“Boko Haram – An Annotated Bibliography”

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Introduction

This document provides an annotated bibliography of the Nigerian group Boko Haram. The bibliography does not include newspaper or online news stories, though in the first section I do list blogs and websites that have a fair bit of relevant content. I’ve included links wherever possible, and indicated if pieces are open access or require subscription – please let me know if links are broken or the status of a piece is wrong or has changed. Articles listed without comments are often of limited use – there are some journals listed here with fairly low editorial standards.

Thank you to those who have sent me pieces or links - I’d welcome corrections and further suggestions.

Where to Start

For those new to the topic, I’d suggest that Davis 2012, Mantzikos ed. 2013, Pham 2012 and Walker 2012 are the best places to start (all open access), perhaps followed by one of the Adesoji pieces (2010 [open access], 2011), articles in Busher ed. 2014 (open access), Elkaim 2012 (open access), Oyeniyi 2014 and something by Agbiboa (maybe 2013d [open access] or 2014). If you only read one (fairly long) piece, I’d suggest International Crisis Group 2014 (open access).

Robertson 2012 is a disturbing indication of possible U.S.-led interventions; Marlatt 2014 provides another useful bibliography (both open access).

Blogs and Websites with Nigeria-related content

Africa is a Country – http://africasacountry.com
African Arguments - http://africanarguments.org
African Futures - http://forums.ssrc.org/african-futures/
E-International Relations - http://www.e-ir.info
Informed Comment – www.juancole.com
Nigeria Research Network - http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/research/research-
Main Entries


A useful analysis of the three remaining countries with endemic polio; and the remaining barriers to eradication. Polio has become a major political issue in Nigeria, with some country-specific concerns but also sensitivity due to the CIA hunt for Bin Laden making use of a fake programme for DNA testing.


Mainly looks at the 2009 events associated with Boko Haram, and compares them to the Maitatsine ['the one who damn's', named after the preacher Muhammed Marwa] uprisings of the 1980s. That provides a useful longer term background to more recent events. Some of the socio-economic analysis is quite useful. It suggests, though without much evidence, that Boko Haram is getting support from global jihadist groups and specifically claims “affinity with the North Africa branch of Al-Qaeda” (Adesoji 2011, 105). The most useful part for me was the description of the ‘Boko Haram riots’ of 26-30 July 2009 which followed the attack on the group’s hideout in the Dutsen Tenshin area of Bauchi. These riots occurred in the states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, and Borno, especially the last. The group’s leader Ustaz Mohammed Yusof was captured and killed in police custody. Over 700 people died in these protests, the riots and the crackdown. Quite helpful on membership and affiliation.


This article is very similar to Adesoji 2011, but with more of a focus on recent events.


A readable brief account for a more policy-orientated audience.


Looks at the wider context of Nigerian politics and the ethnic makeup of the country as a whole.


This is more explicitly on Boko Haram, with some useful discussion especially around religion.


These are all helpful pieces, but there is quite a bit of overlap between them. 2013d is probably the most generally useful; 2013c is good on identity politics; 2013e on deprivation (also discussed in 2013c). 2014 is more up-to-date and has some suggestions of global linkages to al-Shabaab and al Qaeda.


A useful survey of the available literature, with a methodological focus and use of
some interviews. Helpful background on other and earlier non-state violence within Nigeria, suggesting that Boko Haram should be understood as one group among many. Notes the group has existed under a variety of names, including “Ahlulssunna wai’jama’ah hijra and... the ‘Nigerian Taliban’ and ‘Yusufiyyah’ sect” (Aghedo and Osumah 2012, 858), and that the group probably exists in two main factions (p. 859). Notes the “country’s porous borders” as helping the group in terms of movement of people and arms (p. 863). “In August 2011 the commander of US Africa Command held that the BH has ties with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Somalia’s al-Shabaab” (p. 864). Calls for a “human security approach rather than the current emphasis on a repressive state security approach” (p. 853) within Nigeria.


Useful on the overall context of Nigeria as a state, and the comparison with the Delta links it to wider political economy debates.


A brief analysis with some comments on the period after the declaration of the state of emergency in the northeastern states. Argues, unconvincingly and not always consistently, for a stronger line from the Nigerian state that deals with them as a terrorist group, rather than freedom fighters.


Useful as a source of interpretations from Nigerian media, though the analysis is tenuous at best.


Briefing for the International Institute For Strategic Studies.

Very helpful on the religious debates within Islam, where Boko Haram sits within them, and what it has said through a wide variety of media. Explains in some detail what Western elements of education, political practice etc. (*boko*) they find *haram*. Good on criticisms within Nigeria, especially from Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmoud Adam - assassinated by Boko Haram in 2007.


Useful on the unreliable nature of much national reporting.


Spends a lot of time on discussion terrorism in general, and not much on the specifics of Nigeria.


Has a much more general focus, but briefly mentions Boko Haram in terms of their financing, suggesting they have had funds raised from AQIM kidnapping, and supplemented this with bank raids, car-jacking and other crime (p. 723).


An Australian perspective, but not much for a general audience except perhaps for the comparison with AQIM.

Quite a general account, though useful for setting this in a wider context.


Contains several articles on Boko Haram, as well as discussions of al Shabaab and al-Qaeda affiliated groups.


Written before #bringbackourgirls became news, but interesting on social media, especially from within Nigeria.


Takes a hardline approach, but has some useful statements and interviews with Boko Haram members. Downplays any link to AQIM, but stresses its relation with al-Shabab in Somalia.


A policy briefing on behalf of NATO.


Danjibo is based at the Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan. Compares the 2009 Boko Haram uprising with the 1980 Maitatsine events, in a similar way to Adesoji 2009.


A brief analysis with a really helpful diagram of the movement and its links to other groups. Argues that the group’s aims are more to do with self-preservation than political or religious, and makes a compelling case for their mafia-like organization. Suggests that Nigeria’s security services are making things worse, and need to stop
“their extrajudicial killings, and pursue justice rather than revenge”. A longer-term fix can only come through dealing with Nigeria’s corruption.


Sets Boko Haram within a wider study of terrorism and state actions; and within Nigerian politics more generally.


Provides some historical background, especially on the northern and southern protectorates that constituted Nigeria, and on the tensions between the Sokoto caliphate and the Kanem-Bornu Empire before British rule. Good on recent events, and political decisions made within the Nigerian government.


The title explains this one – an argument of designation.

36. Forest, James J. F. (2011) “Al-Qaeda’s Influence in Sub-Saharan Africa: Myths, Realities and Possibilities”, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 5,3-4, 63-80 [open access]

Useful on the wider regional context and on AQIM.


Brief report on the situation for a US audience, suggesting that the country is descending into religious war, and noting supposed links between Boko Haram and al-Qaeda. Read in comparison with other sources for the problems with this analysis.


Not well written, but some useful comments on the permeable borders between Chad-Niger-Cameroon-Nigeria; and the timeline of recent events is helpful. Light on evidence for claimed links to other groups, and some alarming recommendations.

39. Giroux, Jennifer and Gilpin, Raymond (2014) “#NigeriaOnTheEdge”, *Policy...*
Discussion of the challenges facing Nigeria as it approaches presidential elections in 2015; and some intriguing (though not well-referenced) discussion of splinter factions within the overall group.


Some conceptual work on definitions of insurgency and terrorism, with reference to two major areas of conflict within Nigeria.


Uses Frantz Fanon’s work to try to understand the emergence of Boko Haram. It suggests his concept of ‘the wretched’ remains useful, and that even if the notion of a racial foreigner is irrelevant to this case, Fanon is helpful in making sense of it. Seems a bit too willing to see all violence in the north as due to Boko Haram, with AQIM as an influence upon it, rather than affiliates of the second group being responsible—for example, the kidnappings of the British and Italian nationals in Sokoto. Has a useful note on the difficulty of using Nigerian media for accurate reporting on Boko Haram.


Links 1920 colonial-era struggles to the present moment: useful in providing a deeper historical background.


A useful account of policing in Kano, from a key writer in international politics. Her 2009 book Policing Post-Conflict Cities is well worth a look too.


The legal side is quite useful here, as is the listing of Boko Haram demands and beliefs.

Good on the political economy of the country and the wider region, with some useful discussion of US strategic commands in the area. Has some good detail on the 2009 events, and situates these well within other uprisings and violence in the country. Some helpful discussion of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDVF).


Provides what it says—a useful and thorough background context to events, though a few years out of date.


Very good study of the wider context of Nigeria within the Bush-era ‘war on terror’ by a political geographer. Especially useful on the relation between biopolitics and geopolitics.


A very useful account, with background, analysis and suggestions for ways forward. Detailed references and draws on a lot of primary research. Highly recommended.


For those that like the convenience and easy answers of mathematical models.


US perspective on the events, especially in terms of what role the US should or shouldn’t play in the region.

A reading of an Old Testament verse to explore possibilities for dialogue.


Suggests that since the UN building attack in Abuja in 2011, Boko Haram has been an international concern. Useful on the wider West of Africa context, with some discussion of the global dimension.


A remarkable collection of photographs of the Delta by Ed Kashi, with text by Michael Watts and others. Useful for the wider context of Nigerian politics, and in particular the way the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta was dealt with by the state. Some images and text can be found in this piece in Mother Jones.


Useful background on the different religions in Nigeria, with a call for city-by-city studies, rather than a straight-forward divide.


Good on the 2009 events, with a longer view from the author of The Sokoto Caliphate (1967).


Another good account, particularly of Nigerian state responses and constraints.


A good general account, with some historical background, particularly on the Yan Izala movement of reform within Islam.

Takes a broad historical and geographical focus, which is helpful for setting Boko Haram in a wider context. Pre-dates much of the recent activity, but has a discussion of Nigeria, especially in relation to the Delta in 2008.


Analyses Nigeria as a failed state, with some interesting detail on Boko Haram that is unavailable elsewhere.


Some good discussion of existing literature on terrorism and Boko Haram’s position relative to it. Some of the conclusions and recommendations underestimate the complexities, but a helpful timeline of attacks is provided.


A useful brief note on the linguistics of the group’s name; compare to Newman 2013.


The piece is most useful for the background, as it predates key events in 2011 and since. The discussion of other Islamist groups in Nigeria historically is quite useful. The point about the absence of the state is important, though this piece doesn’t make much of it. It is important in making sense of how Boko Haram operates rather than simply opposes, and, like Hezbollah, how it does many things commonly ascribed to states.


A useful compilation of pieces from the website e-International Relations.


Many of the articles listed are discussed in this bibliography, but it also provides links to books, websites, theses and dissertations, and more political reports, especially from the USA.

Suggests that religion is not the key factor in Boko Haram, but rather economic deprivation in the north of the country. Also examines the uses of new media (internet and mobile phones) in how the group operates.


A useful discussion of the term ‘boko’ which is suggested means sham or fraud, and came to be associated with the Latin alphabet, and therefore Western Education, rather than being linked to the English word ‘book’. Compare Manfredi 2014.


Fairly good on the problems of Nigeria generally, situating Boko Haram within that wider context.


Short piece that makes the argument that insecurity is a barrier to development in the country. Not especially useful.


Another mathematical ‘solution’ to the situation.


Two related pieces of work – the Master’s Degree was funded by FFI. Both are comprehensive studies; 2013b has an extensive timeline.

A historical materialist account with a long historical frame, with some useful detail on recent events.


Discusses the security response to Boko Haram, and the large number of extra-judicial killings.


Some useful figures and a chronology up to April 2012.

76. Olaniyi, Rasheed Oyewole (2011) “Hisbah and Sharia Law Enforcement in Metropolitan Kano”, *Africa Today*, 57.4, 70-96 [requires subscription]

Useful on the city of Kano itself, and the partial reintroduction of Sharia law since 1999. Boko Haram wants much more extensive use of Sharia.


Provides some useful analysis of legal, political and military responses to non-state groups within Nigeria, of which Boko Haram is but one.


Compares Boko Haram to the groups operating in the Niger Delta, and good on the territorial challenges of keeping the country together.

Another piece that emphasizes the structural problems of Nigeria’s political system. Maiangwa et. al. 2012 and Tonwe and Eke 2013 are more useful.


Uses Kenneth Waltz’s work on the causes of war to analyse Boko Haram at three levels – individual, state and international system. Some good detail on how the group operates.


Looks at Boko Haram’s links outside Nigeria.


Good on the 2009 events.


A short report which is useful on Nigeria’s political geography.


A valuable study on a key issue within the situation. The policy recommendations, if taken as whole rather than partially, would do much to improve the situation in the north of the country generally.


Another piece that focuses on the structural problems in Nigeria, which is especially good on poverty.


Fairly good on the counter-terrorism policies of the Federal government.

This is a very helpful article that analyses speeches by Boko Haram and opponents, many of which are hard to find today, and argues that there are two distinctive elements within the group’s message: a protest within fundamentalist Islam in the country; and a protest within Nigeria against corruption and ineffective addressing of socioeconomic problems. It suggests that the first can and should be addressed by the federal state, but the first is outside the scope of a secular state. The conclusions are based on some unconvincing arguments, but most of the process of getting there very useful.


Contemporary response to the kidnapping, with a wider view of attitudes to women and education.


Not a bad place to start, with a lot of detail and background on the group.

90. Pham, J. Peter (2011a) “Foreign Influences and Shifting Horizons: The Ongoing Evolution of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” Orbis, 55.2, 240-54 [requires subscription]

Given the alleged links between Boko Haram and AQIM, this is a helpful background piece on the latter.


Another useful piece on AQIM, and particularly its transnational operations.


A briefing for the US Congress, with some useful background on the country as a whole in terms of its economy, health, politics, and society.


Looks at targeting of journalists by Boko Haram, which helps to explain some of the media coverage within Nigeria.

A brief and very up-to-date (May 2014) analysis, including the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls and foreign links to Nigerian Federal forces.


Robertson is a Major in the U.S. Army who advocates a much more engaged strategy for AFRICOM (the US military command based in Stuttgart dealing with the African Continent) and pre-emptive action in Nigeria. She talks up the links between Boko Haram and AQIM, and suggests that AFRICOM’s ‘Theater Strategic Objectives’ can best be met by the use of “Engagement Teams (ETs) to neutralize the foundation of the Boko Haram in Nigeria” (p. 2), and especially future collaboration between Boko Haram and AQIM (pp. 4-5). The ETs being called for are 20-30 men teams, with at least a 50% Nigerian component “including local state citizens, police, military and both Islamic and Christian religious leaders” (p. 5) and a US part “should consist of U.S. military Chaplains, Intelligence, Ordnance, Corps of Engineers, Administrative, Logistics, Civil Affairs and Special Forces personnel, agents from the FBI and CIA, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Justice (DoJ) and USDA [Department of Agriculture] employees” (pp. 5-6). Suggests such activities also need to work in relation to Nigeria’s northern neighbours in Chad and Niger.

While it does recognize there are structural issues that lead to support for Boko Haram, and that the legacy of colonialism is important, this proposal is disturbing. It suggests that “Engagement Teams in Nigeria would pre-empt an all-out war that could potentially destabilize the entire region and block access to key U.S. interests. Efforts by the Nigerian government to end the horrors brought about by the Islamic radicals of Boko Haram are simply not broad enough in scope to truly eradicate the roots of this insurgency. A purely military solution will not work. Rife with religious, economic and ethnic strife, corruption and many other traits of a failed state, Nigeria is still an emerging power” (p. 16).


Short briefing that focuses on economic and political marginalization as a cause.


The discussion of the police here is especially useful, as is that of the wider political geography of Nigeria, but this is also a good general account.

The comparison with groups in the Niger Delta is helpful here.


If you can get past the title this is a fairly useful analysis, following a USIP public event on Nigeria. It dates from 2010 and events have moved on beyond what is looked at here. Better for background and history on Nigeria than on more recent politics.


Analyses Boko Haram within the wider challenges facing Nigeria. Points to the potential for further violence around the Presidential elections of 2015, and understandably pessimistic for the future.


Produced for START (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) which is a US Department of Homeland Security center of excellence. Some useful data, a recently updated timeline, and comparison with other global groups, but with a strong political agenda.


Good on the longer historical background, including the tensions between British colonialism and Islam in the north, especially in the Sokoto Caliphate of the 19th century.


Short, angry piece by the Nobel-prize winning Nigerian writer.

Usefully situates Nigeria within debates around ‘failed’ or ‘fragile states’; and suggests the need for a broader-based response to resolve some of those issues rather than just targeting Boko Haram.


Some useful discussion of ‘civil society’ in Nigeria and the socio-economic elements of the group.


Has some good historical background, and useful information on group structure, funding and communication strategies.


A very good introductory account of the group, from March 2012, with some historical background pre-2009 that is lacking in other accounts. Good on the links—real and imagined—between Boko Haram and other groups in the country and region, and especially on the kidnapping of Europeans Chris McManus and Franco Lamolinara in May 2011 and their failed rescue in March 2012, which was almost certainly the work of a different group.


Very short account, but gives a lot of historical background. Puts the rise down to alienation of young Muslim men from Nigeria’s politics, and gives the text of a speech by President Goodluck Jonathan in early 2012 calling on the group to state their grievances.


Geographer Michael Watts has written about Nigeria for several decades. His recently reissued book Silent Violence: Food, Famine, and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria provides an invaluable background to a study of this part of the country. The above piece is one of his most recent, and puts the Boko Haram events of 2009 in
relation to the violence around the oil fields in the south of the country. There is also an important interview in The Huffington Post from May 2014.


Compares The Guardian and The Telegraph, and concludes that – despite domestic ‘ideological divides’ – there is no appreciable distinction in how they have reported on Boko Haram. Uses this as a basis for suggesting that anti-Islam has replaced anti-communism in Western media.


More theoretically driven than most pieces listed here, using critical theory to interrogate the topic, and a lot of focus on contextual issues that help to explain the situation.


Suggests Ansaru is the Nigerian AQIM; and that Abubaker Shekau is a *nom de guerre* for a number of Boko Haram figures, no longer a single person. Some useful discussion of kidnapping as a general tactic.