1 | *Introduction*

In January 2015, Nigeria's ruling party was fighting for its life on two fronts. Politically, the elections scheduled for that month presented a daunting challenge as President Goodluck Jonathan's overall approval rating dipped to 29 percent from 43 percent just two years earlier (Loschky 2015). Dozens of disgruntled members of his People's Democratic Party (PDP) had defected and banded together to form a new "megaparty." The president faced an even more formidable fight on the military front. Boko Haram, once a small, isolated religious sect, had evolved into one of the world's deadliest insurgencies. During the previous year, its horrific kidnapping of 276 school girls in Chibok captured the world's attention, and it made steady territorial gains. Over a mere three months it attacked and looted over 200 towns across the northeast, and it took control of at least twenty local government areas across three states. The National Security Adviser said the military could not guarantee security for the elections in the northeast and the electoral commissioner decided to postpone the elections. Then, after pledging loyalty to the Islamic State, Boko Haram called for an election boycott and extended the reach of its terror as far as the city of Gombe (Agence France Press 2015). A military surge in the northeast proved too little, too late for the ruling PDP. Voters cast their lot with the newly formed All Progressive's Congress (APC) taking hold of the presidency, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and most of the governorships. Heading off a repeat of post-election violence in 2011, Jonathan's concession speech rose to the occasion, declaring, "Nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian. The unity, stability and progress of our dear country is more important than anything else" (Nossiter 2015a).

This book dissects the 2015 presidential campaign and tells the political story of Nigeria's first "electoral turnover," tracing the origins of the PDP's vulnerability to deals struck during the transition to democracy in 1998–1999. The party internally (and informally) decided

to alternate the presidency between north and south, geographically rotated other political offices by "zoning" them, and established an understanding that the party's first presidential candidate in 1999 needed to be Yoruba. Another agreement, between the military and elites more broadly, offered the outgoing authoritarian rulers various guarantees, paved the way for new career paths, and delimited the rules for elite political competition. After capturing power through these elite deals and elections of varying quality, the PDP controlled all levels of government, along with billions of dollars in oil revenue, for sixteen years. These agreements amounted to what the democratization literature refers to as "pacts," meaning "explicit (though not always public) agreements between contending actors, which define the rules of governance on the basis of mutual guarantees for the 'vital interests' of those involved" (Karl 1990, 9). As such, a pact indicates a "transition from above by authoritarian incumbents with sufficient cohesion and resources to dictate the rules of the game" (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986c, 39). As constitutional crises, tensions over presidential succession, and suppressed internal competition weakened the transition's founding pact, the PDP became vulnerable to a new coalition of rivals under the banner of the APC.

The rise of the APC tacks closely with the transitional pact's decline. This means that the elements of successful democratic consolidation in Nigeria will ultimately differ from the conditions for successful democratic transition. This story is also important because although pacts were common in Latin American and Southern European transitions in the 1970s and 1980s (Stepan 1988), scholars have largely dismissed them in Africa, attributing the expansion of democracy in the 1990s primarily to popular pressures. Moreover, we have little comparative understanding for when and how pacts end (Diamond, Plattner, et al. 1997; Linz and Stepan 1996; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986b).

How did the APC – a party less than two years old, cobbled together from regional parties and PDP defectors – defeat Africa's largest ruling party? I argue that its campaign on economic issues offered a broader electoral coalition than the PDP's traditional ethnoregional strategy, and the APC's emphasis on electoral integrity appealed to disgruntled politicians and voters alike. I demonstrate this through complementary analyses of elite rhetoric and electoral behavior, drawing on interviews in ten different states with nearly fifty individuals and extensive quantitative data. First, a content analysis of 2,390 news articles quoting

the top officials from the PDP and the APC offers empirical evidence that the opposition systematically campaigned on the economy and corruption. Since several national surveys identified insecurity as voters' top concern, and the PDP could have credibly campaigned on economic performance, this strategy suggests that the opposition took a small gamble on its choice of issues. Given the consistent differences between the parties on all five issues I analyze, and the nearly consistent messaging by each party leader on each issue, my results also offer some evidence that African political parties can and do run on strategies calculated and calibrated by issue appeals. Second, a statistical analysis demonstrates that subjective evaluations of national economic performance, objective measures of economic conditions, and enthusiasm for the opposition candidate's economic promises systematically explain electoral outcomes across states. Even the level of violence proves a less reliable predictor of voting patterns. Since outcomes diverged from voters' stated priorities, this provides a building block for inferring that the APC "primed" citizens to engage in "economic voting" (Hart 2016). I also present evidence that campaigning on counter-terrorism played to the PDP's core supporters but meant less to APC voters, who were motivated by other issues. These tests remain robust after controlling for a range of potentially intervening factors, including economic conditions, gender, literacy, and ethnicity. Third, though 2015 electoral maps offer some encouraging signs of voting across ethnicity and indicate that political institutions do promote inter-ethnic electoral coalitions, statistical tests with individual-level data do provide evidence of co-ethnic voting. More alarming is the robust evidence of religiously motivated voting on both sides of the partisan divide. This tempers the "good news" about campaigning and voting on programmatic issues, and has important implications for how Nigeria will confront its most pressing challenges to democracy in the coming years.

I close the book by analyzing how the terrorism of Boko Haram in the northeast, a revival of Igbo secessionism in the southeast, and geographically dispersed farmer–pastoralist conflicts constitute "stress points" that challenge Nigeria's democratic institutions. I argue that electoral accountability will be essential but insufficient for resolving the nation's representational and distributional issues. The peaceful resolution of this stress through political institutions is undermined by lingering legacies of the elite deals

struck during the transition. Pacts essentially are "antidemocratic mechanisms, bargained by elites, which seek to create a deliberate socioeconomic and political contract that demobilizes emerging mass actors," writes one critic (Karl 1990, 12). Thus, while the defeat of the PDP delivered Nigeria's first electoral "turnover" ever, marking an important political milestone, the undemocratic nature of the transition continues to haunt the nation's democratic development.

By adopting the term "stress points," I depart from the usual terminology on democratic "consolidation." On the one hand, the classic literature identifies the relatively uncontested legitimate use of force and the absence of serious secessionist claims among the minimum conditions for consolidation (Linz and Stepan 1996; Englebert 2009). These are useful benchmarks for analyzing the stress points above. On the other hand, consolidation as a concept problematically envisions the path to democracy as a linear process, beginning with discrete stages such as political liberalization and elite splits and culminating in electoral competition from which other essential features of democracy follow (Carothers 2002). The vast new literature on hybrid regimes and democratic reversion underscores the complex, multidirectional reality of post-transition politics around the world (Foa and Mounk 2017; Levitsky and Way 2010). Stress points are subnational case studies for examining whether a regime's institutions can weather extra-institutional pressures. Can radical demands for representation be channeled into party politics? Can federalism relieve tensions in disgruntled regions? Do state actors have the means and motives to render violent participation in politics both ineffective *and* irrational? By considering Nigeria's contemporary subnational stress points and empirically analyzing its electoral politics, this book provides a new way of thinking about regime transitions, when they end, and how they shape the democratic institutional capabilities.

Nigeria's contemporary violence seeks to destroy these institutions, and popular accounts of the PDP's defeat point the finger squarely at Boko Haram. This chapter therefore begins by identifying broader African conflict trends and relevant research on terrorism and electoral politics in order to situate Nigeria's insurgency within a comparative politics of violence. One dominant theme in this research focuses on identifying the causes of terrorism and how to defeat it. In its efforts to "counter violent extremism" (CVE) over the past decade, the US Department of Defense has spent over US$1.7 billion

on counter-terrorism training and equipment for Africa, and another US$2 billion on counter-terrorism and stabilization for the African Mission in Somalia. Such figures do not include US$465 million (in Fiscal Year 2015–2016) through other budget accounts on training, equipment, and assistance to support CVE initiatives in Africa, or spending by the US Agency for International Development (Blanchard and Arieff 2016). Nor do they include spending by other bilateral and multilateral donors, or by African governments. Africa is on the frontlines of counter-terrorism, and with the fall of aging dictators in Zimbabwe and the Gambia, it is once again at the forefront of democratization.

In order to bring these two trends – democratization and violence – together, this book also engages research on the politics of violence through its detailed analysis of Nigeria's elections. Existing literature in this area typically focuses on the "triggers" or the timing of election violence. I ask instead about the broader political effects of terrorism on electoral democracy in order to understand how the presence of a violent insurgency impacts political campaign strategies, the party system, and voting behavior. These remain nascent areas of research for emerging democracies and pose urgent questions for Nigeria. Like numerous developing countries, it faces what I call the paradox of democratic counter-terrorism: less effective strategies might be more politically popular. This means that if citizens vote on issues other than insecurity, any incentives to build a national constituency for peace lose some appeal.

Next, this chapter introduces Nigeria for readers less familiar with this complex and important African country. Since the book focuses on the Fourth Republic, a period which spans from the 1999 democratic transition to the present, I provide some historical background, situating Nigeria's contemporary politics within broader concerns of colonialism, democracy and dictatorship, and complications of underdevelopment. I highlight three conditions that shaped the post-colonial political context: the precedent of military intervention and limitations on the ability of institutions to structure uncertainty; geopolitical realignments that internationally amplified Nigeria's strategic importance and domestically produced conflicting structures of interest aggregation; and the normalization of violence as these structures failed to moderate or mediate citizen demands.

I conclude with a succinct summary of the book's chapters, identifying my main findings and their principal implications for different areas of research. By describing the elite deals that facilitated the transition to democracy in 1999 and linking the weakening of that "pact" to new opportunities for opposition political parties, I offer a new account of how transitions end. Then, by systematically identifying rhetorical differences between competing presidential campaigns, I contribute to our understanding of how parties adopt different issue portfolios to distinguish themselves from each other and appeal to voters. Although religion and ethnicity remain important factors in Nigerian politics, as I will show later, the APC's strategy points to the promise of programmatic campaigns. In addition, by linking the APC's core campaign issues to electoral outcomes, I contribute to emerging comparative research that shows how party messaging can shift voter preferences by "priming" them to vote on particular issues. In Nigeria's case, the opposition effectively discounted the politics of fear fueled by Boko Haram's reign of terror and built a winning campaign on economic promise and electoral integrity. Nigeria's 2015 Presidential Election was certainly not perfect, yet these findings offer some "good" news for African democracy and advance important research agendas on party competition, African politics, and elections amidst terrorism in the developing world.

Terrorism and Electoral Politics

Terrorism such as Boko Harm's is a specific form of non-state violence that targets noncombatants in order to instill fear and achieve some broader political objective.[1] According to a seminal study by Enders and Sandler (2012), terrorist groups are 3.5 times more likely to be present in democracies than in dictatorships. Yet, we are still learning about how terrorism impacts elections, the principal feature of democracies (and many dictatorships too). Enders and Sandler's work, *The Political Economy of Terrorism*, mentions terrorism and elections only in passing, noting, "elected governments may lose the next election if

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[1] The US Code of Federal Regulations defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" (28 C.F.R. Section 0.85).

domestic attacks are not curtailed" (Enders and Sandler 2012, 9). The overall number of terrorist attacks increased just prior to elections taking place in Western European democracies between 1950 and 2004. However "a relatively permissive electoral system makes the use of peaceful means a more favorable option" (Aksoy 2014, 911). Such findings constitute a marked departure from analyses prior to 9/11, when terrorism was often blamed on poverty, limited economic opportunities, or a demographic "youth bulge" (US Agency for International Development and Management Systems International 2009). By locating conditions conducive to terrorism in institutions, these findings also imply that, like other political actors, terrorists' behavior is shaped by the political context generating constraints and opportunities. By this reasoning, good counter-terrorism involves raising the costs of violence while reducing the barriers to entry into legitimate politics. Voters in Mali, Kenya, Niger, Algeria, Somalia, and Nigeria have all had to go to the polls while facing risks associated with terrorism with all of its spectacular, random, and deadly features. How do politicians campaign in the context of terrorism, and how do voters decide who to vote for?

In Mali, Wing finds that the government elected in 2013 repeatedly contradicted itself as rival politicians jockeyed for electoral constituencies. Some officials labeled groups terrorists in order to "frame" them as enemies, while other officials sought to accommodate them as legitimate players in the post-conflict context (Wing 2016). Similarly, Oates finds differences across countries in how politicians characterize terrorism. In Russia and the United States, a "show of strength" is central to campaign rhetoric, while in Britain, discussion of terrorism is "more rational and less emotional" during election cycles (Oates 2006, 426). She concludes that the impact of terrorism on elections is conditioned by this rhetoric and media coverage, not simply by the level of violence. Evidence from seventeen (primarily Western European) democracies over fifty years finds that parties will seek to form surplus coalitions in anticipation of terrorist activity, and if terrorism does occur, ideological differences fade (Indridason 2008). This "rally-around-the-flag" effect was especially pronounced in a study of France, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States between 1990 and 2006 (Chowanietz 2011).

Another area of research focuses on voters. How do they respond to framing and other efforts by political parties to motivate them?

Findings from one influential study of the 2004 US Presidential Election, the 2006 California Gubernatorial Election, and the 2008 Presidential Election further highlight the distortions generated by populism. Merolla and Zechmeister conclude, "conditions of threat cause strong leadership to take on a greater relevance to individuals which is then demonstrated by its changed effect within the candidate choice calculus" (Merolla and Zechmeister 2009, 597). Terrorist activity, according to this research, leads voters to prioritize leadership over traditional campaign issues such as the economy.

The most consistent finding is that terrorism increases electoral support for right-wing parties in more advanced democracies, deepening ideological polarization. Basing their analysis on areas that fall within the range of rockets sometimes used by Palestinians (and thus equating Palestinian violence with terrorism), Getmansky and Zeitzoff (2014) find that the right-wing vote share is 2 to 6 percentage points higher in localities within the range of rockets. In fact, the mere *threat* of an attack benefits right-wing parties. Other research on Israel similarly finds that a terror attack in a given locality before elections increases right-wing support by 135 percent. This means that "terrorism does cause the ideological polarization of the electorate," and, further, each fatality has significant electoral effects beyond physical location of the attack (Berrebi and Klor 2008, 279). A study of Turkey finds that support for right-wing parties that are "less concessionist towards terrorist organizations" increases where the government security services have suffered from Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) attacks (Kibris 2011, 220). In this view, terrorism is a bad tactic for achieving political objectives since it motivates voters to support hardline politicians. Rather than the rally-around-the-flag effect noted above, these studies suggest that terrorism contributes to political polarization.

Polarization of the electorate and narrow party appeals to the base contribute to what I call a paradox of democratic counterterrorism: less-effective strategies may be more popular with voters, thereby making "good" policy bad politics.[2] One study of Israel finds

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[2] That idea evokes an insight (or debate) from the era of economic liberalization, when some scholars argued that optimal economic policies were politically irrational, that is, often not in the self-interest of politicians making policy (Bates 1989).

that political parties explicitly appeal to their core supporters rather than broader electoral constituencies. As right-wing parties tack right and left-wing parties go left, this ultimately means that "electoral incentives may induce democratic governments to select inefficient or suboptimal strategies around election time" (Nanes 2016, 171). Bueno de Mesquita argues that electoral pressures inspire governments to spend on visible counter-terrorism strategies that enable them to take credit. Unless the government's and voters' preferences are aligned, "the government will always allocate resources to observable counterterror in excess of the social optimum" (De Mesquita 2007, 11).

It is important to note that terrorism sometimes generates potentially positive "second-order effects" for democracy. For example, Blattman finds that forced recruitment in northern Uganda "leads to greater postwar political participation – a 27% increase in the likelihood of voting and a doubling of the likelihood of being a community leader among former abductees" (Blattman 2009, 231). Abduction, in this case by radical Christian extremists in the Lord's Resistance Army, does not impact nonpolitical social activity. One cross-national study points to another unexpected, positive result: voter turnout increases in democracies with recent terrorist attacks (Robbins et al. 2013).[3] In general, though, the research suggests that we know little about how terrorism influences parties and elections outside the developed world, and why politicians can so easily harness the public's passions.

A relatively recent rise in terrorism in Africa points to the need for a research agenda organized around the political logic of security in emerging democracies. After a decline starting in the mid-1990s that accompanied a wave of political liberalization, the overall number of incidents rose swiftly, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. Between 1990 and 2015, the Global Terrorism Database reports 9,804 separate incidents (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism 2016). By another measure, conflict among African non-state actors contributed to at least 59,000 deaths in twenty-four countries between 1990 and 2009 (Williams 2016).

Of the 9,804 terrorist incidents in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1990 illustrated in Figure 1.1, nearly a third (29 percent, or 2,882 of the total) occurred in Nigeria. On the basis of frequency alone, Nigeria

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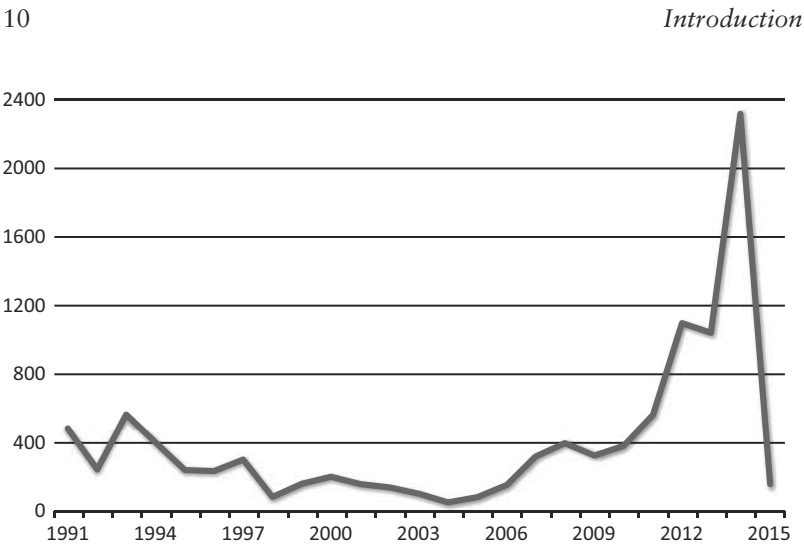[3] I am grateful to Jennifer Raymond Dresdon for pointing out this research to me.

Figure 1.1 Terrorist incidents in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1990–2015.
Source: Global Terrorism Database

constitutes an important case for understanding violence on the continent. Figure 1.2 plots the incidents limited to Nigeria, illustrating a pronounced rise in violence following the 1999 transition to an elected civilian government, consistent with Enders and Sandler's (2012) generalization about democracies experiencing more terrorism. Another trend that stands out is the ups and downs in the years prior to 2015. Heading into March of that year, the country faced its most competitive election since 1979. Did Boko Haram see this as a political vulnerability that it could tactically exploit? And, even more interestingly, did the ruling PDP worry about how the spike of violence in 2014 would appear to voters?

This book seeks in part to situate this rise and decline of Boko Haram's violence in the broader context of democratic competition and political change. At one level, the growing possibility of electoral defeat increased the pressure on the PDP to do something differently. In November 2014, a military surge announced by President Jonathan began taking back the estimated twenty-one local governments held by Boko Haram across the northeast. When the election, scheduled for January 2015, was delayed by six weeks to allow the surge to advance, politicians and voters alike asked what the military could possibly accomplish in six weeks that it could not accomplish over the previous six years. The surge sounded like