



POLICY BRIEF

How viable is dialogue with al-Shabaab and Boko Haram?

Akinola Olojo

The campaign against terror groups in the Lake Chad Basin and Horn of Africa relies heavily on the use of force as a strategy. However, this approach is yet to deliver a sustainable solution. Although dialogue with terror groups is a sensitive and complex undertaking, it needs to be explored as a policy option that can complement existing counter-terrorism approaches.

Key findings

- ▶ There is a longstanding stalemate between terror groups and governments of countries in the regions covered here. The use of force has consistently proven inadequate and the deadlock must be broken.
- ▶ Assessing how communities feel about dialogue and gaining insight from them regarding the terror groups is key. This will also help governments understand the workings of the terror groups. Addressing socio-economic needs will provide the incentive for establishing trust and sustaining community engagement.
- ▶ The ideological objectives of the terror groups must be understood, along with their structures and strategies. All three terror groups highlighted in this policy brief are complex in their membership composition and the framework of dialogue and communication strategies must reflect this. Similarly, the complexity of clan dynamics in Somalia and how it relates to al-Shabaab must be understood in order to facilitate efforts in reaching out to specific actors in the group.
- ▶ Lack of trust and weak cohesion among government actors erode the ability of states to achieve a unified stance when exploring dialogue. Also, failure to effectively address corruption and political exclusion strengthens terror groups' justification to prey on communities' vulnerabilities.
- ▶ Western-backed airstrikes are counter-productive and unsustainable. External actors can play a more constructive role. Furthermore, if conflict-affected states demonstrate political will, external actors may be more inclined to support non-military efforts.

Recommendations

- ▶ In the Lake Chad Basin and Horn of Africa, a dedicated commission should be established and tasked with developing a communication strategy. The commission should involve representatives from the affected countries. The commission's strategy must be discreet and also divided into phases of engagement due to the complexity of reaching out to the terror groups.
- ▶ The governments of Nigeria and Somalia should consult extensively with local communities while prioritising their concerns regarding the idea of dialogue. This would help identify, among other things, acceptable third parties or mediators. Truth and reconciliation platforms should also be established to facilitate healing in communities.
- ▶ The governments of Nigeria and Somalia should carefully consider the grievances of the terror groups before any form of compromise is made. Governments must however be mindful that hardliners within the terror groups may be impossible to win over.
- ▶ In Somalia, there should be increased cooperation among the regional states and in relation to the central government. Without a collective vision, progress will not be made on crucial issues like dialogue. The same applies to Nigeria where government actors must strive for greater cohesion.
- ▶ The global community's contribution must go beyond providing military aid to genuinely supporting the facilitation of talks, or at least endorsing exploration of the idea.

Introduction

At the end of 2018, the Global Terrorism Index listed al-Shabaab and Boko Haram among the four deadliest terror groups in the world.¹ Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, along with the latter's breakaway faction Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), represent the most significant terrorist threats to countries in the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.²

In more than a decade of struggle against them, the predominant strategy of affected countries has been the use of force. In the Lake Chad Basin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) has been at the forefront of battles against Boko Haram and ISWAP. The countries involved in this joint effort include Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

In the Horn of Africa, countries such as Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda are engaged in a similar framework – the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) – against al-Shabaab. External actors such as the United States (US) have also contributed efforts, mainly through measures using force such as airstrikes and military supplies, to countries combating these terror groups.

This experience so far shows that using force cannot adequately address the threats of terror groups in a sustainable manner. It also cannot facilitate the establishment of an environment conducive to peace and development, which is critical for Africa. There is a stalemate between state actors and the terror groups, and neither side is achieving its objectives. Policy options that can complement existing counter-terrorism approaches must urgently be explored.

This policy brief looks at dialogue as an option in this complex counter-terrorism environment. The rigidity of the 'no negotiations' stance by states prevents systematic exploration of how best to conduct negotiations with terror groups.³ Non-negotiation with terror groups needs serious re-examination in light of the rising frequency of attacks and fatalities in communities.

The military approach is yet to deliver solutions that address the challenges posed by the terror groups. At its peak, AMISOM in the Horn of Africa deployed over 22 000 uniformed personnel at a cost of roughly US\$1 billion a year.⁴ Similarly, Institute for Security

Studies reports highlight the massive financial and human costs of the MNJTF operation in the Lake Chad Basin.⁵

Contrary to the popular official position of many states, dialogue with terror groups should not be perceived as a sign of weakness. Among other things, exploring dialogue would suggest that the human security of communities is being prioritised by governments, and that states are willing to bargain for peace through non-violent exchanges with a conflicting party.

Talking to terror groups is a complex and time-sensitive process. But it is one that goes beyond a short-sighted approach to offer an alternative pathway. It is also increasingly unsustainable for both African states and Western donors to keep channelling funds solely towards a military engagement.

In some affected countries, attempts to initiate talks have been short-lived. Such situations offer pointers regarding obstacles to dialogue, but more importantly what is required to surmount them.

This policy brief explores the option of dialogue with three of Africa's most violent terror groups with a view to understanding the extent to which they can be amenable to talks. A clearer understanding of issues would be indispensable for policy practitioners, particularly at a time when alternative approaches to countering terrorism in Africa are crucial.

Contrary to many official positions, dialogue with terrorists shouldn't be seen as a sign of weakness

Boko Haram, ISWAP and al-Shabaab

Boko Haram

Since 2009, sustained violence caused by the terror group Boko Haram⁶ has resulted in devastation in the countries of the Lake Chad Basin. Nigeria is at the epicentre of this crisis and the country's north-east zone has suffered the worst violence. Boko Haram is led by Abubakar Shekau and its agenda is based on implementing the group's interpretation of Islam. A main objective is the establishment of an Islamic caliphate to replace the Nigerian state.

At its height in 2014, Boko Haram was the deadliest terror group globally, responsible for over 6 000 fatalities that year alone.⁷ The persistence of insecurity to date suggests that addressing the problem requires more than a militarised approach.

As rigid as the ideological objective of Boko Haram is, there have been attempts by past Nigerian administrations to initiate talks with the group. These efforts failed not because it was entirely impossible to negotiate. Rather, failures were the result of factors such as the lack of political will to follow through, as well as a lack of consensus regarding objectives, process and expected outcomes on the part of government actors.

The first major attempt at mediation with Boko Haram was in September 2011 when a meeting was facilitated between former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo and Babakura Fugu, the brother-in-law of the late Boko Haram leader Mohammed Yusuf, in Maiduguri, Borno State.

What should have been the first step in a series of peaceful meetings was however cut short by Fugu's assassination.⁸ The initial suspicion was that Fugu was killed by a Boko Haram member. However, the group strongly refuted this.⁹

In March 2012, another opportunity for dialogue emerged when Boko Haram voluntarily chose the president of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, Sheikh Ahmed Datti, to be an intermediary. A renowned medical doctor from northern Nigeria, Sheikh Datti unfortunately later withdrew from further talks, claiming that the government handled the process with poor discretion reflected in the premature release of information to the media.

The abduction of young women from the town of Chibok in Nigeria and the release of some of them signalled further possibilities of negotiation with Boko Haram. It also exposed divisions among the insurgents, some of whom disagreed with the idea of abducting the young women in the first place.

This reveals that Boko Haram is by no means monolithic in terms of members' views. In fact, the dynamic of moderates versus hardliners has always existed. Such internal battles came to a head in 2012 when a faction of the group split off to form Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, or Ansaru. These schisms persisted and another faction emerged in 2016 to form ISWAP.

Islamic State West Africa Province

In March 2015, Boko Haram declared allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). However, by August 2016 the group splintered and its breakaway faction was recognised as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Boko Haram and ISWAP disagree on ideological issues and this reflects in the way the latter claims to conduct its own 'jihad' by not attacking Muslims. Since March 2019, ISWAP has reportedly been led by Abu Abdullah Ibn Umar al-Barnawi.¹⁰



DEATHS CAUSED BY BOKO
HARAM IN 2014

Since mid-2018 ISWAP has sustained back-to-back attacks against army bases, patrol teams and troops on the ground. According to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, events linked to ISWAP more than trebled in 2018 compared to 2017, and fatalities increased by nearly 60%.¹¹

In February 2018 ISWAP was responsible for the mass abduction of 110 schoolgirls from Dapchi in Yobe State, Nigeria. A month later nearly all the victims were released and reports about negotiations between the group and the government suggested that a ransom was paid.¹² In other words, some form of non-military engagement occurred which partially resolved the situation.

ISWAP appears not to espouse the approach of holding physical territory the way Shekau's Boko Haram aims to do. Its strategy cultivates a degree of rapport with communities living close to the Lake Chad Basin. The group operates an informally negotiated framework of understanding with communities and violence is not meted out indiscriminately. However, this relationship is still characterised by extortionist activities by ISWAP.

The fact that elements within ISWAP were open to secret negotiations and some level of compromise regarding the release of abductees from Dapchi hints at possibilities for engaging this faction through non-military means.

Similar to Boko Haram, ISWAP is fraught with internal tensions. The killing of one of its leaders, Mamman Nur, by fellow insurgents in late 2018 revealed the extent to which divisions exist between the moderates and hardliners.

Before his assassination, Nur was believed to be a key actor involved in negotiations for the release of the Dapchi abductees. He was also highly influential within the ranks of ISWAP but was perceived as a so-called moderate. Since his death there has been little clarity regarding the scope of his followership in the current ISWAP structure.

Nevertheless, openings can be explored through local intelligence gathering with the help of communities. This will offer more insight into the potential levels of engagement with the group. What may perhaps pose a challenge is the bearing that ISIS possibly still has on ISWAP.

However, engaging local communities should be done very carefully, given the relative weakness of state security actors in protecting civilians, and also in view of ISWAP's tendency to retaliate against those aiding the government.

Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab emerged from the dissolution of the Islamic Courts Union which, although having earlier origins, rose to prominence in Somalia's capital Mogadishu in 2006. Similar to Boko Haram, al-Shabaab aims to replace the Federal Government of Somalia with its own version of an Islamic government. The group also demands the withdrawal of foreign forces from Somalia. Since 2007, AMISOM has been locked in a protracted struggle with al-Shabaab, with no end in sight.

Ahmed Omar, also known as Abu Ubeidah, is al-Shabaab's leader. In addition to the use of propaganda, his group is involved in a variety of governance activities, running sharia courts, convening meetings with Somali clan leaders and engaging heavily in 'taxation' and extortion of businesses.

Openings can be explored through local intelligence gathering with the help of communities

Analysts like Mohamed Ingiriis have described al-Shabaab as having three main components defining its membership structure.¹³ The first is the ideological component, which includes a few individuals and from where the exercise of leadership flows.

The second is the most fragmented, and militants at this level share to some degree the same ideology with leaders in the first group. However, personal gain is their main goal. Mostly uneducated youth, they come from impoverished families induced by financial rewards.

The third component of fighters constitutes the bulk of the movement, motivated by grievances based on how their communities were politically marginalised and economically excluded under the federal government's state power formula.¹⁴

The rationale behind this explanation of the group's membership suggests the various levels at which

non-military engagement with members can occur. Understanding the motivations of the various levels of membership offers a sense of the nature of incentives that can be used to make members amenable to talks. Thoughtful consideration of this also sheds light on the nature of third parties that can be involved as mediators.

There are however nuances when it comes to the motivation of members on an individual level. While of course collective motivations offer a useful perspective, analysts such as Anneli Botha point out that it is through understanding al-Shabaab from an individual standpoint that potential openings for disengagement become visible.¹⁵

In addition to this complex picture is the fact that there is usually an evolution over time regarding the motivation of individual members. For instance, a member's sense of allegiance at the time of joining is usually not the same several years after.

Understanding the motivations of different members shows the type of incentives that could make them amenable to talks

As far as dialogue is concerned, the category of al-Shabaab members that is most difficult to engage comprises those individuals who are ideologically driven. Yet even at this level there have been high-level defections. The most popular example is that of Mukhtar Robow, the group's former deputy leader. Robow fell out with al-Shabaab in 2013, officially surrendered to the government in 2017 and later declared his candidacy in a regional election in Somalia's South West State in 2018.

Robow's attempts to enter into mainstream Somali politics were short-lived and the government's role in his detention eroded a layer of trust that could otherwise have been helpful for potential talks with al-Shabaab members. However, for a period, Robow's case demonstrated to the global community that it was indeed possible for the most ideologically extreme members of al-Shabaab to withdraw.

Robow's case is not in isolation. In recent years, al-Shabaab has experienced infighting and a number of defections by members. These trends present opportunities for policy actors to take advantage of strategies that can win over members. However, such strategies must take into account the distinction between providing alternatives for those who want to leave the group on an individual basis and an approach based on a broader political settlement or negotiation.

In the meantime, military offensives have failed to erode the operational capabilities of the group. In fact al-Shabaab can afford time and resources to contest regional turfs with its rival contender in the region – the Islamic State in Somalia. Neither AMISOM forces nor al-Shabaab militants have a



MILITARY VICTORY ISN'T
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clear chance of achieving military victory and now would be a good time to consider dialogue.

Establishing a roadmap for dialogue

The following six areas must be considered for a policy framework that aims to chart the pathway of dialogue. They are relevant for the contexts of both the Lake Chad Basin and Horn of Africa:

- Local context and community engagement
- Ideologies and objectives of the terror groups
- Coherence of main entities engaged in conflict
- Timing and communication strategies
- Interlocutors or third parties
- Regional and global actors

Local context and community engagement

The scope of dialogue is wider than a proposed interaction between government actors and terror groups. Communities bear the worst impact of terror attacks and the outlines of dialogue must be shaped by the perspectives of not only the leading voices in communities but also the victims of terror attacks.

Meaningful dialogue in the long run also cannot be possible in a context where basic human rights and socio-economic vulnerabilities in communities are not addressed. Ultimately people will only offer allegiance to the entity they perceive as the de facto authority in their communities. These dynamics relate to the ethno-religious communities in the Lake Chad Basin, as well as the clans in Somalia.

Meaningful dialogue isn't possible when basic human rights and socio-economic vulnerabilities are not being addressed

Vulnerabilities notwithstanding, local actors do have ideas about how to reinforce strategies to engage the groups that terrorise them. However, detailed research and analysis are required in order to strengthen such engagement. Sustained and participatory action research is needed. In gathering data, it is essential to reflect the input of community actors who are often overlooked. This includes women and youth.

There would also be a need to address questions of post-conflict transitional justice and national reconciliation.¹⁶ Restorative mechanisms would be essential as the process of dialogue commences and they should draw on elements of traditional reconciliation processes. Lessons can be learnt from other contexts where such initiatives have



DIALOGUE SHOULD
TAKE INTO ACCOUNT
VICTIMS' VIEWS

been implemented. Religious actors and traditional institutions should play a role in this.

Ideologies and objectives of the terror groups

The ideologies and objectives of these three terror groups are generally understood. All three groups demand some form of Islamic government.

In the case of al-Shabaab, dialogue over issues of sharia actually offers some scope of negotiation for the Somali government.

This is because the constitution of Somalia already defines Islam as the state religion and sharia inspires the country's national legislation. What is therefore in question is the interpretation of sharia, and this cannot be resolved through the use of force.

Gauging the mood of the battlefield is vital, as is governments' willingness to make concessions

Regarding al-Shabaab's opposition to foreign troops – there is already a plan in place, authorised by United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2431, that aims for a gradual withdrawal of AMISOM forces from Somalia by December 2021. The burden left for the Somali government should not be heavy as long as efforts are made from now to reform and strengthen the country's security sector.

In the case of Nigeria, the ideological outlook of Boko Haram and ISWAP appears more absolute and perhaps more complicated. This is because it is in sharp contrast with the country's federal constitution which underscores the secularity of the Nigerian state.

However, since 1999 the same constitution conceded to the enshrinement of sharia in most northern Nigerian states as far as the expression of civil and criminal laws are concerned. Again, while the interpretation of Islamic tenets by Boko Haram and ISWAP differs with the Nigerian polity in general, there is nonetheless a platform to explore negotiation over doctrinal matters.

Coherence of main entities engaged in conflict

A lack of consensus and mistrust have for years complicated the chances of initiating dialogue. Official

actors in the Nigerian and Somali governments hold different views on the idea of reaching out to terror groups.

While some believe that dialogue is an option, others support the view that talks should only arise in exceptional instances when mass abductions occur. There are also those who believe that dialogue could embolden terror groups in their use of violence. Others remain adamant that achieving a military victory is non-negotiable.

Divided views, mistrust and the dearth of political will within governments would need to be overcome in order to achieve the level of cohesion required to engage with Boko Haram, ISWAP and al-Shabaab. Particularly in Somalia, the lingering political divisions between the central government and the regional states must be resolved.

The problem of corruption must also be addressed in both Nigeria and Somalia as this has been central to accusations against certain government actors as well as the military.

Timing and communication strategies

There is the view that dialogue should be initiated when terror groups are on the defensive. While this may appear to be good judgement, whenever terror groups are on the back foot, governments hardly ever decide to initiate talks. This is due to the misleading perception that a military triumph is in sight and therefore a final blow is all that is required. This is often untrue.¹⁷

Gauging the mood of the battlefield however remains vital, as does the willingness of governments to make certain concessions when considering dialogue.

Furthermore, the distinction between Boko Haram and ISWAP must reflect in the communication strategies to be adopted. Dialogue as a means of engagement will differ in relation to the different levels of members in both factions, taking into consideration the moderates as well as the hardliners who may not concede. The same applies to al-Shabaab. The framework of dialogue must be designed in terms of levels of membership within the group.

Governments in both the Lake Chad Basin and the Horn of Africa must also tap into potentially useful intelligence through sources such as defectors.

Interlocutors or third parties

Rival parties don't simply embrace dialogue without mediatory intervention. A combination of entities and individuals is required to facilitate talks. From a local context, a mix of individuals should be consulted for the different phases of dialogue. These should comprise militants' family members, Islamic clerics, mediation experts, women's groups, traditional institutions, clan representatives and civil society organisations, among others. The thematic contexts and issues linked to the aforementioned actors must be considered.

These local actors possess varying levels of influence and awareness ranging from religious or ideological issues to familial knowledge of militants. However, coordination and engagement with them must be conducted in a way that doesn't compromise their safety.

It would also be necessary to involve trustworthy interlocutors among countries. For instance, in the case of Boko Haram and ISWAP, it would be helpful to engage individuals and entities in countries such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Regional and global actors

Dialogue requires the support of regional and international stakeholders. Beyond the institutional backing of the African Union, global actors such as the US can channel the same kind of endorsement of airstrikes towards promoting the idea of a political solution to the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Local actors have varying levels of awareness of religious and ideological issues, and familial knowledge of militants

One recalls how the removal of Mukhtar Robow from the most-wanted list of terrorist suspects by the US State Department in 2017 strengthened the prospects of a positive turn for the former deputy leader of al-Shabaab.

If the US is willing to engage in talks with the Taliban, which is considered by the 2018 Global Terrorism Index as one of the world's deadliest terror groups,¹⁸ then supporting local efforts to achieve peace through non-military means in Somalia should not be considered too high a cost to pay.

This line of action also applies to the Lake Chad Basin where external actors need to go beyond the negotiation of trade deals to supply weapons.¹⁹ However, in the end, external actors would only be persuaded to play a more conciliatory role if they perceive genuine political will on the part of the affected countries.

Key findings and recommendations

The following are the main findings of this brief, accompanied by suggestions for policymakers when exploring the option of dialogue.



DIALOGUE REQUIRES
REGIONAL AND
INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Key findings

- There is a longstanding stalemate between terror groups and governments of the countries in the regions of concern. The use of force has consistently proven inadequate and the deadlock must be broken.
- Assessing how communities feel about dialogue and gaining insight from them regarding terror groups is key. This will also help governments obtain a clearer understanding of the workings of the terror groups. Addressing socio-economic needs will provide the incentive for establishing trust and sustaining community engagement.
- The ideological objectives of the terror groups must be understood, along with their structures and strategies. All three terror groups highlighted in this policy brief are complex in their membership composition and the framework of dialogue and communication strategies must reflect this. Similarly, the complexity of clan dynamics in Somalia and how it relates to al-Shabaab must be understood in order to facilitate efforts in reaching out to specific actors in the group.
- Lack of trust and weak cohesion among government actors erode the ability of states to achieve a unified stance when exploring dialogue. Also, failure to effectively address corruption and political exclusion strengthens terror groups' justification to prey on communities' vulnerabilities.
- Western-backed airstrikes are counter-productive and unsustainable. External actors can play a more constructive role. Furthermore, if conflict-affected states demonstrate political will, external actors may be more inclined to support non-military efforts.

Recommendations

- In the Lake Chad Basin and Horn of Africa, a dedicated commission should be established and tasked with developing a communication strategy. The commission should involve representatives from the affected countries. The commission's strategy must be discreet and also divided into phases of engagement due to the complexity of reaching out to the terror groups.

- The governments of Nigeria and Somalia should consult extensively with local communities while prioritising their concerns regarding the idea of dialogue. This would help identify, among other things, acceptable third parties or mediators. Truth and reconciliation platforms should also be established to facilitate healing in communities.
- The governments of Nigeria and Somalia should carefully consider the grievances of the terror groups before any form of compromise is made. Governments must however be mindful that hardliners within the terror groups may be impossible to win over.
- In Somalia, there should be increased cooperation among the regional states and in relation to the central government. Without a collective vision, progress will not be made on crucial issues like dialogue. The same applies to Nigeria where government actors must strive for greater cohesion.
- The global community's contribution must go beyond providing military aid to genuinely supporting the facilitation of talks, or at least endorsing exploration of the idea.

Conclusion

The question of dialogue and its implementation has remained on the edges of policy discourse for a long time. Engaging terror groups through non-military means should become a strategic priority for policymakers to explore alongside existing approaches.

The predominant counter-terrorism posture predicated on the use of force is short-sighted because, despite military efforts, affected countries still oscillate between varying degrees of violence. The initiation of dialogue won't signal the immediate end of violence but may help to de-escalate it while complementing existing counter-terrorism approaches.

Countries must overcome the limits of the assumption that al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and ISWAP can be defeated with guns and bombs. Although dialogue is not by any means the silver bullet required to end terrorism, it should be more deeply explored as part of a comprehensive set of policy options by African countries.

Notes

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- 1 Institute for Economics and Peace, Measuring the Impact of Terrorism, Global Terrorism Index, 15, 2018.
- 2 The choice of focusing on al-Shabaab, Boko Haram and ISWAP does not minimise the critical threats posed by other groups such as Jama'a Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) in the Sahel or Islamic State in Somalia.
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- 4 P Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007-2017*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2, 2018.
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- 6 'Boko Haram' is a combination of two words. The Hausa word 'boko' refers to secular 'Western education' and the Arabic word 'haram' refers to something that is 'unlawful' or 'forbidden'. Although 'Boko Haram' is widely used to qualify the group, since March 2015 its members have referred to themselves as Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīyyah, signalling its affiliation with Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). However, before March 2015 members described themselves as Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, which translates to 'Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad', or similarly understood as 'Sunnis for Proselytisation and Armed Struggle'. Before 2010, more specifically from 2003 to 2004, some group members were referred to as 'the Nigerian Taliban'. During this period too, followers of the group were also ascribed the name 'Yusufiyya', referring to followers of its late leader Mohammed Yusuf. Despite these titles, this study refers to the group simply as 'Boko Haram'.
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- 14 *Ibid.*, 528.
- 15 A Botha, Reasons for joining and staying in al-Shabaab in Somalia, Security Institute for Governance and Leadership in Africa, 1, 2019.
- 16 J Crouch, Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia's civil war: Time for a new approach, *Saferworld*, 23, 2018.
- 17 A typical case is when Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari erroneously declared that Boko Haram was 'technically defeated' at the end of 2015 – see Nigeria Boko Haram: Militants 'technically defeated' – Buhari, *BBC News*, 2015. Unfortunately evidence of the group's resurgence, with persistent attacks and rising fatalities, suggests otherwise.
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- 19 F Soriwei, Boko Haram: US sells N181bn warplanes, weapons to Nigeria, *The Punch*, 2017.
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