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**“NIGERIA: GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND ELECTORAL REFORM”**

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**02 November 2012**

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## **Abstract**

### *Nigeria: Government Corruption and Electoral Reform*

The 2011 general election in Nigeria was internationally recognized as the most open and transparent to date. Greater voter turn out and increased voter confidence in fair election results were reported by both the European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES). However, since 2008, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index has steadily declined indicating an increase in perceived government corruption. As perception of government corruption remains critically high, insurgent violence in northern Nigeria has increased over the same period of time. Counterinsurgency theory states that insurgents can use core grievances, such as government corruption, to gain public support. Despite improvements in Nigeria's general election process over the past decade, the population's increasing perception of government corruption since 2009 directly correlates to a rise in insurgent violence and may impede Nigeria's counterinsurgency effort. Following the conclusions, recommendations are made to improve government legitimacy and decrease perceptions of government corruption thereby aiding in effective counterinsurgency operations.

## Introduction

In 2001, Transparency International ranked Nigeria as the most corrupt country in Africa.<sup>1</sup> During the past decade, the government took several steps to curb government corruption such as improving the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and establishing the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). By 2011, the general election in Nigeria was internationally recognized as the most transparent and open to date. Greater voter turn out and increased voter confidence in fair election results were reported by both the European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria and the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES).<sup>2,3</sup> However, while improvements in the election process resulted in more open elections, perception of government corruption has remained critically high.

A high perception of government corruption in and of itself may not necessarily be fatal for a country. This is not the case for Nigeria. The past three years have shown a steady increase of insurgent violence in the north attributed to Boko Haram, an Islamic extremist organization. This year, violence by Boko Haram increased exponentially and is beginning to expand outside its previous geographic region. Counterinsurgency theory states that insurgents can use core grievances, such as government corruption, to gain public support.<sup>4</sup> Despite improvements in Nigeria's general election process over the past decade,

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<sup>1</sup> Corruption Perception Index 2001, Transparency International, accessed October 20, 2012, [http://archive.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2001](http://archive.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2001).

<sup>2</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, *Nigeria: Final Report on the 2011 General Elections*, 2011, 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Julia Hedlund, "What Made Nigeria's 2011 Elections So Effective?," International Foundation for Election Systems, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Videos/2011/What-Made-Nigerias-2011-Elections-So-Effective.aspx>.

<sup>4</sup> John Waghelstein, "Lecture," (Joint Military Operations Department: United States Naval War College, January 2006).

the population's increasing perception of government corruption since 2009 directly correlates to a rise in insurgent violence and may impede Nigeria's counterinsurgency effort.

### **History of Corruption in Nigeria**

Corruption is complex and much research has been devoted to dissecting the underlying issues, causes and implications of corruption in a society. At its most basic level, corruption is defined as, "Improper and usually unlawful conduct intended to secure a benefit for oneself or another. Its forms include bribery, extortion, and the misuse of inside information."<sup>5</sup> Corruption is broad and can impact many facets of a society such as government and business. It can also influence the highest levels of a country's government whose affects reach down to the daily lives of the general public. History provides an understanding on how corruption can become so systemic.

In Nigeria, government corruption stemmed from colonial rule. Colonialism was designed to extract resources out of the colony to support the European economies. The Berlin Conference in 1884-1885 divided Africa among the European powers. African colonies were "politically and economically subordinate to European needs."<sup>6</sup> Upon independence, the previous colonial government structure used to administer the colony remained in place. Africans assumed the roles of government leaders but the "laws and institutions used by the colonizers to exploit the Africans and their resources became legitimized. Economic and political institutions in the African colonies were primarily structures of exploitation, despotism, and degradation."<sup>7</sup> Although Africans were now in

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<sup>5</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s. v. "corruption", accessed November 01, 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1163901/corruption>.

<sup>6</sup> April A. Gordon and Donald L. Gordon, *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007), 61.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa, "Serving the Few, Starving the Many: How Corruption Underdevelops Nigeria and How There is an Alternative Perspective to Corruption Cleanups," *Africa Today* 58, no. 4 (2012).

charge of their governments, they maintained the same exploitative construct used by the European colonial powers. In essence, during colonial rule, the system was designed so that the people served the colonial government in Africa and the colonial government in Africa supported the larger European country.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, when Africans assumed control of their government but failed to restructure how the government functioned, a patron-client relationship was established where the people served the government instead of the government serving the people.<sup>9</sup>

When Nigeria became an independent country in 1960, the established government adopted the same model of governance used during the colonial period. Nigerians educated in governance under the colonial model filled the vacuum left by the exit of British administrators. What remained was a central government designed to collect wealth from the population and funnel it to the central government. The difference between an independent Nigeria versus a colonial Nigeria was that the demand to support the European power no longer existed and the income previously sent abroad now stopped with senior leaders in the Nigerian government.<sup>10</sup> The transition to independence coincided with the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, which only increased the amount of money flowing to the top of the central government. Large amounts of money in the government created opportunity for senior Nigerian civil servants to use the government for personal gain. This government corruption led to the current situation where politicians earn more money working for the government than in the private sector.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, incredible incentive exists to enter politics and, once

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<sup>8</sup> Omololu Fagbadebo, "Corruption, Governance and Political Stability in Nigeria," *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 1, no. 2 (2007), 29-31.

<sup>9</sup> Gordon and Gordon, *Understanding Contemporary Africa*, 113.

<sup>10</sup> Fagbadebo, "Corruption, Governance and Political Stability in Nigeria," 30.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

elected or appointed, stay in office. The most effective avenue to remain in power is to control the election process.

### **Prior Election Issues and Improvements**

An essential aspect of understanding political corruption, as a subset of government corruption in Nigeria, is the progression of the national election process within the country. According to the 2003 European Union Election Observation Mission, the second presidential election in Nigeria was a significant step in the transition from years of military rule to a legitimate democracy. Unfortunately, the elections were tarnished by several irregularities and illegal activity. The report cited issues with the administration of the election; however, it did not hold the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) at fault. The INEC was poorly funded, and therefore unable to conduct adequate voter registration in a timely manner. Many Nigerians were unable to vote. Additionally, non-autonomous funding for the INEC and legal provisions aimed to control its members further impacted the impartiality of the commission. The Election Observation Mission also witnessed severe electoral fraud such as stuffing ballot boxes and forging results. Irregularities in announcing the results further discredited the election process. In some states, voting results lacked sufficient data such as total number of votes cast or the percentage of votes cast for a specific candidate. Often times a winner would be announced without any data supplied. In other states, there were large discrepancies between total votes cast for the presidential election and votes cast for the gubernatorial election, both conducted simultaneously.<sup>12</sup> To restore “trust and faith of all parties involved in democracy in Nigeria,”

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<sup>12</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission Nigeria 2003, *Nigeria: Final Report on the National Assembly, Presidential, Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections*, 2003, 4.

the Election Observation Mission recommended electronic registration of voters and improved transparency of INEC activities.<sup>13</sup>

The results of the 2007 Presidential Election highlighted the inability of Nigeria to improve their electoral process. The president retained appointment authority for INEC members, failing to create an independent commission. The commission also failed to incorporate recommendations from the 2003 election regarding the posting of results and providing transparency to the reporting process. Public witness of vote counting and collation did not occur only adding to perception of wide spread fraud. The European Union Election Observation Mission held the INEC responsible for lack of transparency and recommended the commission should publish detailed results of the election broken down by individual polling stations so that independent audits could commence. Again, the Election Observation Mission called for improvements to the commission's nomination process to ensure its independence from the executive branch, transparency in election results, and removal of impunity for electoral violations.<sup>14</sup> Although the ability to register voters and conduct elections improved from 2003 to 2007, the national election process in Nigeria still required significant improvement.

The election of President Umaru Yar'Adua in 2007 marked a significant change in the election process for Nigeria. He centered his presidential candidacy around an anti-corruption campaign. Following his election in 2007, President Yar'Adua formed the Electoral Reform Committee (ERC) to investigate irregularities and mandated they "examine the entire electoral process with a view to ensuring that [Nigeria] raise the quality and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, *Final Report: Presidential, National Assembly, Gubernatorial and State House of Assembly Elections, 2007*, 2007, 3.

standard of our general elections and thereby deepen democracy.”<sup>15</sup> The ERC cited several shortcomings and recommended legislative changes. In June 2010, following the death of President Yar’Adua, the National Assembly approved two amendments to the Constitution. Those amendments provided the INEC with financial autonomy and required members of the INEC to disassociate with any political parties. The amendments failed to implement the recommendation of an independently appointed Chairman of the INEC. Furthermore, the legislation failed to implement laws regarding provisions for independent candidates to run for office, essentially limiting the voter’s choice for candidates.<sup>16</sup>

Despite some of these legislative shortcomings, the 2011 presidential election of Goodluck Jonathan was a significant improvement in the electoral process. The Election Observation Mission reported the INEC was more effective at voter registration even though instances of poor voter education resulted in incorrect ballot submissions and subsequently rejected votes. The Chairman of the INEC publicly reiterated his commitment to fair and open elections and stated his intention to investigate and prosecute anyone on his staff accused of misconduct. However, some observers did note that while the Chairman was committed to the adherence of regulations, members of his staff were not so altruistic. In conclusion, the mission stated the “General Elections laid the foundation for the strengthened election procedures.”<sup>17</sup>

Julia Hedlund, Program Manager for the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) in Nigeria, commented that the 2011 presidential election was well received by both Nigerians and observers. She said three critical steps were implemented by the

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<sup>15</sup> Electoral Reform Committee, *Report of the Electoral Reform Committee, Volume I Main Report*, December 2008, ii.

<sup>16</sup> European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria, *Nigeria: Final Report on the 2011 General Elections*, 2011, 12-13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

INEC to improve voter confidence. In January, three months prior to the election, the INEC conducted a mass voter registration and eliminated the old corrupt system previously in place. Second, the INEC employed an open ballot system meaning voters were required to go to their respective polling facilities in the morning to register. Once they registered to vote, they remained at the polling station until the polls opened at noon. After voting, their fingers were marked to prohibit a person from voting multiple times at various locations. This was done in an effort to prevent fraud or the perception of fraud amongst the voters. Third, vote counting was done at the polling stations and voters were allowed to watch the vote tally. The national vote tally conducted in Lagos was aired live on Nigerian television to provide transparency to the results. The result was an internationally recognized election accepted by Nigerians and the international community.<sup>18</sup>

To contrast the opinions of the EUEOM and IFES, an article in the *Journal of Political Studies* stated a full democracy follows certain principles: equality, alternative choices, regular consultations with the masses, regular elections, majority rule and enlightened electorates.<sup>19</sup> As noted previously in the 2011 report, President Jonathan failed to make the INEC an independent commission. This gives him a distinct advantage in the election process since he appoints the Chairman of the Commission and challenges the principle of equality. The article further suggests that without full equality for all individuals in the polity, Nigeria fails the test of full democracy and should therefore be considered “civilian rule.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Julia Hedlund, “What Made Nigeria’s 2011 Elections So Effective?,” International Foundation for Election Systems.

<sup>19</sup> J. C. Okoye, E. A. Egboh, and Emma E. O. Chukwuemeka, “Changing Perspectives of Nigeria Political Development: From Militarism to Incumbency and Godfatherism,” *Journal of Political Studies* 19, no. 1 (Summer 2012), 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

The author of the article proposes that Nigeria still functions under civilian rule because of what he calls “incumbency influence.”<sup>21</sup> Incumbency influence occurs when an incumbent leader or party tries to influence the inter-workings of the institutional framework or constitution of the country to create an unequal playing field that favors their personal interests in the electoral process. Examples of influencing the electoral process would be actions such as appointment of compromised officers to the electoral commission, manipulation of laws that serve the self-interest of the incumbents or their party, use of state funds to support their campaign or denial of access to state owned media for the opposition party candidates.<sup>22</sup> During President Obasanjo’s second term, from 2003 to 2007, he attempted to pass a constitutional amendment to allow for a third term. It failed to pass the senate’s two-third majority vote but does highlight attempts to control the government for self-serving purposes.<sup>23</sup> Failure to make the head of the INEC an independently appointed position in 2011 demonstrates that incumbency influence is still a major issue within the government under President Jonathan’s administration.

The past decade showed significant improvements in the election procedures in Nigeria. Implementation of critical election reform legislation made dramatic improvements to the transparency and legitimacy of the national electoral process. Although both internal and external evaluations of the presidential election process reflect a positive trend for Nigeria from 2007 to 2011, the perception of government corruption during this period did not improve. The contrast between positive election reform and negative perception of government corruption begins to touch on a deeper issue with respect to the elections process. If the elections are becoming more open, free and transparent, then why is the

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

perception of corruption in the government still so poor? Before attempting to understand why there is an inverse relationship between electoral improvements and government corruption perception, it is critical to understand how government corruption perception is evaluated.

### Corruption Perception

To evaluate government corruption on a global scale, Transparency International (TI) has been evaluating government corruption perception via their Corruption Perception Index (CPI) since 1995 and has been monitoring Nigeria's CPI since 1996. The organization has

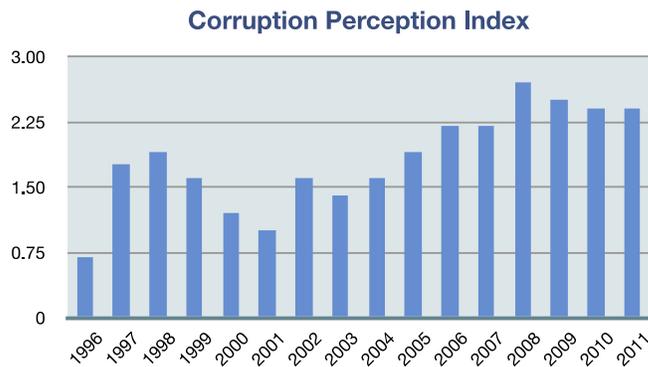


Figure 1 - Corruption Perception Index

more than 100 chapters around the world with the overarching mission of stopping corruption and promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity across the social spectrum. The

organization produces a specific report annually on Nigeria that evaluates the perception of government corruption in the society based on several surveys taken among the public. In Figure 1, the published CPI results were graphed historically beginning with TI's first evaluation of Nigeria in 1996 through the latest report issued for 2011. The overall scale is based on a score of zero to ten with zero being the most corrupt and ten being the least. Therefore, a lower number represents a greater perception of government corruption. As perception of corruption decreases, the number value increases. Nigeria is continually

perceived at a very high government corruption level (0.75 to 2.7 out of 10).<sup>24</sup> When compared to the election cycles in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, one would expect to see corresponding changes in the public's perception of government corruption. Indeed, following the reportedly fraudulent elections in 1999 there was a decrease in the index suggesting an increase in perception of government corruption. During this period there was no electoral reform and no attempts made to improve the process. The 2003 elections were again marred by voter fraud and polling irregularities, however, international observers witness the irregularities and made recommendations for election reform which may have impacted people's perception. Subsequent to the 2007 election, there is also a rise in the CPI value suggesting lower corruption perception. Major election reforms were passed in 2008 following the controversial elections and could also correlate to the sudden improvement in the CPI. However, most concerning is the gradual decrease of the CPI value from 2008 to 2011. During the period of the Elector Reform Committee's review of the election process and the implementation of Constitutional Amendments, public perception of corruption worsened. It is understandable to suggest that positive results of the 2011 general election may not be seen until the 2012 results are released; however, causal factors behind the decrease in CPI from 2008 to 2011 warrant further investigation.

### **Causes of Government Corruption Perception**

Although election reform has positively impacted voter confidence and improved legitimacy in the electoral process, government corruption continues to impact Nigeria. Corruption still exists in the electoral process as evidenced by the presidential appointment of the Chairman of the INEC. However, electoral reform is not enough. Government

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<sup>24</sup> Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International, accessed October 9, 2012, <http://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/>. Corruption perception index statistical data compiled by the author from annual reports from 1996 to 2011.

corruption in Nigeria runs deeper than just political corruption. To begin dissecting possible causes for the increase in perceived governmental corruption, it is crucial to review the surveys used by Transparency International to evaluate the Nigerian's perspective. The survey asked questions aimed at evaluating public opinion ranging from how effective people feel the government is fighting corruption to which institutions they feel are most corrupt. The results of the latest full country report from 2010 indicate areas of concern. When asked if their government was effective at fighting corruption, 46% of the population felt it was effective, where 40% felt it was ineffective and 14% felt it was neither. This shows that less than half of the people surveyed felt the current government was effective at fighting corruption. Even more alarming, when asked if the government was becoming more or less corrupt from 2007 to 2010, 73% of the respondents felt the government was becoming more corrupt compared to 10% that replied it stayed the same and 17% reported a decrease. The last section of the report asked the public which sections of the government were more corrupt. The three highest sectors with perceived corruption were the police, the political parties, and the parliament and legislature in that order.<sup>25</sup>

To highlight why public perception of corruption within the government is high, recent headlines provide the clearest vision into Nigeria's current affairs. In December 2002, the government established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) aimed at challenging the impunity of the country's political elite. An article by Human Rights Watch analyzed the effectiveness of the commission since its inception. As of August 2011, the commission had arraigned thirty nationally prominent political figures on corruption

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<sup>25</sup> Corruption By Country: Nigeria, Transparency International, accessed October 17, 2012, [http://www.transparency.org/country#NGA\\_PublicOpinion](http://www.transparency.org/country#NGA_PublicOpinion).

charges. However, these cases had little success in the courts. Of the thirty politicians tried, only four have been convicted.<sup>26</sup>

The reason this commission may have a high impact on public corruption perception goes back to its foundation. The first Chairman of the EFCC was Nuhu Ribadu, a reportedly media-savvy and charismatic individual that publicly “declared war on corrupt politicians.”<sup>27</sup> Although he took office in April 2003, he did not officially charge any politician until April 2005. One issue of note is that politicians under Constitutional Law could not be tried while in office. His first case was against the Inspector General of the Police, charged in 2005 immediately after leaving office. According to Human Rights Watch, Ribadu charged two politicians in 2005 and one in 2006. His most critical year was 2007. Following the elections of 2007, many national and state politicians were required to leave office due to term limits. That year, the EFCC charged seven prominent former government officials with corruption. It also ended Ribadu’s term as the Chairman of the EFCC. The last official, charged in December 2007, was the former governor of the Delta State, James Ibori. Reportedly close with then current president Yar’Adua, Ibori was a prominent governor in the oil-rich Niger Delta. Two weeks after Ribadu filed charges, he was relieved of his post.<sup>28</sup> President Yar’Adua’s attorney general, also a close friend of Ibori, eventually dropped the charges. The high profile case of former Governor Ibori continues to highlight the larger issue of fighting government corruption in Nigeria. In April 2012, five years after charges of

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<sup>26</sup> Chris Albin-Lackey and Eric Guttchuss, “Corruption on Trial?” Human Rights Watch, August 25, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/print/reports/2011/08/25/corruption-trial>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

corruption were filed against him in Nigeria; he was finally convicted by the United Kingdom on money laundering charges and was sentenced to thirteen years in prison.<sup>29</sup>

Interference with the EFCC did not stop with the change in administration. Farida Waziri, the successor to Ribadu, became the head of the EFCC in 2008. During her tenure, she arraigned twenty-one political figures, but was only able to obtain two convictions. More notably, she had been criticized publicly for her lack of tenacity in prosecuting former government officials. In October 2011, following the prosecution of several business leaders, Waziri filed corruption charges against four former state governors and one former senator, all members of the current ruling People's Democratic Party. In November 2011, she was suddenly relieved of her duties.<sup>30</sup>

Government corruption does not only exist at the high levels of civil service. The pervasive exploitation of the population for personal gain filters down to local government entities. Transparency International's country report states that Nigeria's Police Force is considered the most corrupt institution in the country.<sup>31</sup> To validate public perception with current events, two articles identified issues in the police force. Both articles, one written in 2010 and another in 2012, demonstrated three areas of corruption. The first area, extortion and bribery, was evidenced in many roadblocks established to extort money from motorists and through the "sale of justice."<sup>32</sup> Rampant corruption has led to instances of paying bribes to police to avoid arrest or senior police officials *renting* the police force to private citizens as security for their own profit. The second, embezzlement, has crippled the ability of the non-

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<sup>29</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: UK Conviction a Blow Against Corruption," April 17, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/17/nigeria-uk-conviction-blow-against-corruption>.

<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Firing of Anti-Corruption Czar Won't Fix Agency," November 23, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/23/nigeria-firing-anti-corruption-czar-won-t-fix-agency>.

<sup>31</sup> Corruption By Country: Nigeria, Transparency International, accessed October 17, 2012, [http://www.transparency.org/country#NGA\\_PublicOpinion](http://www.transparency.org/country#NGA_PublicOpinion).

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria: Corruption Fueling Police Abuses", August 17, 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/08/17/nigeria-corruption-fueling-police-abuses>.

corrupt police force to do their work. Mismanagement of funds has left police departments underfunded.<sup>33</sup> And finally, referred to as a system of returns, lower police officials that receive money through bribes and extortion are expected to pay senior officials a percentage earned thereby ensuring impunity.<sup>34,35</sup> The public's daily interaction with the local police is the front-line of the fight against corruption. Extortion of the private citizens erodes confidence in the very organization tasked with the rule of law.

Nigeria is finding the battle against government corruption to be difficult. "Corruption can be a particularly invidious challenge... [that] hampers economic growth, disproportionately burdens the poor, undermines the rules of law, and damages government legitimacy."<sup>36</sup> The government of Nigeria commissioned the EFCC with the attempted objective of targeting corruption within the government. However, the public perception of government corruption, indicated by Transparency International's report, criticizes the government of being ineffective at fighting corruption. The people identify that the political parties and the parliament are the most corrupt institutions and they overwhelmingly agree that government corruption worsened from 2007 to 2010. Looking at the inter-workings of the EFCC and its inability to independently prosecute political offenders, complicated by the ineffectiveness and corruption of the Nigerian police, public perception and reality are in complete alignment.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Abiodun Oluwarotimi, "Nigeria: Police Force Is Corrupt, EFCC Not Sincere – U.S.," AllAfrica, May 26, 2012, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201205270236.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008), 19.

## Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

Government corruption in Nigeria is a critical issue to understand because of the latest rise of violence inside the country. A recent article in the *Economist* graphically conveyed the number of security incidents in northern Nigeria (Figure 2).<sup>37</sup> The past two years have shown a marked escalation in the amount of violence in the country. At the center of these violent actions is the insurgent organization known as Boko Haram. Boko Haram is organized around two main grievances. The first is the indiscriminate killing by the Nigerian police in 2009. They seek revenge by attacking the police, officials, clerics and journalists that speak out against them. The second major grievance is economic inequality. Boko Haram blames government corruption and greed as the reason for the population's plight.<sup>38</sup>

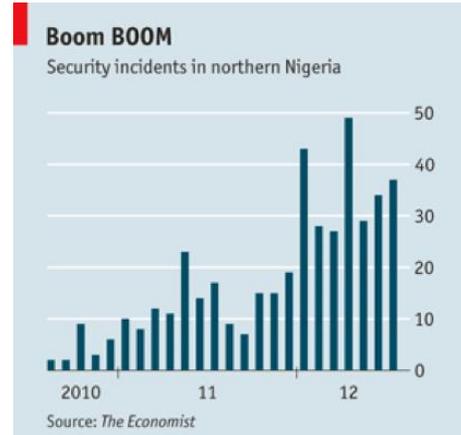


Figure 2 – Security Incidents

Core grievances are critical issues in understanding counterinsurgency theory. The insurgency triangle identifies three major components: the government, the insurgency and the people.<sup>39</sup> The success of an insurgency rests on its ability to exploit core grievances to gain public support. According to Joint Publication 3-24 Counterinsurgency Operations, core grievances, such as corruption, are a major aspect of an insurgency.<sup>40</sup>

Corruption of national politics, HN [Host Nation] government, or key institutions or organizations can be a core grievance. Institutional corruption is systematic and

<sup>37</sup> *The Economist*, "Nigeria's Crisis: A Threat to the Entire Country," September 29, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563751>.

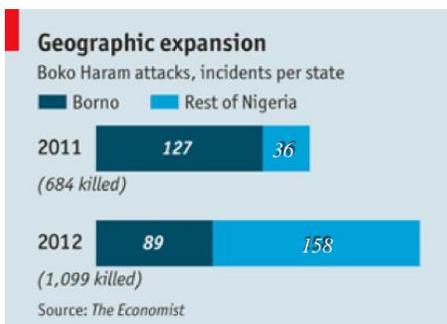
<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> John Waghelstein, "Lecture," (January 2006).

<sup>40</sup> U. S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, Joint Publication (JP) 3-24 (Washington, DC: CJCS, October 5, 2009), II-6.

ongoing, unfair or illegal actions or policies. Political corruption is the dysfunction of a political system... Corruption leads to loss of HN legitimacy and is often a core grievance.<sup>41</sup>

Nigeria is fighting a national insurgency in the northeastern section of the country fueled by both government and political corruption. As perception of corruption among the public continues to grow through dysfunctional and outwardly corrupt systems such as the EFCC or the police force, the insurgency may continue to expand. In fact, evidence of Boko Haram's growth may already exist. Originally isolated to the northern state of Borno, The Economist's Intelligence Unit reported Boko Haram attacks are increasingly expanding beyond their historical area. In fact, as Figure 3 depicts, to date there have already been more attacks outside Borno than the entire previous year.<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 3 – Boko Haram Expansion**

Governance plays a vital role in a country's ability to defeat an insurgency. Often times, poor governance can be the major underlying factor for the insurgency. It creates a fissure between the population and the government, which provides the insurgency an opportunity to attract more members to its cause. Dr.

Seth Jones, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation, succinctly summarized the power of corruption on the people, "The most damaging effect of corruption is its impact on the social fabric of society: corruption undermines the population's trust in the political system, political institutions, and political leadership."<sup>43</sup> Trust in the government to provide for the masses is the very foundation of modern society. When that trust falters, the link

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., II-7.

<sup>42</sup> *The Economist*, "Nigeria's Crisis: A Threat to the Entire Country."

<sup>43</sup> Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, 20.

between the people and their government begins to crack and insurgencies, capitalizing on a disaffected population, find fertile ground to grow. Dr. Jones' statistics show that "governments with popularity defeated most of the insurgencies they fought, while unpopular governments lost more than one-half of the time."<sup>44</sup> It is vitally important to the future success of Nigeria to tackle government corruption and improve the population's perception of the government to fight a growing insurgency within their borders. Decreasing perceived government corruption is only one aspect of the reducing the economic grievances exploited by Boko Haram, however, it begins to break the link between the insurgents and the population.

### **Conclusion**

Despite positive momentum in the electoral process, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index displays a recent negative trend suggesting there is more to election corruption than stuffing ballot boxes or fraudulently submitting vote results. A deeper look at the inability of Nigeria to eradicate corruption from within revealed high-level government corruption. Interference with independent organizations such as the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Economic Financial Crimes Commission erode public confidence in the institutional and political systems of Nigeria. The systemic corruption of senior government officials penetrates to all levels of government. The implications of this systemic government corruption manifest in circumstances, such as local police extorting the public, which impacts the perception of effective rule of law.

Against the backdrop of political and government corruption, there exists a growing insurgency in northeast Nigeria. Boko Haram is gaining strength from perceived corruption and poor governance. Not only has the insurgency increased violent attacks in the past two

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

years, those attacks are starting to expand. For Nigeria to successfully counter the growing insurgency, attention needs to be focused wholeheartedly on improving legitimacy in their government. If Nigeria fails to improve governance, decrease the perception of government corruption and increase popularity in the central government, history shows they may have a less than fifty percent chance of success in counterinsurgency operations.

### **Recommendations**

- Senior AFRICOM leaders experienced with counterinsurgency need to engage and mentor senior Nigerian government officials emphasizing the correlation between poor governance and failed counterinsurgency. Understanding the cause and effect between the population's perception of poor governance and its intrinsic support to insurgent ideology is the primary step toward improving the government's fight against corruption.
- Immunity for currently serving government officials provided by the Nigerian Constitution needs to be rescinded. This will allow the EFCC to prosecute *and convict* currently serving corrupt government officials and should have an immediate positive affect on the public's perception that the government is effective at fighting corruption.
- The latest constitutional amendments regarding the INEC had positive impacts on the 2011 election. Nigeria needs to continue improvement of the general election process through implementation of the remaining recommendations from the Electoral Reform Commission and the European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria. Of those recommendations, the most important is the independent appoint of the Chairman of the INEC.

Fighting corruption in the Nigerian government is vital to long-term legitimacy and improving the public's perception of improving governance. Strengthening anti-corruption

legislation, removing barriers within the government to eradicate corrupt officials and providing an independent election process may potentially decrease the population's perception of corruption in the government. These efforts should begin to build confidence that the government is addressing public grievances, which may weaken the connection between Boko Haram and the disaffected population.

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