

Review: Virginia Comolli. *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, C. Hurst & Co., London, UK, 2015 (2017 edn.)

Pages: 251

Islam: Satan in Nigeria

A scholarly work which catalogues an extremely concerning Islamic front in Nigeria and the African Middle Belt which is wreaking havoc. Historically, Islamic Jihad goes back centuries to the Sokoto Caliphate, so this should be nothing new, however, violence has reached a peak (including kidnapping of the Chibok girls) and despite anti-Christian Western media radio silence, it is becoming too obvious to hide.

Of the various personages, the violent Abubakar Shekau stands out. The methods used by Boko Haram will also warn the reader when in Muslim-affected locations: use of women, children, and disabled as suicide bombers; wearing military uniform disguises; and widespread financial extortion (just like the Mafia).

The biggest fault is the secular approach to a religious problem; the author seems at a loss as to why deradicalisation programs (which include “cognitive behavioural therapies”) failed.

Introduction (pp. 1-9)

Around 3.3M have been displaced since 2010.

Traders are afraid to open shops, and customers to visit them. Borders are also closed discouraging trade and foreign investment.

Life expectancy is 54 and 60% of people live in absolute poverty (75% in the Islamic north).

The social contract has been broken by corruption.

In Boko Haram's stronghold state of Borno, 70% of children have no schooling.

In 2002, the Nigerian Taliban set up in Yobe state.

I) Islam in Nigeria: Historical Background (pp. 10-24)

In the 15thC, Hausaland converted to Islam from pagan and fertility worship; the Sahel had acted as a barrier to Islam.

MUJWA is Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa.

Usman Dan Fodio and the Fulanis were Senegalese migrants who moved into Nigeria in the 1400s. Fodio was born in 1754 and took up Sunni Islam with the Maliki school.

“Slavery was .. the indispensable engine behind the growth of the caliphate ... to the point that some of the conquered ... were forbidden from converting to Islam so ... they could be more easily forced into slavery, These practices ... were common until the late 1850s.” [p16]

The British subjugated northern Nigeria in 1903 and established a Protectorate till 1914; very few signs of modernity existed (“[it] might as well belong to another world”).

Britain forged an alliance with the Fulani aristocracy under Lord Lugard's “indirect rule” system: “They also banned from the emirate Christian missionaries who were only allowed to preach in ‘quiet places’ till 1931” “. [p17]

After independence in 1960, Nigeria fractured along ethnic lines; Hausa-Fulani in the north, Yoruba in the south, and Igbo in the east.

On 5/30/1967, Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu declared secession of eastern Nigeria as the Republic of Biafra; by 1970 they had surrendered with 2.4M dead (mostly from malnutrition).

Boko Haram spokesman Abu Qaqa, 2012: “ We have our sights on [bringing sharia to] the whole world, not just Nigeria.” [p20]

II) The Genesis of Radical Groups (pp. 25-43)

Ansaru Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan are Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa.

AQIM is Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb.

III) What Is Boko Haram? (pp. 44-84)

In 1995, Abubark Lawan set up a Muslim Youth organisation at the University of Maiduguri.

Ibn Taymiyyah was a 13thC theologian who inspired many ultra-Salafist movements (“Salafist” is synonymous with “Wahhabism”).

Boko Haram’s Muhammad Yusuf, *BBC News*, 31 July, 2009: “If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism.” [p48]

Yusuf was killed by Nigerian forces in 2009.

“Boko Haram” means “Western education is forbidden”.

Muslims poisoned five wells in Bauchi with HCN and P.

Abubakr Shekau took over in 2010; he was more violent and a hashish user.

“What I am doing is written in the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith and I will not stop ... The concept of Government of the people by the people for the people will never be possible and will never exist. Democracy shall be replaced only by the government of Allah, from Allah and for Allah.” [p62]

Islamisation of Nigeria would destroy Christianity in the entire Middle Belt.

In May 2013, Nigeria declared an emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.

Almajirai: “a large army of unemployed vagabonds.”

VBEIDs (Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices).

The disabled were often used in suicide missions since they were less likely to attract attention. [p77]

Muslims extort from rural villagers, businessmen, and local government officials.

There is a direct connection between Latin American drug baron and Boko Haram.

IV) The Internationalisation of Boko Haram (pp. 85-107)

Niger is “another weak link in the Sahel”.

Food prices increased 50% in Cameroonian border towns after the rise of Boko Haram.

Boko Haram: “Any Muslim that goes against the establishment of Sharia law will be attacked and killed.”[p99]

Ansaru vowed to restore, “the lost dignity of Muslims in black Africa” through revival of the Sokoto Caliphate.

V) Government Responses (pp. 109-152)

Nigeria has 80K troops and 82K paramilitaries.

Hundreds of footpaths criss-cross its borders.

Emergency Powers were to: detain suspects; control property; enter and search; implement curfews; suspend mobile phone communication networks.

Abu Qaqa gave Christians in the north three days to leave.

Shekau, March, 2013: “ The government .. is waging war upon Allah and His Prophet. We will continue waging war against them until we

succeeded in establish an Islamic state in Nigeria ... we are workers in the vineyard of Allah” [p117]

Boko Haram use women and children as spies, also, wear military uniforms. There are up to 1.5M Nigerians in Britain.

Conclusions (pp. 153-159)

Epilogue / Appendix (pp. 160-239)

Nigeria extracts 2M barrels of crude each day, yet does not have refineries to process it all.

In 1822, Egyptian Muhammad Ali, Ottoman governor, invaded Sudan and declared himself the Mahdi. He killed Charles Gordon, but was later defeated by Lord Kitchener in September 1889, who killed 11K Muslims.