

Book review

Olumuyiwa Temitope Faluyi, Sultan Khan, Adeoye O. Akinola (2019): *Boko Haram's Terrorism and the Nigerian State: Federalism, Politics and Policies*. Cham: Springer. 157 pgs. ISBN: 978-3-030-05736-7

Jan Záhorský*

Citation: Záhorský (2021). Olumuyiwa Temitope Faluyi, Sultan Khan, Adeoye O. Akinola (2019): <i>Boko Haram's terrorism and the Nigerian State: Federalism, Politics and Policies</i> . <i>Ethiop.j.soc.lang.stud.</i> Vol. 8 .No.1, pp.3-6.
eISSN: 2408-9532; pISSN: 2412-5180. Web link: http://journals.ju.edu.et/index.php/ejssls
Publication history: Received in revised form 29 Jun2021; Published online: 30 Jun, 2021
Subscription(electronics): Submission fee: Free of payment ; Accessing fee: Free of payment
Copyright: © 2020 Jimma University. A first publication right is granted to the journal. Jimma University makes the publications to be made available freely (open access).
License: Published by Jimma University. This is an open access article under the CCBY-NC-ND license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/BY-NC-ND/4.0/).

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and one of the key economies of the continent. However, it is a country known for almost chronic state instability, military coups in the first decades of its independent existence, as well as recurrent security issues including terrorism, kidnapping, large-scale corruption, armed crimes, and so on . The Boko Haram movement has been a subject of multiple studies out of which articles and books were published. The current book written by a group of experienced scholars, Olumuyiwa Temitope Faluyi, Sultan Khan, and Adeoye O. Akinola is a significant contribution to the study of this very complex movement and socio-political and economic environment in Northern Nigeria. Obviously, this is not the first monograph published on Boko Haram, and the international book market knows quite a few pieces dealing with a similar topic from many different angles (MacEachern, 2018;Thurston, 2019; Zenn, 2020).

Nigeria is historically one of the main centers of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa. Empires such as Kanem-Bornu, or later on Sultanates of Sokoto, Kano, or Katsina belonged to significant political and religious centers in pre-colonial times. Nigeria is roughly divided into two zones, predominantly Islamic North, and predominantly Christian South, besides traditional religions. This division has its historical roots multiplied by the colonial past during which the North enjoyed relative autonomy while the South was more incorporated into globalized economic exchange and therefore more economically developed. Both communities, Muslim and Christian, were looking for international and transnational support at least since the 1950s and so while Nigerian Christians were seeking support from Christian churches in the USA, Nigerian Muslims were looking for links leading to the cradle of Islam, Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis supported particularly those who were anti-Sufi and who followed reformist agenda within Nigerian Islam, such as Abubakar Gumi who was a visible critic of Sufism. Islam in Nigeria can be divided, just like in many other West African countries, into three different branches: traditional, modernist, and fundamentalist. While the traditionalists usually follow the classical Quranic teachings, as well as Sufi orders and at the same time they have no opposition against broadcasting their teachings via radio. The fundamentalists in Northern Nigeria belong to the so-called anti-system movements that preach and practice resistance against the federal government but primarily against the West and Western-like elites, culture, and influences. Modernists then stand somewhere in between the two. They reject Sufism, but at the same time tend to modernize Islam, or better said tend to make Islam a part of constitutional and administrative processes as an alternative against customs and superstitions (Peter, 2010).

When in the 1950s Nigeria entered the decolonization period, the North was surprised by the modernization shock as the South was much more developed and economically attached to the globalized world. Politicians such as Ahmadu Bello, Prime Minister of Northern Nigeria at that time were trying to promote the Islamization of modernity and acted against traditional authorities, be it sultans or Sufi order such as Tidjaniya or Qadiriya (Roman, 2012). Before the creation of Boko Haram which is the main scope

of the book under review, there existed several movements with reformist agenda, or with anti-Sufi program. One of those was Yan Izala whose members attacked Sufi mosques during the 1970s, but at the same time, fought for modern Islamic education and political and religious mobilization of women (*Ibid*). This was one of significant differences between Yan Izala and Boko Haram.

The authors of the present volume under review have chosen to deal with Boko Haram from the perspective of the state functioning, broader political and security contexts, and counter-terrorism strategies although the book offers more than that. The first three chapters of the book deal with the nature of the Nigerian state, its ethno-regional and religious background, conflicts, as well as theoretical debates over the issue of terrorism (chapter 2). The core of the monograph is formed by chapters 4, 5, and 6. Here the authors analyze Nigeria's resource question, a crucial factor behind multiple Nigeria's crises, and primarily the Boko Haram movement itself (chapter 5). Although the roots of the movement go back deeper in history, it became widely known since 2009 especially after confrontation with Nigerian security forces and subsequent killing of Boko Haram's leader Mohammed Yusuf. Brief historical account on Boko Haram shows a progressive development from a movement with rather localized impact into a full-fledged military and (from the state perspective) terrorist organization going beyond pure rhetoric of spreading the Sharia law and setting up an Islamic government in Northern Nigeria. One of the elements which definitely helped Boko Haram to grow was, as the authors show (pp. 64), the porous borders in the area of Lake Chad basin which comprises Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Cameroon. The same goes with the spillover effect of the Libyan civil war in 2011 which helped to smuggle weapons across the Sahara Desert and Boko Haram was believed to become one of the major recipients of that.

However, some of the reasons behind the success of Boko Haram and behind its longevity particularly in poorer regions of the Nigerian North-East is simply a dysfunctional state, poor governance, the notorious corruption in Nigeria, and what the authors call the "viciousness of the security forces" (p. 66). One of the key features of Boko Haram's stand is its total rejection of Western education, which mainly in Northeastern region of Nigeria, is seen as part of the problem for its underdevelopment. Therefore, Sharia law is seen by the followers of Boko Haram as a solution to the socio-economic crises in the region. This is also explained in terms of the frequent attacks on governmental institutions and police stations in the region as they are perceived as enemies not representing the needs of the local population.

The book, in a very detailed way, monitors practically all atrocities committed by Boko Haram, all acts of violence and attacks on schools, police stations, security forces, and governmental buildings. Despite the fact that Boko Haram started as a local movement, the globalization of jihad in northern Nigeria is obvious as there are documented links leading to some of the major terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), as well as Ansar al-Din, operating primarily in Mali. Nigeria's counter-terrorism strategies, as we can see in chapter 6, include a wide range of economic, political, security aspects all combined to face the danger of prolonged conflict, its internationalization, and above all, its internalization in Northeastern Nigeria that is already facing serious socio-economic troubles and as a result, the most disadvantaged region in the country. Despite its mainly political, IR and economic focus, the reviewer has a feeling that more could have been done by using a bit more of an anthropological approach to our understanding of root causes of violence in Northern Nigeria. On the other hand, in spite of a relative wealth of literature on Boko Haram in the last ten years or so, the book under review is a valuable insight and contribution for the study of terrorism and violence in Africa, and in Nigeria in particular. The book can serve political scientists, experts in IR, as well as students of African studies in general to better understand the complexities of poverty-violence-security-governance nexus which is not necessarily only a case of Nigeria.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the reviewers of this article.

Author's' Contributions

Jan Záhorský has originated the review idea, critically commented on the book, and prepared the manuscript for publication.

Author details:

Assoc. Prof. Jan Záhorský, Ph.D.
Centre of African Studies
Department of Middle Eastern Studies
University of West Bohemia in Pilsen
Sedláčkova 15, 30125 Pilsen, CZE
Tel.: 00420 739 599 814

* Corresponding author: nvgogol@seznam.cz

Competing interest

There is no competing interest.

Consent for publication

I have agreed to submit for EJSSLS and approved the manuscript for submission.

Funding:

I disclosed that I have received no funding for this book review from any organization.

References

- Chalk, P. (2010): "Islam in West Africa: The Case of Nigeria," in: Angel M. Rabassa et al. (eds.): *The Muslim World After 9/11*. RAND Corporation.
- Loimeier, R. (2012): "Boko Haram: The development of a militant religious movement in Nigeria," *Africa Spectrum* 2-3/2012.
- MacEachern, S. (2018): *Searching for Boko Haram: A history of violence in Central Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Thurston, A. (2019): *Boko Haram: The history of an African Jihadist movement*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Zenn, J. (2020): *Unmasking Boko Haram. Exploring global Jihad in Nigeria*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.