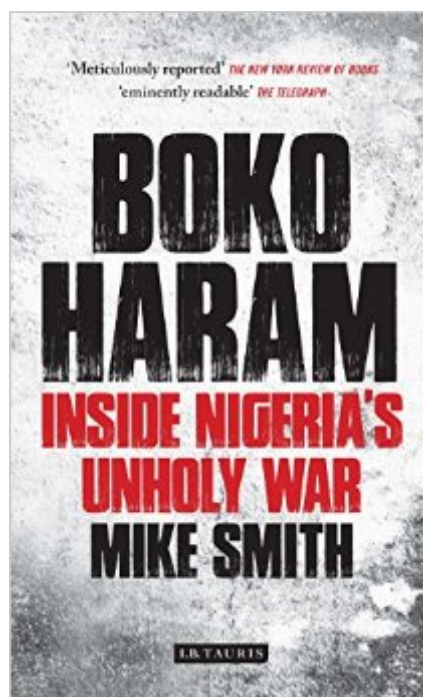


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Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War



Synopsis

An insurgency in Nigeria by the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram has left thousands dead, shaken Africa's biggest country and worried the world. Yet they remain a mysterious, almost unknowable organisation. Through exhaustive on-the-ground reporting, M.J. Smith takes readers inside the violence and provides the first in-depth account of the conflict. He traces Boko Haram from its beginnings as a small Islamist sect in Nigeria's remote northeast, led by a baby-faced but charismatic preacher, to its transformation into a hydra-headed monster, deploying suicide bombers and abducting innocent schoolgirls. Much of the book is told through the eyes of Nigerians who have found themselves caught between the violence of a shadowy group of insurgents, brutal security forces accused of horrifying abuses and an inept government led by an accidental president. It includes the voices of a forgotten police officer left paralysed by an attack, women whose husbands have been murdered and a sword-wielding vigilante using charms to fend off insurgent bullets. It journeys through the sleaze and corruption that has robbed Africa's biggest oil producer of its potential, making it such fertile ground for extremism. Along the way it questions whether there can be any end to the violence and the ways in which this might be achieved. Interspersed with history, this book delves into the roots of this unholy war being waged against the backdrop of an evolving extremist threat worldwide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Islam has been well established in northern Nigeria for over two centuries; its initial leader,

Muhammad Yusuf, has helped to firmly imbed radical and terroristic Islam there recently with the advent of Boko Haram. Roughly speaking the meaning of Boko Haram translates in English to "Western education is forbidden". Boko Haram attained notoriety with the kidnapping of 300 female boarding school students but even before then, this terrorist organization was brutally attacking police stations and other government institutions with impunity. They continue to capture international headlines and have pledged allegiance to ISIS. After the death of Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau assumed leadership of the group. This book studies the early history of Islam in Nigeria and then brings the reader into present day for a face-to-face analysis as to the reason for the birth of Boko Haram. There are many anecdotal first person stories about the personal impact left by terrorism in Nigeria and how that is linked to corruption in government and the oil boom that started in 1956. Because Nigeria was unable to build sufficient refineries, it was necessary to export its crude oil through a process that has become mismanaged and corrupt. The current Nigerian president, Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian, has been unable to reign in sufficient governmental support against the brutality of Boko Haram. Jonathan, always known for his heavy-handed militarist tactics, has done little to slow down the progress of terrorism. This is a well-detailed book but is hard to read and digest standing alone due to all of its content and history.

In "Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War," Mike Smith writes with a journalist's sense of urgency, and with a deep understanding of the history, regions, economics, religions, and politics of Nigeria. Smith rapidly covers one millennium of Western African history as it relates to Nigeria and Islam, which is critical to understanding the current upheaval in this densely populated and poor corner of Africa. Islam's spread through Africa in the Tenth Century was not without conflict. Throughout the centuries, Islam fought on the defensive and offensive against other religions and cultures. As Islam began to dominate in many regions, including Northern and Central Africa, different factions and dynasties split and infighting occurred. According to Smith, "one of history's most successful armed jihads occurred in what is today northern Nigeria [Bornu] in the eighteenth century. Bornu became an important centre of Islamic learning. Some 300 years later, Boko Haram would take root amid the remnants of that former empire, by then part of Nigeria." In the last 100 years, Nigeria formed into one culturally and religiously diverse country, gained independence, underwent several civil wars and coups, became the most populous country in Africa with 170 million people, and recently overtook South Africa as the continent's biggest economy strictly in terms of GDP size. Nigeria remains a country that is deeply divided by three main regions: the Islamic North, Christian South, and ultra-poor/religious diverse Delta.

Government corruption and corporate racketeering has accelerated animosity, leading to further unrest.

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