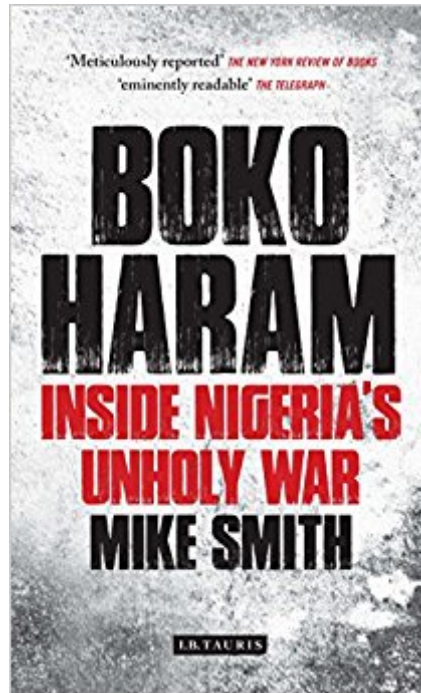




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# Boko Haram: Inside Nigeria's Unholy War



## 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

"Meticulously reported" – The New York Review of Books "Perceptive and fair-minded...eminently readable" – The Telegraph "A commendable first draft of history" – The Economist "What

shines through is (Smith's) measured anger, shared by many Nigerians" - Financial Times '[readers] get a vivid impression of the horrors associated with the group and the campaign against it, thanks to Mr Smith's reporting-the book's main strength...Considering the dearth of information available, this is a commendable first draft of history.' - The Economist; 'The best bits of Inside Nigeria's Unholy War are focused reportage such as the moving tale of Wellington Asiaye, an assistant police superintendent shot in a 2012 attack in the northern city of Kano...Smith's achievement is in diligently marshalling the available information... What shines through is his measured anger, shared by many Nigerians, about a country battered by empire builders, the curse of oil, the military and a devastating 1967-70 civil war.' - Michael Peel, Financial Times; 'Meticulously reported' - Joshua Hammer, New York Review of Books; 'eminently readable...fascinating passages...this book is based on his [the author's] own reporting, lending it genuine authority...he writes with perception, clarity and fair-mindedness.' - David Blair, The Sunday Telegraph

Mike Smith is news editor for Israel and the Palestinian territories for Agence France-Presse. He was based in Lagos from 2010-13 as AFP's bureau chief for part of West Africa.

If you want to better understand the insanity of terrorism this book should be read

written by Author who spent years in the area and understands the political and economic micro-climate. Worth reading to help understand the Islamic uprising now taking place throughout the area.

smith has written a short but very informative book on the horrible subject matter concerning boko haram; he gives some background to the movement, if you can call it that, describes what it is believed by him to be & what it is not; despite the outrages committed in its name & they are that, he also details some of the abuses of the nigerian security services including the army; nigeria is a disaster, one of the most dysfunctional & corrupt states not only in africa but the world; what is going on in that country is a mess with no easy solutions; as a matter of fact, with such a high birth rate in that environment, things may only get worse despite the oil wealth it has or could have if so much of it was not stolen ; the benefits of that wealth does almost nothing for the average nigerian

Access to information, especially in a war zone, is difficult to obtain. Mike Smith is a journalist and

off and on, he was able to gain access to Boko Haram zones of influence and personalities surrounding the conflict. I give Mike Smith credit for developing the historical influences leading up to the Boko Haram context. The first half of the book describes Uthman don Fodio's jihad of the early 19th century which eventually led to the Sokoto Caliphate; stretching from North West Nigeria to Northern Cameroon. The journalist then introduces Lord Lugard, the British colonial appointee charged with building connections with Nigerian chiefs in a race against the French who were moving down from areas of Niger and Chad. The conservative, yet distinctly Nigerian character of the Islamic Sokoto Empire in combination with British indirect rule slowly formed a unique Northern Nigerian personality in relation to the rest of the world. Fast forward almost a century and Mike Smith shows how influential reformers like Muhammadu Marwa of the Maitatsine movement and Mohammed Yousouf of the early Boko Haram were reactionary forces to the political, religious, economic and social perceptions of Nigeria. There are a few additional research points included by Mike Smith that better develop the setting. Interestingly, Uthman don Fodio, Muhammadu Marwa, Yousouf and Abubakr Shakau (current leader of Boko Haram) were NOT ethnic Hausa. Smith argues that at least Uthman, Yousouf and Shakau adopted more extremist Wahhabi positions on religious practice and theology. The Hausa dominated North has always mingled in a tense environment of political balance; a reality easily manipulated by would-be reformers. It could be due to my personal interests alone, but I found the first half of the book much more interesting than the latter half. Despite the journalist's attempt to dig beyond the main headlines, the chapters get sucked in to the hype. Mike Smith describes a series of high-profile events from the viewpoint of a few local Nigerians, some privy to first hand-experience and others perhaps embellishing their information to protect or advance personal goals. Western media was particularly taken by the Chibok girl's kidnapping saga. In direct respect to his intended audience, no doubt, the book devotes a full chapter and more to a single event. It would be correct to say that strategic media and voicing launched a global awareness of Boko Haram for the better. But an author who claims to be better than the ordinary "parachute" journalist could have balanced the single media hog events with more environment nuances. The author has a heart for the Nigerian people and a visible concern for dignity and justice. In light of the many other books and articles that have been printed on Boko Haram, specifically by Nigerian authors, I can only barely recommend it as a worthy Boko Haram account.

When the name Goodluck Jonathan appeared I had a mental smile. Finally a name I recognized and could pronounce. That was my one and only smile, mental or otherwise. A look at the terrorist

group Boko Haram. I have long pondered how a ragtag group of terrorists managed to grow and increasingly run rampant committing ever more daring and deadly atrocities. Already there exists an imitation of if not an actual link to ISIS and almost surely cooperation with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as well as possibly Al-Shabab. Although claiming to be in the name of religion these terrorists groups go against all that is holy, seeming rather to enjoy the opportunity to rob, rape, plunder and pillage while committing what can only be classified as genocide. I question why America has not stepped in when we as a country seek to eliminate these organizations posing an affront to humanity in the name of religion. This writing provides an examination of the inability or unwillingness of a government to confront and exterminate this plague. It further explains why we as a country stand on the sidelines. Also offering an insight to the question of financial support needed maintain and arm these groups. The most distressing take away is the plight of the inhabitants of this resource rich country, living in poverty and in constant fear of the aggressors. If one is to take for fact the findings of this report the aggressors are not only the terrorists but also those in the employ of the government assigned to protect the public. Although it can be somewhat dry it is a very worthy read for anyone seeking to understand the how and why behind the headline news stories, but the vivid descriptions of carnage will never be included in those headline stories.

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