

# Women Involvement in Terrorism: A Critical Look at their Roles in Some Selected Terrorist Organizations

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## ABSTRACT

Women's involvement in terrorism has become a pressing concern globally, with increasing numbers of women participating in terrorist activities, including combat, suicide bombings and recruitment. This paper examined the roles and motivations of women in selected terrorist organizations, including Hamas, Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Boko Haram. A critical analysis of existing literature reveals that women play various roles in these organizations including combatants, suicide bombers, recruiters and fundraising. The study adopted a feminist perspective, arguing that women's involvement in terrorism is often driven by a complex mix of factors, including socio-economic marginalization, political oppression and ideological manipulation. The paper explored the ways in which women's involvement in terrorism is shaped by their experiences of patriarchy, oppression, and marginalization. It also examined the way in which terrorist organization exploits these experiences to recruit and radicalize women. This paper drew data from a range of sources including academic papers, policy documents and reports. This paper highlighted the importance of understanding the complex and multifaceted nature of women's involvement in terrorism. It also underscored the need for policy makers to seek a more nuanced understanding of women involvement in terrorism and to develop targeted strategies to prevent radicalization. The paper contributed to the existing literature on women's involvement in terrorism by providing a critical analysis of the roles and motivations of women in selected terrorist organization. Overall, this paper provided a comprehensive understanding of women's involvement in terrorism and to inform the development of effective policies and strategies to prevent radicalization and promote deradicalization. Also, this paper found that women play a variety of roles, sometimes even more, in terrorist organizations. Men do feature mainly as combatants, leaders, and planners, whereas women because of their natural advantage over men, feature in many other roles that men cannot apparently featured.

**Keyword:** Feminism, Ideological Manipulation, Socioeconomic Challenges, Terrorist Organizations, Women Terrorist

## INTRODUCTION

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in its preamble reiterates the equal rights of both sexes. However, in most societies and under many circumstances, there still exists gender disparity due to ingrained cultural patterns that accords the male element prominent positions resulting in most women failure to reach important social, elective and even appointive positions in their societies. Paradoxically, while the societies are slow or not inclined to imbibed the UDHR directive on equal rights, terrorist organisations are using this to entice more women into their fold by offering them opportunities to hold positions of prominence denied them by the societies they live in. This acts as one of the motivational inducements for joining such organisations. In order to fully understand motivation as a push/pull force or the inner conscious action-taken decision to do what one does; we must bear in mind that this action and the decision to join or not to join is equally dependent on the type and nature of the terrorist organization and the allure it holds to the person. Broadly, terrorist organizations can be categorized to include state-sponsored, religious, ethnic and politically motivated terrorism (Spindlove & Simonsen 2003). Although, Hoffman (2006) has alluded that all acts of terrorism are,

to a certain extent, politically motivated, there may be need to differentiate between political and religious motivated terrorist organization as these become very important in the final decision as to which to join or not to join. Although both employ the use of violence, they still differ in certain important respects that make it important to delineate between them. In this respect, a good starting point is that for a terrorist action to qualify as being purely politically motivated, it must “challenge the state but affect no private rights of innocent parties” (Kittrie, 1981).

Therefore, a religious motivated terrorism would differ from other acts of terrorism primarily because; first, while political terrorism attempts to find a resolution within the life times of the perpetrators, religious terrorism outlives their participants. This is predicated on the belief that the rewards of those involved in this cause are trans-temporal and the time limit of their struggle is eternity. Secondly, the targets of religious terrorism are not chosen for their military values but rather they are chosen for the sole purpose of making an impact on public consciousness both by its brutality and suddenness. Thirdly, the constant recourse to an eternal being to justify their action has the power of ‘satanising’ the enemies while making the perpetrators of religious terrorism ‘godly’. As Juergensmeyer (2004) had noted, this is a kind of “perverse performance of power meant to ennoble the perpetrators’ views of the world while drawing viewers into their notions of cosmic war”. The effect of this, as he had also noted, is “not so much that religion has become politicised but that politics has become religionised.

Fourth is that the targets of religious terrorism and violence also have the tendency to assume and acquire a similar religious mien, explanation and perspective. For instance, following the 9/11 attacks, the then US President, George Bush whipped up national sentiments when he invoked the ‘religious image’ of America’s “righteous cause” as combating and bringing to an end the “absolute evil” of its enemies. Fifth, the ‘divine’ nature of religious terrorism, the notion that the battle is between ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘truth’ and ‘evil’, the expectation of heavenly rewards for the terrorists all rule out the possibility of a compromise or a peaceful resolution. Sixth is that the spiritual dimension which the war has acquired makes it to go beyond the confines of human law and ideal of morality. Society’s law is subordinated and in extreme cases are deemed non-existence or inapplicable because of the recourse to a higher authority. The belief and perception here are that society’s laws and limitations are of no relevance when one is obeying a higher ‘divine’ authority. Finally, the end result of religious terrorism is that it impacts a sense of redemption and dignity on the perpetrators. It is at this level that religious terrorism acquires a personal willingness on the part of the perpetrators who often times are men who feel alienated and marginalised from public life (Agara and Ogwola, 2014).

As a concept, what then is motivation and how does this apply to the issue of women terrorists? The concept of ‘motivation’ is primarily used to explain the connection between an individual’s behaviour and his environment. Motivation, therefore, becomes a patchwork concept which includes other concepts such as ‘feelings’, ‘needs’, ‘goals’, and ‘drives’ in its effort to explain and account for an individual’s tendency to respond differently to the same stimulus at different times and for different individuals to respond differently to the same stimulus. Motivation and its understanding therefore become imperative if one is to understand why people behave the way they do.

As Drucker (1974) has tried to explain, every organisation and society, no matter how authoritarian they may be, must satisfy the ambitions and needs of its members and do so in their capacity as individuals. This implies that people act in their own interests as defined by their needs. This has been brilliantly put by Adam Smith (1976) when he stated that it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their own advantages.

As with many terms and concepts in Social Science, motivation suffers from a basic definitional disagreement. Cole (2002) has defined it as “process in which people choose between alternative forms of behaviour in order to achieve personal goals”. This definition rules out the possibility of behaviour being the operation of instinctive and reflex action while showing that it is a conscious choice. The exercise of choice is not to be seen as a rational process, but essentially as one which is considerably influenced and affected by sometimes

deeply rooted emotions and values of the individual. Mitchell (1982) has identified four common characteristics which underlie most definitions of motivation, and these are;

- Motivation is typified as an individual phenomenon. This implies that every individual is unique.
- Motivation is described, usually, as intentional. This implies that motivation is under the individual's control and so, behaviours that are influenced by motivation should be seen as choices of action
- Motivation is multifaceted. This implies that in any motivated behaviour, two factors are of greatest importance: (a) what gets people motivated (arousal); and (b) the force of an individual to engage in desired behaviour (direction or choice of behaviour)
- The purpose of motivational theories is to predict behaviour. This means that motivation is not the behaviour itself nor is it performance, but it concerns action, the internal and external forces which influence a person's choice of action.

On the basis of these characteristics, Mitchell (1982) defines motivation as “the degree to which an individual wants and chooses to engage in certain specified behaviours”. Basically, all motivational theories can be divided into two broad categories. The first is the Content Theory and this includes Maslow's (1943) ‘Hierarchy of Needs’, Herzberg's (1959) ‘Motivation/Hygiene Theory’ and McClelland's (1975). The Content Theory will also include the reformation of Maslow's theory by Porter (1964) and Alderfer (1972). The Content Theories are distinguishable by the fact that they are premised on the belief that human behaviour can be scientifically predicted and thus manipulated. They sought to adduce reasons or causes for individuals behaving and performing in certain ways and generally attempt to answer the question of ‘what’ drives, moves or motivates people to behave the way they do. The sets of theories under this heading generally described motivation as “behaviour caused by some stimulus but directed towards a desired outcome” (Cole, 2002). Put pictorially, it will look thus:

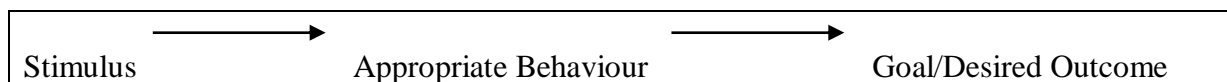


Fig.1: Content Theory Basic Motivational Model (Cole, 2002, p96)

However, an awareness has been generated that the sources of human behaviour, hitherto, thought to be self-evident and self-explanatory in scientific terms are not proving so anymore. Motivation may actually be the final issue after certain conscious cognitive processes, not easily traceable or subjected to scientific analysis and exactitude of the Logical Positivist type has occurred or been undergone by the individual. Hence, the second type of theories, the Process Theory, evinced a departure from the traditional focus and addressed itself to the more fundamental issue of how people actions and behaviour are determined. This set of theories, unfortunately, had not enjoyed wider currency and application because they focus on the thought processes which individuals undergo before making decision. Vroom's (1964) ‘Expectancy Theory’, Adams' (1965) ‘Equity Theory’ and House & Mitchell (1974) ‘Path-Goal Theory’ are representatives of this category. A third category has been introduced by Daft (1997), the ‘Reinforcement Theories’, may not be of usefulness to the trajectory of this paper because they focus on employee learning of desired work behaviours. The theories here focus on changing or modifying the employees' on-the-job behaviour through appropriate use of immediate rewards and punishments.

Since no one is born a terrorist (Sanmartin 2004) and since all attempts to stereotype or delineate specific terrorist personality have failed (Crenshaw 2004, Weatherston & Moran 2003), it becomes essentially then to be able to identify the reasons for involvement in terrorism. Overall, the motivation which propels an individual to join and participate in terrorist activities range from political to social, to psychological and to cultural. Nevertheless, they differ from individual to individual and from type of organisation to the other. For instance, what motivates an individual to join a political terrorist organisation may not be the same as another person joining a religious terrorist group. Hence, for any person to be successfully assimilated to a terrorist group, his motivation must align with the ideologies and actions of that group.

Of course, while some feminist social scientists have preferred to argued that there are no specific female motivations, Nacos (2005) have also argued that, in reality, there exists no evidence that male and female

terrorists differ regarding recruitment, motivation and brutality. As Brown (2017) has asserted, joining terrorist organisation and getting involved in their activities may be “for men an opportunity to display their prowess, to defend their women and to have a life that’s more fun than the Call of Duty Computer game” however, for women “the journey is presented as cleansing and exciting, an opportunity to help those suffering and a chance to have to shape history.” Thus, while most of the motivations may be common to both sexes, the fact remains that in societies with history of oppression and gender inequality, there will certainly be some motivating factors that are peculiar and unique to women.

In Bloom’s (2011) conceptualisation of The Four R’s Theory – revenge, redemption, relationship and respect – to explain the contents of women’s motivation and participation in terrorism, another *r* – rape, was later added. While this list would seem likely, it is but inexhaustible, particularly for women living in Islamic societies where the cultural traditions are unequivocally followed and adhered to by the society and where it is easier to convince women to become join terrorist groups as a way of expiating their sins and to recover societal respect or to improve their social and familiar standing. Thus, the family is a strong factor in motivating or influencing the final decision which a woman takes in joining a religious terrorist group. There is, therefore, a high probability that the final decision will be influenced by a member of the family who belongs to the group, or have been persecuted, imprisoned, tortured or killed by those seen as enemies of the group.

What could account for western women joining jihadist group had been broadly categorised by Saltman & Smith (2015) in two broad categories of push/pull factors. Among the pull factors are feeling isolated within the western culture, seeing the Muslim community as being persecuted worldwide, and anger and frustration over what is perceived as international inaction to the plights of the Muslim. The push factors, on the other hand, are religious duty and building a utopia haven, sisterhood and a sense of belonging, and romanticising and seeing joining a jihadist group as an adventure without realising the implications of such decision. What this implies is that western women, at least the younger generation, are no longer feeling comfortable or bored or are disillusioned with life as offered by western countries and so wanted to find a new life that is meaningful and adventurous and the propaganda of a paradise proves irresistible for someone who is leading a dull life in a cultural environment of anomy and indifference.

Concerning the Balkan region, Mietz (2016) has identified nine push and seven pull factors, although he was quick to point out that both of these factors were not peculiar to the Balkan alone but were shared by other citizens of other countries, but that three factors may be responsible for the attraction which Balkan female have for jihadist groups in Balkan countries. The impressive list of the push factors includes questioning identity, boredom unsatisfying life, looking for adventure, high youth unemployment, restriction of free movement, feelings of not belonging, limited skills to make good judgment, Islam phobia, and slow political and economic growth. The pull factors include helping to create a new state, the romanticism of marrying a jihadist, sisterhood belonging, jihadi ‘cool’ subculture, seek revenge against the ‘unbelievers’, practice ‘pure’ Islam freely, and ‘religious duty’ to migrate to Islamic State. The three factors identified as being responsible for female Balkan jihadists are high youth unemployment, weak institutions and Wahhabi ‘charities’ and radical mosques.

Interestingly, the factors identified as both the push and pull factors are present in both so-called developed and undeveloped countries, particularly in Nigeria. Although we agree with Sanmartin’s submission that nobody is born a terrorist, we must also agree that the social and cultural environment do act as drivers. A simplistic explanation is that in both western and Islamic states, women get radicalised because they want to run away from an unpleasant boring life and hence are easily prone to any suggestion of a deviation from life as they have been experiencing.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Terrorism as a concept suffers definition crisis, thereby, confusing its actual meaning and usage. Dupuy (2004) collected over a hundred definitions but the real essence of the concept did not change much. As an ancient word, its root can be traced back to the time of the Zealots in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but its current usage is associated with the period of the French Revolution, the ‘Jacobin Reign of Terror’ (1792-94). Global terrorism is of a



more recent period. Rapoport (2001) has traced its origin to the late decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had distinguished four waves of global terrorism. The last wave, which we are now witnessing, is religious and started in 1979 when Ayatollah Khomeini declared the Islamic Republic in Iran.

However, our contention is that for any definition of terrorism to be acceptable, it must, at least, include these six major elements; (1) the use of violence or threat of violence, (2) the existence of an organized group, (3) the intention of achieving a political objective, (4) the focus of violence must be a targeted audience that extends beyond the immediate victims who are often innocent civilians (usually account for as collateral damage), (5) in this case, government can be either the perpetrator or the target, and finally, (6) it is a form of insurgency usually favoured by the weak (Lutz & Lutz 2008). Hence, we aligned with Sinai's (2011) definition as:

Terrorism is a tactic of warfare involving premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated by subnational groups or clandestine agents against any citizen of a state, whether civilian or military, to influence, coerce, and if possible, cause mass casualties and physical destruction upon their targets. Unlike guerrilla forces, terrorist groups are less capable of overthrowing their adversaries' government than of inflicting discriminate or indiscriminate destruction that they hope will coerce them to change policy.

Currently, specific attempts to define terrorism can be grouped into two; official and academic definitions. Schmid & Jongman (2005) have compiled a number of official definitions of terrorism. According to them, the U.S. Vice President's 1986 task force defined terrorism as "the unlawful use or threat of violence against persons or property to further political or social objectives. It is generally intended to intimidate or coerce a government, individuals or groups to modify their behaviour or policies." A British legal definition as given by Schmid & Jongman (2005) has terrorism as "the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear." The US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives". The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) states that terrorism is "any activity that involves an act that is dangerous to human life or potentially destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources; and ... must also appear to be intended (i) to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, (ii) to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or (iii) to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping." The US Department of Defense (DoD) defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological objectives." Not surprisingly, three commonalities can be discerned from these definitions; (1) the use of violence, (2) political objectives; and (3) the intention of sowing fear in the target population.

However, academic definitions are rather more complex, all-embracing and more diverse. For instance, Hoffman (2006) has defined terrorism "as the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change, while Combs (2003) has defined it as "a synthesis of war and theatre, a dramatization of the most proscribed kind of violence – that which is perpetrated on innocent victims – played before an audience in the hope of creating a mood of fear, for political purposes." Nicholson (2003) has defined terrorism as "the deliberate killing of non-military personnel in order to pursue a claimed political goal through exertion of pressure on a society". Shimko (2008) has defined terrorism as "the indiscriminate use or threat of violence to advance social, political, economic, or religious objectives by creating a climate of fear." Rourke, (2008) has defined terrorism by attempting to highlight the features common to it thus; "terrorism is (1) violence; (2) carried out by individuals, non-governmental organisations, or covert government agents or units; that (3) specifically target civilians; (4) uses clandestine attack methods, such as car bombs and hijacked airliners; and (5) attempts to influence politics." Kegley & Wittkopf (1999) have defined it as "criminal acts and threats against a targeted actor for the purpose of arousing fear in order to get the target to accept the terrorists' demands." In all, Jenkins (1980) submits that terrorism should be defined "by the nature of the act, not by the identity of the perpetrators or the nature of their cause."

## METHODOLOGY

This paper adopted a case study method with which four cases were selected for qualitative analysis. One of the benefits of a case study method is that the cases can be evaluated in depth to provide a thorough body of evidence to support the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses. A 'Most Similar System Design' method was also adopted to examine each case study so as to identify similarities among them and areas of differences if any. Unlike the 'Most Different System Design' all the cases chosen have certain things in common. Four terrorist organizations, that is, Hamas, al-Qaeda, ISIS and Boko Haram were chosen for comparison. These cases were chosen in spite of the existence of other terrorist groups based on their listing as terrorist organizations as well as documented and publicized involvement of women within their organizations occupying strategic roles. Structured, focus comparison is used to compare variables across the four cases selected for this paper. George & Bennet (2005) have argued that focus comparison is effective because the process allows researchers to avoid the all too familiar and disappointing pitfalls of traditional, intensive single case studies. So, using this method, it was easier to note the similarities and difference between the selected cases.

### Islamic Revival Movement (Hamas)

Hamas is one of the arms or wings of the Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine, established on the eve of the first *intifada* (an Arabic word for 'civil uprising that literally means 'shaking off') (Agara, 2022), in December 1987 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Mahmoud Zahar as the Brotherhood's local political arm and with one specific purpose; to eliminate Israel as a nation and return all of Palestine to Islamic control. In fact, the Hamas Charter declares violence to be a legitimate means to use against Israel. Sheikh Yassin was the spiritual leader who founded the Islamic Center (al-Mujamma' al-Islami) in 1973 to coordinate the Brotherhood's activities in Gaza.

In 1988, Hamas published its charter, now known as the Hamas Charter, where its primary purpose was put in words. The document opens with verses from the Qur'an, claiming the superiority of Islam over other religions and stating clearly Hamas's stated motto in Articles 5 and 8 – "Allah is its goal, the Prophet its model to be followed, the Qur'an its constitution, Jihad its way, and death for the sake of Allah its loftiest desire". Also included in the Charter was the ominous warning that "Israel will exist, and will continue to exist, *until Islam abolishes it*". The Charter, from its preamble to the last article, stated its purpose clearly – the violent elimination of Israel as a people and a nation. Very clear from the wordings of the Charter is that Hamas does not want peace or offer or want any compromise with Israel. Rather, it will only agree to intermittent 'truces' when its military capabilities are not sufficiently strong enough and it needs time to recuperate and rearm – the practice and uses of deception. Thus, the various 'peace solutions' and 'conferences' are seen as a way to give the infidels power of arbitration over Moslem land but also to allow and give time to Hamas to rearm, reorganize and re-strategise before the continuation of the conflict.

After Hamas took over Gaza in 2006, it transformed from an underground guerilla organization into a uniformed terrorist organization designed to protect Gaza from outside influence. Yet, despite its unquestioned terrorist identity, Hamas seeks for and often obtains recognition and funding from Western powers. In June 2014, Hamas and Fatah announced their decision to form a unity government. Fatah is a secular group that was founded by Yasser Arafat and a small group of Palestinian nationalists in the late 1950s. Both its existence and purpose were a secular version of Hamas's and this secularist ideology had been roundly criticized by Hamas as being "in total contradiction to the religious ideology and ideas which are the basis of position, behavior and decisions" of Hamas. The secular Fatah had joined the jihadis group Hamas to govern the Palestinian territory together. This led to a new phase in the conflict which has been termed 'lawfare', meaning the abuse of international law and legal processes to accomplish military objectives that cannot be accomplished on the battlefield (Sekulow 2014).

While Hamas is considered as an extremely conservative organization, its use of women and the role they play in the organization has greatly surprised observers. The first recorded use of women was in the attack on a Sbarro pizzeria in 2001 in Israel in which 15 were killed and 130 wounded, of these were 8 children (Bloom

2011). The planner of the attack was Ahlam at-Tamimi, a woman who had earlier been involved in providing intelligence, and played a pivotal role in planning the operation, choosing the target, and even accompanying the bomber on a failed bombing attack (Bloom 2011). This portrayed Hamas as an organization that is willing to use women to promote their cause and carry out their terrorist acts. Its use of women is one that accords them some level of attention due to the “seeming incongruity of women, symbols of fertility and the gift of life intentionally taking the lives of others (Schweitzer 2008).

As a terrorist organization, Hamas falls within the nationalistic/religious side of the continuum rather than a purely political/secular group such as Fatah or the PLO. The avowed violence between it and Israel is the motivating influence that attracts most women in addition to some of them being exposed to and been victims of the violence between these two. Although, women may not have been allowed to take a leadership role, they are effective at increasing support and garnering media attention for both their plight and the population they represent.

## Al-Qaeda

The name ‘Al Qaeda’ (the Base) had become the focus of media attention since the August 1998 U.S. embassy bombings and has achieved a near mythical status by the fact that prior to the 9/11 incident, Osama bin Laden had never uttered the name. However, the origin of the name had been attributed to Abdallah Azzam who coined the term *al-qaeda al-sulbah* (the solid base) in 1988, in his bid to refocus his ambition of the reconquest of the Muslim world (Migaux, 2007). The killing of Azzam in Peshawar in 1989 created a leadership vacuum which brought Osama bin Laden into the limelight as one who would later give an impetus of a different sort to Al Qaeda and a new direction to the jihadist strategy (Migaux 2007).

Bin Laden’s main grouse and which he was able to sell to other movements subsequently was his opposition to the presence of Christian troops on Saudi soil which was necessitated by the invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi army in 1991 and which left the Saudi regime vulnerable to the invading Iraqi army. To prevent the possibility of a Saudi invasion, more than half a million international coalition soldiers, mainly Americans, were stationed in Saudi territory (Migaux 2007). Two of Islam’s three holiest sites are situated in Saudi – Mecca and Medina, the third being Jerusalem occupied by Israel since 1967. This development was unbearable for bin Laden who viewed it as a humiliation for all Moslems; the land of the prophet defiled by infidels. For bin Laden and other Muslim nationalists like him, the mere presence of Americans presented a two-fold act of aggression: the occupation of Saudi Arabia by infidel soldiers was seen as evidence of America’s desire to plunder the country’s wealth under the pretext of protecting it. America having thus humiliated all Muslims became their principal enemy and was also deemed responsible for the present state of apostasy of Saudi’s authorities. This formed the thrust of bin Laden’s grouse and which was later given a religious colouration.

Women in al-Qaeda do play a number of roles but quite a number of them are ‘invisible’ to public eyes but assist greatly the organisation in encouraging and supporting al-Qaeda’s next generation of terrorists. The leadership of al-Qaeda has embraced women as essential to play the roles of supporters, facilitators and promoters in carrying out jihad (von Knop 2006). They are allowed to act as recruiters and ideological supporters and through this role, they are responsible for raising and inducting new members with the ideology of the group. To this end, an online periodical – *al Khansaa* – is published by the Women’s Information Bureau with the sole aim of motivating women to participate in jihad by bringing up their children to be good jihadis and by being supportive of their husbands, brothers, and sons. The magazine indoctrinates that the goal of a woman is also to become a *shahid* (Muslim martyr) (von Knop 2006). Another online publication by the women – *Al-Shamihka* – means ‘Majestic Woman’ equal to serve similar purposes by urging and encouraging women who have lost their husbands, brothers or sons, to seek for revenge; what has become a common motivation for female participation in such organisations.

The participation of women in online discussions and forums portray them as playing the strong role of recruiters and they often support their husbands, brothers and extended male relatives, helping them to cope and endure the hardship associated with the difficulties of training, terrain and harsh conditions. There is no particular age preference for women as some have been found to be between 14 and 40 years. The expansive

nature of al-Qaeda helps in increasing its scope and recruitment pool and women's involvement certain varies depending on the affiliate they are with and the focus of the organisation.

## ISIS

While the PLO may be credited with the internationalization of terrorism, at least the ethnonational political dimension of it, the Al Qaeda would be credited with internationalizing the religious dimension. Of course, this is not to argue that there have not been instances of religious terrorism before the emergence of Al Qaeda but that religious terrorism now has a reference point in Al Qaeda. Al-Qaeda has now metamorphosed into many cells, among which is the Iraq (AQI) which has now turned into ISI (the Islamic State of Iraq) and with the forming of the new Caliphate has turned into ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).

The new Caliphate is crucial to ISIS and it is envisioned to be a unified, transnational government ruling over the entire Muslim community (the *ummah*). The conflict to install and establish this Caliphate will not end until all habitable land is conquered for Allah and hence, a single, global, Islamic state, also known as the Caliphate, is formed (Khadduri 2010). Hence, the Caliphate is the highest type of political organization on earth and its subjects derive their highest welfare through absolute obedience to its ordinances as given by Allah, the lawgiver, there is no place for a legislator and all human government exists only to enforce Allah's law. The age-long contestation and which has divided Muslims into two bodies – the Shi'as and the Sunnis – still posit a problem as to where the Caliph will come from (Agara & Imonie 2015). The dates back to the lack of explicit guideline on how to determine the successor to Muhammed and this has been the source of long-standing, bloody feud between the Sunnis and the Shi'as. While the Shi'as believe that the successor, caliph, must from the bloodline of the prophet, the Sunnis maintain that any believer may qualify for the office of caliph regardless of his lineage.

To date, ISIS has emerged not just as the most ruthless of all the Sunni jihadist organizations in Syria and Iraq, but also the most successful. Its ruthlessness in carrying out its jihadist mandate have made several terrorist organizations to distance themselves from it while some have even had to resist them violently (Sly 2013, Oddon 2014, and Knickmeyer 2014). Not alone are they ruthless, but they possess sufficient assets to support a standing military force, they are no longer a terrorist gang, but a terrorist army possessing greater striking power than al-Qaeda and every other terrorist force in the Middle East. As Sekulow et al (2014) have noted;

This terrorist army is proving to be irresistibly attractive to a subset of British and American Muslim men [and women] with hundreds (if not thousands) flocking to the black flag of jihad. By some estimates, up to three hundred Americans currently fight for ISIS, all of them now enemy combatants against their own country. Britain faces an even worse crisis, with more of its Muslim young men volunteering to fight for ISIS than volunteering to serve in their own country's armed forces.

In fulfilling its eschatological mandate, ISIS also utilizes and relies on women as sympathizers to provide basic logistic support including money, time, domestic chores such as sewing, cooking, providing safe haven and hideouts, sex and other duties that may be deemed necessary for the cause and their mujahedeen. They also act as spies to espied out probable targets and undertake missions such as running messages and as HUMIT to gather intelligence or as decoys to distract attention from their men during operations. It is more likely to suspect a single man than one that is accompanied by a woman posing as his wife or sister. The roles played by women in ISIS are very crucial and critical to the ability of any terrorist organization to function well and effectively. Women as female warriors and dominant forces operate more significantly and are more active when trained to handle weapons, make bombs and to execute terrorist's agenda and acts. The ISIS is especially dangerous because it has both the means and the will to carry out its assignments. So far, it is the best-equipped, richest terrorist force in the world.

## Boko Haram

Boko Haram belongs to one of the many sects in Islam and it is based largely in the North Eastern part of Nigeria. The group emerged as an arm of the Sahabab group in 1995 and its leader then was Abubakar Lawan



who later left the group to University of Medina for further study. The leadership of the group was later conceded to Muhammad Yusuf who immediately upon taking up the mantle of leadership changed the doctrine of the sect and came up with the appellation; 'Boko Haram'. At the initial stage, the sect was limited to Borno, Yobe, Katsina, Kaduna, Bauchi, Gombe and Kano states, but is now known to have members and sympathizers in virtually all of the other northern and middle belt states of Nigeria.

The name 'Boko Haram' was not original to the group. It has been known severally as the 'Yusufuya sect' while others called it Jamaatul Takfur Wal Hyra Ahlus Sunna, or Khawaarji or even Jamaatu Alhlisunnah Lidda'awatiwal Jihad. It is this last name the group approved of (Sanni, 2011). Yusuf was professed to have been mentored by Sheik Jafar Mohammed with whom he fell out on the basis of his militant doctrines and later declaring his mentor as an apostate, a death penalty in Islamic terms and the Sheik was subsequently shot dead on the eve of the 2007 election while leading the dawn prayer in his mosque at Kano. Although Yusuf himself had been reported as describing his movement as a non-militant group of youths who are simply bent on upholding the words of Allah, he nevertheless did state that they would rather die than to succumb to the present corrupt system in the country.

The popular name of the group projects its doctrines, aims and objectives, the ideological polemics of the group itself. 'Boko' is a Hausa term popular used for Western education or learning (that is book). It is actually a derivative from the Hausa 'Boka' (meaning 'sorcerer'). 'Haram' is Arabic for everything deemed as taboo, and so combined together, 'Boko Haram' actually translates to meaning Western education (and of course, everything connected to it including the civilization it fosters) are taboo. This captures in essence the basic doctrinal and ideological stand of the group.

As Sanni (2011) argued, the group emanated from an orthodox teaching slightly resembling those of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan and later accepted the ideology of Al Qaeda which shaped their doctrine of acceptance of everything western as an aberration or as un-Islamic. Their belief systems hold that banking, taxation and jurisprudence, the entire framework on which the modern state structure is built, are completely deemed infidel. The mixing of boys and girls under the same shade and the theory of evolution are all haram and so the system that allows these must be destroyed and annihilated. Boko Haram in selecting its target has kept to the broad target priorities of Al Qaeda which are American and Israeli Jews first, the British Jews and then French Jews and so on. The unifying factor here is that they are Western and Christians. As Hoffman (2008) has elaborated, in order of importance, the primary targets of Al Qaeda which Boko Haram had equally adopted are;

Americans, British, Spanish, Australians, Canadians, Italians. Within these categories there are further distinctions: businessmen, bankers and economists because money is very important in this age; followed by diplomats, politicians, scholars, analysts and diplomatic missions, scientists, associates and experts, military commanders and soldiers and lastly, tourists and entertainment missions and anybody that was warned by the mujahideen not to step in the lands of Moslem.

As part of their activities was the targeting of Christian students' worshippers in Bayero University (Kano State), the bombings of two churches in Jos and the warning by the Boko Haram that all southerners and Christians should leave the north forthwith. This is domesticating the broad strategy of Al Qaeda as quoted above. The obligations of a jihad are to wage, both defensive and offensive wars, against those termed as infidels (non-Muslims and even northerners), the Nigerian state, and apostates (those leaders that have been deemed as compromising and not following the true teaching of Islam), hence, fellow Muslims are not exempted. According to Islamic laws, it is lawful and legitimate for Muslim faithful to wage war anywhere and everywhere against four types of enemies; infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits. Of these four only the first two counts as a religious obligation for all Muslims, hence a jihad. An infidel is an unbeliever in the Islamic faith which can be converted either through peaceful means or through war and conquest. An apostate is a former believer who has either left the faith or renounced it for other religious beliefs.

As with the other terrorist organisations, Boko Haram has involved women in their repertoire of activities, particularly as suicide bombers. Probably because they were not making headway with propaganda and other

means of recruitment of female into their fold, another means they have perfected is kidnapping. Generally, the act of kidnapping is motivated by certain reasons, chief among these being money or some form of economic gains. However, Zannoni (2003) has proposed a distinction between kidnapping as a criminal act (with economic motivation), and as politically induced (with political motivation). A third distinction, which cuts across both criminal and political aspects of kidnapping is the religious reasons as exemplified by the Boko Haram terrorists. Nwanunobi (2017), on the other hand, has attempted to classify this act according to the purpose for which it is perpetrated. For instance, he sees kidnapping for ransom (commonly reported by the media) in Nigeria as more prevalent in the South-East and South-South (Niger-Delta), kidnapping for ritual (religious) purposes (uncommonly reported) as more prominent in the South-West and North-Central regions, while abduction (mostly unreported) as more prominent in the North-East and North-West region. Thus, whether it is viewed as politically, religiously or economically motivated, kidnapping has become a business in which all are involved and has closed the divide between organised crime and terrorism (Abadinsky, 2010).

Boko Haram kidnapped for all these three reasons, to score some political goals, for money (ransom) for weapons, and of course, for religious purpose, to add to the numbers of their membership. However, it's notoriety as kidnappers started in February 2013, with the abduction of a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon, which included four children (The Guardian, 19 April 2013). However, between February 2013 and May 2013, this kidnapping strategy started with the abductions of more than a dozen government officials and their families in Borno State. In May 2013, Boko Haram carried out a mass assault on a police barracks in Bama, Borno State in which 12 Christian women and children were abducted (Agence France-Presse, 13 May 2013).

Boko Haram achieved the interjection between criminal and religious/terrorist organizations' act of kidnapping of people for money in Nigeria with two prominent incidents. On Wednesday, April 16, 2014, over 100 innocent Nigerian school girls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Borno State were reported to have been kidnapped by Boko Haram. The students were abducted from their school located at Chibok Local Government of Borno State while preparing to write the Senior Secondary School Certificate examinations (SSCE) at about 9 pm (Vanguard Newspaper, Wed. April 16, 2014). The actual number of the girls abducted became controversial with the Vanguard Newspaper quoting Major General Chris Olukolade as reporting that only 8 girls was missing and that 14 of the abducted girls have escaped. The Vanguard Newspaper was later to report that the military has admitted the error in the numbers and collaborated the school's principal's report that about 129 students were abducted out of which only 14 were able to escape (See Vanguard Newspaper, Friday, April 18, 2014). The actual identity of the girls abducted also generated hues and cry but this was laid to rest when the Northern Christian Forum released about 180 names of some of the girls, many of which are Christians while asking for a N50million compensation for each of them (Guardian, Monday May 5).

For the criminal organisations, it is possible that greed and enrichment could be sufficient reasons for their involvement in kidnapping. However, for Boko Haram involvement, we need to look deeper, particularly, into the doctrinal basis and justification provided by Islam, because this provides them with the necessary justification to continue such act of kidnapping. Religious grounds and precepts have also provided perpetrators grounds and basis to justify violence against humanity. In this respect, virtually all religions are guilty only that some are guiltier than others (Agara, 2012). For instance, history is replete of the barbaric killings, pillage and destruction of human beings and property caused by Crusaders in the name of Christianity (Lewis, 1984). Today, Islam has taken over using the Qur'an and the Hadith as basis to perpetuate mass destructions of innocent victims in the name of a jihad. It is in this respect that religion, especially Islam, has become and used as a means rather than an end in itself thereby making religion ideological.

Of equal justificatory significance and importance is that according to the Muslim tradition, the world is divided into two houses; the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*) and the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*). The Chibok girls' abduction is justified under *Dar-al-Harb* which accepts that they are to be regarded as 'spoils of war' and as slaves. It is on this basis that the reference to the girls as spoils of war and as slaves in the video shown on social media found justification. The Qur'anic acceptance of slavery parallel that of the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible, but it also prescribed a just and humane treatment of slaves. In addition to their being treated well, fed and clothe, not punished severely, the Qur'an also urges owners whose slaves ask

for their freedom to give them the opportunity to buy it (Segal, 2001, p. 35, Esposito, 1988, p. 45). Women slaves serve as concubines and in Muslim societies their sexual services are not considered degrading. Of equal importance is the kidnapping of women for the purpose of providing a ready source of female for coercive sexual relations and sex economies under duress. Obviously, while it is possible to conceive of young men joining criminal organisations because of the lure of money and the easy good life it offers, the lure to join terrorist groups like Boko Haram can only be due to an affinity of the group's ideological underpinnings and what this stand for or implied.

Just as Zoe (2014) has noted, it is incredibly difficult to keep these virile young men living a life of violence and insecurity perpetually in the bush without access to sex, women and the social trappings of manhood. In consonance with Muslim belief and culture, a sexually frustrated person is dangerous to the community, hence, Islam vehemently abhors sexual abstinence and expects that every man and woman, unless physically or financially incapable, should marry and be sexually active. As such, kidnapping women fulfils this crucial military, social and religious role. They are necessary to keep the men fully motivated and if the only way to acquire them is by kidnapping, then so be it.

Maiangwa and Agbiboa (2014) have noted that this tendency is not peculiar not is it exclusive to Boko Haram alone. For instance, as they have shown, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been known to kidnap and abduct 'wives' for its commanders in raids that have spanned well over three decades. Going by the example of Sierra Leone, particularly during the years of protracted conflicts (1991-2001), 'operation fine girl' was a regular occurrence during which young girls and women were regularly kidnapped and abducted, forced into sexual servitude or into marriage with members and commanders. Thus, for the terrorists, sexual violence becomes a weapon against the government and the civilian populace, both to instil fear and a sense of insecurity as well as a demonstration of its power and impunity (Witness 2001). To avoid sexual violence and the horror of being repeatedly raped by whosoever desire sex, following witness reports, many of the girls have learnt to opt for becoming sexual property of specific males – a phenomenon that is commonly known as 'bush marriages' or 'AK-47 marriages' (Maiangwa and Agbiboa, 2014; Denoy and Maclure, 2006). This succinctly paints the picture why Boko Haram deliberately looks out for girls to kidnap and what the captured girls have to go through in order to survive the ordeal of being captives and 'slaves.' It goes without saying, therefore, that the more the male membership grows numerically, the more the urgent need to find and provide sexual outlets for them. Hence kidnapping and abductions of female and women may persist indefinitely.

The abduction and kidnapping of the Chibok girls had been further justified by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, which had been linked to the training of Boko Haram militants, because of what they perceived as the Nigerian government abuses against Muslims. Since the group's stand against Western education is well orchestrated, educating women is seen as the ultimate slap in their collective faces. Hence, in a perverse logic, the girls were seen as being rescued from the Nigerian state injustices of subjecting them to Western education. On one of its Facebook handle (*Al-Andalus*), the Al-Shabaab group has equally asked its followers and sympathizers to comment on the fate of the abducted girls; whether (1) they should be released unconditionally, or (2) they should be given freedom for a ransom, or (3) they be given to jihadists so that 200 more boys can be born to join the mujahideen (Thomas and Ahmed 2014). Ironically, all these three options are well endowed by and permissible under Sharia Law and the Hadith if the girls are labelled as unbelievers or infidels

## CONCLUSION

In concluding this paper, it is interesting to note that women play a variety of roles, sometimes even more than men, in terrorist organizations. Men do feature mainly as combatants, leaders, and planners, whereas women, because of their natural advantage over men, feature in many other roles that men cannot apparently featured. Women's role has been categorized into four broad categories (Mahan & Griset, 2008). A brief description of each category is pictorially presented below.

SYMPATHISERS	SPIES
Basic Logistics Support	Running Messages

Money Time Food Safe Haven Sex with Male Terrorist	Gathering Intelligence Serving as Decoys
<b>WARRIORS</b>  Execute Terrorist Acts Weapons Bomb Making Execute Terrorist Events	<b>DOMINANT FORCES</b>  Play a Prominent Role Leadership Establish Policy

The implication of this goes a long way for devising effective counterterrorism strategy and policies that will be relevant to solve the new threat posed by women's involvement. We conclude on a note of caution; that there is a great possibility that Boko Haram may be abducting girls and women to use as future recruiters or suicide bombers. In espionage parlance, they are called 'sleepers' who can be 'awakened' later in the future for certain jobs such as suicide bombing or targeted assassination. The Russian KGB had many of such 'sleepers' deliberately planted in America as American children and families during the heydays of the Cold War. This submission has been vindicated by recent news reports from the dailies (June 4, 2014) which have actually showed pictures of two women who were arrested for recruiting for Boko Haram. Other reports are indicative of this possibility. For instance, since 2013, with a change in tactics by the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), male supporters of Boko Haram have become uniquely vulnerable to detention and abuse. The vulnerability of male supporters to arrest and detention has also initiated a similar change and responsive shift in Boko Haram tactics. Women are now being used as 'mule' by Boko Haram for obvious reasons.

Many instances of this have been captured and documented. In June 2013, an AK-47, a pistol and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were found with two 'shivering' veiled women in Maiduguri (Vanguard News, 30 June 2013). Two months later, two women hiding rifles in their clothing were among five suspected Boko Haram militants who were arrested by the security forces (The Guardian Nigeria, August 2013). Also, in August 2013, a woman was detained alongside a 35-year-old male Boko Haram suspect (Vanguard News, 17 August 2013). Additionally, male Boko Haram members have reportedly disguised themselves as women in veils in order to evade arrest. In one case, in July 2013, three men dressed as veiled women were killed, and around twenty others arrested, in an attempted attack on a police station (Daily Trust, 6 July 2013).

This adaptive response of using women as instruments is not exclusive to Boko Haram but rather showed that they have been properly trained in the world-wide strategy of religious terrorism. In Iraq, for example, women were similarly deployed to smuggle arms and execute suicide bombings, during a clamp-down on Al-Qaeda in the mid-2000s (Sjoberg & Gentry 2011, Bloom 2011). This instrumental use of women is to exploit and capitalise on women's superior ability to evade security checks, cache weapons in clothing, and attract less suspicion as suicide bombers. This tactical use of women has a historical antecedent as evidenced in liberation campaigns such as the Algerian resistance against the French, in which women were initially ordered to smuggle weapons (Minne & Clarke 2007, Horne 2002). It is also reminiscent of the behaviour of rebel movements in conflict zones in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, in tactically exploiting women. Civil conflicts in Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Rwanda have all witnessed gender-based violence (GBV) in the abduction, sexual violence and forced marriage and conscription of enemy women into insurgent groups (Mazurana & McKay 2003, Turshen 2001, and Coulter et al 2008).

If the abduction of women by Boko Haram is tactical, other violence against Christian women appears primarily punitive. In Maiduguri, in August 2013, a Christian student reported an attack by Boko Haram on her university accommodation: the men were murdered, the women segregated into Muslim and non-Muslims, and the Christian women systematically raped (Barkindo et al 2013). Such attacks on Christian women by Boko Haram can be regarded as an extension of other institutionalised and long-term discriminatory practices against them in northern regions (Onapajo & Uzodike 2012). Women have faced broad discriminatory practices in both the professional and domestic spheres. They have been targeted in acid-attacks for 'un-Islamic' practices,



such as a failure to wear the hijab, or for taking a job (Turaki 2010). Women are also often accused of ‘dishonouring Islam’. In 2006, riots ensued in which more than 50 Christians were killed, mostly women and children, after a Christian female teacher confiscated a Qur’an from a student in Bauchi (Alao 2009). This generic culture of discrimination against Christians has enabled the escalation in recent violence.

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