

The Politics of Technocracy in Fourth Republic Nigeria

Alexander Thurston

Abstract: The technocrat, a supposedly apolitical figure who joins government on the basis of technical expertise, looms large in discussions of governance. The empowerment of technocrats has sometimes been taken as a barometer for Africa's economic and democratic progress. Rejecting this conventional wisdom, this article argues that technocrats are inevitably trapped in a web of politics—politicians leverage the apolitical image of technocrats for political gain, and public debates implicate technocrats as targets of protest. This article pursues this argument through a case study of Nigeria, where technocrats were both politicized and politicizing figures during the rule of the People's Democratic Party between 1999 and 2015.

Résumé: Le technocrate, une figure soi-disant apolitique qui a rejoint le gouvernement de par son expertise technique, occupe une position importante dans les discussions sur la gouvernance. L'autonomisation des technocrates a parfois été considérée comme un baromètre des perspectives économiques et démocratiques de l'Afrique. Rejetant cette idée répandue, cet article soutient que les technocrates sont inévitablement pris au piège dans un réseau politique—que les politiciens tirent parti de l'image apolitique des technocrates pour le gain politique et les débats publics impliquent les technocrates comme des cibles de protestation. L'article poursuit cet argument à travers une étude de cas au Nigeria, où les technocrates ont été politisés et politiser pendant le règne du Parti démocratique populaire entre 1999 et 2015.

Keywords: Nigeria; Africa; technocrats; neoliberalism; Olusegun Obasanjo; Umaru Yar'Adua; Goodluck Jonathan; Muhammadu Buhari

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Alexander Thurston is a visiting assistant professor of African studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He is the author of *Salafism in Nigeria: Islam, Preaching, and Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2016) and *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton University Press, 2017). E-mail: ajt29@georgetown.edu

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Introduction

In May 2015, Al Jazeera's Mehdi Hassan interviewed Oby Ezekwesili, a Nigerian anticorruption activist, former cabinet minister, and former World Bank executive. The interview had several tense moments, particularly at those times when Ezekwesili called for wide-ranging reforms in Nigeria but avoided criticizing specific agencies or individuals. Ezekwesili attempted to reconcile these positions by claiming not to be a participant in politics:

Ezekwesili: I am not a politician.

Hassan: Really? What are you?

Ezekwesili: I am not . . . I don't belong to a party.

Hassan: . . . But you were a government minister. . . .

Ezekwesili: . . . We don't practice Westminster type of government. We practice presidential system of government. . . . I can be a minister without having to carry a party card and, you know, dance in the village square.

Hassan: Your definition of a politician is someone who's part of a party.

If you're a Federal Government minister for education, for solid minerals, if you're the Vice President of the World Bank, if you're an advisor to African presidents, you're not a politician? Really . . . that's a very narrow definition. That's a very convenient definition.

Ezekwesili: . . . You are giving a definition of politician that is way above the way that I have looked at it.

Hassan: Spoken like a true politician (Al Jazeera 2015).

In this exchange, Ezekwesili sought refuge in the ideal of technocracy, the category that this article critically reexamines. The technocrat is a supposedly apolitical figure who joins government on the basis of technical expertise (McDonnell & Valbruzzi 2014). Technocrats loom large in discussions of governance, especially in countries experiencing crisis. As discussed below, technocrats also figure prominently in discussions of governance in Africa, and are sometimes cast—misleadingly—as saviors. To say that technocrats will occupy key ministerial positions supposedly connotes the arrival of competence—not only of technocracy, but also of meritocracy.

Technocracy is sometimes said to transcend politics. When technocratic ministers were appointed amid economic and political turmoil in Greece and Italy in 2011, one analyst told the BBC that “the political spectrum is so fragmented and the political conversation so acrimonious that, in a situation of crisis, the markets and the international partners of these two countries are looking for concerted answers and determined answers and these can't be provided by political figures” (BBC 2011). This analyst unwittingly exposed the fundamental contradictions of the technocratic ideal: technocrats are expected to be in politics but not of it, to be apolitical politicians.

This article argues that technocrats are inevitably trapped in a web of politics, part of which involves contestation over the definition of politics itself. As the above exchange demonstrates, proponents of the technocratic ideal seek to limit the definition of politics to a formalized competition over elected offices and/or the reins of state. This article adopts a broader definition of politics—as the struggle to control a given community’s resources, decisions, and decision-making¹—in order to highlight how the notion of technocratic policymaking as applied expertise obscures critical arenas of informal politics. The web of informal politics is large; within governments, political infighting takes place concerning decision-making and resource allocation. In the public arena, politicians seek to leverage the apolitical image of technocrats for political gain. Public debates over government decisions implicate technocrats as figures of praise or protest. Some technocrats attempt to transform their technocratic capital further into electoral success. Being implicated in politics does not necessarily prevent technocrats from implementing reforms or advancing their careers—politics can even strengthen technocrats’ positions and boost the governments they serve. But implication in politics does expose the hollowness (and the political nature) of the antipolitical technocratic ideal.

This argument is pursued through a case study of Fourth Republic Nigeria, in which senior technocrats were both politicized and politicizing figures during the three presidential administrations of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) between 1999 and 2015. Nigeria can be viewed as an important case because the combination of severe, endemic corruption and democratic aspirations in that country has heightened popular demands for elite accountability (Smith 2005). Meanwhile, recent scholarship on Nigeria has shown that various “political settlements”—involving elites, “wider coalitions with societal groups,” consensus among policymakers, and/or institutions—rather than purely technical concerns—are the driving force behind economic policymaking in the country (Usman 2016:16; see also LeVan 2014 on “veto players”). Building on Usman’s findings, this analysis shows how various political entities have co-opted technocrats, sometimes against their will. Drawing on speeches, government documents, and memoirs, as well as fieldwork in Nigeria, it examines how these technocrats became embroiled in their administrations’ internal politics and public relations. Records of protests and journalistic criticism of technocrats, along with the technocrats’ own statements (sometimes quite bitter) about how politics shaped their tenures in government, demonstrate the manner in which they and their actions became politicized. It is not suggested that these technocrats were personally corrupt or that they always failed in their assignments and reforms. Rather, their experiences confirm that there is no expert domain of economic policymaking that is free from political pressures.

Initially, the PDP benefited from the involvement of technocrats as it advanced politically controversial reforms addressing privatization, debt relief, and anti-corruption measures. Yet the politicization of technocracy

contributed to the PDP's 2015 electoral defeat, which occasioned Nigeria's first transfer of power from one elected party to another. "The government's dismal record in economic management"—especially its failure to restrain visible corruption and its inability to translate rapid economic growth into mass poverty reduction—was a key factor in the PDP's loss (Owen & Usman 2015:457). The breakdown of technocratic credibility exacerbated the political consequences of economic mismanagement.

This analysis explores the trajectories of six senior technocrats, selected for their prominence and high-profile involvement in governmental policy-making. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (b. 1954) was Minister of Finance from 2003 to 2006 and Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2006 under President Olusegun Obasanjo, Managing Director of the World Bank from 2007 to 2011, and Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy from 2011 to 2015 under President Goodluck Jonathan. Nasir El-Rufai (b. 1960) was Director General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises from 1999 to 2003 and Minister of the Federal Capital Territory from 2003 to 2007. Nuhu Ribadu (b. 1960) was Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission from 2003 to 2007. Oby Ezekwesili (b. 1963) oversaw reforms to public procurement and contracts from roughly 1999 to 2007, and was Minister of Solid Minerals from 2005 to 2006, Minister of Education from 2006 to 2007, and World Bank Vice President for Africa from 2007 to 2012. Charles Soludo (b. 1960) was Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) from 2004 to 2009. Finally, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (b. 1961) was CBN Governor from 2009 to 2014. The first five individuals were the core members of Obasanjo's second term Economic Team, the formal body charged with economic reform. All of them come from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds and represent the same generation, but they are otherwise a regionally and ethnically diverse group.

Examining Nigeria's politicized technocrats can inform a broader debate about the politics of neoliberal reforms. Neoliberalism is a system and an ideology that seeks to limit the economic role of the state to the protection of "private property rights, free markets and free trade" (Harvey 2005:2). It envisions the state as a kind of "night watchman," safeguarding markets that are assumed to be efficient on their own (Zenawi 2012). Neoliberalism seeks to present itself as economic common sense, rather than as one ideology among many. In this manner, neoliberalism uses the camouflage of "antipolitics," attempting to depoliticize various exercises, from economic "development" (Ferguson 1990; Easterly 2013; Thomas 2015) to "conflict management" (Mundy 2015).² In keeping with this antipolitical guise, neoliberalism's proponents present reforms that diminish the state's role in the economy—reforms such as downsizing state bureaucracies, privatizing state-run enterprises, and slashing subsidies—as apolitical. The technocrat, by claiming to enact this apolitical common sense, reinforces the camouflage of neoliberal politics.

The voting public, however, often reacts to such economic reforms by treating not only the policies, but also the technocrats themselves, as objects

of political anger. Even neoliberal reforms that contribute to economic growth may falter politically when such growth is jobless. Such dynamics are not unique to Nigeria; amid the upward transfers of wealth and partial austerity imposed in many Western countries following the global economic crisis of 2007–2008, public anger targeted technocrats such as United States Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner. More recently, the election of the socialist Jeremy Corbyn as Britain’s Labour leader is seen as a reflection of disgust, among many British voters, with austerity and rising unemployment, no matter what technical arguments neoliberal governments might produce to justify their policies. When technocrats become objects of political backlash, in Nigeria or elsewhere, this censure reveals some limits to neoliberalism’s hegemony.

Technocracy as a Political Category

The word *technocracy* first appeared in a 1919 essay by William Henry Smyth, an American engineer. Writing after World War I, Smyth described a sweeping historical struggle between “raw strength and animal cunning” (1921:2). He suggested that a new force—“Organized Purposive Skill”—would displace both forms of power. Smyth outlined a new system of government: “the organizing, co-ordinating, and directing through industrial management on a nation-wide scale of the scientific knowledge and practical skill of all the people who could contribute to the accomplishment of a great national purpose” (1921:7).

Does technocracy have a particular ideological orientation? In post-World War II France, intellectuals debated the intensification and bureaucratization of the state’s economic role (Kuisel 1981). In *La Technocratie: mythe ou réalité?* (1964), Jean Meynaud argued that the expansion of technocracy favored conservatism. In Meynaud’s view, technocrats espoused the idea that the era of ideologies (i.e., socialism) had given way to an era of antipolitical expertise. This idea in itself, he continued, constituted a conservative ideological position (see also Bell 1999 [1973]).

Since the 1980s, technocracy has been increasingly associated with neoliberalism, rather than with state-led efforts to manage the economy. For the developing world, this represents an irony but also, to a large degree, a continuity. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, state power has often been displayed through centrally planned, state-led, spectacular projects of technical transformation. Colonial governments showcased their power—and pursued ideals of “modernization”—through massive engineering projects such as India’s railway system (Aguilar 2011) and Egypt’s Aswan Low Dam (Mitchell 2002).

With the rise of neoliberalism, the focus of technical expertise has been narrowed; now technical expertise is meant not to help the state project tangible power over people and territory, but rather to help the state liberalize economic markets. Yet technocracy’s conceptualization of power remains top-down; in all of technocracy’s iterations, the idea of politics as popular

debate only impedes the implementation of correct policies. William Easterly (2013:6) has denounced what he calls the “technocratic illusion,” or “the belief that poverty is a purely technical problem” rather than a result of “the unchecked power of the state against poor people without rights.”

Neoliberal technocracy has developed a specialized vocabulary to reinforce the fabrication that governing is a technical rather than a political exercise. This vocabulary is widely shared by international financial institutions, Western governments, and technocrats themselves. Notions such as “reform,” “transparency,” and “governance” present politics as a matter of applied expertise, rather than contentious, interest-based decision-making. The vocabulary of technocracy uses corporeal metaphors to discuss the state and the economy: bureaucracies are said to be either “bloated” or “trim,” images that position the technocrat as a doctor ministering to the health of the state and of the economy. In the vocabulary of technocracy, quantitative “evidence” is the criterion for decisions. The power to decide what counts as evidence is, however, ultimately political.

Neoliberal Technocracy in Africa

Thandika Mkandawire has recently called for more complex readings of African politics. Mkandawire critiques the “neopatrimonialist school” of analysis. Neopatrimonialists view African politics as an arena in which predatory “big men” and their clients and associates dominate both state and society, constraining economic growth and entrenching corruption. Mkandawire writes, “The analytical template forged by the neopatrimonialism school has had the effect of flattening the African political and economic landscape” (2015:602).

Any reconsideration of the African political landscape must include the technocrat, a figure often presented as the antithesis of the big man. The empowerment of technocrats has sometimes been taken as a barometer for Africa’s economic and democratic progress. In 2012 Harvard’s Calestous Juma celebrated the “technocrats’ rise,” writing about how new African heads of state with backgrounds in engineering might lead an infrastructural revolution. Three years later, a columnist for South Africa’s *Mail & Guardian* lamented a trend in Africa whereby elections seemed to be elevating populist strongmen at the expense of technocrats (Mwiti 2015). The technocrat’s fortunes, we are told, correlate inversely with those of the big man. But the reality is more complex. To answer Mkandawire’s call, it is necessary to question not just the stereotype of the big man, but also the ideal of the technocrat.

The internal contradictions of the neoliberal technocratic ideal are acutely evident in Africa. African technocrats are often closely associated with international financial institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), both of which champion anti-political understandings of decision-making. These institutions prefer to deal with technocrats, not only because of the presumed competence of these

individuals but also in order to “promot[e] the notion of national ownership of [Structural Adjustment Programs].” Furthermore, the IFIs often prefer to interact with technocrats who have had experience working overseas, either for other institutions or directly with the IFIs themselves. This trend adds another layer of complexity to the politics of defining technocrats, with the result that some local experts lacking international credentials are excluded from the pool of acceptable “technocrats.” Not only local experts but also the voting public as a whole are excluded from decision-making roles: the IFIs believe that “since adjustment requires unpopular sacrifices, in-camera negotiations with technocrats are preferable to a participatory decision-making process by which popular demands can derail ‘necessary’ reforms” (Konings 2011:134–35). Such relationships could be witnessed during the structural adjustments of the 1980s and 1990s.

In the late 1990s, when structural adjustment failed to spur growth and attract foreign investment, the World Bank and the IMF shifted from promoting “good policies” to also demanding “good institutions.” For the IFIs, this meant institutions dedicated to “serving the market,” for example by “reduc[ing] the functions of such institutions as the judiciary to the task of protecting private property” (Mkandawire 2012:89). When development practitioners have championed “inclusive” processes of building “good governance,” they have often conceptualized the relationship between democracy and growth, or the public and the policymakers, in a simplistic way. Neoliberal, managerial approaches to development ignore the stark trade-offs and collective action problems—in other words, the politics—that are necessarily involved in generating the kind of development that can supply essential public goods, rather than simply jobless growth (Booth & Cammack 2013).

Technocrats have retained their importance in the effort to promote institutional “reform.” Even as demands for “good governance” can limit the accountability of government institutions, the technocratic ideal is invoked to suggest that relationships between governments and the IFIs are not political. This image of apolitical, even anti-political expertise reinforces neoliberalism’s claim that economic decision-making should be the province of experts, rather than a matter of extended public debate. Yet the African technocrats’ perceived subservience to international financial institutions implicates them in the longstanding mistrust of such institutions among many African citizens—a viewpoint evident in the film *Bamako*, in which a surreal trial of the World Bank and the IMF takes place in the courtyard of a poor Malian family’s home (Sissako 2006).

Politics in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic

Nigeria’s Fourth Republic began in 1999 when the country transitioned to civilian rule after sixteen years of nearly continuous military dictatorship. The 1999 Constitution re-instituted a presidential and federal system patterned after the American model. The Nigerian system vests considerable power in the president, who may serve a maximum of two four-year terms.

The People's Democratic Party dominated politics from 1999 to 2015, winning the first four presidential elections along with a majority of state governorships and National Assembly seats. The PDP, at its peak, was a large coalition, consisting of 1990s-era democratic activists as well as several former military rulers and their networks. The PDP's first presidential candidate was Olusegun Obasanjo, who had served as the military head of state from 1976 to 1979. The PDP represented itself as a big tent in ethnic and regional terms, addressing different communities' aspirations and concerns with the promise that all would be represented in senior offices.

Ideologically, the PDP defined itself as center-right. Its founding manifesto committed the party to the "war against poverty," "rapid industrial growth," and "rebuilding and expanding basic infrastructure" (People's Democratic Party 1998:10); it presented the market, rather than the state, as the primary vehicle for realizing economic development, with a promise to "provide the political environment that is conducive to economic growth and national development through private initiative and free enterprise" (11). While affirming that "the state will play a leading role in the economy," the manifesto stated that "privatization in the Nigerian economy shall be encouraged and expanded" (14).

The PDP initially adhered to an internal party agreement to rotate the presidency between candidates from southern and northern Nigeria. In 2006–2007, however, Obasanjo sought to change the constitution to allow him to run for a third term. The National Assembly blocked his bid, and Obasanjo's hand-picked successor, Umaru Yar'Adua, won the next election. In 2010, Yar'Adua, a northerner, died in office, leading to the accession of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner, to the presidency. When Jonathan sought and won election to a full term in 2011, the rotational agreement was disrupted, to the unhappiness of many northern PDP elites. Northern discontent—as well as the PDP's inability to address Nigeria's security challenges and reduce widespread unemployment and poverty—contributed to Jonathan's defeat by Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler, long-time opposition candidate, and northern politician, in 2015. Buhari ran as the candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), a coalition consisting of opposition parties and disaffected PDP elites, especially northern politicians.

Technocrats under Obasanjo: The Politics of Privatization, Anti-Corruption, and Debt Relief

The careers of Fourth Republic technocrats in Nigeria should be understood in a historical context. Key developments include the weakening of Nigeria's civil service from the 1970s onward and the bitter experience of structural adjustment and state predation under military rule. Civil servants enjoyed substantial power during the early phase of military rule (1966–1975), but in 1975 a new military government sacked some eleven thousand bureaucrats (Joseph 1987). This purge had the unanticipated effect

of increasing corruption: “as the public sector continued to expand through the early 1980s, meritocratic criteria and organizational discipline weakened” (Lewis 2007:148). Some civil servants came to view their offices as short-term opportunities to reap personal gain, rather than as secure posts.

Structural adjustment intensified the politics surrounding Nigeria’s economic policy (Jega 2000). When the oil boom ended in the early 1980s and the civilian-led Second Republic fell, military heads of state imposed an austerity regime. Ibrahim Babangida (in power from 1985 to 1993) presided over Nigeria’s structural adjustment program, which met with widespread public opposition (Lewis 1996). It was politically convenient for Babangida to blame the cabinet, including the technocrats, for economic setbacks (LeVan 2014), and indeed Babangida may not have fully understood the implications of the economic reforms implemented by technocrats such as his Minister of Finance, the internationally trained economist and World Bank alumnus Kalu Idika Kalu (Siollun 2013). As both the economic reforms and a promised political transition faltered in the early 1990s, Babangida appropriated increasing amounts of power for himself, paving the way for a highly predatory system of economic management under his eventual successor, General Sani Abacha, who ruled from 1993 to 1998 (Lewis 1996). These experiences left many Nigerians with a lasting antipathy toward the IFIs and the promises of neoliberal technocracy.

Under PDP rule, technocrats became politicized in a different way: PDP heads of state attached much of their political image to their governments’ abilities to carry out neoliberal macroeconomic reforms. The notion that these policies were advanced by expert technocrats, rather than by politicians, helped Obasanjo to successfully implement many significant reforms. In the process, however, individual technocrats were drawn deeply into the political machinery. Three actions of Obasanjo’s administration highlight this politicization of technocracy: the privatization of state-run enterprises, the effort to fight corruption, and the quest for debt relief.

The PDP partly fulfilled its commitment to privatization. Efforts to sell off state-owned enterprises had begun under military rule, but the Abacha regime halted the process (Okonjo-Iweala 2012). When Obasanjo took office in 1999, the federal government still controlled nearly six hundred businesses, most of them unprofitable (Iliffe 2011). Obasanjo established the National Council on Privatisation and the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE). Inaugurating the Council, Obasanjo spoke in the language of technocracy, arguing that ideas of “sound economic policy” had shifted since the Nigerian state first created dozens of enterprises in the 1970s (including during his own tenure as military head of state). Privatization, Obasanjo continued, would “assist in restructuring the public sector in a manner that will affect [sic] a new synergy between a leaner and more efficient government and a revitalized, efficient and service-oriented private sector” (National Council on Privatisation 2001:3–4).

In practice, privatization was ultimately deeply politicized, creating not just acrimonious public debate over individual sales, but also mistrust between Obasanjo and key team members, especially Vice President Atiku Abubakar,

who headed the Council and was suspected of manipulating sales to benefit himself and his allies (El-Rufai 2013). The technocratic appointee Nasir El-Rufai, who headed the BPE, experienced this tension during the sale of the state-owned Nigerian Telecommunications Limited. To one interested bidder, “I explained that we did what we could as technocrats, but the award of the contract was a decision reserved for our political masters” (2013:124). The contract in question went to Swedish-owned Ericsson, despite a technical commission’s recommendation that the contract go to U.S.-owned Motorola on multiple grounds, including price. According to El-Rufai, Abubakar not only swayed the decision to Ericsson, but also accused El-Rufai of exploiting a familial connection to Motorola (U.S. Embassy Abuja 2001; El-Rufai 2013). Both Abubakar and El-Rufai survived politically, but this episode highlights how a supposedly technocratic process became a minefield of political maneuvering. Technocrat-led privatization proceeded, but in a deeply politicized fashion.

If privatization was a hallmark of Obasanjo’s first term, his second term focused on broader economic reform. In the words of Okonjo-Iweala, who became Minister of Finance,

[Obasanjo] needed a modern and technocratic finance minister who was familiar with the fierce politics of the time. . . . A comprehensive strategy would be needed to stabilize Nigeria’s volatile macroeconomic environment, tackle endemic corruption, and redress various structural features of the economy hindering private enterprise. (2012:6–7)

But the bid to balance technocracy and politics was subject to crippling contradictions, a trend that surfaced in the politics of fighting corruption.

Anti-corruption was key to the economic approach of Obasanjo’s second term. In 2001, the inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force placed Nigeria on its list of Non-Cooperative Countries and Territories, and in 2002, the U.S. Treasury Department issued a warning about the dangers of conducting financial transactions in Nigeria. These actions hampered Nigerian businesses, hurt prospects for foreign investment in Nigeria, and reduced Nigeria’s chances for obtaining debt relief for the USD30 billion it owed to the Paris Club, which was one of Obasanjo’s core aspirations (Ribadu 2010). In response to the blacklisting, the administration created the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), headed by a technocrat, the police officer Nuhu Ribadu.

The EFCC’s work was meant to be mutually reinforcing with other economic reforms. Ribadu later wrote that “the EFCC was given a wide berth and top-level political cover” (2010:80). By 2005, the EFCC was investigating major politicians, including all of the state governors, some of whom became embroiled in impeachment proceedings over charges of corruption. The EFCC’s work did have a positive impact on lessening corruption in Nigeria, contributing to the downfall of politicians such as Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, governor of Bayelsa State from 1999 to 2005. But the process was nonetheless still politicized. When Obasanjo began maneuvering to

seek a third term, “the battle against high-level corruption raised accusations that the EFCC was being used by Obasanjo to settle political scores” (Ribadu 2010:126–27). Reflecting on this period, Ribadu concluded that it was impossible for a technocrat to duck politics:

I was walking on a tightrope, making sure the EFCC did its job without political fear or favor, while maintaining support from the top without which the Commission’s work was doomed. One of the many lessons I learned the hard way while in office was that it is best for anti-corruption bodies to avoid going after politicians at times of elections or political transition. It is otherwise extremely difficult to steer clear of political manipulation and accusations, and to do the job correctly and properly. (2010:130–31)

Relatively few convictions of top politicians or bureaucrats were ever finalized. Ribadu’s courageous work won him hero status among many Nigerians and allowed him to shine a spotlight on corruption for both domestic and international audiences, but he was not able to sustain the image that he and his office were merely technocratic actors who stood outside of political influence and intrigue.

Privatization and anti-corruption were tied in with another key priority: debt relief. This goal required substantial interaction with the IFIs. The administration leveraged its technocrats’ relationships with those institutions and performed a certain technocratic sleight of hand. To qualify for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, Nigeria needed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), a strategy document required by the IMF and the World Bank. Yet as Okonjo-Iweala noted, Nigeria’s experience of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s was “a major hurdle . . . [Nigerians] had indicated, in what was tantamount to an informal national referendum, that they wanted no truck with IMF programs” (2012:99). Given this “hurdle,” Obasanjo’s economic team sought to present the PRSP as a “home-grown reform programme” under “national ownership” (National Planning Commission 2004:iii).³ In 2004 the team issued the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). NEEDS, however, was vetted by the IMF and the World Bank, and the plan revolved largely around further privatization. This process exemplifies how the supposedly apolitical notion of “transparency” is “intended more to ensure the global legibility of local financial practices than to facilitate democratic oversight” (Mkandawire 2012:89).

Okonjo-Iweala admitted that the document required extensive “marketing” by the economic team: “There were *many* critics, including those who felt that the strategy had too much of what they termed a ‘neoliberal’ Western flavor” (2012:16). This “marketing” implicated the team more thoroughly in politics:

It was clear to me from the outset of the reform process and the formation of the Economic Team that President Obasanjo saw the team as technocratic

and wanted to keep it that way. . . . [But] as the reforms moved along, the idea that economics could be separate from politics and that the reform team could remain as technocratic as it was became increasingly untenable. We needed to explain NEEDS and the economic reforms to the lawmakers so they could understand and back the reforms. (2012:124)

As NEEDS became politicized inside Nigeria, however, the document helped bring international praise for Nigeria's economic management.

The administration secured its sought-after debt relief in 2005: the Paris Club wrote off 60 percent of Nigeria's debt, or USD18 billion. Rather than functioning as an impersonal technocratic exercise, this process leaned on Okonjo-Iweala's network of contacts through the IMF and the World Bank. She later recalled:

Our case was helped greatly by the presence of people who knew me and my track record in important positions in treasuries and development ministries in the Group of Eight and other creditor capitals. A former colleague of mine, the former World Bank chief economist Nicholas Stern, had joined the UK Treasury as one of Gordon Brown's senior officials. In Germany, my former boss at the World Bank, Caio Koch-Weser, was the deputy finance minister. In Japan, another former colleague, Kiyoshi Kodera, was Senior Deputy Director General at the Ministry of Finance. At the Paris Club Secretariat, Emmanuel Moulin, former alternate Executive Director for France at the World Bank's Board, was secretary-general. This situation generated an invaluable measure of trust. (2012:112)

With debt relief secured, credit rating agencies assigned Nigeria a relatively favorable outlook, and foreign investment almost doubled, from USD2 billion to nearly USD4 billion (Okonjo-Iweala 2012).

The implementation of NEEDS corresponded with a period of 6 to 8 percent annual growth in Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The top-line figures indicated that the reform had succeeded by its own measures. Yet the supposedly apolitical wisdom of privatizing state-owned enterprises and firing civil servants ran afoul of not only political but also economic realities. Okonjo-Iweala estimated that as of 2004, Nigeria had some 2.3 million government workers at the federal and state levels (2012:53). In a country with an extremely high rate of unemployment, mass firings would have been both politically and economically disastrous, and so the civil service remained largely untouched:

While the exercise to get rid of "ghost workers" [names on the payroll that did not correspond to real persons, and were merely proxies for payouts to corrupt networks] won support, the streamlining of pilot ministries and consequent redundancies of staff did not get as much sympathy or support, because people argued that every civil servant, like most working Nigerians, was likely to be supporting a large number of relatives. (Okonjo-Iweala 2012:123)

Meanwhile, NEEDS did not reduce unemployment. As the team worked on “accelerating economic growth” at the level of the economy as a whole,

We did not focus on metrics for job creation and other impacts on the real sectors, so we had no way of gauging whether the growth created jobs or whether we were experiencing jobless growth. In an environment of high unemployment and underemployment, especially of young people, being able to demonstrate job creation would have been an important means of further convincing Nigerians that the reforms were beneficial. (Okonjo-Iweala 2012:122–23)

This state of affairs would later expose the PDP, and Okonjo-Iweala herself, to devastating critiques during the 2014–2015 electoral campaign. Meanwhile, El-Rufai pointed to another feature of NEEDS’ success: “We also got very lucky that our hard work coincided with a period of galloping oil prices” (2013:157). This relationship between economic boom and oil prices would be another factor in increasing the PDP’s vulnerability in 2014–2015, when oil prices returned to former pre-boom levels.

Breaking with the PDP, and the Road to 2015

The start of the PDP’s long fall from power might be dated to Obasanjo’s bid to open the possibility of running for a third term. This bid can be explained in various ways—as an effort to preserve a legacy, as a self-interested power grab, as evidence of a profound mistrust of other political actors, or as an arrangement with sympathetic business interests. El-Rufai, adopting this last explanation, recalls how technocracy became politicized as a result of *successful* reforms:

We were visibly implementing an economic reform programme that was on track: the Nigerian economy was booming, accumulating huge foreign reserves and a big savings account from excess oil revenues. However, for many outside our inner circle, these achievements were the justification for the third term project. (2013:xxxvii)

Obasanjo’s third term bid created a division among technocrats in the administration. Some, like Okonjo-Iweala, allegedly preferred to allow the scheme to go forward. But El-Rufai, Ribadu, and others resolved to undermine the third term plans. Even as they helped line up legislators to defeat the proposed amendment, however, El-Rufai acknowledged the interpenetration of politics and technocracy:

My vested interest in this was precisely that any perceived weakening of Obasanjo’s political stature that derived from anything, whether it was a grab for a third term, a huge corruption scandal, a key legislative defeat or any number of other obstacles a Nigerian president faces, was going to inhibit me from continuing to do my job effectively. (2013:330)

The denial of Obasanjo's third term came with a price: shifting his approach, Obasanjo sought to retain power by selecting a supposedly tractable (and at that time already likely physically ill) successor, Umaru Yar'Adua. Most of Obasanjo's technocrats would find themselves horrified by Yar'Adua's less energetic and more brazenly self-interested approach to running Nigeria's economy.

The end of the Obasanjo administration saw an exodus of senior technocrats. For Ribadu and El-Rufai, both prominent northerners, the transition from Obasanjo to Yar'Adua proved rocky. Behind closed doors, both El-Rufai and Ribadu had been discussed as possible northern successors to Obasanjo (El-Rufai 2013). As Yar'Adua looked toward 2011, when the presidency would still be "zoned" to the north and southern politicians would theoretically be biding their time until 2015, he may have feared that either El-Rufai or Ribadu would challenge him.

Ribadu personally experienced marginalization and then danger. Yar'Adua neutered the EFCC in order to protect his associates, and muzzled Ribadu by flexing the control that the Attorney General wielded over the EFCC and the control that the National Police Force wielded over Ribadu, who was, administratively, an officer in the Force. In December 2007, Ribadu's superior temporarily relieved him of his duties as EFCC chairman and ordered him to attend a one-year training course. Ribadu understood this reassignment as punishment for the EFCC's actions against James Ibori, the impeached governor of Delta State and a political ally of Yar'Adua. Once the course began, Ribadu was demoted within the Force and formally dismissed as EFCC chairman. After experiencing two assassination attempts in 2008, he fled the country. In February 2008, Ibori was released from prison, and the Nigerian justice system dropped all charges against him in 2009 (Adeniyi 2011; Ribadu 2010).

El-Rufai also experienced harassment from law enforcement, particularly concerning alleged improprieties connected to one of his houses in Abuja. A "smear campaign" followed, claiming that he had abused his position as Minister of the Federal Capital Territory—an assignment meant to transform Abuja into a laboratory for technocratic reform (El-Rufai 2013). Concerned for his personal safety, El-Rufai left Nigeria, first to finish his LL.B. at the University of London and then to complete a fellowship at Harvard University in 2008–2009. El-Rufai leveraged his image as a technocrat to discredit Yar'Adua in the international media and through appearances at Western think tanks. In 2009 El-Rufai penned an op-ed for the diaspora-run website *Sahara Reporters*, entitled "Umaru Yar'Adua: Great Expectations, Disappointing Outcome," in which he claimed that Yar'Adua had reversed most of Obasanjo's economic accomplishments (2009b). Significantly, El-Rufai partly attributed these reversals to the limitations of technocratic thinking by Obasanjo's economic team:

I think we all made two huge mistakes. First, we failed to appreciate that the political leadership never really bought into the economic reforms we

championed, and accepted them only out of necessity. Second, by insisting that we were technocrats, we failed to get deeply involved in the political process and therefore got easily marginalized and policy directions reversed. Clever as we were deemed to be, we failed to realize that politics trumps everything, everyday! (2009a:5)

When Yar'Adua died and Jonathan inherited the presidency, El-Rufai continued his opposition, supporting Buhari against Jonathan in 2011.

Ribadu's image as a wrongfully persecuted technocrat presented another opposition party with an opportunity to run a northern candidate against Jonathan in 2011. Ribadu was selected as the candidate of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), whose heartland was the southwest part of the country. Ribadu promised not just cleaner government but also a partial break with neoliberalism; he ran on his image as an anti-corruption reformer, also proposing a social security program and emphasizing state-led job creation for youth (see Ribadu 2010). For various reasons, allegedly including a last-minute deal in which the ACN gave Jonathan the southwest's presidential vote in exchange for the freedom to sweep several gubernatorial races (Odunsi 2014), Ribadu lost badly, scoring an official 5.4 percent of the total votes (Independent National Electoral Commission 2011). Nevertheless, the 2011 elections foreshadowed the eventual winning coalition in 2015: a northern candidate backed by the southwest. Tellingly, though, that candidate would be Buhari, a long-time politician, rather than a technocrat with no prior electoral experience.

In 2011 Jonathan won handily—roughly 59 percent to Buhari's 32 percent—but problems soon emerged. Riots in northern cities followed the announcement of Jonathan's electoral victory. In a development largely unrelated to electoral politics, the Boko Haram sect accelerated and intensified its attacks. In summer 2011, Boko Haram bombed the headquarters of the National Police Force along with a United Nations building. The Nigerian president began to seem unequal to the multiple challenges related to security and the economy.

This dynamic reinforced the importance of projecting economic competence by invoking the technocratic ideal. Jonathan sought a break with the image of Yar'Adua, portraying him as an isolated figure surrounded by cronies who were willing to sacrifice the country's stability for their personal interests. Jonathan hoped to show that he had capable economic managers in the cabinet assembled after his election. Okonjo-Iweala was brought back from the World Bank to become Finance Minister, now with the added title of Coordinating Minister of the Economy—a super-technocrat.

Before long, however, there was political pushback against the administration's economic policies. On New Year's Day, 2012, the administration removed a subsidy on fuel, causing prices at the pump—or, more often, at stands where roadside hawkers sold fuel out of jerry cans—to double. The administration presented the removal of the subsidy as economic common

sense, a maneuver necessary to balance the budget and eliminate corruption. Yet many ordinary Nigerians experienced it as the loss of one of the few benefits they personally had experienced from Nigeria's massive oil wealth. Labor unions, digital activists, and ordinary citizens mobilized protests that compelled Jonathan to back down and partially reinstate the subsidy.

Amid the protests, which some digital activists dubbed "Occupy Nigeria" in solidarity with the anti-neoliberal "Occupy Wall Street" movement in the United States, Nigerian technocrats and the IFIs were the focus of this anger. Many protesters viewed the technocrats as the lackeys of those suspect institutions. This perception was reinforced by IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde's visit to Nigeria in December 2011, just before the removal of the oil subsidy. When I talked with protesters in Kano in January 2012, it was clear that massive public anger was directed not just at Jonathan, but at the technocrats around him as well, particularly Okonjo-Iweala and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Governor Sanusi Lamido Sanusi. That the anger openly included Sanusi was notable in Kano, Sanusi's home city, where he is a member of the hereditary ruling family. In the public's eyes, the fuel subsidy removal exposed technocrats as being thoroughly politicized.

Ironically, the next major economic scandal involved Sanusi, whose break with Jonathan deeply undermined the administration's claims to technocratic, transparent economic management. In September 2013 Sanusi wrote a letter to Jonathan stating that the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) had failed to "repatriate" nearly USD50 billion in proceeds to the Federal Government, in effect charging that the prime mechanism by which Nigeria's oil benefited its people was broken. Sanusi "expressed a strong view that while Government needs to continue its effort to combat oil thieves, vandals and illegal refineries in the Niger Delta, the major problem is transactions taking place under legal cover with huge revenue leakages embedded therein" (2013:2). With these words, Sanusi questioned the government's rhetoric about the oil-rich Niger Delta, the site of a 2006–2009 antigovernment insurgency which resulted in an uneasy peace and amnesty program which is still in place. Sanusi's letter, which implied that by blaming low-level thieves in the Delta for shortfalls, the administration was concealing massive white-collar corruption at the NNPC, was leaked to the press three months later.

The stakes were high for Jonathan's administration, for Sanusi's letter questioned its technocratic credibility. Jonathan's team responded with a personalized attack. Okonjo-Iweala and others set about questioning Sanusi's numbers, which soon led the banker to adopt a revised figure of USD20 billion in missing remittances (Channels Television 2014b). In February 2014 the president sacked Sanusi, asserting that "Sanusi's tenure has been characterised by various acts of financial recklessness and misconduct, which are inconsistent with the administration's vision of a Central Bank propelled by the core values of focused economic management, prudence, transparency and financial discipline" (Channels Television 2014a). Jonathan's statement upheld the technocratic ideal

while excluding Sanusi from it. Sanusi, however, landed on his feet: with the backing of Kano's state governor, who had left the PDP in 2013, Sanusi succeeded his great-uncle as Emir of Kano, one of the north's most important hereditary Muslim offices.

Seeking to restore confidence in the technocratic and transparent character of the administration, Okonjo-Iweala hired the global consulting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers to audit the NNPC. When that firm delivered its final report in February 2015, shortly before that year's election, it provided a conservative estimate of the shortfall—USD1.48 billion—but added that “the NNPC model of operation must be urgently reviewed and restructured,” especially given that “forty-six percent of proceeds of domestic crude oil revenues for the review period was spent on operations and subsidies” (PriceWaterhouseCoopers 2015:12). Hiring outside consultants helped give the administration technocratic cover, but this maneuver could not permanently shield the administration from questions about its management of Nigeria's resources.

At the same time, the administration politicized another technocratic exercise: rebasing Nigeria's GDP. Rebasing involves replacing an older “base year” with a newer year when calculating GDP; the base year is used in calculations in order to have a set of baseline figures from which to estimate growth while capturing the complexities of the economy as accurately as possible. Rebasing is a normal, cyclical process in economic calculations around the world, and Nigerian economic policymakers needed an updated base year. Nevertheless, rebasing can also have political implications, especially for incumbent administrations defending their economic records in the year before an election (Sy 2015). Nigeria's rebasing nearly doubled its GDP figure from USD262 billion to USD510 billion and showed that Nigeria had displaced South Africa as the continent's largest economy. Okonjo-Iweala presented rebasing, justifiably, as a technocratic process, but the new data had undeniable political value, and Jonathan did not hesitate to use the data to his political advantage. In November 2014, when Jonathan declared his intention to seek a new term, he said: “Our economy is heading in the right direction and our efforts are yielding positive results. . . . Our country is now the top investment destination and the largest economy in Africa” (Jonathan 2014).

Yet there was a gap between the rebased GDP figure on the one hand, and the realities of massive unemployment and poverty on the other. This gap exposed the administration and its technocrats to damning criticism. In January 2015, another former Central Bank Governor, Charles Soludo, published an op-ed entitled “Buhari Versus Jonathan, Beyond the Election.” Soludo argued that no matter who won the election, neither man “will be able to deliver on the fantastic promises being made on the economy.” He focused his assault, however, on the PDP's “mismanagement of our economy,” highlighting Nigeria's decreasing foreign reserves and rising debt. Soludo criticized Jonathan's economic advisors, implying that technocratic pretense masked cronyism:

Sadly the government's economic team is very weak, dominated by self-interested and self-conflicted group of traders and businessmen, and so-called economic team meetings have been nothing but showbiz time. The very people government exists to regulate have seized the levers of government as policymakers and most government institutions have largely been "privatized" to them. . . . There are no big ideas, and it is difficult to see where economic policy is headed to. (Soludo 2015a)

Promises of technocratic change, he suggested, had become mired in Nigeria's highly personalized politics as usual.

It was not hard to detect in this a personal criticism of Okonjo-Iweala, and she responded heatedly. Challenging Soludo's presentation of himself as a neutral technocrat, she recalled his failure to win political office, savaged his performance at the CBN, and portrayed him as an appointment-seeking opportunist. Responding to the substance of Soludo's charges, Okonjo-Iweala placed blame for falling foreign reserves on oil theft and declining oil production. She then embarked on what was probably the most detailed defense of the Jonathan administration's economic record to appear in print throughout the entire 2015 campaign. She challenged Soludo's statistics on poverty and unemployment, detailed the president's job creation programs, defended the administration's borrowing and debt approaches, and touted initiatives in agriculture and infrastructure (Okonjo-Iweala 2015). This list of programs was framed as technocratic accomplishments but, in the context of the campaign, it amounted to a political endorsement.

Soludo's next op-ed went even further in questioning Okonjo-Iweala's integrity, depicting her technocratic defenses of the Jonathan administration as political rhetoric. Soludo not only accused Okonjo-Iweala of ignoring other politicians' wrong-doings on issues like oil theft, but he also wrote, "What worries me is that this government is the first in our history to attempt to manipulate our national statistics under Okonjo-Iweala." Behind her technocratic façade, Soludo implied, was an operator as ruthless as any other Nigerian politician, and as reckless with public money (Soludo 2015b).

As Soludo and Okonjo-Iweala argued over whose technocratic credentials could be trusted, the debate highlighted the difficulty that advocates of technocratic neoliberalism encountered in explaining the PDP's record on job creation. Okonjo-Iweala acknowledged that Jonathan's administration was falling short of the job creation necessary to keep pace with population growth while at the same time reducing unemployment. The idea that government could directly create jobs was off the table, and so she could only speak of "driving quality growth in key sectors" and "promoting entrepreneurship" (2015).

The APC was keen to exploit the PDP's vulnerability on the economic front. The APC promised a different approach to economic management, one that would give the state a more direct role in job creation while reversing the PDP's austerity program. Bola Tinubu—a key architect of the merger that formed the APC out of the ACN and other parties—positioned the

Nigerian election as part of a broader, global debate over how to run large economies:

On the one side, the PDP champions a conservative, elitist economic model based on the theory that wealth money must first go to the already rich and well-heeled who shall determine how small a fraction of it will trickle-down to the rest of society. On the progressive side, we believe government can fillip economic growth and development in such a way that brings the fairness of prosperity to all of society. (Tinubu 2014)

Challenging Okonjo-Iweala's claims that low oil prices demanded austerity, Tinubu argued that the government should decouple the Nigerian naira from the U.S. dollar, and then print more naira in order to finance large infrastructure projects that would create jobs. If the government relied on local labor and reduced "superfluous imports," Tinubu continued, it could avoid spurring inflation.

Just as important as the policies Tinubu proposed was his maneuver to portray the supposed economic wisdom of the Jonathan administration as outdated. Accusing the administration of "blindly impos[ing] last century's policies in a modern setting inappropriate to the old strictures," Tinubu relativized and questioned the administration's claim to be enacting economic common sense. As discussed above, the APC won the presidential election for multiple reasons. But one key factor was that the image of technocratic competency, intended to shield the PDP from criticism, broke down, providing opportunities for disaffected technocrats like Soludo and opposition politicians like Tinubu to criticize the PDP's economic management.

In closing, it is worth examining how those technocrats who entered electoral politics fared. Ribadu, as discussed above, placed third in the presidential election of 2011. He was recruited back to the PDP to run for governor in his home state of Adamawa where he again placed a distant third (Anwar 2015), unable to counter the APC's networks and grassroots popularity in Adamawa, or to neutralize a third-party candidate who cast himself as the Christian alternative to both Ribadu and the PDP candidate (Muhammad 2015). Similarly, Charles Soludo failed in two attempts to become the governor of Anambra State: first in 2010, when he was the PDP candidate but lost to the incumbent governor; and again in 2013, when the All Progressives Grand Alliance party disqualified him from seeking its nomination. El-Rufai, meanwhile, remained with Buhari after the latter's defeat in 2011. He became the APC candidate for the gubernatorial election in Kaduna, where he defeated the incumbent PDP governor in a landslide. These three examples show how difficult it is to turn technocratic capital into electoral success; El-Rufai's victory and the losses of Ribadu and Soludo suggest that the technocrat-turned-politician must secure the solid backing of a political network in order to win elections, and cannot rely solely on personal reputation.

Other technocrats have sought to position themselves above the fray. After Boko Haram's kidnapping of over 250 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno

State, in April 2014, Ezekwesili became a co-founder and spokesperson for the “Bring Back Our Girls” campaign (Abdullahi 2014). The campaign’s heavy Twitter presence and sustained protests in Abuja became an embarrassment to the Jonathan administration. The campaign expanded its focus beyond the safe recovery of the girls, transitioning to a broader call for “good governance” (Bring Back Our Girls 2015). Yet Ezekwesili distanced herself from the APC, even as her co-founder Hadiza Bala-Usman joined Buhari’s campaign and subsequently became chief of staff to El-Rufai. Repositioning herself as a non-partisan critic of the system to which she had once belonged allowed Ezekwesili to claim continued status as a technocrat.

Conclusion

In the months before and after the PDP’s first national electoral loss in 2015, commentators often presented the opposition’s strength as a reflection of Nigeria’s physical insecurity and as the potential return of military-era strongman politics. Buhari, the eventual winner, was supposedly gaining support almost exclusively because of his military credentials.⁴ Such perspectives ignored the opposition’s simultaneous appeal to voters on economic grounds. Alongside the standard criticisms of corruption and of the incumbent himself, the opposition also criticized neoliberal economic policies.

These criticisms were partly enabled by the politicization of technocracy in the Fourth Republic. The PDP’s hegemony unraveled in part because despite its claims to be a competent manager of the economy, its policymaking and policymakers were exposed as powerless against Nigerian politics. When key policymakers such as Okonjo-Iweala were deemed partisan rather than technocratic, the Jonathan administration became more vulnerable than its immediate predecessors to attacks on its economic policies. Meanwhile, as economic growth soared but many Nigerians remained jobless, the promises of technocracy rang hollow. While factors such as falling oil prices and defections from the PDP to the APC played a major role in the PDP’s defeat, the PDP’s vulnerabilities were compounded by the exhaustion of a technocratic playbook that had worked on and off since 1999. The PDP’s eventual fall was inevitable, but the dynamics of that fall shed light on the limitations of the technocratic ideal.

The Nigerian experience suggests that efforts to achieve “good governance” and “reform” through technocracy are naïve, whether in Africa or elsewhere. Proponents of neoliberalism have often suggested that economic policymaking, or even government itself, can be managed by experts who stand outside of politics. This managerial vision amounts to an anti-politics approach, treating political contestation over policy as ugly and counterproductive, and treating the economic preferences of citizens as largely ill-informed and reactionary (Zuckerman 2012). Nigeria’s recent history shows that no one stands outside politics, and there are political limits to a “reform” agenda that produces rapid but jobless growth and that seeks to strip citizens of the economic benefits they receive from the state (such as fuel subsidies).

Such circumstances might presage a newfound political popularity and success for social democrats and socialists around the world—witness the popularity of candidates such as Bernie Sanders and Jeremy Corbyn and parties such as Podemos, and Syriza, as well the APC's own flirtation with left-leaning populist economic rhetoric in Nigeria. Yet the pressures that neoliberalism continues to impose, especially the pressure on governments to sustain and deepen austerity, place a powerful limit on governing options and political prospects for left and left-leaning parties. If neoliberal technocracy is sometimes rejected by voters who demand policies more favorable to job creation and working people, the alternatives nevertheless appear difficult to implement in the present political and economic climate. Buhari and the APC hinted during the 2015 campaign that they would invest massively in infrastructure and create millions of jobs, but the realities of governing have shown that the new administration is hamstrung by global economic pressures. What remains to be seen is whether Buhari—and other politicians around the world who have used popular discontent with austerity as a springboard to elected office—can truly break with the assumptions of neoliberal technocratic management, or if they will remain prisoners to them.

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Notes

1. This definition builds on Harold Lasswell's famous notion of politics as "who gets what, when, how" (Lasswell 1936).
2. Both Ferguson and Mundy, it should be noted, discuss "antipolitics" as a phenomenon broader than just neoliberalism, and as a facet of what Foucault calls "bio-power" and/or "bio-politics."
3. Note that the paper is now hosted at the World Bank's website, where it is called Nigeria's PRSP. See National Planning Commission (2004).
4. For an example of this kind of commentary, see Nossiter (2015).