

The “Webification” of Jihadism: Trends in the Use of Online Platforms, Before and After Attacks by Violent Extremists in Nigeria

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The use of digital platforms to disseminate information and coordinate activities by violent extremist organisations (VEOs) in Nigeria has grown considerably in recent years. This report analyses the adoption of social media before and after attacks by Boko Haram, Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Ansaru.

All three groups use online platforms to claim responsibility and display their strengths against the state’s security forces. By demonstrating their capacity to attack state security forces, the three groups aim to erode the public’s confidence in the state military’s capacity to safeguard national security.



Boko Haram, ISWAP and Ansaru previously leveraged popular social media platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, Telegram and Instagram. These platforms were used to promote propaganda and create awareness regarding upcoming attacks. However, all three groups have now had their use of these platforms restricted or banned.

ISWAP has switched to using WhatsApp as a secure platform for communication before, during and after attacks. Rocket.Chat and Telegram have also been instrumental in ISWAP’s information dissemination.

Boko Haram uses Telegram to share its activities in the pre- and post-attack environments.

Ansaru appears less on social media platforms due to its underground activities.

The recent acquisition of high-speed satellite internet has enhanced ISWAP’s communication with its audience and enabled coordinated attacks.