BOKO HARAM
INSIDE NIGERIA'S UNHOLY WAR
MIKE SMITH
MIKE SMITH is news editor for Israel and the Palestinian territories for Agence France-Presse (AFP). He was based in Lagos from 2010–13 as AFP’s bureau chief for part of West Africa.

‘Perceptive and fair-minded... eminently readable... Smith’s achievement is to demonstrate how Boko Haram arose from the particular conditions of northern Nigeria, where brutal security forces, a corrupt and predatory state, and a long tradition of Islamist radicalism all combine to create a perfect breeding ground for terrorism.’

– David Blair, The Telegraph

‘The best bits of [Boko Haram] are focused reportage such as the moving tale of Wellington Asiayei... what shines through is [Smith’s] 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

‘[readers] get a vivid impression of the horrors associated with the group and the campaign against it, thanks to Mr Smith’s reporting … this is a commendable first draft of history.’

– The Economist
‘brilliant... the first comprehensive book to be written about Boko Haram and offers an excellent anatomy of the group, its emergence, its activities and the havoc it has wrought on the lives of Nigerians... Smith’s attention to detail is excellent and he creates a vivid and accurate description of current and historical events... This book should be compulsory reading for anyone interested in Nigerian affairs and particularly for those who want to have a good grasp of one of Africa’s most brutal insurgencies.’

– Abdullahi Tasiu Abubakar, *African Arguments*

‘There is certainly an urgent need for a comprehensive yet accessible account of Boko Haram about which much is written but yet little understood. The author is eminently well qualified, especially from his connection with AFP, who have been at the forefront of reportage on the situation of Northern Nigeria, to tackle this subject. The book should find a ready readership among the policy and diplomatic community as well as academics and interested lay readers.’

– Richard Reid, Professor of the History of Africa, SOAS, University of London

‘I enjoyed [this book] very much – it’s a good read. It’s... the best account I have read, and offers a real sense of place – and crisis. Mike Smith’s book will be widely read and cited.’

– Murray Last, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University College London

‘Mike Smith has written an unsparing study of both Boko Haram’s cruelty and the failure of the Nigerian state to defeat the movement. In this timely book he tells a demoralising but necessary story, of the violence and negligence that is rapidly undermining the stability of sub-Saharan Africa’s most important country.’

– Barnaby Phillips, author of *Another Man’s War: The Story of A Burma Boy in Britain’s Forgotten African Army*
BOKO HARAM

INSIDE NIGERIA’S UNHOLY WAR

MIKE SMITH
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When my companions passed, and my aims went awry
I was left behind among the remainder, the liars
Who say that which they do not do, and follow their own desires.

Abdullah Ibn Muhammad, brother of Usman Dan Fodio, from the *Tazyin Al-Waraqat*

*It is never easy to keep secrets in Nigeria; it is just that secrets, when divulged, are tied up in many distractions.*

Wole Soyinka, from *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*
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This book would not have been possible without an enormous amount of help from many others. My colleagues at AFP’s Lagos bureau deserve special recognition for their tireless efforts in covering a story that has only seemed to grow more horrifying by the day, and my knowledge of Nigeria and the forces underlying the insurgency was endlessly enriched by working alongside them.

Aminu Abubakar, AFP’s northern Nigeria correspondent, has broken so many stories that I long ago lost count. His intelligence and insight have helped the rest of the world understand the terrible violence that has shaken his home region. He and I spent countless days and nights over bad phone lines trying to make sense out of the latest attack, and despite it all, he still managed to be the nicest guy you’ll ever meet. I’m also proud to have worked with Nigerian journalists and AFP staffers Ade Obisesan, Tunde Agoi, Ola Awoniyi and photographer Pius Utomi Ekpei, along with the rest of the Lagos bureau, including our irreplaceable driver and all-around guide Hassan Jimoh, Patrick Chikwendu, Johnson Moses, Timothy Jamani, Dauda Ishola, Bola Meseda and Isaac Momoh.

Our coverage also would not have been possible without the talented non-Nigerian journalists I worked with in the bureau, including Susan Njanji, Sophie Mongalvy, Ben Simon and Cecile de Comarmond. I owe particular thanks to Sophie for reading through an earlier draft of this book and providing important feedback. I was also honoured to work alongside numerous colleagues from other news outlets, including Jon Gambrell,
Sunday Alamba, Lekan Oyekanmi, Christian Purefoy, Tom Burgis, Nick Tattersall, Joe Brock, Tim Cocks, Julie Vandal and Will Ross.

Wise Nigerians willing to share their thoughts on issues facing their country provided me with the kind of perspective any foreign correspondent needs to do his or her job properly. They include Chidi Odinkalu, an anti-corruption activist who is now the head of Nigeria’s National Human Rights Commission; Clement Nwankwo, whose PLAC non-governmental organisation keeps an eye on Nigeria’s corrupt politics; Kyari Mohammed of Modibbo Adama University of Technology, who has provided astute analysis of Boko Haram; and Catholic Bishop Matthew Kukah, who has for years served as an important voice of reason in Nigeria. I am also grateful to Murray Last for sharing his insight as well as for his important book, *The Sokoto Caliphate*.

I.B. Tauris provided me with support for this project, and I am especially grateful to Lester Crook, who commissioned the book and provided invaluable input, and Joanna Godfrey, who guided it towards publication. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Centre of African Studies at SOAS, University of London, for allowing me to work from its excellent library for the purposes of this project.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to also thank my family, especially my parents, who have supported my travels and my work while hoping that it would some day lead me back home.

While my name is on the cover, this book has in many ways been a team effort. Any and all errors, however, are completely my own.
A NOTE ON SOURCES AND THE ‘BOKO HARAM’ LABEL

Much of the information in this book is the result of my more than three years in Nigeria between 2010 and 2013, when I was based in Lagos as bureau chief for part of West Africa for Agence France-Presse news agency. I have cited instances where I have relied on reporting from colleagues or on the work of academics. My reporting on the insurgency has included four trips to Maiduguri and a number of other visits to various parts of northern Nigeria, including Kano, Sokoto, Kaduna and Zaria.

I have decided to use the term ‘Boko Haram’ throughout the text rather than the full name of the group (Jama’atu Ahlus Sunnah Lid Da’awati Wal Jihad, or People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad). I have done this because the world knows the group as Boko Haram, and Nigerians, including the security forces, continue to refer to it as such. In addition, as a result of the shadowy nature of the insurgency, several different groups or cells may in fact be operating beyond Abubakar Shekau’s faction. Boko Haram serves as a catch-all phrase encompassing the entire insurgency.

The description of what happened on the day of the UN attack in Chapter 1 is mainly based on my phone interviews with UN staffers Geoffrey Njoku and Soji Adeniyi as well as a personal account written by Vinod Alkari that was distributed to his colleagues internally. He agreed to allow me to quote from it, and I have in some cases corrected minor typos or grammatical errors that would otherwise distract the reader. I also spoke in detail with
Alkari by phone. A separate, anonymous source who has seen the video surveillance footage of the attack described to me details from it, and I have also visited the site to see the layout.

I have included a select bibliography, but it is worth pointing out several books that were especially helpful. For my research for Chapter 1, the late Mervyn Hiskett’s books on Islam in West Africa and the life of Usman Dan Fodio were invaluable. Murray Last’s history of the Sokoto Caliphate also provided me with great insight on the period, and Toyin Falola and Matthew Heaton’s *A History of Nigeria* served as a useful overview along with Michael Crowder’s *The Story of Nigeria*. For the section on the British conquest of northern Nigeria, I relied heavily on Frederick Lugard’s papers, archived at the Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies at Oxford, as well as his annual reports.

I have drawn from a wide range of sources to piece together Mohammed Yusuf’s rise, as specified in the endnotes, but I am particularly grateful to an academic who has carried out an extensive analysis of the Boko Haram leader’s recorded sermons and speeches. The academic, to whom I spoke by phone, has asked to remain anonymous out of fears for his own safety, and I agreed to abide by his wishes.

For translations of Boko Haram videos and statements from Hausa to English, I often relied on Aminu Abubakar, AFP’s correspondent in northern Nigeria who in most cases was the first journalist for an international news agency to obtain them. Aminu translated many of the videos on deadline as we worked together to prepare stories on them for our news agency and I have stuck for the most part with those original translations. Professor Abubakar Aliyu Liman of Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria worked on two translations at my request and specifically for this book: Yusuf’s interrogation before his death and his ‘tafsir’ quoted in Chapter 2.

The vital work by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Nigeria’s National Human Rights Commission led by civil
society activist Chidi Odinkalu, among others, documenting alleged abuses committed by the security forces has also served as an important source, as reflected in the endnotes.

As specified in the epilogue and prologue, I interviewed Wellington Asiayei in person both in the hospital in Kano after the 2012 attacks there as well as in Warri in 2013. I also spoke by phone with Wellington in addition to speaking with his wife, his brother, his son and his doctors in Kano, India and Warri.

I repeatedly requested interviews with Nigerian government and military officials to allow them to respond to allegations and criticisms. Requests made specifically in connection with this book were not granted; however, I did carry out interviews with officials as part of my work for AFP in Nigeria. I have included details from those interviews, such as the military’s denials of abuses, and relied on public statements from officials when necessary.
A TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS IN NORTHERN NIGERIAN HISTORY AND THE BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY

- c.1085  Kanem-Bornu Empire becomes officially Muslim under Mai Hummay.
- c.1349  Kano becomes first state in Hausaland to have a Muslim king.
- 1804  Usman Dan Fodio and followers of his Muslim reformist movement migrate to Gudu, marking the start of a jihad in Hausaland that would lead to the creation of the Sokoto Caliphate across much of what is today northern Nigeria and beyond.
- 1903  A military assault on Kano begins the final conquest of northern Nigeria and the Sokoto Caliphate for the British.
- 1914  Northern and southern Nigeria are amalgamated by the British into a single entity, creating the outlines of the nation that exists today.
- 1956  Nigeria strikes oil in commercial quantities in the Niger Delta in the south.
- 1960  Nigeria gains independence from Britain.
- 1967  Civil war begins after the south-east declares itself an independent Republic of Biafra.
- 1970  Civil war ends with the defeat of the Biafrans. Nigeria remains one nation, but deep divisions persist.
- 1980  Deadly riots break out in Kano involving members of a radical Islamist movement known as Maitatsine.
- 1999  Northern politicians push to institute sharia law for criminal cases. Some 12 northern states later adopt some form of sharia criminal law, though it is selectively enforced.
- 2003  The beginnings of Boko Haram begin to take shape when followers of radical cleric Mohammed Yusuf retreat to a remote area of Yobe state and clash with authorities.
- 2009  Boko Haram under Mohammed Yusuf launches an uprising in north-eastern Nigeria after a clash with authorities in Maiduguri. Around 800 people are killed in five days of violence. Yusuf is shot dead by police after being captured.

- 2010  Boko Haram re-emerges after more than a year in hiding with a series of assassinations and a prison raid under the leadership of Yusuf’s deputy, Abubakar Shekau.

- 2011  Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack on United Nations headquarters in Abuja that killed 23 people.

- 2012  A series of coordinated assaults and bomb attacks leave at least 185 people dead in Kano, Nigeria’s second-largest city. Shekau claims responsibility.

- 2013  Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan declares an emergency in three north-eastern states after Boko Haram seizes territory in remote areas of the region.

- 2014  Boko Haram attackers raid the north-eastern town of Chibok and kidnap 276 girls from their dormitory, sparking global outrage.

- January 2015  A Boko Haram attack on the town of Baga in north-eastern Nigeria reportedly leaves hundreds dead and perhaps up to 2,000, though a precise death toll has never been established. If the reported numbers are correct, it would be the worst ever Boko Haram attack.

- 31 January 2015  Chadian aircraft bomb the Nigerian town of Gamboru, held by Boko Haram at the time, as a regional offensive targeting the group takes shape.

- 7 March 2015  Boko Haram pledges allegiance to Islamic State.

- 28 March 2015  Nigeria holds presidential elections won by ex-military ruler Muhammadu Buhari. The elections had been postponed by six weeks to allow the military time to win back territory from Boko Haram.

- May 2015  Nigeria’s military claims to have freed more than 700 hostages, including many women and children, from Boko Haram over the course of several weeks. It is unclear whether any were among those kidnapped from Chibok.

- May 29, 2015  Muhammadu Buhari is sworn in as Nigeria’s new president.
Key cities in Nigeria

North-eastern Nigeria, including key sites of Boko Haram activity
PROLOGUE: ‘I THINK THE WORST HAS HAPPENED’

The siege that would shake Nigeria seemed to unfold at shocking speed, young men blowing themselves up in bomb-laden cars, hurling drink cans packed with explosives and gunning down officers with AK-47s, all in the space of a few hours. But for Wellington Asiayei, the horror would play out in slow motion.

It was a Friday in Kano, the largest city in Nigeria’s predominately Muslim north, and prayers at mosques had drawn to an end, worshippers in robes having earlier filed out into streets thick with dust in the midst of a dry season near the Sahara desert. Residents of the crowded and ancient metropolis were returning home, manoeuvring their way through traffic or climbing on to the rear of motorcycle taxis that would zip them through and around lines of cars. At police headquarters in a neighbourhood called Bompai, Wellington Asiayei wrapped up his work for the day and took the short walk back to his room at the barracks to begin preparing his dinner.

When the 48-year-old assistant police superintendent reached his room, he heard explosions. ‘Everybody from the barracks was running for their dear lives’, Asiayei would explain to me three days after the 20 January 2012 attacks. The barracks would soon be empty, but despite the confusion, it would still occur to him to lock the door to his room before fleeing. As he began to do so, he noticed a young man who looked to be in his twenties and dressed
in a police uniform, an AK-47 rifle in his hands. Asiayei knew that members of a certain branch of the force were often assigned to work as guards at the barracks, and he assumed the young man was one of them. He yelled out to him, telling him that they should both run to headquarters. ‘I saw him raising the rifle at me, and that was all I knew’, he said.

The veteran policeman, still trying to piece together what was happening, felt what seemed to be a gunshot pierce his body. He fell to the ground and lay there face down, blood pooling underneath him. He did not know where the young man with the gun went next. He would remain face down on the floor for what he believed to be hours before a group of women making their way through the barracks spotted him and finally contacted his supervisor, who arranged for a rescue. Asiayei survived, and three days later he and other victims from the same set of attacks would be in a Kano hospital, his bed among lines of others in a sprawling room. The bullet had damaged his spine and lung. He could not walk.

By the time Asiayei was shot, an unprecedented siege of Nigeria’s second-largest city was well underway, dozens or perhaps hundreds of young men, a number of them dressed as police officers, swarming neighbourhoods throughout Kano with no remorse for their victims. The first attack occurred at a regional police headquarters, a suicide bomber in a car blowing himself up outside, ripping off much of the roof. The number of explosions then became difficult to count, one after the other, the blasts echoing through the city. Residents said there were more than 20, and judging from the amount of unexploded homemade bombs that police later recovered, that may be a vast understatement. One doctor who helped treat the wounded said the force of some of the blasts caused at least one home to collapse. Witnesses and police said the attackers travelled on motorbikes, in cars and on foot. They included at least five suicide bombers. In one neighbourhood, they threw homemade bombs at a passport office and opened fire. They also attacked a nearby police station, completely destroying it: the building’s tin roof collapsed,
the inside burnt, cars outside blackened by fire. Gunshots crackled, corpses were piled on top of one another in the morgue of the city’s main hospital and dead bodies were left in the streets to be picked up the next morning. The official toll was 185 people killed, but there was widespread speculation that it was at least 200. It was the deadliest attack yet attributed to the Islamist extremist group that had become known as Boko Haram.

This was long before the kidnapping of nearly 300 girls from their school in north-eastern Nigeria, an atrocity that would draw the world’s attention to an insurgency that had by then left a trail of destruction and carnage so horrifying that some had questioned whether Nigeria was barrelling toward another civil war. To understand what led to the abductions, it is important to first know what occurred in Kano. To begin to wrap one’s mind around what happened there – bodies lying in the streets and police helpless to stop a rampaging band of young men engaging in suicide bombings and wholesale slaughter – one must first look backward, not only at the formation of Boko Haram itself, but also at the complex history of Nigeria, Islam in West Africa and the deep corruption that has robbed the continent’s biggest oil producer, largest economy and most populous nation of even basic development, keeping the majority of its people agonisingly poor. One must look at colonisation and cultural differences between Nigeria’s north and south, the brutality of its security forces and the effects of oil on its economy. But before all of that, it is perhaps best to begin with a charismatic, baby-faced man named Mohammed Yusuf and an episode two and a half years before the attack in Kano.

In a video from 2009, Yusuf can be seen building his argument, the crowd before him off camera but roaring its approval. He describes a confrontation between security forces and his followers when they were on their way to a funeral, and soon he is lashing out at the soldiers and police, accusing them of shooting members of his sect. It is time to fight back, he says, and to continue fighting until the security task force he believed was set up to track them is withdrawn.
‘It’s better for the whole world to be destroyed than to spill the blood of a single Muslim’, he says. ‘The same way they gunned down our brothers on the way, they will one day come to our gathering and open fire if we allow this to go unchallenged.’

Yusuf was thought to be 39 at the time and the leader of what had come to be known as Boko Haram. Some had considered him to be a reluctant fighter, content to continue expanding his sect through preaching, but the brutality of the security forces and pressure from his bloodthirsty deputy, Abubakar Shekau, who would later be known as the menacing, bearded man on video threatening to sell kidnapped girls on the market, pushed him toward violence. Not long after the video was recorded, Yusuf would be dead.

His call for his followers to rise up against Nigeria’s corrupt government and security forces would lead them to do just that, beginning with attacks on police stations in the country’s north. Nigeria’s military, not known for its restraint, would soon respond. In July 2009, its armoured vehicles rolled through the streets of the north-eastern city of Maiduguri toward Boko Haram’s mosque and headquarters, soldiers opening fire when they drew within range. What resulted was intense fighting that saw soldiers reduce the complex to shards of concrete, twisted metal and burnt cars spread across the site. Around 800 people died over those five days of violence, most of them Boko Haram members. Security forces claimed Yusuf’s deputy, Shekau, was among those killed, but they would soon be proved wrong. Yusuf himself somehow survived the brutal assault, but was arrested while hiding in a barn and handed over to police. They shot him dead.

Years later, rubble remains at the former site of the mosque. Shekau has repeatedly shown up on YouTube or videos distributed to journalists to denounce the West and Nigeria’s government and Boko Haram, once a Salafist sect based in Nigeria’s north-east, has morphed into something far more deadly and ruthless: a hydra-headed monster further complicated by imitators and criminal gangs who commit violence under the guise of the group. Throughout
years of renewed violence, it had been building toward a headline-grabbing assault that would shock the world, and it would do just that in April 2014 with the kidnappings of nearly 300 girls from a school in Chibok, deep in Nigeria’s remote north-east. The abductions and response to them would lay bare for the world to see the viciousness of Boko Haram as well as the dysfunction of Nigeria’s government and military. But for Nigerians, it was yet another atrocity in a long list of them.

Boko Haram had been dormant for more than a year after the 2009 military assault that led to Yusuf’s death, with Shekau, believed to have been shot in the leg, said to have fled, possibly for Chad and Sudan. During that time, authorities in Maiduguri remained deeply suspicious and on the alert for any new uprising. Academics and others in the area with knowledge of the situation predicted a return to violence, saying underlying issues of deep poverty, corruption, a lack of proper education and few jobs left young people with very little hope for the future. Journalists, including myself, visiting Maiduguri one year after the 2009 uprising were made to understand they were not welcome, with secret police trailing our movements. The police commissioner for Borno state, of which Maiduguri is the capital, refused outright to discuss Boko Haram at the time and warned journalists they could be arrested for even uttering those words. Despite such restrictions, I and two other journalists were able to carry out a number of interviews, including with one man who claimed to be a Boko Haram member – a claim to be taken with a heavy dose of scepticism. Looking back now, I have serious doubts about whether he was indeed a Boko Haram follower, particularly since intelligence agents were monitoring us and would have likely questioned him if they suspected him of being one, but certain details of what he told us seemed to ring true in retrospect, whether by coincidence or otherwise.

Through a local contact, we arranged for the man to be brought to our hotel, a hulking building out of sync with its scrubby savannah surroundings. There were few other guests, and the hotel,
the Maiduguri International, was badly in disrepair, with mouldy carpets and dirty sheets. Staff, including employees who said they had not been paid in months, refused to turn on the generator for much of the day, leaving the hotel without electricity, since Nigeria was, and remains, unable to produce anywhere near enough power for its burgeoning population. It felt as if we had taken up residence in an abandoned building.

The supposed Boko Haram member, dressed in the same type of caftan any average Maiduguri resident would wear, was led into one of our rooms and took a seat in a chair. I pulled up across from him and began asking him questions, a Nigerian correspondent who works for my news agency translating. The man, who spoke in Hausa, said he was 35 years old, and he claimed Boko Haram members had weapons hidden in various parts of the country with a plan of eventually striking again. Despite my repeated attempts to lead him into explaining in detail why one would willingly join such a violent group, he mostly spoke in generalities.

‘We are ordained by Allah to be prepared and amass weapons in case the enemy attacks’, he said. ‘Anybody who doesn’t like Islam, works against the establishment of an Islamic state, who is against the Prophet, is an enemy.’

At the time, we, like so many others, could see the elements that could spark another uprising, the deeply rooted problems that had led to such hopelessness, and we certainly felt that more violence was possible, if not likely. We would not have to wait long for a more definitive answer. Any sense of normalcy the police commissioner and others hoped to portray would soon be shattered. Boko Haram’s deadliest and most symbolic attacks were yet to come.

* * *

In some ways, unrest seems inevitable in parts of northern Nigeria, a country thrown together by colonialists who combined vastly different cultures, traditions and ethnicities under one nation. This was the case for many African civilisations, but a number of factors
would make Nigeria a particularly volatile example, and one must of course start with the oil.

Nigeria first struck oil in commercial quantities in 1956 among the vast and labyrinthine swamps of the Niger Delta in the country’s south. Commercial production began in relatively small amounts at first, but new discoveries would soon come, offshore drilling would eventually take hold and Nigeria would become the biggest oil producer in Africa, gaining astounding amounts of money for its coffers – and a list of profound, even catastrophic, problems to go with it. So much of that money would be stolen and tragically misspent, leading to the entrenchment of what has been called a kleptocracy, assured of its vast oil reserves but with electricity blackouts multiple times per day and poorly paid policemen collecting bribes from drivers at roadblocks, to name two examples among many. Most telling is the fact that it must import most of its fuel despite its oil, with the country unable to build enough refineries or keep the ones it has functioning at capacity to process its crude oil on its own. On top of that, petrol imports are subsidised by the government through a system that has been alleged to be outrageously mismanaged and corrupt. In other words, Nigeria essentially buys back refined oil after selling it in crude form – and at an inflated cost thanks to the middlemen gaming the system.

All the while, Nigeria’s population has been rapidly expanding. It is currently the most populous country in Africa with some 170 million people, including an exploding and restless youth population. It also recently overtook South Africa as the continent’s biggest economy strictly in terms of GDP size, but its population is far larger, meaning the average Nigerian remains much poorer than the average South African. The title of Africa’s biggest economy means little or nothing to most Nigerians, the majority of whom continue to live on less than $1 per day.

It is those Nigerians who are obliged to scrape whatever living they can in whichever way they can find it, while their leaders and corrupt business moguls force their way between traffic in
SUVs with police escorts and seal themselves off inside walled complexes. The daily struggle to survive has led to all sorts of outlandish schemes that have, much to the chagrin of hard-working Nigerians, badly damaged the country’s reputation. Emails from Nigerian ‘princes’ promising riches have become so common worldwide that they are now a punchline, but that is only one part of the problem. In Nigeria itself, many residents have taken to painting the words ‘Beware 419: this house is not for sale’ on the outside walls of houses in a bid to keep imposters claiming to be the owners from selling them when no one is there. The number 419 refers to a section of the criminal code, and all such forms of financial trickery have come to be known as 419 scams. Another infamous example involves the police. Newcomers learn quickly that being pulled over by a policeman can be a maddening experience. They have been known to jump into the passenger seat and refuse to exit until they are ‘dashed’, or bribed, even if the driver has done nothing wrong. The almighty dash is central to Nigerian life.

Because the oil has brought riches, there has been little incentive to develop other sectors of the economy. It would be wrong to say that Nigeria’s mostly Christian south, where the oil is located, has done well for itself in these circumstances, but it is certainly true that it has fared better than the north. It is better educated, has more industry and jobs and less poverty. Oil-producing states are handed a significantly bigger chunk of government revenue. Despite that, the region has in no way been immune to violence. The deeply poor Niger Delta, badly polluted by years of oil spills, has seen militants and gangsters take up arms, carry out attacks on the petroleum industry and kidnap foreigners. Some of the worst of this violence occurred under the name the Movement for the Emancipation for the Niger Delta and continued until a 2009 amnesty deal drastically reduced the unrest.

The neglect of other aspects of the economy particularly hit Nigeria’s north, which relies heavily on agriculture, despite