

Book Guide

Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know

Rapid economic growth and improved governance across Africa in the twenty-first century are part of the “Africa rising” narrative and have renewed interest in the continent. In *Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know*, John Campbell and Matthew T. Page provide an accessible, one-of-a-kind overview of Nigeria. Using a question-and-answer format, they discuss what makes Nigeria unique, how it operates domestically and internationally, the challenges it faces, and why it has the potential to become Africa’s greatest power.

Summary

Nigeria's success as a democracy is of fundamental interest to its African neighbors, the United States, and the world. As the giant of Africa, Nigeria is home to approximately twenty percent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, serves as Africa's largest producer of oil and natural gas, comprises Africa's largest economy, and represents the leading cultural center of African literature, film, and music.

Yet, the country is plagued by problems that diminish its potential as a world power. Boko Haram, a radical Islamist insurrection located in the northeast of the country, is an ongoing security challenge, as is the continuous civil unrest in the Niger Delta, the heartland of Nigeria's petroleum wealth. There is persistent violence associated with land and water use, ethnicity, and religion. Corruption is endemic, holding the country back from progressing while also keeping it from falling apart. In many ways, the country has yet to consolidate its constituent parts within its colonial-enforced borders, and hasn't been able to develop a sense of national identity. It is neither fully a nation nor a state.

Given its religious, political, and ethnic complexity, as well as its economic and demographic standing, Nigeria is frequently misunderstood by outsiders. *Nigeria: What Everyone Needs to Know* clarifies these misunderstandings by explaining Nigerian history, politics, religion, security issues, economics, and foreign policy before ending with a short commentary on how Nigeria may look in the future. It is an honest assessment of the country's strengths and its weaknesses.

This book is suitable for the following types of undergraduate and graduate courses:

- African Politics
- Comparative Politics
- Religion in Africa
- Politics of Oil
- Corruption and Governance
- Introduction to African History

Discussion and Essay Questions

Courses on African Politics

1. How does ethnicity influence the view of government by citizens of African countries?
2. In what ways have Western powers influenced politics in African countries, both historically and present-day?
3. What role do youth play in the politics of African countries?
4. What influence do women have in the politics of African countries?
5. How does Africa's level of development affect the politics of African countries and Regional Economic Communities (RECs)?

Courses on Comparative Politics

1. Nigeria and the United States both have federal systems of government. How are they similar, how are they different? Provide examples.
2. How does the Nigerian economy differ from that of European countries? How does this influence its politics?
3. Compare Nigerian security challenges to those faced by Western countries. Be sure to discuss the role of vigilantes.
4. Nigeria is constitutionally secular, but religion plays a significant role in politics. How does this compare to the United States, another secular country where religion influences politics?
5. Compare Nigeria's democracy to South Africa's, another African power with significant corruption that has experienced both democratic backsliding and growth.

Courses on Religion in Africa

1. What are relations like between Nigerians of different religious backgrounds?
2. How have Western organizations influenced religion in African countries?
3. How have Nigerian diaspora populations influenced religious groups abroad?
4. How do Christian-Muslim relations influence political life in Nigeria? What about traditional religions?
5. How does Christianity in Nigeria compare to Christianity in the United States? What are the defining characteristics of Islam in Nigeria, and how has it changed in recent years?

Courses on Politics of Oil

1. How does oil revenue alter a state's need to respond to citizen demands?
2. How has Nigeria managed the "resource curse"?
3. Is it possible to both protect the environment and take advantage of oil reserves? How do you think citizens of oil rich countries would answer this question?
4. How does the presence of significant oil reserves affect a country's foreign policy?
5. Oil brings wealth and investment to countries. How are citizens, especially those living in poverty, affected?

Courses on Corruption and Governance

1. How does corruption alter citizens' expectations of government?
2. How has globalization affected accountability and governance for corrupt countries?
3. What role does corruption play in politics and governance?
4. Does corruption fuel violence?
5. Do social media and other news sources play a part in reducing corruption?

Courses on Introduction to African History

1. How has colonialism contributed to national identity in African countries?
2. Many African countries have experienced military-led coups. How have coups, and the military more generally, affected democratization in Africa?
3. How did the slave trade (both trans-Atlantic and trans-Saharan) impact Africa?
4. Compare the effects of direct rule and indirect rule on African institutions today.
5. Christianity is a recent import to Africa, in comparison to Islam and traditional religions. How has the spread of Christianity changed Africa?

Analytical Essay

Write a 1,500-word essay on one of the following subjects:

1. Assess the "Africa rising" narrative, including whether the United States should devote more resources to its African foreign policy at the expense of other regions.
2. You are the president of a middle-income country that just discovered oil. What steps would you take to help your country avoid the "resource curse"?
3. Many African borders, drawn by European colonizers, do not represent ethnic divisions. Should borders be

redrawn, and possibly new countries created, to more accurately represent ethnic divisions? Why or why not?

4. Is religion in African countries a unifying or dividing force? Provide examples in your argument.
5. Does Nigeria have the qualities required to become Africa's greatest power?

Supplementary Materials

Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (London: Penguin, 2013).

John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink*, upd. ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013).

John Campbell, "Religion and Security in Nigeria," *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security* (London: Routledge, 2013), 215–225.

Sarah Chayes, *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2015), chapter 10.

John De St. Jorre, *A Brother's War: Biafra and Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

Stephen Ellis, *This Present Darkness: A History of Nigerian Organized Crime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Richard A. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Brandon Kendhammer, *Muslims Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

Matthew T. Page, *Improving U.S. Anticorruption Policy in Nigeria* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2016).

[Visit Book Page](#)