Boko Haram's Feminization, Minorization, and Cyberization of Terrorism:
Offering the Cyberterrorism Diffusion Model as Anti-Bokoharamism Tool

Adamkolo Mohammed Ibrahim

(iD) https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1662-7054

University of Maiduguri, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Now, it is no longer any news that Boko haram is dreaded because of its brute acts of terrorism — killing everybody indiscreetly, regardless of faith, gender, age or social status despite the group's claims that it's activities are for Islamic proselytization, a claim that most orthodox Muslims the world over have unanimously condemned. However, over the last four years, whatever killing the group perpetrates is perceived by the public as comparatively less dreadful as a boom of a successfully perpetrated suicide attack. This is because following the weakening over the last couple of years (2016 to 2018) of the terrorists by Nigerian joint military troops, they resorted to using a subtler guerrilla war tactic: laying ambush to Nigerian troops convoys (mostly in remote areas), overrunning and pillaging military camps, bases and even barracks as well as attacking and sometimes laying ambush to motorcades of humanitarian aid personnel zigzagging vulnerable communities in the area. But this subtle war tactic seldom yields large number of casualties as the group would want (given the nature of the targets) compared to suicide bomb attacks which often occur in crowded public places like markets and mosques; hence, people tend to be scared more by suicide attacks, and hence the terrorists' infatuation for girl captives and their preference for suicide bombing as a tool for terrorism (Elden, 2014; GTI, 2017, 2016; UNICEF, 2016a).

So far, the nine-year insurgency has had a devastating effect on the society and people — dozens of thousands have been killed, more than a million others have been forced from their homes and properties worth billions of Dollars have been destroyed (*The Independent*, 2017). Scholars and experts have viewed the attack methodologies adopted by the militants from various perspectives with a view to analysing them and proffering solutions to the protracted insurgency for peace to be restored in the society. Whenever war against terrorism is discussed, the issue of 'sustainable peace' cannot be overlooked. Societies may survive relative peaceful atmosphere but effective social, economic, political and cultural development can only be achieved when there is sustainable peace (Abdulazeez, 2017; Ibrahim & Hassan, 2017).

Currently, the dominant paradigm being employed by the Government in the fight against terrorism has largely been militarized action. Despite the flaws observed in this approach especially human rights abuse by the military, a tremendous success has been achieved within the last couple of years, from 2016 to 2017. The employment of military option to combat insurgency and terrorism may be able to 'enforce' peace, or restore peace through gun nozzle. But an 'enforced' peace (as is being done by Nigerian troops fighting Boko haram) may be difficult to last long (Abdulazeez, 2017). Hence, the need for a multifaceted approach to combat terrorism in Nigeria and worldwide. Historically, over the
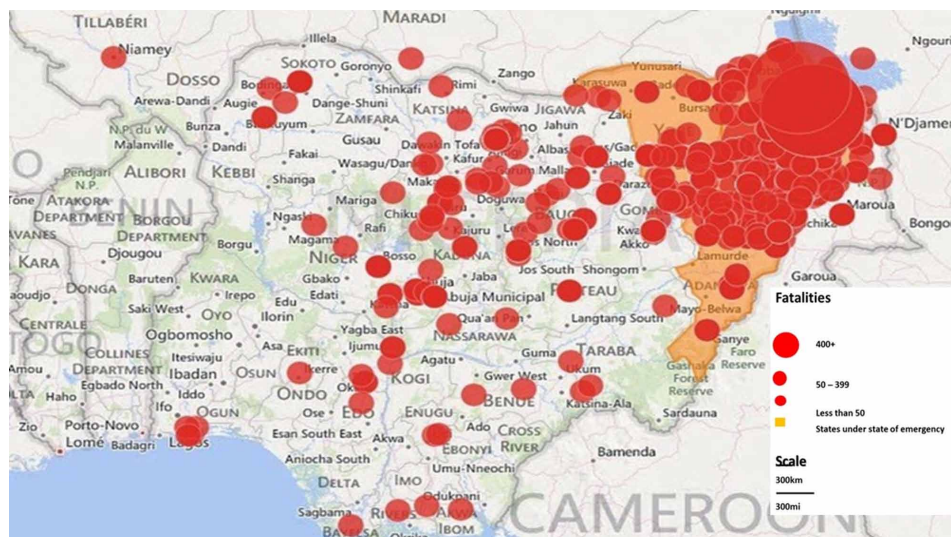
last decade, terrorists have been striving to have a digital footprint in cyberspace (GTI, 2017; Khayat, 2015), this chapter suggests a research model to address issues surrounding cyber terrorism and conflict.

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BACKGROUND

A study carried out in the United States (US) has shown that Boko haram's gendered and youth-centric terrorism ballooned after the group understood what *CNN* (2017) reports, "the potency that gender and youth offer in raising its global profile," after the 14 April 2014 kidnapping of the 276 Chibok school-girls, an incident that prompted the 'Bring Back Our Girls' campaign globally. Boko haram has not only realized that leaning against the screen of gender and youth-centrism by using children (mostly girls) as suicide bombers can raise its global profile but also obviously resolved to make this innovative-tactic a tradition and lead other terror groups around the world in the use of children and women as suicide bombers, a phenomenon that, according to Warner and Matfess (2017 August), has shattered demographic stereotypes as to what a suicide bomber looks like.

Since 2009, when it started its terrorism in north-eastern Nigeria (see Figure 1), Boko haram has notoriously achieved two ironic attributes: (i) being the deadliest terror group in the world (even out-stripping ISIL and Al-Shabab) from 2014-2015, and (ii) being the first terror group in human history to pioneer the use of more female suicide bombers than male. Available records have shown that Boko haram, a terrorist group that pledged allegiance to ISIL in March 2015 started using suicide bombers on April 8, 2011, that is, about two years after it began insurgence at Suleja town in the Nigerian state of Niger. The attack claimed nine lives including those of eight National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members (Warner & Matfess, 2017 August). The group started to use women suicide bombers on a large scale in 2014, two months after the Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping. Since then, no other terrorist group in history has used as many female suicide bombers as Boko haram. This incident, "which proved to the beginning of a terrible end" (Meservey, 2018, paragraph 3, n.p.) was first broke to the world in October 2015 by a global geopolitical intelligence outfit, Stratfor.

Figure 1. A map showing areas of Boko haram attacks in Nigeria and neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger, with concentration of the attacks in the country's northeast (Los Angeles Time, 2014)

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