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on

"Nigeria on the Brink?"

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you, not only for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss the present situation in the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but also for the sustained attention which this Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, has consistently dedicated to the West Africa as a whole and to Nigeria in particular as well as for its solicitude for the challenges faced in the region by the United States and our African and other partners. I think I speak for many in the policy and advocacy communities in expressing our gratitude for the leadership which the Chairman, the Ranking Member, Members of the Subcommittee, and its Staff, have shown, including the no fewer than three hearings in the 113th Congress, including the one last June on the ongoing struggle against Boko Haram which you accorded me the privilege of testifying at. It should be acknowledged that the

Subcommittee was already working on the present hearing well before the news cycle turned to Nigeria once again in the aftermath of the Boko Haram attacks on Baga two weeks ago.

At any time, elections in Nigeria—Africa's most populous country, the continent's largest economy, and home to both its largest Muslim community as well as its largest Christian community—would be a pivotal moment, fraught with geopolitical, economic, and strategic implications. However, this is all the more the case as Nigerians prepare to go to the polls in less than three weeks in what many analysts view as perhaps the most competitive presidential race since the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999.

While I know that some have questioned the title of this hearing and its reference to a country "on the brink," it is not an exaggeration to say that what has come together is a "perfect storm" of security threats, including, of course, the continuing insurgent activity of Boko Haram in the extreme northeastern part of Nigeria and its terrorist attacks beyond that region to other parts of Nigeria as well as neighboring countries; humanitarian challenges, not least of which are the hundreds of thousands (if not millions) who have been displaced because of the conflict; and economic pressures, top amongst which is the impact of declining oil prices on the national budget (and, thus, resources available to the federal government to deal with the aforementioned challenges).

Permit me, therefore, to begin by reviewing these challenges as they currently stand before returning to the upcoming elections and what the United States might be able to do that might have a positive effect on the situation in Nigeria, including helping contribute to ending Boko Haram's campaign of brutal violence and destabilization.

Boko Haram's Apparent Momentum

Since the Subcommittee's hearing on the fight against the militants last June, Boko Haram has unfortunately continued to be "on a roll" and, in fact, appears to have even ramped up its momentum. What I dubbed at the time the militant group's "Version 3.0" has successfully overrun and currently holds—or at least prevents the legitimate federal and state authorities from governing—wide swathes of three states in northeastern Nigeria: Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe. And, depending on which Nigerian official or international analyst one chooses to credit, this means the group effectively exercises at least loose dominion over a total area that is either larger than that of the state of Maryland or slightly smaller than that of the state of West Virginia.

Just over two weeks ago, Boko Haram stormed Baga near the shores of Lake Chad, one of the last urban centers in that region remaining in government hands. The town, which had hitherto resisted repeated assaults by the militants, was supposed host the multinational joint task force previously agreed to by Nigeria and its neighbors—Cameroon, Chad, and Niger—to combat the militants. The other African forces had not arrived on post when Boko Haram overwhelmed the Nigerian troops, many of whom reportedly threw down their weapons and fled, and took control of the military base that was to serve as the command center for the regional effort to

combat the insurgency. The death toll from the attack has been reported to be as high as 2,000 people, while thousands of others were forced to flee to other parts of Nigeria or into Chad. And, as satellite images released by Amnesty International so graphically illustrated, the insurgents literally wiped large portions of Baga and several nearby towns off the face of the map, burning homes, schools, businesses, and clinics.

Over this past weekend, an assault on the Borno State capital of Maiduguri by Boko Haram was repulsed, although I am not entirely convinced that the strategic objective of that attack was so much to storm the city as to underscore a message, given that the attack came the day after the Nigerian President campaigned there amid heavy security and sought to reassure citizens that then insurgency would be defeated. On the other hand, the group's simultaneous attack on Monguno, about 135 kilometers away near the borders with Chad and Cameroon, was successful, resulting in the capture of the city with its population of more than 110,000 people as well as the large military base nearby. Nigerian military spokesmen admitted that the garrison in Monguno, consisting of some 1,400 soldiers from the 243rd Army Battalion and other units, was overwhelmed. The seizure of Monguno, which sits at the intersection of three major roads, removes one of the key buffers protecting Maiduguri and the two million people who reside or have taken refuge there from complete encirclement by Boko Haram forces.

Furthermore, Boko Haram has been using the territory it holds or clears out as a base to launch a campaign of terrorist attacks reaching other Nigerian states as well as into neighboring countries, some of which, like Niger, are already under pressure from militants linked to al-Qaeda's North African affiliate as well as the spillover of the continuing disintegration of Libya. Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou has even been quoted as saying that "the Islamic State is at our door."

In its ongoing offensive, Boko Haram is not only using the terrorist tactics it has honed over the last five years—even ratcheting them up with new twists like the recent use of girls as young as 10 years old to carry bombs into crowded settings—but also showing signs of growing conventional military capabilities, as indicated not only by its battlefield successes against the Nigerian armed forces it has been squaring off against, but also its willingness to attack military forces in neighboring countries, such as the recent attack on the Rapid Reaction Battalion (BIR) base at Kolafata in northwestern Cameroon.

Attacks like this make it clear that the stage where Boko Haram was quasi-exclusively a Nigerian concern has long passed. Like other extremist groups and criminal networks across North and West Africa, Boko Haram has been able to leverage porous borders and grey economies while targeting—in both the literal and figurative senses—vulnerable, impoverished populations, many of which have historically been neglected by their respective national governments. In the case of Boko Haram, the group has also managed to exploit the shared Kanuri ethnicity to camouflage cells in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

And while the budding security cooperation between Nigeria's neighbors such as that displayed

at the ministerial-level regional security meeting hosted last week by the government of Niger as well as international calls—most recently in a presidential statement of the United Nations Security Council—for a multinational joint task force to combat Boko Haram are welcome developments, it is necessary to inject a note of caution, both with respect to what can realistically be expected in the short-to-medium term and with respect to the conduct of some of those neighbors. While Cameroon fought back against Boko Haram incursions this month, it was just three months ago when the same country acquiesced to what was reported to be a payment of at least $400,000, the transfer of a large quantity of arms and ammunition, and the release of four militant commanders in order to secure the release of Françoise Agnès Moukouri, wife of Vice Prime Minister Amadou Ali, ten Chinese workers, and several others held captive by the Islamist group.

Even more worrisome, as a number of terrorism analysts have pointed out, Boko Haram's videos in recent months have shown a troubling convergence between the Nigerian militants and their counterparts in the so-called "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria, not only in terms of symbolism and ideology, but also insurgency doctrine. Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau first expressed "support" for the Islamic State's caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, this past summer, but the pace of at least virtual exchange between the two groups represented by the leaders has quickened. Boko Haram has added the jihadist black banner to its logo and the Islamic State's anthem to the musical repertoire on its videos. In one recent video, Shekau even declared that he is establishing his own "Islamic emirate" and greeted his "brothers" in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, as well as "the Caliphate in Iraq and Syria."

While the reasons for the failure to contain, much less roll back, Boko Haram's advance were addressed in my prior testimony and, indeed, are legion—with plenty of blame to go all around—I would be remiss if I did not call attention to the fact that the address last week at Chatham House by Sambo Dasuki, National Security Advisor to Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, if it is indeed representative of the current consensus in Abuja and consequent future conduct by the federal authorities, represents a significant and promising shift in strategic thinking. Speaking with remarkable candor, the National Security Advisor, a retired military officer who is the son of a former Sultan of Sokoto and nephew of the current head of the Sokoto Caliphate, acknowledged deficits in the equipment, training, and doctrine of the Nigerian forces (he even called some "cowards"); the need to combat violent extremism through both counter-radicalization programs and strategic communications efforts; and the imperative to focus on "root causes" through "economic revitalization, infrastructure development, job creation, a program to protect schools and the care of internally displaced persons as well as victims of terrorism." Likewise refreshing was the affirmation that "For Nigeria to address the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism leading to insurgency, the cancerous menace of corruption must be fought with all elements of its national power."

The Humanitarian Crisis

Not only has Boko Haram wreaked havoc on Nigeria's northeast quadrant and parts of Niger,

Chad, and Cameroon, but the group's attacks have also precipitated a veritable humanitarian crisis spanning the region. Between victims of raids by the militants and those killed by its campaign of terrorist bombings, more than 10,000 people lost their lives in 2014 to violence connected to Boko Haram, according the widely-respected Nigeria Security Tracker maintained by the Council on Foreign Relations. The International Organization for Migration estimates that nearly 1 million people have been displaced by the conflict; other organizations, including the European Union's Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, put the figure substantially higher, at more than 1.6 million, while Nigeria's Coordinating Minister for the Economy estimates it to be an even higher 3 million. According to the International Rescue Committee, last year more than 160,000 Nigerians fled to Niger, a country which strains to feed itself in a good year. Boko Haram's continuing offensive operations further exacerbate the situation: the conquest of Baga earlier this month, for example, sent roughly 13,000 refugees fleeing into western Chad alone, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Of course northeastern Nigeria was already lagging in numerous socio-economic indicators long before Boko Haram began its rampage and the effects of climate change and desertification, manifested in episodic droughts and perennial food shortages, meant that food insecurity has been a longstanding concern in the region. However, now the combined effects of the insurgents' seizure of livestock and food supplies as well as the closure of markets and the abandonment of farms—some for several years in a row—have resulted this month in a warning from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network of the United States Agency for International Development that without massive assistance some 3 million people will not be able to meet their basic food needs by the middle of this year. The situation is already dire in areas controlled by the insurgents where, notwithstanding their pretense of establishing an Islamic state, they have largely failed to establish institutions and provide services even as their plunder leaves the populace starving, as Red Cross officials who entered towns like Mubi after their recapture recently attested.

Among those hardest hit have been children, even those who have been fortunate enough to at least escape the clutches of Boko Haram. Not only are many of those who have become refugees or internally displaced suffering malnourishment, but their schooling has been interrupted—and with some 300 educational facilities destroyed last year in the three most affected states, including eighty schools in Borno State alone, providing alternative placements for students presents a major challenge.

In the context of discussing the humanitarian crisis caused by the Boko Haram insurgency, it is incumbent upon me to draw attention to one frequently overlooked fact. While northern Nigeria has historically been predominantly Muslim, the north is not without its sizable Christian population just as parts of the south, especially the southwest of the country, have significant Muslim communities. Consequently, while both Muslims and Christians have been victims of Boko Haram's brutal assaults—and the militants have indeed shown precious little respect for the traditional Muslim leaders of Nigeria, Boko Haram's Abubakar Shekau going so

far as to denounce the Emir of Kano as a "false Muslim" and threaten his life in a video released last month—the latter community has suffered a disproportionately high toll. According to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Maiduguri, in just two months, August and September 2014, 185 churches were destroyed by Boko Haram in Borno and Adamawa States. When added to the 300 churches destroyed in 2013 and those destroyed in previous years, it adds up to an unholy tally of more than 1,000 Christian houses of worship razed by Boko Haram since the last time Nigerian went to the polls.

To its credit, the Nigerian federal government has begun to address some of the developmental challenges posed by both the longstanding social and economic marginalization of the northeast and the ravages of the last few years of insurgency. Last year the federal government launched the Presidential Initiative on the Northeast (PINE), a special program to provide not only emergency assistance, but also targeted resources to jumpstart the economy in the affected zone, beginning with the three states currently under a state of emergency, Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. According to the Federal Ministry of Finance, in the short term, the program will focus on delivery of relief supplies, fixing roads and schools, and assistance to the needy. Over time, PINE will seek to revitalize the regional economy by encouraging agriculture—the largest employer—as well as mining. Despite the pressures on the national budget due to declining oil prices, the federal allocations to the three states in the extreme northeast have remained fairly high: in 2014, they received total transfers of just under $700 million to provide services for their combined population of approximately 10 million.

On a more modest, but nonetheless important, scale a Safe Schools Initiative was launched last year under Nigeria's Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, to work with the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, as well as with the Nigerian business community led by Aliko Dangote, Chairman of the Dangote Group, and Nduka Obiagbena, Chairman of the Nigerian Newspaper Publishers Association. The Safe Schools Initiative combines money from the private sector with government funds as well as contributions from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, foreign governments (including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway), and other partners, to upgrade security at educational institutions. Moreover, the weekend before last, an initial group of 2,400 students from the three most affected states were, with their parents' consent, transferred to more than forty boarding schools in safer areas.

Economic Pressures and Opportunities

As Africa's most populous country, its largest economy, and its top petroleum producer, Nigeria has grown about 7 percent a year for the past decade. With the expansion of the telecommunications, media, and retail sectors and a new interest in agriculture, the ubiquitous oil industry nowadays accounts for just 14 percent of the economy. The West African country's buoyant prospects have attracted significant investments from a growing number of multinationals as well as private-equity firms. However, with hydrocarbons still making up almost all Nigerian exports and up to 80 percent of the government's revenues, the dramatic

fall in global oil prices—the benchmark Brent crude closed on Friday at $48.79 a barrel, down from close to $108.00 just one year ago—cannot but have a major impact on the Nigerian economy. The Nigerian naira is trading at record lows against the US dollar, the stock market is down by almost one-third, and expectations for economic growth in 2015 have been revised downward, as has the federal budget which has been recalibrated twice in recent months—and, although she defends the current calculations based on oil prices stabilizing this year at $65.00, Nigeria's finance minister assured me in a telephone conversation last week that the government was prepared to cope with scenarios in which the price collapsed to even $45.00 a barrel. Moreover, she emphasized that, even with the slashed fiscal outlook, the currently projected budget deficit of less than 1 percent of GDP is low by global standards.

In addition to the pressures being exerted on the Nigerian economy by global commodity prices, there is also the negative impact of the ongoing insurgency on the economy of the northern part of the country in general and the northeastern zone in particular. Border towns in the northeast which formerly thrived on trade with neighboring countries, where they have not been overrun altogether by militants, have seen commerce decline precipitously. Numerous small and medium businesses, many run by expatriates, especially those whose origins go back to Lebanon or India, or enterprising Nigerians from the south, have shuttered and their owners and operators have fled the region for safer areas.

And while diminished revenues clearly impact the resources available to Nigeria to fight the insurgency and fund the sort of holistic approach to development that can truly drain the fever swamps that feed extremism, the current crisis is also an opportunity to accelerate a much-needed shift in and diversification of Nigeria's overall economy. In this process, the expansion of power generation in the country, an effort to which the United States' "Power Africa" Initiative has made a modest contribution, and the infrastructure build-up of recent years—*inter alia*, some 25,000 kilometers of road have been rehabilitated or newly built in recent years across Nigeria—have laid a good foundation for future growth.

The financial squeeze of collapsing oil and gas prices also incentivizes whatever administration takes office after the upcoming elections to redouble efforts to fight corruption. The incumbent government has focused its efforts in this regard on reforming and, where necessary, building systems and institutions. Three electronic platforms introduced in recent years—the Treasury Single Account (TSA), the Government Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS), and the Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS)—have made headway in improving the transparency and efficiency of Nigeria's infamously murky public finances and their sluggish administration. The IPPIS system alone has been credited with weeding out more than 60,000 ghost workers who cost the country almost $1 billion a year.

The Upcoming Elections

All of this sets the context for the upcoming general elections, which Secretary of State John Kerry rightly described on Sunday as "one of the most important elections" that Nigeria has ever held. If the 2011 election represented a significant turning point from previous polls—who

can forget then-U.S. Ambassador John Campbell's characterization of the 2007 vote as "the election-like event"?—the vote next month will indeed determine the very trajectory of the country for years to come, even beyond the mandate of the man elected president.

There are a number of challenges to the vote, however. In deference to my good friend, Dr. Chris Fomunyoh, who just returned from a joint International Republican Institute-National Democratic Institute Pre-Election Assessment Mission to Nigeria and will address many of the technical and structural issues with its organization, I will limit myself to signaling several points of concern.

First, the specter of Boko Haram has clearly impacted the election and will continue do so. With numerous local government areas either under the insurgents' control or otherwise rendered unsafe, even the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has acknowledged that it will be impossible to organize voting across the entire territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Whether satisfactory arrangements can be made for displaced persons remains to be seen. In addition, millions of voters outside the states most impacted by Boko Haram may still be deterred from voting by fear of suicide bombing or other attacks mounted by the terrorists. Thus the political question that will only be answered after the election is how does the winner claim to have the mandate of the people when so many of them could potentially be unable to express themselves and will that claim be accepted?

Second, even aside from Boko Haram in the northeast, divisive and inflammatory messages which some political figures and their supporters have been delivering through traditional and social media in several other parts of Nigeria—including Plateau State in Nigeria's sensitive "Middle Belt" and Rivers State in the Niger Delta, where the amnesty program for local militants expires this year—is worrisome, raising as it does the risk for the sort of localized violence that marred the first elections after the restoration of democracy in Nigeria.

Third, Election Day itself presents extraordinary security challenges commensurate with the temptations it undoubtedly presents to the terrorists who ideologically reject democratic politics and who strategically have every reason to tarnish the poll lest it result in a government that stands in the way of their goal of establishing their ghoulish caricature of God's kingdom on earth. With about 120,000 polling stations across Nigeria, even if one sent the entirety of the Nigerian army to guard just the vote in the north, given that Nigeria has one of the lowest ratios of military personnel to population in the world, that deployment would barely result in one soldier at each location—not much deterrence to a determined enemy. And this theoretical scenario does not even address the different security concerns in the Middle Belt and other areas.

Fourth, in the lead up to next month's vote, numerous fault lines have emerged in greater relief, dividing Nigerian society along various ethnic, regional, and religious lines. Ironically, these are the sort of fissures that first-past-the-post democratic politics exacerbates, rather than mitigates. In addition, the security crisis in the northeast adds a wild card to the election insofar as Nigeria's constitution requires that the successful presidential candidate win not only

50 percent plus one vote of the total votes cast, but that he or she also win 25 percent of the vote in two-thirds of the states of the federation; otherwise, the election goes into a run off. Population displacements not only increase the possibility that the winning candidate might not meet the minimum proportions in a sufficient number of states, but the ethnic, regional, and religious polarization render any possible run-off election a potentially combustible undertaking.

Fifth, the intensely competitive presidential race and exceptional circumstances under which it is being run have given rise to concern that the loser and/or his supporters may refuse to accept the outcome, even if the election itself is credible. Although the "Abuja Accord" signed by almost all the presidential candidates, including President Goodluck Jonathan and retired General Muhammadu Buhari, commits them to not only running issues-based, non-violent campaigns—and denouncing violence should it emerge before, during, or after the polls—as well as contesting any disputes only through legal channels, with so much at stake, who knows what may happen. It is worth recalling that the last election, which was generally deemed to have met international standards, was nonetheless followed by mob violence that resulted in over 800 deaths and the destruction of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of property—all because partisans of the losing candidate were whipped into a veritable frenzy by some of his more irresponsible allies.

On the other hand, one can be cautiously hopeful about a number of measures taken by Nigerians, both as a government and as a civil society. INEC's cleanup of the voter rolls and its introduction of a biometric voter registry and machine readable permanent voter cards (PVCs) have enhanced confidence that fraud has been curbed, even if the distribution of the PVCs still suffers from a number of hiccups. The creation by the Nigerian government of an Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), co-chaired by the head of INEC, Professor Attahiru Muhammadu Jega, and the National Security Advisor, as well as ICCES committees at the level of states and local government areas is a positive step which should provide more seamless coordination in the event of disruptions. Nongovernmental organizations have undertaken extensive voter education programs, many driven by social media. Religious leaders have also played their part with the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Abuja, Cardinal John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan, and the Primate of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Archbishop Nicholas Okoh, all recently making strong pronouncements against hate messages and the misuse of religion. It is hard to disagree with Archbishop Okoh's assertion that "religion should build, not destroy."

The Role of the United States

It goes without saying that the bilateral relationship between the United States of America and the Federal Republic of Nigeria has been through something of a rough patch recently—and at a time that could not be less opportune for any chasm to open up between our two countries. Between the increasingly virulent and brutal Boko Haram insurgency, the setbacks the Nigerian armed forces have suffered in the fight, the uncertainty surrounding the upcoming general elections, and the challenges which the fall in oil prices has posed to the nation's balance sheet,

Nigerians have had a lot to confront. And on the American side, having acknowledged as the Obama administration put it in its document on *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* that "as we look toward the future, it is clear that Africa is more important than ever to the security and prosperity of the international community, and to the United States in particular," we find ourselves with few partners on the continent as strategically important as Nigeria, Africa's most populous country and largest economy. Nevertheless, while the United States indeed has a role that it can and should play in this pivotal moment in Nigeria's history, we need to be realistic about what that role is, cognizant of some very real limitations—constraints due to the actual resources at our disposal, the still considerable resources available to Nigeria, and, somewhat ironically, the virtual cessation in U.S. imports of Nigerian petroleum since early last year, a dramatic shift from the country being the fourth-largest foreign source of imported oil just a few years ago.

That said, Secretary of State Kerry's visit to Nigeria over the weekend and his meetings with the two leading contenders for the presidency and other officials helped to underscore the importance that we recognize in this election and our commitment to a strong working relationship with Nigeria going forward, a partnership that is, of course, predicated upon a free, credible, and, hopefully, peaceful election. While time is short, the Secretary's words need to be translated into action through support of the electoral process, including assessments and monitoring before, during, and after the voting; sustained messaging about the consequences of violence on both its perpetrators and the credibility of the polls; and support for Nigerian civil society initiatives consonant with these objectives.

While much of what we might be able to and would certainly like to do in cooperation with Nigeria to combat the scourge of Boko Haram will have to wait until the dust settles after the elections, there are things which can be done now, including exploring ways to support through information, training, and equipment the efforts of Nigeria's neighbors to contain the militants, if not quite yet reverse their gains; exploiting the legal authorities under the "Foreign Terrorist Organization" (FTO) designation of Boko Haram to investigate and go after the militants supporters, both within Nigeria and outside; and ensuring adequate resources are available to meet the burdens which neighboring states have to shoulder due to refugee flows caused by the insurgency.

Even in terms of bilateral security cooperation with Nigeria, while much has been said and written about the limits placed on what can be done—and for good reason—due to human rights concerns because of the Leahy laws, I would venture to suggest that there are multiple ways which the United States, without violating our laws or our principles, could nonetheless be doing more to assist in the fight against Boko Haram. What has been lacking, quite frankly, is political will and a little bit of creativity. For example, the problems of the Nigerian military go beyond reports of human rights abuses to the general professionalism of the rank-and-file and the specific competence (or lack thereof) of the officer corps in terms of strategic and tactical thinking. Military success, especially in counterinsurgencies, requires a combination of skill at the level of tactics and a sound overall approach at that of strategy. These are the sort of things

resolved through doctrinal development, curriculum reform, and good instruction in ongoing military education. And nothing in the Leahy laws or other legislation present insurmountable obstacles to military-to-military programs, for example those involving our war colleges and other institutions and their Nigerian homologues, that might help arrest the decline of the once effective Nigerian military and address the institutional weaknesses which have bedeviled it in recent years.

Conclusion

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of Nigeria's upcoming general elections. Not only is the immediate political future of Africa's most populous country and its largest economy to be determined, but, in light of the rapid expansion of the threat posed by Boko Haram and the inability, for whatever reason, of Nigerian forces so far to contain, much less defeat, the militants, the entire West African region and beyond has a lot riding on the outcome. Ultimately, while effective military force is necessary and lacking to date, it will require a combination of political, economic, and social programs—that is, improved governance, economic opportunity, and social welfare—to win what needs to be a full-fledged counterinsurgency campaign. Only a government with a national political mandate can undertake such a mission, especially given the constraints imposed by falling oil prices and other pressures, as well as the tough decisions which lie ahead.

The international community can only hope that such is the result that emerges from the elections next month. And, for the sake of Nigeria, its neighbors, and their own self-interest in a secure and prosperous Africa, Nigeria's friends need to do everything in their power to stand by the people of Nigeria as the latter queue up to cast ballots for the future they would choose for themselves and their children.