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DYING TO WIN: BOKO HARAM TERRORISM AND SUICIDE BOMBING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

If there is any consensus in the popular and academic literature on the post-colonial Nigeria, it is that violent conflict especially by non-state actors have been on the increase in the past decades. The study examined the nature, dimension and trend in Boko Haram (BH) suicide terrorism. It predicated its discussions and analysis on the games theory of politics. On this note, it argued that the kidnapping, abductions, recruitment, radicalization and deployment of people especially women and children on suicide missions were well thought out strategy in keeping its campaign alive. It also noted that the group has preference for women and children as they are usually seen as harmless by security agents. It concludes that military action alone cannot successfully eliminate the BH challenge. The study recommends that emphasis should be placed in understanding why people join BH and the various ways the BH recruits its fighters.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Terrorism, Suicide Bombing, Nigeria and Recruitment*

Introduction

If there is any consensus in the popular and academic literature on the post-colonial Nigeria, it is that violent conflicts especially by non-state actors have been on the increase in the past decades. The violence which had taken the form of secessionist attempt that culminated in the civil war from 1967 to 1970, the Niger Delta rebellion in 1966, the Niger Delta militia insurgency of 2005-2009, electoral violence (1965, 1983, 2011, religious (Maitatsine in the 1980s, Boko Haram, 2009 and ongoing); Communal/Ethnic (Ife and Modakeke, Umuleri and Aguleri, Ogoni and Andoni, Ijaw and Itsekiri) in addition to the on-going farmer-herder clash in communities across the country. But none of these conflicts brought the challenge of domestic terrorism

to the fore of national and international discourse as the BH challenge (Ibaba & Okoye, 2017).

The BH has been fighting the Nigerian state since 2009, in an attempt to impose an extremist version of Islamic ideology upon the government and citizens of the country. But, when it felt that this aim may not be easily realized it declared its occupied territory in Gwoza, Borno State, an Islamic caliphate in 2014. In the process, the BH had been recruiting, radicalising and mobilizing fighters that engage the Nigerian military and sister security agencies. Whereas, the BH like some other radical groups that have engaged the state in the past had killed, maimed, destroyed private and public properties, razed building, stealing, and abducted people either for ransom, means of forcing negotiation or tactics of warfare. It however, imported and applied the worst form of terrorist tactics anyone can think of, which is suicide terrorism. This deviation in operational tactics sets the BH apart from the rest of the group that had battled the Nigerian state. Besides, the volume of carnage attributed and claimed by BH resulted in its classification as one of the most deadliest terrorist group in the world by Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), through its Global Terrorism Index. On this note, the group success in the recruitment and radicalization of people especially women and children, who they compel to carryout suicide bombing in both Nigeria and neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, in addition to other heinous crimes such as killing their parents, relatives and friends partly accounts for its continued existence, despite the claim by the Nigerian military in December 2015 that it had been degraded and decimated the group. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the rise of BH suicide terrorism, its dimensions and trends in the Lake Chad region with a view to presenting set of recommendation for checkmating the problematic.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts some basic propositions emanating from the games theory of politics as its framework of analysis. Some of the major names that were associated with the popularization of the theory include mathematicians John von Neumann and John Nash, as well as economist Oskar Morgenstern. Meanwhile, the theory was introduced and applied in political analysis by Duncan Luce & Howard Raiffa, Martin Shubik & Anatol Rapoport (Varma, 2006). The theory studies human actions and strategies in situations of conflict and cooperation (as well as interdependence) in which each of actors (players) seek to maximize gains and minimize losses (Piano & Riggs, 1973), hence, their actions and interaction between them is game-theoretic in nature. In some respects, game theory is the science of strategy, or at least the optimal decision-making of independent and competing actors in a strategic setting, which may be individuals, groups, firms, or any combination of these. It typically involves several players; the formal definition lays out the players, their preferences, their information, the strategic actions available to them, and how these influence the outcome (Turocy & von Stengel, 2001); in addition to the creation of a language and formal structure of analysis for making logical decisions in competitive environments. The term “game” can be misleading. Even though, game theory applies to recreational games, the concept of “game” simply means any interactive situation in which independent actors share more-or-less formal rules and consequences.

Meanwhile, a strategic game represents a situation where two or more participants are faced with choices of action, by which each may gain or lose, depending on what others choose to do or not to do. The final outcome of a game, therefore, is determined jointly by the strategies chosen by all participants, as the choices made by each of the players (actors) have effect on the gains or losses of other players

involved in the game. These are also situations of uncertainty because no participant knows for sure what the other participants are going to decide. Some variants or types (models) of games under the games theory are: Two-person zero-sum games (where one's gain equals the other's loss) used by military-strategists; many-person (non-zero-sum games where it pays to cooperate) used in study of economic behavior. Games such as prisoner's dilemma (where two players must choose-without communicating with each other-either to cooperate or betray) are used in political theory and union (collective-bargaining) negotiations. Again, the formal application of game theory requires knowledge of the following: the identity of independent actors, their preferences, what they know, which strategic acts they are allowed to make, and how each decision influences the outcome of the game. Depending on the model, various other requirements or assumptions may be necessary. Finally, each independent actor is assumed to be rational (<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gametheory.asp>).

Assumptions of Games Theory

The basic assumptions of upon which the games theory is applied to political settings and events are as follow:

- Every game requires at least two independent players. This may be more depending on the nature of game;
- Each of the players is concerned with strategies that will arrive at decisions beneficial to him;
- Every game requires a strategy, which the players hope will enable them attain their goals;
- Players are guided in their actions by rationality, hence, they act rationally;

- There are always alternative causes, which the players or actors can select from
- Players usually select the alternative that gives them the highest pay-off;
- Players are aware that every game involves profit or loss. And such, they apply the strategy that will maximize their gain and minimize their loss (Minimax).
- In games there exists certain degree of uncertainty. This is because; no strategy assures the total elimination of loss or complete success (prevent zero loss or guarantees maximum gain);
- Also, the strategy to be adopted by each of the players is dependent on the observable realities in the process of gaming; and
- At any point where the rational players discover that their chosen strategy cannot guarantee them success they will resort to damage control – this is what is meant by minimax in the process of games.

The application of the theory to the study indicated that BH sect recruits, radicalize, mobilize and deploy people, especially women and children as suicide bombers as an effective strategy in targeting and hitting soft targets in their fight against Nigeria state. The reasons for this change in operational strategy exist at two levels. First, not only did BH understand the importance of women and children after the Chibok abduction, they also, came to learn the global impact and attention their involvement generates. Reason being that due to the increasing military operations and security intelligence dedicated by the Nigerian state and its neighbouring countries as epitomized in the establishment and activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), BH finds it increasingly difficult to successfully coordinate and carryout direct attacks through its fighters; hence, the introduction of suicide terrorism with the

aid of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). This is in line with the argument of Hile (2017) the Editor, Financial Nigeria magazine that:

Boko Haram reverted to guerrilla warfare as its formidable operational tactic following a bolstered counterinsurgency that took back territories formerly captured by the group. But the reason Boko Haram's strikes against security forces and civilian populations have been quite effective is the group's use of children, especially young girls to carry out suicide bombings.

Second and most importantly, women and children are usually perceived in the security circle as docile, peace loving, non-violent and harmless. Also, since military personnel at checkpoints as well as on patrol are usually men, BH reasoned that they will hardly subject women to thorough search on the grounds of morality and respect of human rights. On this note, it becomes easy for women strapped with IEDs to beat the patrol and hit their targets. Again, the counterinsurgency operations MNJTF have resulted in the loss of many trained fighters by the BH.

Perspective on Terrorism and Suicide Terrorism

Terrorism has been variously described as a tactic or strategy of using premeditated violence to achieve political goals or change the outcome of political processes (Sinai, 2008; Deutsch, 1998); the deliberate or intentional use of massive fear to secure and maintain control over others (Cooper, 2011); and the use of force or violence to compel a government to achieve political and social goals (Blum, 2003). The common threads which run through these views see terrorism as the use of violence/force and fear by a non-state actor or sub-national group for the purpose of achieving social or political goals. Although the political objective appears most defining, other goals of violence, ethnic, social, and economic/financial are not overlooked in the description of terrorist behaviour (Ibaba & Okoye, 2015).

Terrorism is seen as a crime and tactic of warfare; and as a crime, it pertains to the use of violence to kill and destroy public infrastructure or personal property. As a tactic of warfare, it refers to deliberate attack of civilian population or non-combatants in times of war (Schmid, 2004). Article 2 of the UN Draft Convention on International Terrorism (2004)¹ and the Nigeria anti-terrorism Act of 2011, as amended in 2013 list the following as terrorist acts (see Table 1).

Table 1: Acts of Terrorism

UN draft Convention on International Terrorism	The Nigeria anti-terrorism Act
<p>Classifies acts of terrorism as unlawful and intentional means that results in:</p> <p>2 "Death or serious bodily injury to any person;</p> <p>2. "serious damage to public or private property, including a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment"; and</p> <p>3. "Damage to property, places, facilities, or systems (place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, an infrastructure facility or the environment) resulting or likely to result in major economic loss, when the purpose of the conduct, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a government or an international Organization to do or abstain from doing any act".</p>	<p>Considers terrorism to be "an act which is deliberately done with malice, aforethought and which may seriously harm or damage a country or an international organization; and is intended or can reasonably be regarded as having been intended to:</p> <p>(1) Unduly compel a government or international organization to perform or abstain from performing any act;</p> <p>(2) Seriously intimidate a population;</p> <p>(3) Seriously destabilize or destroy the fundamental political, constitutional, economic or social structures of a country or an international organization, or otherwise influence such government or international organization by intimidation or coercion;</p> <p>(4) "an attack upon a person's life which may cause serious bodily harm or death;</p> <p>(5) Kidnapping of a person;</p> <p>(6) Destruction to a government or public facility, transport system, an infrastructural facility including an information system, a fixed platform located on the continental shelf, public place or private property likely to endanger human life or result in major economic loss;</p> <p>(7) The seizure of an aircraft, ship or other means of public or goods transport</p>

¹ This draft is still under negotiation and was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998 by India. The UN Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism which deals directly with this issue was established by Resolution 51/210 in 1996.

	<p>and diversion or the use of such means of transportation to influence government or international organization by intimidation or coercion</p> <p>(8) The manufacture, possession, acquisition, transport, supply or use of weapons, explosives or of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, as well as research into, and development of biological and chemical weapons without lawful authority;</p> <p>(9) The release of dangerous substance or causing of fire, explosions or floods, the effect of which is to endanger human life;</p> <p>(10) interference with or disruption of the supply of water, power or any other fundamental natural resource, the effect of which is to endanger human life;</p> <p>(11) An act or omission in or outside Nigeria which constitutes an offence within the scope of a counter terrorism protocols and conventions duly ratified by Nigeria; and</p> <p>(12) An act which disrupts a service but is committed in pursuance of a protest.</p>
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Source: Article 2 of the UN draft Convention on International Terrorism (2004; Nigeria anti-terrorism Act of 2011, as amended in 2013

Whereas the the tactics of terrorism differ, the central aims of all terrorist attacks is the cultivation in the target population of the fear of such attacks, so that the threat of violence becomes as effective as actual violence in addition to avoiding effective countermeasures and exploiting vulnerabilities (FEMA,2011). As such, terrorist groups have the potential to utilize many different types of terrorism tactics depending on the circumstances and the perceived likelihood of success. Some tactics are more conventional and widely used in the operations of many terrorist groups. These tactics include shootings, hijackings, kidnappings, bombings, and suicide attacks (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tactics_of_terrorism).

Meanwhile the literature have attempted a distinction among the terms “suicide terrorism”, “suicide attacks”, “suicide missions” and “suicide bombing”. Accordingly, Pape (2005) limits the term “suicide attack” to an attack which is only successful with the death of the terrorist. The terrorist deploys in the expectation of certain death to ensure the success of the mission. “Suicide bombers” are specific

example of this genre. "Suicide missions" are carried out by terrorists who realistically do not expect to survive the mission and do not have an escape plan but sometimes survive. Suicide terrorism is an all-embracing term that covers all of these events and it constitutes the most aggressive form of terrorism. What distinguishes a suicide terrorist is that the attacker does not expect to survive a mission and often employs a method of attack that requires the attacker's death in order to succeed (such as planting a car bomb, wearing a suicide vest, or ramming an airplane into a building). In essence, a suicide terrorist kills others at the same time that he kills himself. Usually these tactics are used for demonstrative purposes or to targeted assassinations. In most cases though, they target to kill a large number of people (Pape, 2003, p.344). The various means through which terrorist organizations carryout suicide attack in the 20th and 21st centuries include:

- On foot: explosive belt, satchels charge,
- with a plane as target and explosives hidden inside attacker's shoe,
- with explosives hidden inside the body,
- car bomb,
- boat with explosives,
- submarine with explosives (human-steered torpedo),
- bicycle with explosives,
- hijacked commercial jet airliner with fuel,
- private plane,
- diverting a bus to an abyss, and
- use of fast driving car to drive intentionally into a crowd of people or breaching a security barrier (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide_attack).

Boko Haram and Suicide Terrorism in Nigeria

In its fight against the Nigerian state and its citizens whom the BH in most part refer to as infidels; the BH have among its other criminal activities and terrorist tactics that ranged from kidnapping, arson, murder, stealing, abduction, jail break, attack at police stations, security check points, military outposts, destruction of: schools, places of worship (churches and mosques), ambushing of security patrols as well as use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) *et cetera* adopted and introduced a more radical dimension in the struggle by non-state actors against the Nigerian state, in the form of suicide bombing.

Whereas, records demonstrated that the initial suicide attack by the group were the April 15, 2011, and June 16, 2011 attacks on the premises of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) headquarters in Niger state, and the Nigeria's police headquarters (Louis Edet House) in Abuja, respectively. Since then, the BH have enhanced and routinised suicide bombing as one of its basic *modus operandi*. As could be expected of every bloodletting terrorist groups hardly does a month passes by without the story of one suicide bombing operation or failed suicide mission especially in the northeast, which is the BHs major theater of operation. From its very beginning the BH suicide terrorism have been targeting places of worship (churches and mosques), markets, government institutions, security outpost, military barracks, academic institutions, camp for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) *et cetera*. These suicide attacks have resulted in the deaths of many, countless injuries, loss of properties, renders many children orphans, and parent's childless as well as turned wives into widows and husbands into widowers. The table below presented some of the suspected suicide attacks by the BH in both Nigeria and its neighbouring countries.

Table 1: Selected Cases of Suspected Boko Haram Suicide bombing in Nigeria and Neighbouring Countries

Date	Perpetrator/event	Victims	Place
3 January, 2018	A suspected BH militant blew himself up	Killed 14 civilians	A mosque in Gaboru, Nigeria
16 January, 2018	Suicide attack	At least 2 civilians were killed and a dozen others injured	Near a mosque in the Far North Region
17 January, 2017	2 suspected BH suicide bombers	Killed 12 people and injured 65 others	Northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri
31 January, 2018	Multiple suicide bomb attacks	Killed 4 and 44 others sustained injuries	Konduga community and the Dalori IDPs camp
16 February, 2018	3 suspected BH bombers	At least 21 persons were killed and 70 civilians were injured	Konduga local government area of Borno State
25 February, 2018	2 suspected suicide bombings by BH	At least 4 people were killed; while half a dozen others were injured	Bourvare and Goumouldi, in the north of Cameroon.
27 February, 2018	A suicide bomber drove into their patrol vehicle	Killed 2 soldiers were killed and two others wounded	Lake Chad region of Nigeria
2 March, 2018	A female suicide bomber blew up herself	Killed 7 persons and injured 28 others	A mosque in the Fulatari area of Buni Yadi, Gujba local government area of Yobe state,
10 January, 2017	2 female bombers	Killed three persons, alongside themselves	Kalari area
13 January, 2017	4 suicide bombers	Killed at least 9 people including themselves	Madagali town, Borno
16 January, 2017	2 teenage suicide bombers	Killed 3 people, including a professor	University of Maiduguri
25 January, 2017	BH multiple suicide bombing	Killed 4 people	Maiduguri
13 May, 2017	A suicide bombers	Killed 1 person and another injured	University of Maiduguri in northeastern Nigeria
16 May, 2017	Three female suicide bombers	Killed 2 people and injured 7 others	Borno State
2 June, 2017	2 suicide bombers	Killed 11 persons	IDP camp in Northeast Cameroon
8 June, 2017	Multiple suicide bomb attack by BH	At least 14 persons were killed and 24 were injured	Mosque in Maiduguri
9 June, 2017	A female suicide bomber detonated her explosive vest	Killed a soldier	A military base in Cameroon

18 June, 2017	5 suicide women	Killed at least 12 people, while 11 others were injured	Borno
22 June, 2017	Double suicide attack	Killed six civilians	Cameroon's restive Far North
26 June, 2017	Multiple suicide bomb blasts	Killed 9 people and injured 13 others	Maiduguri
29 June, 2017	Twin suicide attack	Killed 2 people and injured 10 others	Refugee camp near the city of Diffa, in Niger
30 June, 2017	2 BH suicide bombers blew themselves up	Killed one person	City of Kerawa, in Niger
1 July, 2017	4 BH suicide bombers blew themselves up	Killed one person	City of Mora, in Cameroon
3 July, 2017	A suicide bomber exploded his bomb in the middle of a group of people,	Killed 4 persons	Homaka, locality in the Mora subdivision of the Far North region of Cameroon
11 July, 2017	4 BH suicide bombers	Killed 19 people and injured 23	Maiduguri
23 July, 2017	Female suicide bombers	Killed at least 8 people	IDPs camp in Maiduguri
29 July, 2017	2 suicide bombers blew themselves up	14 people were killed and 15 others were injured	Dikwa, Nigeria
4 August, 2017	3suicide bombers detonated explosives	Killed themselves and injured 2 members of the civilian joint task force	Simari area of Maiduguri
6 August, 2017	A suicide bomber	Killed at least 7 people	Northern Cameroon near the Nigerian border
15 August, 2017	A woman bomber blew herself up	Killed 27 people	A market in the village of Konduga near Maiduguri
8 September , 2017	2 female suicide bombers	Injured 8 other commuters close to the explosions	Maiduguri
13 September, 2017	A young woman blew herself up	Killed 4 people and injured another	Cameroon's far north,
18 September, 2017	Suicide attack	Killed at least 15 people and injured 43 others	Mashimari village in Borno state
26 September, 2017	A female suicide bomber blew herself up	Killed 5 people and injured 3 other worshippers	A mosque in northeast Nigeria
22 October, 2017	A suicide bomber	Killed 13 people and injured 5 others.	Maiduguri
30 October, 2017	BH terrorist blew himself up	Killed 5 persons and injured several others	A mosque in Maiduguri, Nigeria
1 November, 2017	A BH suicide attack	Killed 6 people and injured two others	A mosque in the village of Zamga, Cameroon
15 November -	Suicide attack	Killed at least 10 people and injured	A popular market in Maiduguri

		dozens	
21 November, 2017	Suicide attack by BH militants	Killed 50 people	Nigeria
2 December, 2017	Twin suicide attacks	Killed 15 persons and injured 53 others	A market in Borno state
11 December, 2017 n	Suicide bomb attack	Killed two persons and the bomber	A mosque in far northern Cameroon
28 December, 2017	A suicide bomb attack BH	Killed at least 6 people and injured 13 others	Borno state
13 January, 2016	A suicide bomber blew himself up	Killed 12 people and injured another one	A mosque at Kouyape, close to the Nigerian border
18 January, 2016	A suicide bomber	Killed 4 worshippers and injured another two	A mosque in the village of Nguetchewe in northern Cameroon,
25 January, 2016	4 suspected BH suicide bombers	Killed at least 28 people and injured another 65	Busy market in the north Cameroonian town of Bodo, close to the Nigerian border
29 January, 2016	2 suicide bombers	Killed 4 people and injured 12 others	A school, housing Nigerian refugees in northern Cameroon
29 January, 2016	A 12-year-old blew himself up.	Killed at least 11 people	Gombis' market
9 February, 2016	2 BH suicide bombers	Killed 6 people and injured 30 others	Muslim funeral gathering in northern Cameroon 10 km (6 miles) east of the Nigerian border
9 December 2016	2 female suicide bomber	Killed at least 57 people and injured 177 others	Madagali
9 February, 2016	2 female suicide bombers	Killed 60 people and injured 78 others	IDPs camp in the northeast Nigerian town of Dikwa
19 February, 2016	2 suicide bombers	Killed at least 24 people and injured 112 others	A market in northern Cameroon
16 March 2016	3 female suicide bombers	Killed 22 people and injured 18	In Umarari Village, on the outskirts of Maiduguri, Borno State
5 April, 2016	2 suicide bombers exploded their devices	At least 3 people were killed and several others injured	In a public transport vehicle that was going to a market in Diffa, Niger.
12 May, 2016	A suicide bomber	Killed at least 6 people, including 2 police officers	Maiduguri
30 June 2016	A suicide bombing	Killed at least 15 people and injured dozens	A mosque and a video club in Djakana, Cameroon
8 July 2016	A suicide bombing attack	Killed at least 9	A Mosque in Borno

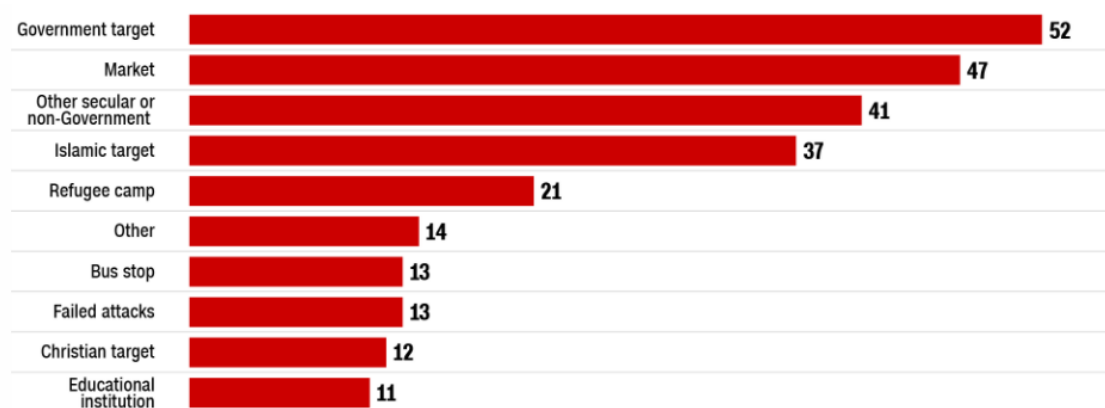
		people and injured dozens	
21 August, 2016	A suicide bombing attack	Killed at least 3 people and injured 24 others	A market in the city of Mora
22 September, 2016	A suicide bomber	Killed 4 people	In Cameroon's Far North in Djakana
24 October, 2016	2 suicide bombers	killed 3 people	In Far North Region of Cameroon
29 October, 2016	2 suicide bombers	Killed at least 8 people	Maiduguri
8 November, 2016	2 suicide bombers exploded improvised explosive	Killed 4 people and injured 6 others	Maiduguri
24 November, 2016	2 young female suicide bombers	One of the bombs exploded in Mora killing the girl and injuring at least 4 others	Cameroon's far north region
11 December, 2016	2 suicide bombing	Killed 3 people	Maiduguri
January 10, 2015	A female suicide bomber, believed to be around 10 years old	Killed herself and 19 others	A market in Maiduguri, Nigeria
January 11, 2015	2 female suicide bomber, believed to be around 10 years old	Killed themselves and 3 others	A market in Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria
February 2, 2015	A female suicide bomber	Killed at least one person and injured 18	An election rally in the city of Gombe state
February 15 2015	A suicide bomber	Killed 16 people and injured 30 others	Nigerian city of Damaturu
February 22, 2015	A suicide bomber	Killed 5 people and injured dozens	A market in Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria
February 24, 2015	2 suicide bombers	Killed at least 27 people	At bus stations in Potisum and Kano
February 28, 2015	2 female suicide bombers	Killed up to 4 people	Near Damaturu, Yobe State
March 7, 2015	5 suicide bomb blasts	Killed 54 people and injured 143 others	Maiduguri
16 June, 2015	Twin suicide bombings	Killed 24 people and injured more than 100	Chad's capital N'Djamena
June 22, 2015	2 young female suicide bombers	Killed 30 people	A crowded mosque in Maiduguri
July 5, 2015	A suicide bomber attacks,	Killed 5 people	A church in Potiskum, Yobe State, Nigeria
December 1. 2014	2 female suicide bombers that detonated explosive	Killed at least 5 people	A crowded market in Maiduguri, Borno State
December 10, 2014	A female suicide bomber	Killed at least 4 people and injured 7 others	Near a market in Kano

Source: compiled by the author.

Nature of Boko Haram suicide terrorism

The nature of BH suicide terrorism as is typical of terrorist attacks is that it deploys an element of surprise, lone wolf and guerrilla tactics. The reasons for these operational styles were strong and obvious. Terrorist elements quite understand that operationally, they are no match to the state, and as a result stand no chance of surviving a full blown conventional war with the *enemy* (in this case, Nigerian state) that they fight. Accordingly, the state has more weapons, trained soldier, expertise, and other financial resources needed to prosecute the conflict than they do. Besides, the sovereignty possessed by states offer them domestic and international recognition, which they usually deploy against the terrorists. On the part of the BH, it usually targets such soft targets as: markets, academic institutions, church, mosque, motor parks, IDP camps etc. It also target police stations, military barracks and security checkpoints.

Fig. 1: BH suicide bombings by target and number of attacks, 2011 – 2017



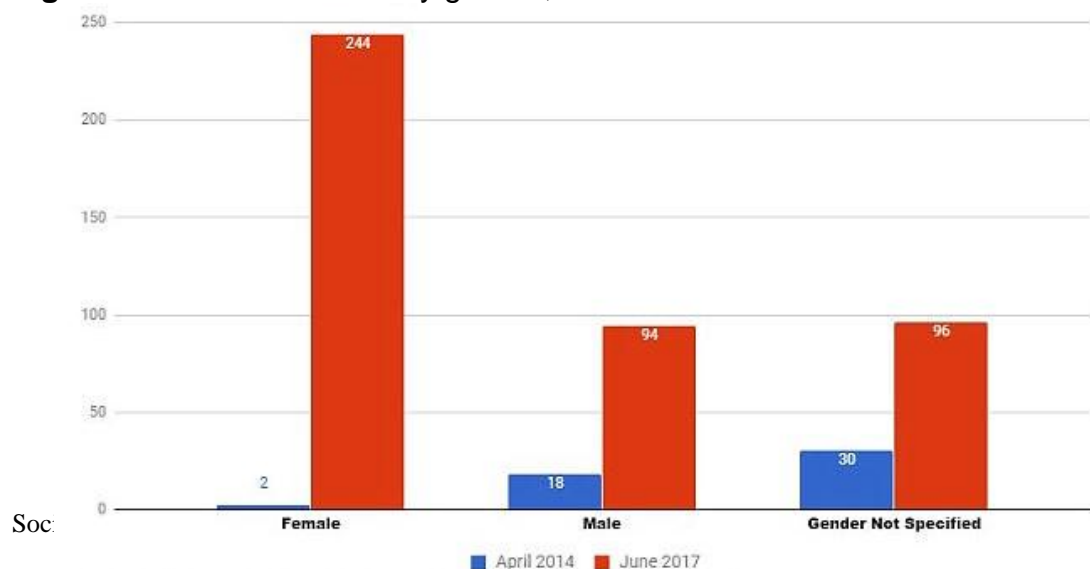
Source: Combating terrorism at west point (<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/10/africa/boko-haram-women-children-suicide-bombers/index.html>)

A critically consideration of BH suicide terrorist attacks indicates that government targets and market are two major target of the sect. This implicates the fact that the insurgents not only contests the authority of the Nigerian state but equally claimed to

possess the capacity to undermine the Nigerian military. It also demonstrates BH capacity to target and hit any point in the country any time, any day with little resistance as evidenced in the number of failed attacks by the group. By attacking markets the sect sought to delegitimise the Nigerian government by instigating fear in the people, which will compel them to hold the opinion that the government lacks the capacity to protect them from the attacks of the group. Evidently, the various target points where BH had successfully carried out suicide attacks were primarily aimed at making the country look vulnerable to security threat, which will threaten both the government and the citizens into negotiating and possibly accepting their demands.

In all these, there appears an inherent penchant by the BH towards the use of women and children. Accordingly, the BH had been noted as the terrorist group in the world that made most use of women in suicide bombing, in which case one can arguably talk of the *feminization* of suicide bombing in Nigeria. Comparatively speaking, the analysis of 434 cases of suicide bombings that were carried out by the sect since 2011, indicated that at least 244 of the gender identifiable 338 attacks were carried out by women (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4787152/Boko-Haram-s-suicide-bombers-women-children.html>).

Fig.2: BH suicide bombers by gender, 2014 – 2017

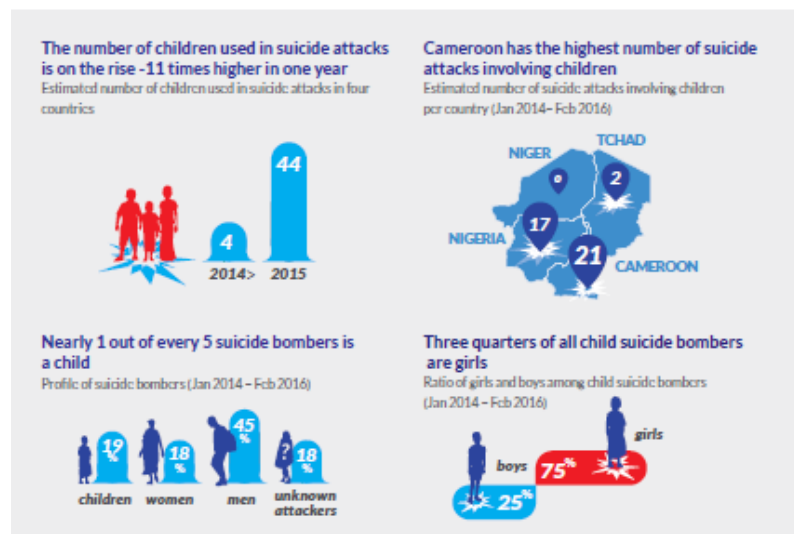


Source: Combating terrorism center at west point.
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4787152/Boko-Haram-s-suicide-bombers-women-children.html>

The trend in the use of women is not and cannot be treated as coincidence. Rather it is a well thought operational strategy by the BH sect in beating the security patrols and check points *within and without* it targets points. Women are naturally seen by the society as the weaker sex that are inherently fragile, non-violent, peaceful, compassionate, emotional among others. On account of which they are often welcomed with open arms and little suspicion wherever they enter unlike men that were usually subjected to various forms of stop and search, questioning and investigations. The point is that with this relaxed mind it is very easy for women strapped with explosive devices to penetrate secured vicinities where they denote their bombs.

Similarly, BH increasingly recruits and uses children in suicide bombing due to the fact that the presence of children hardly generate suspicion as they are rarely seen as source of threat. This made them readymade tool in the hands of the BH since they can access with ease locations that the presence of unfamiliar adults will trigger suspicion. On this note, BH made use of four (4) children in 2014, 44 in 2015, 30 in 2016 and 83 as at August, 2017. The trend is such that out of every five (5) suicide attacks carried out by the group one (1) involves a child. Again, the analysis of the gender of children involved in BH suicide terrorism indicates that BH still make use of more girl child than boys as indicated in the figure below. Given the situation/state of affair; it is arguable that BH is attempting at the moment to normalize the use of children (juvenisation) of suicide bombing in the country.

Fig.3: Children increasingly used in BH suicide attacks



Source: UNICEF (2016:2)

Initially, the BH started with the use of hand held/thrown grenades (improvised explosive devices [IEDs]) then transmuted to car bomb, as demonstrated in the December 25th, 2011 bomb attack at St Theresa's Catholic Church Madalla, Niger State, the June 16, 2011 suicide car bomb attack at Nigeria's police headquarters (Louis Edet House) in Abuja and finally, to wearing of explosive vests or having IEDs strapped on the body of the suicide bomber. In doing this, it tactically targets crowded areas or public facilities in order to maximize damages/casualties as well as: draw the attention of the government to bring the government to its knees by initiating negotiation, instigate public opinion/resentment against the government, make the people to mount pressure on the government to attend to their demands as well as undermining the legitimacy of the government of the day.

Often times, the BH conduct coordinated multiple attacks as a means of distributing, defocusing and disorganizing the Joint Task Force (JTF), Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as well as the Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF), that were manning and guarding strategic areas and routes against incursions by the BH. By diverting the attentions of the security agents, dividing the men or drawing them out of their

post; it becomes easy for the BH to either attack its main target, steal arms, raid communities, as well as transport men and equipments from one point to another in readiness for a future attack or to hide same from the watchful eyes of security operatives.

In keeping with the drive to ensure that its recruits carry out its instructions to the letters, the BH normally indoctrinate, radicalize and drug most of the people that it use in suicide bombing. This has been attested to by the fact that a sizeable number of the persons that were successfully disarmed or rescued by the military from the captivity of BH tends to manifest symptoms Post-trauma stress disorder, psychological imbalance, disoriented personality that results from military training that was meant to break their personality or excessive use of drugs. This claim had equally been corroborated by the confessions of the some ex-BH fighters, rescued victims and those that successfully escaped from BH captivity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined and highlighted the threat posed by BH suicide terrorism to Nigeria and its neighbours such as Cameroon, Chad and Niger. Traditionally, non-state armed groups in the country such as the Niger Delta militants and other radical elements in both northern and southern parts may have appropriated terrorist tactics in their engagements with the state as evidenced in the pre-2009 Niger Delta. However, none of them toyed with the idea of suicide terrorism. Conversely, BH in its win at all cost mentality, had metamorphosed and adapted various tactics latest of which is suicide bombing; which until now is unthinkable as people saw it as a western phenomenon that has no place in Nigeria. The group resort to suicide terrorism (suicide bombing) is an admission both within and without the sect that all other strategies utilized by the group did not produce the expected pay-off

(outcome). This suggests that sect is seeking to maximise its gain while limiting loss through the introduction of suicide bombing due to a number of reasons; 1) the sects membership appears to be dwindling by the day. Hence, suicide bombing which will enable it use one person to at a time in carrying out its mission believing that the persons will take out as many number of persons and property in a single attacks. Again, the fact that women and children are scarcely, associated with violence equally spurs the sect to recruit and use them as incendiary time bomb against the Nigerian state and its citizens. As part of its engagement tactics, the sect is forcing the Nigerian military into committing operational errors that amounts to the violations of human rights, thereby discrediting the government and its security agencies at both home and abroad. The point is that the Nigerian state and its coercive institutions have more at stake than the faceless terrorist organisation nicknamed BH. This explains why they are willing to die in the process so long as they succeed in their quest.

Whereas the group had repeatedly maimed, kidnapped, abducted, raid and destroyed lives, properties and business all in attempt to achieve their impervious objectives, it is the contention of this study that over-reliance on hard-counterterrorist strategy as the Nigerian state had been doing since 2009 can only momentarily degrade and disorganize the group. As the literature have demonstrated only about seven percent of terrorist groups have been successfully eliminated through military action globally since 1960's (Spooner, 2014), suggesting a change in tactics by the Nigerian government. Therefore, efforts should be directed towards addressing the conditions that make it easy for BH to recruit and radicalize people or why people choose to join the BH as well as the ways the recruitment and radicalization is

conducted. This in the eye of the study argued will cut-off the membership supply chain for the group, which will put them out of business overtime.

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