korean cybercriminals.124 In 2021, Abbas pled guilty and provided information that led to the indictment of six other individuals, including a decorated police official, Deputy Police Commissioner Abba Kyari.125 U.S. authorities are reportedly seeking Kyari’s extradition to the United States.126

In 2020, the Treasury Department imposed sanctions on six Nigerian nationals for email and romance scams under Executive Order 13694 (as amended), pertaining to cybercrime.127

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) and U.S. Assistance

As of March 24, 2022, Nigeria had reported approximately 255,000 COVID-19 infections, with 3,100 deaths.128 Several surveys assessing the presence of COVID-19 antibodies—an indicator of past infection—appear to indicate that official statistics significantly underreport Nigeria’s caseload.129 Nigeria’s rate of testing has been low compared to many countries in the region.130 Vaccination efforts have been slow due to in part to limited financial resources for COVID-19 vaccine procurement and global supply chain constraints. Nigeria has destroyed over one million

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125 DOJ, “Six Indicted in International Scheme to Defraud Qatari School Founder and then Launder over $1 Million in Illicit Proceeds,” July 28, 2021.
126 *This Day*, “Nigeria: Court to Hear Govt's Extradition Suit Against Abba Kyari March 23,” March 10, 2022.
129 A survey led by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) and Nigerian Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) found that as of late 2020, as many as 1 in 5 people in Lagos (home to an estimated 15-20 million people) may have been infected with COVID-19 at some point. NCDC, “NCDC and NIMR Release Findings of COVID-19 Household Seroprevalence Surveys in Four States of Nigeria,” February 22, 2021.
expired vaccine doses; Nigerian officials have accused donor countries of hoarding vaccines and delivering them shortly before their expiration.\footnote{AP, “Nigeria Destroys 1 Million Nearly Expired COVID Vaccine Doses,” December 22, 2021.} As of late March 2022, Nigeria had vaccinated roughly 4\% of its population.\footnote{WHO, “Nigeria: WHO COVID-19 Dashboard.”} Vaccine hesitancy is reportedly high in some areas.\footnote{Iliyasu et al., “‘They have produced a vaccine, but we doubt if COVID-19 exists’: correlates of COVID-19 vaccine acceptability among adults in Kano, Nigeria,” \textit{Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics} vol. 17, no. 11, 2021.} Vaccine hesitancy has impeded other immunization campaigns in Nigeria, including efforts to eradicate polio; Nigeria was declared free of wild polio in 2020, though vaccine-derived polio remains a challenge. Researchers have partly attributed vaccine hesitancy in Nigeria to public distrust in the wake of a 1996 trial of an experimental meningitis treatment by U.S. pharmaceutical company Pfizer, during which several participants died and many others became disabled.\footnote{Pfizer denied wrongdoing, and maintained that the trial met ethical standards. A lawsuit brought by the Kano State government led to an out of court settlement in 2009. See Belinda Archibong and Francis Annan, “What do Pfizer’s 1996 drug trials in Nigeria teach us about vaccine hesitancy?,” Brookings, December 3, 2021.}


### The Economy

Nigeria’s economy is the largest in Africa. Its energy sector, discussed below, has long been a key source of government revenues, and dependence on oil has significantly shaped Nigeria’s politics and economy since large-scale production began in the 1970s. The non-oil economy is large and dynamic, driven by a youthful, rapidly growing population and burgeoning services sector. Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital, is among the world’s largest cities and is a technology and financial services hub in Africa; its population and annual gross domestic product (GDP) are larger than those of many African countries. Nigerian artists and musicians are prominent in global media, and the country’s film industry, “Nollywood,” is second to India’s Bollywood in annual output.\footnote{UNESCO, \textit{The African film Industry: trends, challenges and opportunities for growth}, 2021.} Investors have increasingly viewed Nigeria as a potentially lucrative consumer market for social media and other telecommunications, financial services, retail trade, and other industries.\footnote{On challenges and opportunities for investors in Nigeria, see Financial Times, “Special Report: Investing in Nigeria” (February 14, 2022) a collection of articles available at https://www.ft.com/reports/investing-in-nigeria.}

Nonetheless, Nigeria faces stark economic and development challenges, and a wide gap between the rich and the poor. The World Bank has projected that 100 million Nigerians may be living in extreme poverty by 2022—making Nigeria home to one of the largest extremely poor populations in the world.\footnote{Jonathan Lain and Tara Vishwanath, “Tackling poverty in multiple dimensions: A proving ground in Nigeria?”} Service provision is limited in densely populated urban zones and in rural areas; as of 2015, 30\% of Nigerians lacked access to improved water, and 70\% lacked access to basic...
sanitation facilities. Nigeria tops the World Bank’s list of countries with the largest populations lacking access to electricity, with an estimated 90 million people as of 2019; the gap has widened in recent years, as population growth has outstripped electrification efforts. Despite notable advancements in public healthcare provision, immense challenges remain: Nigeria accounts for over a quarter of annual malaria deaths and one of the top tuberculosis disease burdens globally, and is home to the world’s third-largest population living with HIV.

A drop in global oil prices in 2020 and COVID-19-related shocks weakened Nigeria’s economy, which was already mired in a period of low growth following a 2016 recession. The country’s GDP contracted by 1.8% in 2020, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which estimated a rebound to 2.6% growth in 2021. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 has roiled global fuel and food markets, with evolving implications for Nigeria, which imports wheat and other products from Russia. Observers question whether Nigeria can fully capitalize on a spike in crude oil and natural gas prices, as the country’s reliance on imported fuel (a function of insufficient domestic refining capacity) and the government’s subsidization of gasoline (despite efforts to remove the subsidy, see below) are expected to undercut projected revenue gains.

Nigeria’s public debt stock has grown rapidly in recent years. As of late 2021, the World Bank assessed Nigeria’s debt to be sustainable, but highly vulnerable to fiscal shocks, such as oil price and production swings. Longstanding subsidies on fuel have imposed a high fiscal burden; the Buhari administration has pledged to replace the subsidy with cash transfers in 2022, but has postponed implementation. Interest payments are high as a share of government revenues: Nigeria has struggled to collect taxes outside of the oil and gas sector, and has one of the world’s lowest government revenue-to-GDP ratios. Fiscal pressures at the federal level tend to ricochet to sub-federal tiers via reduced intergovernmental revenue transfers. As of late 2021, around half of Nigeria’s external debt was owed to multinational lenders, primarily the World Bank and the IMF; Eurobonds accounted for much of the balance. China is Nigeria’s largest bilateral lender.

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<th>China’s Commercial Involvement in Nigeria</th>
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<td>China is Nigeria’s top source of imports, and one of its top export destinations. Chinese construction firms have undertaken a number of public works and infrastructure projects in the country, many financed in whole or in part by China’s state Ex-Im Bank. Recently finished or ongoing projects include several new railways and highways; new airport terminals; a deep-water port expected to be completed by 2023; and the 700-megawatt Zungeru Hydroelectric Power Project, slated to begin operation in 2022. Other projects have faced delays amid reported</td>
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143 IMF, World Economic Outlook database, October 2021 update.
149 For an overview of available information on Chinese investment and construction activities in Nigeria, see the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)-China Africa Research Initiative (CARI) databases and American Enterprise Institute (AEI)’s China Global Investment Tracker.
Some commentators have criticized the alleged opacity of Chinese loans to Nigeria, and raised concerns over potential threats to Nigeria’s sovereignty arising from indebtedness to China. The Buhari administration has downplayed such concerns and defended Chinese lending as favorable to Nigeria and beneficial for the country’s economy. Researchers also have raised concerns related to illicit activity by Chinese commercial actors in Nigeria, such as bribery, illegal logging, and illicit fishing. (Non-Chinese nationals also have been implicated in such practices.) In the past two decades, China has become a top supplier of military equipment to Nigeria; recent Nigerian acquisitions include tanks, armored vehicles, aircraft, drone systems, and artillery.

Impediments to Growth and Development

Numerous analyses have sought to identify impediments to the realization of Nigeria’s economic potential and explain the apparent contradiction between the country’s vast human and natural resources and its poor development indicators. Many of these have focused on dysfunctions and structural distortions arising from Nigeria’s dependence on oil and gas, such as vulnerability to oil price swings and boom-and-bust cycles. Others have focused on constraints to efficient oil sector management in a political system in which officials at all levels of government face pressures to capture and distribute oil wealth.

Efforts to spur nonoil industries via import restrictions, foreign exchange controls, and other protectionist policies have had limited success, some argue, in engendering diversification. Corruption is a key barrier to private sector activity, as is costly and unreliable power access. The Central Bank maintains several windows through which foreign exchange is sold at differing rates based on the client, and prohibits the use of foreign exchange channels to import dozens of goods; businesses report that such controls create uncertainty and restrict access to imports. According to the State Department, other concerns include “an inconsistent regulatory and legal environment, insecurity, a slow and ineffective bureaucracy and judicial system, and inadequate intellectual property rights protections.”

159 State Department, 2021 Investment Climate Statements: Nigeria, 2021.
Quality job creation has been a key challenge. An estimated 33% of Nigeria’s labor force—and 43% among those aged 15-31—was unemployed as of late 2020, one of the highest official unemployment rates in the world, according to official statistics. Many Nigerians are engaged in poorly paying informal work such as low-yield subsistence agriculture or self-employment in services like petty trading and tailoring. Labor strikes are common in the formal sector, including by public sector employees protesting nonpayment of salaries. Barriers to quality employment and other labor challenges are generally more pronounced among women (see Text Box).

### Nigerian Women in the Workplace: Selected Issues

Across various measures—including employment rates, education and school attendance, digital literacy, financial inclusion, and access to agricultural inputs—women in Nigeria generally lag behind men. The State Department reports that Nigerian women experience “considerable economic discrimination,” noting that Nigerian law “does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value [...]or] nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring.” Women often are barred from owning or inheriting land due to customary social practices. According to a recent survey, nearly three in five women workers, across various sectors, reported that they had experienced gender-based violence or harassment (GBVH) in the workplace; nearly one-third reported that they had faced pressure for sexual favors at work. Women’s participation in political leadership and governance is another key challenge; Nigeria has one of the world’s lowest rates of women’s representation in parliament.

The agriculture sector is central to Nigeria’s economy, and has been a focus of U.S. development assistance (see “U.S. Assistance”). It is the country’s top employer and contributes roughly one-quarter of annual GDP. Top export crops include sesame seeds, cashew nuts, and cocoa beans. Nigeria’s livestock industry is one of the largest in Africa and is expected to expand as rising incomes, population growth, and urbanization drive up demand for animal products. Analysts contend Nigeria’s agriculture sector operates below potential, due to such issues as low fertilizer use (Nigeria has one of the world’s lowest fertilizer usage rates), limited uptake of improved seeds, irrigation, and other technologies, poor access to credit, and high market access costs. Several analyses have assessed Nigeria to be particularly vulnerable to negative effects of climate change. Northern Nigeria is chronically arid, and susceptible to highly variable rainfall, leading to drought and riverine flooding; the Middle Belt also faces exposure to aridity and flooding, with implications for herder-farmer violence and other land-use conflicts in the region. Storm surges and riverine flooding pose key risks in southern Nigeria, particularly in densely populated coastal cities, including Lagos, that generally lack adequate drainage systems and other infrastructure.

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163 State Department, 2020 *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*.
167 For instance, Nigeria ranked as the second most vulnerable country (tied with Chad) on UNICEF’s 2021 Children’s Climate Risk Index, a measure of children’s vulnerability to environmental stress and extreme weather events (see UNICEF, *Children’s Climate Risk Index*, 2021). Verisk Maplecroft, a risk consultancy, has identified Lagos as one of ten cities at “extreme risk” of economic exposure to climate change (Verisk Maplecroft, “84% of world’s fastest growing cities face ‘extreme’ climate change risks,” November 21, 2018).
The Oil and Gas Sector

Nigeria has the 11th-largest proven crude oil reserves in the world; in 2020, it was the 12th largest producer of crude oil and condensate and 16th largest producer of natural gas. Oil and gas exports generally account for at least half of annual federally collected revenues. As noted above, domestic refining remains limited, despite efforts to increase use of existing refineries and expand total capacity; Nigeria relies on imports for a large share of its fuel needs.

U.S. firms Chevron and ExxonMobil are among the largest multinational oil companies (MOCs) active in Nigeria’s oil sector; others include the Anglo-Dutch firm Shell (the leading MOC in Nigeria), French firm Total, and Italian firm Eni. Analysts have raised concerns over opacity, corruption, and mismanagement on the part of the oil parastatal, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). In 2021, President Buhari ratified the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB), an expansive law to overhaul governance of the oil industry.

Nigeria’s crude oil production declined in 2020-2021 as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to which Nigeria belongs, responded to a global oil price crash by restricting members’ output. Maintenance issues and underinvestment have limited Nigeria’s output to below its allotted OPEC quota levels. MOCs in Nigeria have increasingly sought to divest from onshore operations, a pattern observers attribute to rising costs associated with aging pipelines and insecurity; tensions with local communities, some of which have sought reparations for oil pollution; and global pressure to transition to clean energy sources; among other factors.

U.S.-Nigeria Trade and Investment

Nigeria is the United States’ second-largest trade partner and the third-largest destination of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigerian exports to the United States have long been dominated by crude oil, which accounted for 75% of U.S. imports from Nigeria, by value, in 2020. Nigeria often ranks as a top source of U.S. imports under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA, P.L. 106-200, as amended) trade preference program; crude oil accounts for nearly all of Nigeria’s AGOA-eligible exports. U.S. crude imports from Nigeria have been subject to dramatic swings due to fluctuations in global oil market trends. Amid rising U.S. domestic oil production, U.S. imports of crude oil from Nigeria have fallen sharply since the 2000s and early 2010s, when Nigeria often ranked in the top five suppliers of U.S. crude imports. The largest categories of U.S. exports to Nigeria in 2020, by value, were automobiles, machinery, cereals, and mineral fuels. U.S. FDI is in Nigeria is led by the oil and gas sector, though the share of extractives in the U.S. FDI position in Nigeria has declined in recent years amid U.S. investment in other sectors, such as services.

October 25, 2021.

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173 Libby George, “As OPEC reopens the taps, African giants losing race to pump more,” Reuters, September 27, 2021.
177 Bureau of Economic Analysis, “U.S. Direct Investment Abroad: Balance of Payments and Direct Investment
U.S. Relations and Assistance

U.S.-Nigeria ties improved after Nigeria’s transition to civilian rule in 1999. Successive U.S. Administrations have described the U.S.-Nigeria relationship as among the most important U.S. partnerships in Africa. Nigerian presidents are often among the first African leaders to receive calls from new U.S. presidents. Secretaries of State under each Administration since President Clinton have visited Nigeria; President George W. Bush visited the country in 2003. Amid travel disruptions linked to COVID-19, Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Nigeria virtually in his first official “trip” to Africa in April 2021, and in late 2021 visited the country in his first in-person trip to the region. During the latter visit, Blinken met with President Buhari and others to discuss cooperation in public health, economic growth, climate change, and security, among other issues, and signed a new foreign aid agreement with Nigeria (see “U.S. Assistance,” below).178 Bilateral relations include the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission (BNC), a forum inaugurated in 2010 that features regular high-level diplomatic visits and discussion of a range of interests. The last BNC, held in 2020, focused on trade and investment, governance, security cooperation, and development; former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale and Nigeria’s foreign minister, Geoffrey Onyeama, led the U.S. and Nigerian delegations, respectively. A U.S.-Nigeria Commercial and Investment Dialogue (CID), launched in 2017, convenes U.S. and Nigerian officials and private sector actors to foster commercial ties, initially focused on “infrastructure, agriculture, digital economy, investment, and regulatory reform.”179 The State Department maintains an embassy in Abuja and consulate in Lagos, and supports “American Corners” in libraries throughout Nigeria to share information on U.S. culture. People-to-people ties are extensive, underpinned by a large U.S.-based Nigerian diaspora (see Text Box).

As noted above, poor governance, human rights, and religious freedom conditions in Nigeria have strained bilateral ties. In 2020, the Trump Administration imposed visa restrictions on Nigerian nationals via Proclamation 9983, which expanded travel restrictions under Executive Order 13780 (the “Travel Ban”), citing Nigeria’s failure to comply with identity-management and information-sharing issues.181 President Biden revoked those restrictions in January 2021.

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180 CRS tabulation of data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. CRS Analyst in Immigration Policy Jill H. Wilson assisted in collecting and analyzing U.S. Census Bureau data.

U.S. Assistance

Nigeria often ranks among the top annual recipients of U.S. foreign aid globally. In his late 2021 visit to Nigeria, Secretary Blinken and his Nigerian counterpart signed a five-year Development Objectives Assistance Agreement (DOAG), entailing U.S. development assistance commitments worth $2.1 billion, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).\(^{182}\) This would be level with what USAID reports having provided to Nigeria under a previous five-year DOAG signed in 2015.\(^{183}\) Congress may consider the objectives and funding levels set out in the recently signed DOAG as it appropriates foreign aid for Nigeria in the years ahead. According to public budget materials, bilateral State Department- and USAID-administered non-emergency aid for Nigeria totaled $452.4 million in allocations of FY2020 appropriations (Table 1).\(^{184}\)

### Table 1. Non-Humanitarian U.S. Assistance for Nigeria, by Sector, FY2018-FY2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>FY2018 (act.)</th>
<th>FY2019 (act.)</th>
<th>FY2020 (act.)</th>
<th>FY2021 (req.)</th>
<th>FY2022 (req.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>408,561</td>
<td>585,668</td>
<td>403,739</td>
<td>436,100</td>
<td>538,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Growth</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>24,249</td>
<td>19,249</td>
<td>16,010</td>
<td>22,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Social Services</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>21,000</td>
<td>15,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy, Rights, and Governance</td>
<td>31,000</td>
<td>23,000</td>
<td>9,256</td>
<td>6,320</td>
<td>15,456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace and Security</td>
<td>7,092</td>
<td>4,534</td>
<td>4,684</td>
<td>4,670</td>
<td>4,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>497,653</strong></td>
<td><strong>658,451</strong></td>
<td><strong>452,428</strong></td>
<td><strong>472,100</strong></td>
<td><strong>594,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* State Department, Congressional Budget Justification FY2020-FY2022.

*Notes:* Figures do not include Food for Peace (FFP) assistance.

Health assistance comprised nearly 90% of this total, broadly consistent with past years. Support for Nigeria’s efforts to control HIV/AIDS under the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has long constituted the largest share of annual health assistance for Nigeria (see Text Box). Other U.S. global health aid for Nigeria aims to help counter malaria—Nigeria is a President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) focus country—support maternal and child health, control tuberculosis, enhance water and sanitation services, and promote nutrition, among other efforts.

#### PEPFAR in Nigeria: Selected Issues

Nigeria is home to one of the world’s largest populations of people living with HIV, estimated at 1.7 million in 2020.\(^{185}\) The country’s HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate is 1.3%, lower than that of many African countries, but Nigeria has one of the highest rates of new infection in the region; an uneven distribution of cases and limited testing in a large population have raised challenges for detection and treatment. PEPFAR funding for Nigeria has exceeded $6 billion since 2003.\(^{186}\) The United States has provided additional support for Nigeria’s campaign

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\(^{184}\) State Department, Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) for FY2022, 2021.


Reassess Local Partner Capacity to Meet Funding Goals

Flow of Resources and Expenditures of the National HIV and AIDS Response

...which is helping to establish a Transitional Police Unit to assume responsibility for civilian law enforcement capacity building has been another focus of State Department programming, efforts, State Department, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Nigeria," March 19, 2021.

...security cooperation to Nigeria has totaled approximately $650 million since 2017, Department of State and DOD also has supported Nigeria to restore C-130 aircraft, establish a military exercise center, and develop military policies. DOD has struggled to increase the share of PEPFAR funding it allocates to local partners in Nigeria relative to other USAID missions in Africa.

Support for agriculture-led economic growth has typically comprised the second-largest category of U.S. assistance. Nigeria is one of 12 focus countries under Feed the Future (FTF), an agricultural development initiative. U.S. democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) aid for Nigeria has included funding to help strengthen political competition and democratic institutions (e.g., electoral bodies), support conflict prevention and resolution, and build the capacity of civil society. DRG programs also have helped strengthen local law enforcement and the justice sector.

The above figures do not include additional assistance provided through regionally and centrally managed programs, which public budget materials do not disaggregate by country. Examples include Power Africa, a USAID-led electrification effort; Prosper Africa, which aims to promote U.S.-Africa trade and investment; and humanitarian assistance (see “Humanitarian Assistance”).

Security Assistance and Cooperation

According to the State Department, “since 2017, Department of State and Department of Defense security cooperation to Nigeria has totaled approximately $650 million.” Nigerian purchases of U.S. defense articles and services through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program account for roughly $500 million of this total (see “U.S. Military Sales and Transfers” below). Department of Defense (DOD)-administered security assistance provided under DOD’s “global train and equip” authority (10 U.S.C. 333) comprises much of the balance: such aid has included support for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities; air-to-ground integration (AGI); and maritime security and counterterrorism capacities. DOD also has supported Nigeria to restore C-130 aircraft, establish a military exercise center, and develop military policies.

State Department-administered security assistance has sought to strengthen counterterrorism efforts, enhance maritime security, and professionalize Nigeria’s military, among other efforts. Law enforcement capacity building has been another focus of State Department programming, which is helping to establish a Transitional Police Unit to assume responsibility for civilian security in the northeast and has aided efforts to combat drug trafficking. Nigeria participates in

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191 CRS assessment based on DOD notifications to Congress of planned security cooperation activities.
the State Department's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), an effort to build regional counterterrorism capabilities and coordination. Nigeria also has benefitted from U.S. support to the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) coalition in the Lake Chad Basin.

U.S. “Leahy laws,” which prohibit the provision of U.S. security assistance to security force units implicated in gross violations of human rights, have precluded some Nigerian military personnel from receiving certain types of U.S. security assistance.\(^{194}\) Between 2015 and 2018, and again in 2020 and 2021, the State Department designated Nigeria under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act (CSPA, Title IV of P.L. 110-457) in connection with the use of child soldiers by state-backed militias battling Boko Haram and/or the use of children, generally in support roles, by Nigeria’s military.\(^{195}\) That designation can carry restrictions on U.S. security assistance, subject to a waiver; successive Administrations have fully waived the restrictions for Nigeria, citing the U.S. interest. In October 2021, President Biden waived all CSPA aid restrictions on Nigeria for FY2022.

The maintenance of U.S. defense articles provided to Nigeria has been a concern. For instance, a 2021 DOD evaluation of maritime security cooperation in the Gulf of Guinea between 2007 and 2018 identified “a strong reliance on the United States to provide parts and maintenance services” on the part of Nigeria’s navy.\(^{196}\) The study found that Nigerian authorities often failed to provide support infrastructure and supplies, such as fuel and internet, to sustain U.S.-provided materiel.

U.S. Military Sales and Transfers

Reported abuses by Nigerian security forces and other issues have impeded sales of U.S. defense articles and services to Nigeria. In 2014, the Obama Administration blocked the transfer of U.S.-origin attack helicopters from Israel to Nigeria amid “concerns about Nigeria’s ability to use and maintain this type of helicopter [...and] the Nigerian military’s protection of civilians when conducting military operations.”\(^{197}\) Nigeria’s ambassador to the United States later criticized the United States’ alleged refusal to sell “lethal equipment” to Nigeria, and Nigeria’s military cancelled a planned U.S. military training exercise in late 2014.\(^{198}\)

Recent attention has centered on the sale of A-29 Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria. The Obama Administration considered a potential sale of 12 A-29s to Nigeria, but suspended consideration of the sale after a Nigerian jet bombed a displaced persons camp in early 2017.\(^{199}\) The Trump Administration revived the proposal, and in 2017 notified Congress of the proposed sale, under FMS, of 12 A-29s and associated weaponry, training, and other support.\(^{200}\) Some Members of Congress expressed opposition to the sale; none introduced or moved to force consideration of a joint resolution of disapproval.\(^{201}\) The sale of the A-29s along with spare parts, logistics support,

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\(^{195}\) See State Department, Trafficking in Persons reports for 2015-2018, 2020, and 2021; on the use of children by the CJTF and Nigerian military, see State Department human rights reports for 2015-2018 and 2020.


\(^{201}\) Letter from Senators Cory Booker and Rand Paul to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, June 8, 2017.
munitions, and construction of new facilities to house them went forward in 2017, valued at $496 million, the largest FMS case in sub-Saharan Africa to date. The Nigerian Air Force took delivery of the planes in 2021 and has deployed them against extremists in the northeast as well as armed gangs in the northwest. In mid-2021, according to press accounts, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) leadership reportedly placed an informal, pre-notification hold on a proposal to sell 12 AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters and accompanying systems to Nigeria.

In addition to the sale of the A-29 aircraft, Nigerian FMS purchases have supported construction of new facilities at Kainji Air Base (in Niger State) to house the A-29s, as well as the acquisition of munitions and rocket propellants, aerial targeting systems, bomb equipment, and surveillance systems. The United States has provided or committed to provide further materiel to Nigeria under other authorities, including unmanned aircraft and associated training and, under the Excess Defense Articles program, two Coast Guard cutters and 24 armor-protected vehicles.

**Humanitarian Assistance**

The United States is the largest donor to the humanitarian response in Nigeria, providing over $2.0 billion in bilateral food and non-food assistance since FY2015 (Table 2). The majority of these funds have supported the humanitarian response in the northeast, though U.S. humanitarian assistance also has targeted other regions, including the northwest and Middle Belt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USAID/NGA</td>
<td>33,800.0</td>
<td>10,853.7</td>
<td>6,182.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID/FFP</td>
<td>12,396.8</td>
<td>50,782.5</td>
<td>250,085.3</td>
<td>197,615.5</td>
<td>199,936.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID/OFDA</td>
<td>20,082.1</td>
<td>29,478.9</td>
<td>110,337.2</td>
<td>111,292.2</td>
<td>115,076.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID/BHA</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>335,994.3</td>
<td>316,704.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State/PRM</td>
<td>28,200.0</td>
<td>26,900.0</td>
<td>36,800.0</td>
<td>24,400.0</td>
<td>31,900.0</td>
<td>57,524.6</td>
<td>47,385.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>94,478.9</td>
<td>118,015.1</td>
<td>403,405.2</td>
<td>333,307.7</td>
<td>346,912.4</td>
<td>393,518.9</td>
<td>364,089.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Notes:** NGA=Nigeria; FFP=Food for Peace; OFDA=Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance; BHA=Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (established in FY2020); PRM=Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. FY2020 totals include COVID-19-related assistance categorized as humanitarian aid.

Insecurity in the northeast has posed challenges for humanitarian access and the oversight of U.S. assistance. According to a 2020 audit by USAID’s Inspector General, for instance, the award of a

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202 The contract notice for the aircraft sale is available at DOD, “Contracts for Nov. 28, 2018.”


third party monitoring contract—used where site visits by U.S. staff are not feasible due to insecurity—encountered extensive delays, and “it was not until April 2019—4 years after the need was first identified” that the contract was awarded.\textsuperscript{206} The risk of aid diversion by terrorists has further complicated humanitarian efforts, prompting heightened due diligence (see \textbf{Text Box}).

\begin{center}
\textbf{USAID Anti-Terrorism Support Measures in Nigeria: Humanitarian Implications}
\end{center}

In 2017, USAID’s Offices of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and Food for Peace (FFP) introduced a grant contract provision requiring implementers in the Lake Chad Basin to attain written approval from USAID before distributing aid to individuals whom implementers “affirmatively know” to have been formerly associated with Boko Haram or IS-WA “as combatants or non-combatants.”\textsuperscript{207} Some observers have raised concerns with this provision, questioning the practicability of vetting beneficiaries’ past affiliations with terrorist groups and/or alleging that it constitutes a violation of the core humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and independence.\textsuperscript{208} USAID has disputed accusations that the provision has impeded programming, stating that the vetting requirement only comes into force in the event that there is knowledge of a beneficiary’s past affiliation with a terrorist group, and that aid may proceed even in such instances, if determined to be consistent with U.S. law.\textsuperscript{209}

\section*{Outlook and Issues for Congress}

The escalation of insecurity across Nigeria has kindled debate among observers concerning the potential for territorial fragmentation or state failure in Africa’s most populous country, a scenario that could threaten U.S. interests in Nigeria and the wider sub-region while generating demands for additional U.S. attention and resources. Amid mounting concern over Nigeria’s trajectory, some Members of Congress have called for a reevaluation or reorientation of U.S. engagement.\textsuperscript{210} Congressional deliberations over the best way forward for U.S.-Nigeria relations may depend, in part, on Members’ assessments of the Nigerian government’s commitment to addressing issues of concern to the United States, such as governance and human rights challenges. Such appraisals may inform debate over the relative merits of various policy tools for advancing U.S. interests in Nigeria, which may range from increased U.S. engagement and assistance to potential punitive measures, such as sanctions and aid restrictions.

Looking ahead, general elections scheduled for early 2023 arguably represent a test for Nigeria’s democratic institutions as the country approaches a quarter-century of uninterrupted civilian rule. Recent Congresses have focused attention on Nigerian elections through hearings and resolutions calling for peaceful and credible polls, and have appropriated foreign assistance funding that has supported electoral activities.\textsuperscript{211} Congress may consider these and other avenues of engagement,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{206} USAID OIG, \textit{USAID Has Gaps in Planning, Risk Mitigation, and Monitoring of Its Humanitarian Assistance in Africa’s Lake Chad Region}, 2020.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid; see also Jacob Kurtzer, \textit{Out of Sight}, and Chiara Gillard et al., \textit{Screening of final beneficiaries – a red line in humanitarian operations. An emerging concern in development work}, International Review of the Red Cross, February 2022. In 2021, Senator Booker cited Nigeria as an example of a context in which “compliance with some USAID policies, related to potential material support to terrorist groups, has made it nearly impossible to operate.” See SFRC, “Nomination of Ambassador Samantha Power to be USAID Administrator,” 117th Cong., 1st Sess., March 23, 2021.
\textsuperscript{210} In June 2021, for instance, Senator Robert Menendez stated that there was a need for “a fundamental rethink of our framework of our overall engagement” with Nigeria. SFRC, “Review of the FY 2022 State Department Budget Request,” hearing, 117th Cong., 1st Sess., June 8, 2021.
\textsuperscript{211} For recent examples of legislation focused on Nigeria’s elections see, in the 114th Congress, H.Res. 143, H.Res. 147,
such as official communications and delegations to the country, as it weighs how best to support successful elections. More broadly, the forthcoming polls may offer an opportunity for Members of Congress to take stock of Nigeria’s trajectory, assess opportunities and challenges in the bilateral relationship, and set priorities for engagement with incoming authorities.

The Nigerian government’s governance and human rights record has driven U.S. critiques and strained the bilateral partnership, notably with respect to security cooperation. At the same time, U.S.-Nigerian defense ties have deepened through continued military sales and U.S. training and equipment activities. As noted above (see “U.S. Military Sales and Transfers”), some Members have signaled opposition to U.S. military sales to Nigeria due to human rights concerns. As Congress considers engagement with Nigeria, Members may possibly draw lessons from U.S. approaches to other countries where U.S. governance and human rights concerns have conflicted with U.S. security interests. Congress also may evaluate the sustainability of past U.S. security investments in Nigeria in light of the Nigerian government’s limited investment in maintaining U.S.-origin defense articles (see “Security Assistance and Cooperation”).

Nigeria’s size, economic weight, and regional influence position it to play an important role in the context of U.S.-Africa policy, as the attainment of various U.S. security, development, and global health objectives in the region arguably hinges on the advancement of such goals in Nigeria. As it considers budgetary, policy, and oversight priorities, Members may assess U.S. priorities in Nigeria in the context of various regional objectives. These might include:

- Development and global health promotion, in view of Nigeria’s high poverty rate and disease burden—which, by virtue of Nigeria’s demographic size, weigh heavily on broader poverty and global health trends in Africa. Members may review past U.S. development and health investments in Nigeria, and assess whether U.S. assistance is sufficient and properly targeted to help address Nigeria’s needs.

- Expanding U.S.-Africa trade and investment, in light of Nigeria’s economic potential and the extent of current U.S.-Nigeria commercial relations. Congress may consider what challenges might impede greater bilateral economic ties, and opportunities for expanding U.S. trade and investment through such initiatives as Prosper Africa;

- Strengthening democracy and promoting human rights, amid extensive governance challenges in Nigeria and democratic backsliding in the broader sub-region. Congress may debate what mix of tools might best help promote good governance in Nigeria and weigh the merits of increased engagement (e.g., expanding democracy, human rights, and governance assistance and anti-kleptocracy efforts) against signals of U.S. concern and punitive measures (e.g., aid restrictions, sanctions, and public criticism); and

- Global power competition in Africa, in the context of Nigeria’s growing commercial and military relationship with China. Congress may weigh various approaches for advancing U.S. influence, such as by expanding bilateral cooperation (through increased diplomatic


214 In the 117th Congress, §6428 H.R. 4350, the House-passed NDAA, would have expressed the sense of Congress “on the role of human rights in reducing violence in Nigeria” and called on the United States Government to strengthen the capacity of Nigerian security forces to respond more effectively to terrorist attacks and sectarian violence. That provision was not adopted in the final bill, P.L. 117-81.
• engagement, foreign assistance, or military sales), promoting U.S. commercial competitiveness, and drawing attention to malign practices by foreign actors

How Congress balances these priorities, as well as other U.S. interests—such as enhancing peace and security, responding to humanitarian crises, and maintaining and advancing U.S. strategic access and influence—is likely to continue to shape U.S. engagement in Nigeria. Congress may continue to influence bilateral relations through its appropriation and oversight of U.S. assistance, consideration of U.S. military sales, and engagement (e.g., through hearings, statements, travel, and correspondence) on issues related to Nigeria and U.S.-Nigeria policy.

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