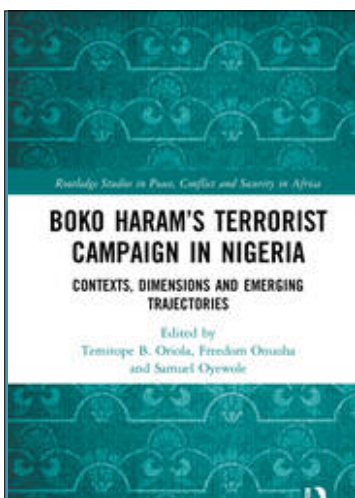


Boko Haram's Terrorist Campaign in Nigeria

Contexts, Dimensions and Emerging Trajectories

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Boko Haram has fast become one of the world's most notorious terrorist groups. The longevity of Boko Haram, coupled with its dynamic nature, necessitates that scholars keep abreast with a vast and intersectional array of developments. As a result, much ink has been spilt providing analysis and insight into the group's motives, activities, internal politics, tactics, and future trajectories. Boko Haram's ever-green endurance both in Nigeria and the wider West African region paves the way for a scholarly momentum which Oriola, Onuoha and Oyewole's edited collection aligns with. The book has 12 chapters which are split across five thematic areas, namely: gender, the media, displacement, non-state actors, human rights, and non-state actors. It is beyond the scope of this review to place each chapter under the microscope. Instead, the reviewer will highlight some of the most important contributions the book makes to the academic discourse on Boko

Haram. Chapter three (by Oyewole and Onuoha) provides the reader with a comprehensive account of the Dapachi Kidnapping of 2018; this contribution is significant as much scholarship as focused on the Chibok Kidnappings of 2014. Oyewole and Onuoha unpack why the Dapachi Kidnappings took place, placing an emphasis on the need for Boko Haram to portray itself as a resilient origination so as to appear appealing to prospective members, to raise funds (by means of hostage negotiations), and rewarding hardworking foot soldiers with 'wives' and sex slaves. Furthermore, context is given to Dapachi's geographical and political vulnerability vis-à-vis Boko Haram's terrorist campaign.

Chapter four (by Oshodi) highlights how journalists and media outlets have come under fire by Boko Haram. Emphasis is placed on how journalists have become 'easy prey' for misrepresenting Boko Haram's narratives and/or activities, which resulted in the issuing of threats or the attacking of media outlets. Chapter seven (by Tar and Ayegba) highlights the resilience of internally displaced persons (IDPs) displaced as a result of Boko Haram's armed assaults. Tar and Ayegba's contribution shows that IDPs resort to skipping meals, selling of their own critical assets (such as homes, cattle or land), wage labour, and networking (which involved forming connections with host communities that allowed IDPs to escape the harsh conditions of the IPD camps). This illustration of resilience was followed by suggestions on how to build the capacity of IDPs which included social support and wealth creation initiatives.

Chapter eight (by Adeakin, Gray and Madu) questions the overall consequences of humanitarian assistance provided by non-governmental organisations. Their chapter finds that while humanitarian assistance provided by NGOs is a crucial lifeline for victims of Boko Haram campaign of terror, this assistance is, all too often, given out to recipients whose allegiance is unverifiable.

As a result, humanitarian assistance may, unintentionally, end up in the hands of Boko Haram. Omotuyi and Okwechine (chapter eleven) investigate how the Leahy Law of the United States of America (USA) was being implemented. The Leahy Law was passed in 1997 to prohibit the use of counter-terrorism assistance (particularly military assistance) to facilitate human rights abuses. They find that the application of the Leahy Law under former President Obama within the context of Nigeria was misguided as the law was leveraged not to protect and promote human rights but to prevent Nigeria from gaining access to counter-terrorism assistance due to Boko Haram informants possibly operating within the Nigerian military. The final chapter of this edited volume provides a bird's-eye view of how the international community provided assistance to Nigeria in fighting Boko Haram.

Boko Haram's complex nature facilitates this book's broad thematic scope, which is its greatest strength. Additionally, Oriola, Onuoha and Oyewole's edited collection is a quick and easy read, which makes it the ideal resource for seasoned and novice Boko Haram watchers alike. Both of these readerships will find context or inspiration, respectively, as they seek to either commence their research into Boko Haram or advance their contributions to the literature. The 'easy to read' style and presentation of Oriola, Onuoha and Oyewole's edited collection means that the work is accessible to students, scholars, policymakers, non-state actors or the layperson wishing to understand more about the Boko Haram conflict and its complexities outside of the media cycle. With these laudable strengths in mind, it is worth noting that the book does not give a detailed account of Boko Haram's roots. Given the combined expertise of the various contributors, a forecast of Boko Haram's future would have been another welcome addition to this book.

The above paves the way for further research opportunities. Chief among these is the death of Abubakar Shekau in 2021. Boko Haram watchers will need to monitor and interpret what the post-Shekau era means for (counter-)terrorism in Nigeria and West Africa as a whole.

Book information

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