

DYNAMIC TERRORIST STRATEGY: A
CASE STUDY OF ISIS IN SYRIA AND
BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Over the years, terrorist organizations have established various networks across the world and have inspired new ideas causing a rise in terrorist activities. This research examines the comparison of terrorist groups in Nigeria and Syria. The research focuses on different attack types and weapon types these terrorist groups utilize in different parts of their region. The fundamental question is: are the attack types in Nigeria by the Boko Haram group different from the ISIS group? This paper sets out to analyze the similarities and differences between these groups. The conclusion suggests measures the United States can adopt to restrict the activities of these terrorist groups.

Keywords: Terrorism; Boko Haram; ISIS; Syria; Nigeria; Islamic extremism

INTRODUCTION:

Terrorism has become an emerging trend in the world. It has evolved and has become more sophisticated and coordinated. This has also increased the activities of both domestic and international terrorist groups to expand their operations in different parts of the world. According to a recent statistic, the “Global Market Institute (GMI) poll conducted in 2006 among 8,001 respondents in the US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, UK, Russia, and Japan showed that fear of terrorism is a preeminent issue in all G8 countries.”¹ Assessing the waves of terrorism over time, there have been different ‘cycles’ starting from the first wave, which is seen as the creation of doctrine and developing into the second wave, which ultimately extends its presence around the world. The third wave of terrorism essentially saw a rise of internationalism by the terrorist organizations, and the fourth wave, which is currently the modern wave centers around religious elements due to the overlap of religious and ethnic identities.² A vivid description of modern terrorism suggests,

“Today’s religion has a vastly different significance, supplying justifications and organizing principles for a state. The religious wave has produced an occasional secular group – a reaction to excessive religious zeal..... Islam is at heart of the wave. Islamic groups have conducted the most significant, deadly, and profoundly international attacks. Equally significant, the political events providing the hope for the fourth wave originated in Islam and the successes achieved apparently influenced religious terror groups elsewhere.”³

¹ Olanrewaju, John. "Globalization of Terrorism: A case study of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 6 (2015): 2

² Rapoport, David C. "The four waves of modern terrorism." *Attacking terrorism: Elements of a grand strategy* (2004): 46-61.

A wave is a cycle of activity in a given time period. A wave is composed of organizations, but waves and organizations have different life rhythms. Normally, organizations disappear before initial wave associated with them does.

³ Ibid, 2

Over the years, the Middle East has been viewed as the region ‘baptized with fire’. Many of these terrorist activities have emanated from that region. However, after the 9/11 attack, the United States declared war on Iraq as possessing a weapon of mass destruction and holding the Al-Qaeda group responsible for the 9/11 attacks. However, terrorism in Africa has been present, but the rise of terrorism in West Africa is a new development. In relation to the world, “no region in the world has been spared, and Africa is one of the hardest-hit regions partly due to other developmental issues that help intensify the consequences of terrorism.”⁴ Looking at the regions most affected by terrorist activities, Iraq is the top-ranked country followed by Afghanistan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Syria⁵. By looking at these rankings, the top two countries are middle eastern countries, i.e., Iraq and Syria, with an African country, Nigeria. This shows that modern terrorism is dynamic coupled with the presence of networks enabling these terrorist groups to establish an extensive chain of networks. Different tactics are being used by these terrorist groups ranging from locally made weapons to acquiring sophisticated weapons to carry out their attack.

This research is important to the counterterrorism field because it captures the characteristics of ISIS and Boko Haram and the similarities or differences between these terrorist groups. Albeit, these groups are from different part of the world, we can assess the attack types and the types of weapons these terrorist groups use. ISIS has been known to have a strong backing of state-sponsored figures like Iran. In the case of Boko Haram, “it is relatively easy to

⁴ Olanrewaju, John. "Globalization of Terrorism: A case study of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 6 (2015): 2.

⁵ Dudley, Dominic. “The Ten Countries Most Affected By Terrorism.” Forbes. Forbes Magazine, November 18, 2016. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2016/11/18/countries-most-affected-by-terrorism/#1ed74fd230d9>.

understand where Boko Haram's money has been coming from in recent years. Bank robberies and kidnappings have provided Boko Haram a substantial amount of money"⁶ Funds are a key part of a terrorist group's existence. Understanding the strategic trend of these terrorist groups will give a better understanding of how they operate. In this modern terrorism, counterterrorism measures must be continually updated to combat terrorist activities. This is also important for policymakers to aid in better decision making.

For this research, Boko Haram and ISIS were selected because, over the past decade, there have been numerous attacks by these terrorist groups. Additionally, the research limited the case study to developing countries. Both terrorist organizations originate from developing countries with a weak democracy. Nigeria is known to have a hybrid democracy regime, while Syria is known for its authoritarian regime."⁷ This research adds to the terrorism literature by examining the different attack types and weapon types and proposing some measures to restrict the activities of these terrorist groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEORETICAL EXPLANATION TO VIOLENCE

To explain interstate and intrastate violence, scholars have proposed some set of theories to explain this phenomenon. Two theories, namely: (i) **state failure theory** and (ii) **conflict theory**

⁶ L., Jason. "The Funding of Boko Haram and Nigeria's Actions to Stop It." Calhoun Home. Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, December 16, 1970. <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/51603>.

⁷ "The Economist Intelligence Unit." EIU Democracy Index 2018 - World Democracy Report. Accessed October 23, 2019. <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>.

fits the context in explaining the cause of violence of Boko Haram and ISIS independently.

Starting with the state failure thesis to the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria,

“Nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence, and as a result are unable to provide security and positive political goods to their citizens. These political goods include security, education, healthcare, infrastructures, employment opportunities, and a legal framework for law and order. Once the state is unable to perform these primary responsibilities, it loses its legitimacy in the eyes of the citizens, many of whom will then naturally transfer their allegiances to more responsive authority groups or figures – religious, clan, or group leaders-while others will go even further by becoming terrorists.”⁸

The role of the state is pivotal in the smooth running of the government. Without the population and a defined institution, a state cannot exist. Since the independence of Nigeria in 1960, there have been regimes mostly under the military control until 1999 when a democratic model was introduced and currently in practice till the present. Despite the “so-called” democracy in Nigeria, there has always been a “general discontent in the country from an army of unhappy, despondent, impoverished, or aggrieved citizens, some of whom are clearly choosing a terrorist path”⁹ Since Nigeria’s adoption of democracy, there has been a continuous failure of government to meet the needs of the people, hence, terrorist groups like Boko Haram have “exploited this failure by coopting disaffected youth to pursue its radical religious and ideological objectives.”¹⁰ Exploiting these channels has also added to their relentless intrusion of the Nigerian border and neighboring border by smuggling ammunition to sabotage the country.

⁸ Maiangwa, Benjamin, Ufo Okeke Uzodike, Ayo Whetho, and Hakeem Onapajo. ““Baptism by Fire”: Boko Haram and the Reign of Terror in Nigeria.” *Africa Today* 59, no. 2 (2012): 42-43.

⁹ Ibid, 8

¹⁰ Ibid, 9

In relation to the ISIS group in Syria, the conflict theory best explains the emergence of violence of this group. The conflict theory states that “when a group’s shared grievances about marginalization are combined with a strong sense of group identity, there is a tendency for the outburst of violent responses against the source of their marginalization.”¹¹ In an attempt to figure out the creation of ISIS,

“most historians of the Islamic State agree that the group emerged out of al-Qaeda in Iraq as a response to the U.S. invasion in 2003. Narratives about the origins of Islamic State ideology often focus on the fact that Zarqawi and Osama bin Laden, both Sunni extremists, diverged on the idea of fighting Shiites and on questions of *takfir*, or excommunication. Such differences, the story goes, were reinforced in Iraq and eventually led to the split between ISIS and al-Qaeda”¹²

This forced a split among these terrorist groups making ISIS independent on itself. It is important to note that albeit, al-Qaeda and ISIS are different terrorist organizations, there is a shared ideology between these groups. One of which is the “shared obligation to perform jihad by all able-bodied Muslims. Both organizations also portray the West (particularly the United States) and its allies as nations that are hostile to Muslims. Additionally, they frame their ideologies within the house of war and Islam.”¹³ Looking at the overall picture, ISIS spurned out of conflict with both its local rival, al-Qaeda, and the United States.

¹¹ Ibid, 10

¹² Hassan, Hassan. “The True Origins of ISIS.” The Atlantic. Atlantic Media Company, January 7, 2019. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/11/isis-origins-anbari-zarqawi/577030/>.

¹³ Fink, Naureen Chowdhury, Benjamin Sugg, Janhavi Apte, Hayat Larbi Caro, Philip Obaji Jr., Aïssata Athie, Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, and Esfandiyar Batmanghelidj. “A Tale of Two Jihads: Comparing the Al-Qaeda and ISIS Narratives.” IPI Global Observatory, March 3, 2015. <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2015/02/jihad-al-qaeda-isis-counternarrative/>.

TYOLOGY OF TERRORISM RELATING TO BOKO HARAM AND ISIS:

RELIGIOUS TERRORISM:

The modern terrorism, also known as ‘Fourth Wave’ or ‘Religious Wave,’ has overwhelming characteristics that sustain its dominancy. Religious elements have always been important in modern terror because religious and ethnic identities overlap. “Islam is at the heart of the wave.”¹⁴ There is the fact that religion dictates the modern-day terrorist activities. Boko Haram and ISIS both adhere to the Islamic doctrine and following the rules of the holy book, albeit, some refer them as having alternate Islamic doctrine.

In most cases, religious terrorists are subject to immersed religious teachings, which serve as an encouragement and factor of justifying their behavior. Over the last decade, there have been various religious terrorist groups developing from different countries. For example, the common terrorist groups, al-Qaeda and ISIS, but there are other groups as well as functioning in other countries. Below is a list showing some terrorist groups and their origin.

<i>Name of Terrorist Organization</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Nature of Group</i>
Boko-Haram	Nigeria	Islamic Extremist
ISIS	Syria & Iraq	Islamic Extremist
Al-Qaeda	Iraq	Islamic Extremist
Hezbollah	Lebanon	Islamic Extremist
IS Guard Corps	Iran	Islamic Extremist

Source: Compiled by the author of the research project

¹⁴ Rapoport, David C. "The four waves of modern terrorism." *Attacking terrorism: Elements of a grand strategy* (2004): 61.

Assessing the above table, it is overwhelming to see that most of these terrorist groups are Islam extremist based. This leads me back to the definition of the current terrorism era, which we are in and how it is overwhelmingly religious. Boko-Haram and ISIS are both Islamic extremist groups, which make the case that their approach is through violence and belief in their extreme ideology.

UNDERSTANDING BOKO-HARAM AND ISIS

ORIGIN:

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, popularly known as Boko Haram hail from the northeast part of Nigeria. It can be traced back as early as 1995 in a movement called 'Sahaba' which was led by Abubakar Lawan, but subsequently conceded Mohammed Yusuf. During Yusuf's era of leadership, he made changes to the cleric's doctrine and managed to gain huge followership mostly comprised of youths from less privileged families within the age range of 17 – 30 years¹⁵ As part of his effort to advance this movement,

“Yusuf had established a mosque and a school in the northern city of Maiduguri for the propagation and indoctrination of the group's belief system. The bulk of students were from Borno in northern Nigeria and the country's neighbors Niger, Cameroon, and Chad”¹⁶

¹⁵ James, Adewunmi. “The Nature of Nigeria's Boko Haram War, 2010-2015: A Strategic Analysis.” SSRN, January 18, 2014. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2380234.

¹⁶ Ibid, 15

Yusuf took additional measures to spread his ideology in other neighboring northern states such as Katsina, Yobe, and Gombe. After the demise of Mohammed Yusuf, the interim leader, Abubakar Shekau assumed the role of leadership of the terrorist organization¹⁷. Under the command of Shekau, the group redefined their ideology regarding their strategy of operations. As part of their ideology declaration, he said,

“We are spread across 36 states in Nigeria, and Boko Haram is just a version of Al-Qaeda, which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is completely converted to Islam, which is according to the wish of Allah”¹⁸

At this point, it was clear that Boko Haram wanted an international reach, and steps taken by the leader of the group proved that. Shekau’s leadership has propelled the terrorist group’s label into one of the most notorious terrorist groups in the world today. Looking at the distressed part of Nigeria, the northern part of the country is the main operating hub of the terrorist group. Albeit, some attacks have been recorded in other parts of Nigeria, but the northern part has the highest attacks recorded.

On the other hand, there is a different context in which the origin of ISIS can be traced, but the literature highlights that ISIS broke out of the Jihadist rise in Iraq. As said best, “ISIS developed out of a string of predecessor insurgent organizations that operated in Iraq between 2003 and 2013”¹⁹ ISIS is believed to be a merger of AQI (al-Qaeda of Iraq), the Mujahideen

¹⁷ The Origins of Boko Haram. “New African no. 538 (2018): 31-33.

¹⁸ “Boko Haram's International Reach.” Perspectives on Terrorism. Accessed November 1, 2019. <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/326/html>.

¹⁹ Hove, Mediel. “Middle East: The Origins of the Islamic State (ISIS).” *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, no. 23 (October 2018): 3–22. <https://doi.org/10.24193/csq.23.1>.

Shura Council of Iraq and Jund al-Sahhaha (Soldiers of Prophet's Companions)²⁰. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is believed to be the group's leader and formed the ISIS. Before ISIS became independent, Zarqawi and Osama Bin Laden became allies during the Jihad in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the two leaders, Zarqawi and Bin Laden, had some differences in ideas, which led to friction between these terrorist leaders and was forced to establish his independent group. After the death of Zarqawi in 2006, al-Masri emerged and advocated for the then 'ISI' group. After his death, Al-Baghdadi took over the group and transformed it into "a classic-styled terrorist group built on an underground organization"²¹ Al-Baghdadi was an Islamic scholar who encouraged the killing of people as a characteristic of being a good Muslim. By 2014, ISIS rebranded itself the Islamic State following its proclamation of a Caliphate in the areas it conquered in Iraq and Syria. Under the leadership of Al-Baghdadi, ISIS gained new heights and has established affiliations with terrorist groups in Nigeria, Syria, Egypt and even Iraq. On the 27th of October 2019, the United States military conducted a military operation where it was reported that Al-Baghdadi detonated a suicide vest that killed him. Moments after the incident, a new leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Qurayshi, was named the new leader of ISIS.

FUNDING:

In terms of Boko-Haram's funding, there have been different avenues by which these groups fund their activities/operations. During the group's initial creation, membership dues were the

²⁰ Ibid, 19

²¹ Ibid, 20

main source of funding. The membership fee at that time was 100 naira, which was equivalent to \$1 US dollar. There are possibilities the membership dues must have increased over the years. Another source of funding was external assistance from individuals within and outside the community. Boko-Haram funded their organizations through bank robberies. Finally, they also acquire wealth from donations from politicians and affiliates in the country²². In the cases of ISIS, they also have different sources by which they can fund their operations and reward the workers. One of the most common ways is through the black-market antiquity sale. The terrorist group partakes in the illegal sale of treasures and artifacts. Additionally, they engage in oil smuggling, and they also engage in trafficking

DATA SECTION

The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world since 1970 (currently updated through 2018). Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematic data on international as well as domestic terrorist incidents that have occurred during this period and now includes over 190,000 cases. For each GTD incident, information is available on the date and location of the incident, the weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and -- when identifiable -- the identity of the perpetrator²³. For this research, data for Boko Haram and ISIS were considered,

²² Olanrewaju, John. "Globalization of Terrorism: A case study of Boko Haram in Nigeria." *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance* 6 (2015): 13

²³ "Global Terrorism Database (GTD)." Global Terrorism Database (GTD) | START.umd.edu. Accessed November 2, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/global-terrorism-database-gtd>.

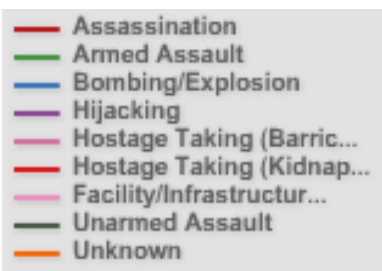
and an aggregate dataset was utilized was used to answer some of the questions in this research. The data set for ISIS was limited as there were few cases reported. Inquest to answer some research puzzle, I propose this hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: In comparing the aggregate attack types in general, the attack type in Africa will be different from the attack type in the Middle East due to the inclusion of other terrorist events.

Using the data obtained by GTD, we start by analyzing the attack types by Boko Haram and ISIS terrorist groups. By attack type, we mean violent methods used by these terrorist groups to carry out their acts. The graph below shows the attack types between Boko-Haram and ISIS and their distribution into each category.

Note: The Global Terrorism Database began in 2001 when the Pinkerton Global Intelligence Services (PGIS) donated an archive of handwritten records to researchers at the University of Maryland. PGIS trained researchers- mostly retired Air Force personnel to identify and record information about terrorist attacks from wire services, government reports and major international newspapers in order to assess the risk of terrorism for their clients.

PGIS lost data for 1993 in an office move and these data have never been fully recovered.



Source: "Global Terrorism Database (GTD)." Global Terrorism Database (GTD) | START.umd.edu. Accessed November 2, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/global-terrorism-database-gtd>

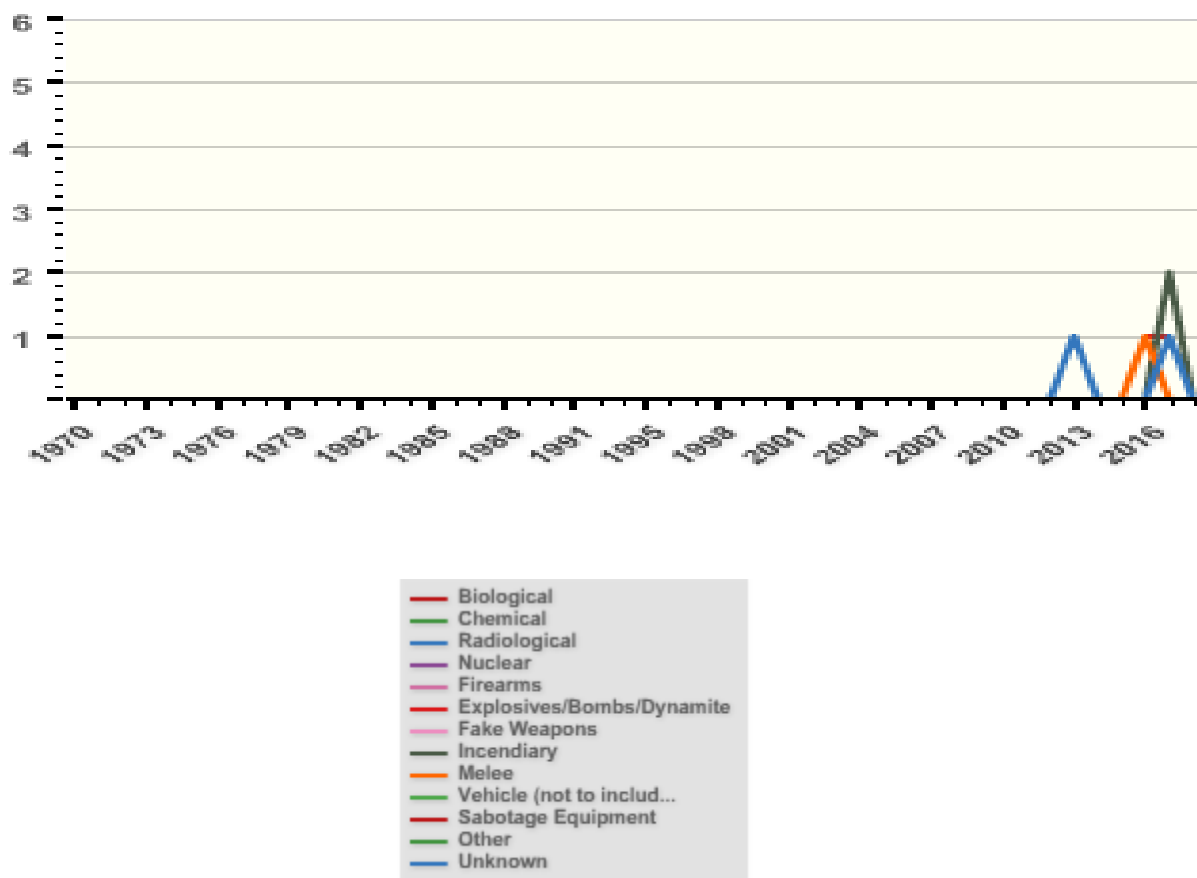
As shown above, the graph shows the attack types utilized by these two terrorist groups. Starting with the Boko-Haram group, the most common attack type used is armed assault. According to the dataset, there are over one thousand cases of armed assault by Boko-Haram. The next popular attack type is bombing, and the third common type is the facility or infrastructural damage. In the case of ISIS, the most common attack type is bombing or explosion, which is consistent with media representation. This is followed by facility or infrastructure damage, and there is an equal attack type statistic for assassination, hostage apprehension, and unarmed assault by ISIS.

TABULAR SUMMARY OF THE ATTACK TYPES

ATTACK TYPES	
Boko Haram	ISIS
Armed Assault	Bombing/Explosion
Bombing	Facility/Infrastructure Damage
Facility/Infrastructure Damage	Assassination / Hostage / Unarmed Assault

Compiled by the author of this research

ISIS WEAPON TYPES



The table shows the weapon types utilized by Boko-Haram and ISIS in order of popularity. Starting with Boko-Haram, the most popular weapon type is explosives. This is followed by firearms, Incendiary (This means attacks designed to cause a fire), Melee (Irregular pattern of premeditated fights), Vehicles, and Chemical weapons. In the case of ISIS, explosives seem to be the most popular weapon used, followed by Incendiary and Melee.

SUMMARY OF WEAPON TYPES

WEAPON TYPES	
BOKO-HARAM	ISIS
Explosives	Explosives
Firearms	Incendiary
Incendiary	Unknown
Melee	Melee
Chemical Attacks	
Vehicle	

Compiled by the author of this research

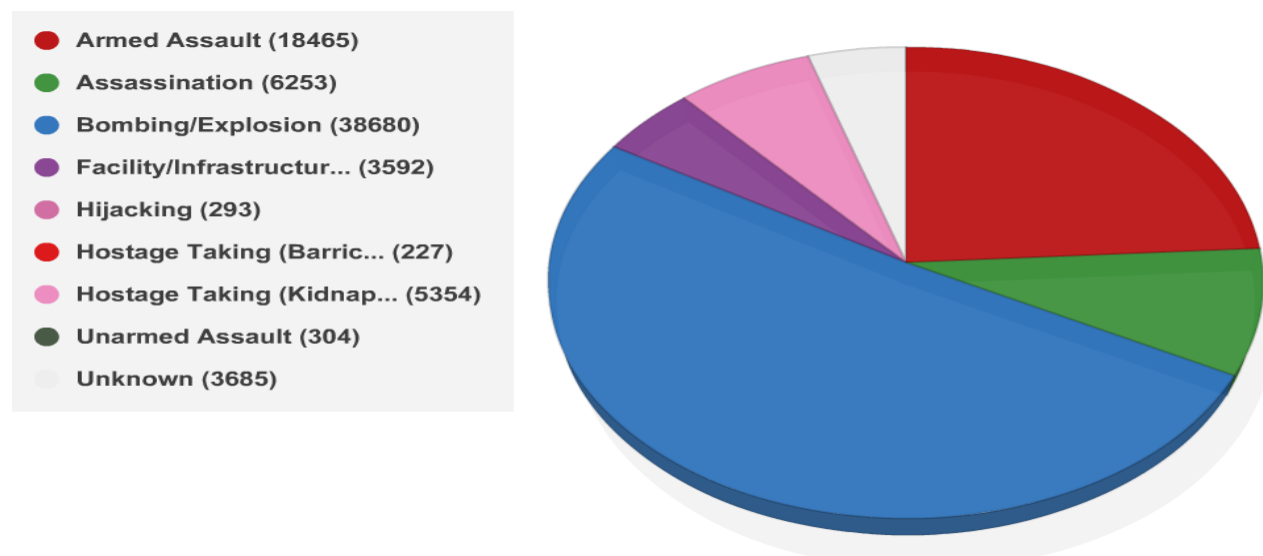
In comparing the weapon types by these two terrorist organizations, it is logical to conclude, using the data, that there are no differences in preference type over the choice of weapon. The weapon choices are the same for the two terrorist organizations in this research. Although, while Boko-Haram has an additional variety of weapon types like Vehicle and Chemical, we cannot underestimate ISIS threat and their capability. It can be argued that ISIS is yet to fully establish its operation record after seceding from al-Qaeda in 2014 to become an independent terrorist group.

HYPOTHESIS RESULT

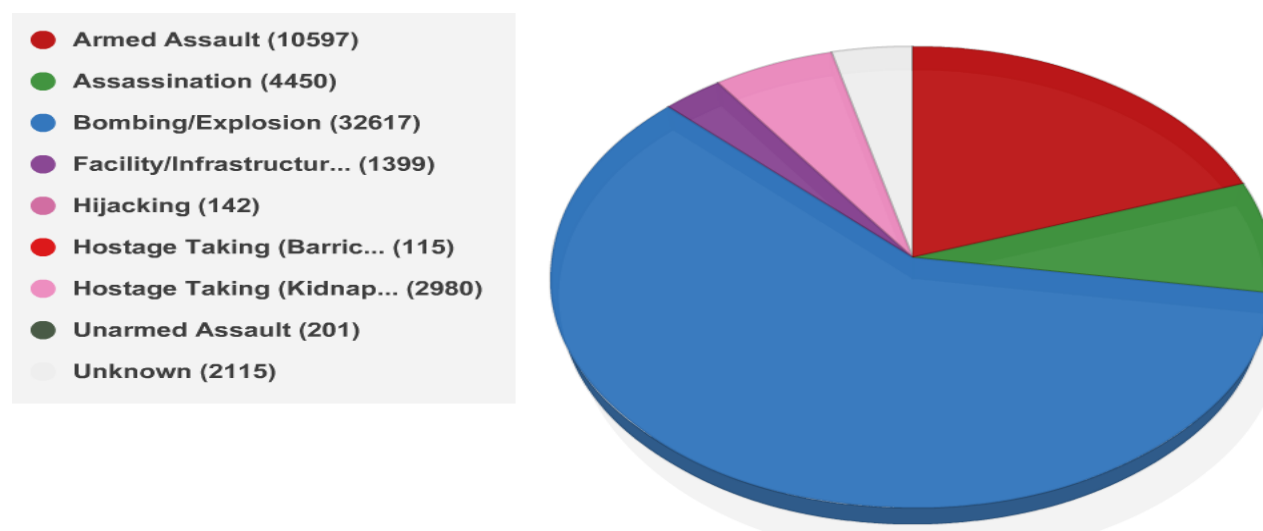
Recalling the hypothesis proposed, looking at the bigger picture, would there be a difference in the attack types? To recall the hypothesis, in comparing the aggregate attack types in general, the attack type in Africa will be different from the attack type in the Middle East due

to the inclusion of other terrorist events. The data below shows the aggregate analysis between Africa and the Middle East.

ATTACK TYPES IN AFRICA



ATTACK TYPES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Source: "Global Terrorism Database (GTD)." Global Terrorism Database (GTD) | START.umd.edu.
 Accessed November 2, 2019. <https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/global-terrorism-database-gtd>

To re-state my hypothesis: *In comparing the aggregate attack types in general, the attack type in Africa will be different from the attack type in the Middle East due to the inclusion of other terrorist events in other countries.* After looking at the data, a different result was reached. After including all the other African and Middle Eastern terrorist events from other countries, the data shows that attack types are the same, and the preference order is consistent. Therefore, the attack types in Africa and the Middle East are the same.

In as much as case studies are important to determine causal factors or determinants, it is also important to approach from an aggregate level perspective. In the counterterrorism context, information is a key factor in making decisions. In a situation whereby information is not accessible for a region, an aggregate data analysis can help predict certain phenomenon. In this research, after collecting data for two different continents, it was concluded that there are no differences in attack types for both African and Middle Eastern terrorist groups. For example, in a situation where there is insufficient intelligence on Mali, an aggregate data of previous attacks from other parts of Africa can serve as supporting data. This is a major tool for intelligence agencies.

MEASURES TO CURB TERRORIST ACTIVITIES: ADVICE TO THE UNITED STATES

The United States has been a major player in the world's effort to deal with terrorism, both international threats and domestic threats. In addition to that, the terrorist attack on September 11 on the United States has left a bitter taste on the nation, and more than before, there is an emergent need to challenge terrorist activities. The recent military operation has

focused on groups with notorious reputations and effort to eliminate some of their top supreme leaders like Osama Bin-Laden and Al-Baghdadi, which has signaled that the United States is prepared to tackle terrorism head to head. Over the last decade, most of the attacks have originated from the middle east with attacks in different parts of the area. There is also an emerging shift in terrorist activities in Africa, which has raised security concerns. To make matters worse, there has been a collaboration between the African terrorist groups and Middle eastern groups, most of which pledge allegiance to groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS. Why is this the case? Like the famous adage, 'Birds of same feathers, flock together.' Regarding the subjects of this research, Boko-Haram tends to receive support from groups like ISIS/al-Qaeda through funding and benefit from their large connective networks all over the world, as Boko-Haram is seeking to become a dominant force. On the other hand, ISIS also conducts recruitment activities in Africa and through this, they can re-enforce their group and create different cells in different locations.

In terms of how similar these groups are in general, it is hard to proffer a specific reason, but the trend observed in this research suggests that some of these terrorist groups model after each other, hence, employing similar operational strategies. Also, it could be about the resources available to the terrorist groups (In the form of money or material resources).

In this research, I have sought to find out the attack types and weapon types of these terrorist groups. Looking at the bigger picture of African nations and Middle Eastern nations, I have been able to gather data on how these groups operate. Additionally, comparing two of the most notorious groups in Africa and the Middle east has corroborated the operation strategy of these terrorist groups. In general, the weapon types common with terrorist groups are explosives

and firearms, While the attack types common to these groups are armed assault, assassination, and bombing.

Knowing all these, it is important for security agencies to focus on major areas these terrorist activities are operating. Some measures the United States can use include:

- 1- **Extend Africom's close ties in Africa:** The African Command popularly known as AFRICOM is the United States African Command responsible for military operations and maintaining regional relations with fifty-three African countries. Terrorist groups invent new ways to foster their operations, and one of the reasons they are hard to track is their dynamic nature. It is not a new phenomenon that African countries are the latest breeding ground for terrorist activities. The presence of Africom has helped form reliable relations in African countries and surroundings, but the question remains- how close are these relationships? Countries like Nigeria, Somalia tend to attract more attention due to the nature of the terrorist groups, but what happens to countries that are less known for terrorist activities? Do those countries serve as a secret hideout for terrorists? It would be a positive step for the United States if they can closely monitor and work with all the African countries' security agencies establishing accountability. Unfortunately, most African countries lack accountability.
- 2- **Arms Sale Accountability:** Trade is inevitable in the World, and as part of security needs, arms are also part of the deals nowadays. However, I think it would be positive if the United States can hold countries accountable and, if possible, limit the sale of arms in the form of quotas, unless there is a need to exceed the quota. As seen on an exclusive report in 2019, "Sold to an ally, lost to an enemy: The US shipped weapons and secrets to the Saudis and Emiratis. Now, some are in the hands of fighters linked to al-Qaeda and

Iran”²⁴ The less accountability of these weapons, the more futile the efforts of the United States will be in curbing these situations. As these weapons circulate, it will eventually fall into the wrong hands, and this adds to the terrorist’s machinery.

- 3- **Improve relations in the Middle East:** Regardless of past relations in the Middle East, the United States should attest to maintain a good relationship with its allies in the Middle East in which they could serve as the intermediary between the US and opposing countries in the Middle east. In a way, I see non-allies of the United States in the Middle East as promoting a ‘US vs. Them’ fight, which might go on for a while. The ability to negotiate and make deals could ease tension, but this is not a guarantee.

CONCLUSION

Modern terrorists have devised different tactics in running their operations and part of the ever-changing tactical approach by these terrorists is due to pressure by the enforcement agencies to track down their activities. It is also fascinating that these terrorist groups provide a detailed manual for their operations in detail. For example, Al-Qaeda’s manual was about one hundred and forty pages long describing the protocols that must be observed before, during and after operations.

In terms of the attack types, there seems to be a consistent pattern of attack, but the preferred choice is different. To get a vivid picture of the attack types, Boko Haram might prefer to utilize A-B-C in that order, but ISIS might prefer to use C-B-A. The attack types are the same,

²⁴ “US Arms Sold to Saudi Arabia and UAE End up in Wrong Hands.” CNN. Cable News Network. Accessed November 11, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2019/02/middleeast/yemen-lost-us-arms/>.

but the rank order is different. In terms of the weapon types, we can conclude that there are no differences with weapon types. There are no differences in the types of weapons they utilize. Lastly, looking at the bigger picture, particularly incorporating all terrorist activities in all African and Middle Eastern countries, the attack types are the same and preference order is consistent.

To advance this research, I believe the inclusion of other terrorist groups around the world will help us view the similarities and differences between terrorist groups. It will be interesting also to explore other terrorist groups on other continents. For example, looking at terrorists in Asia or North America can also inform us of the differences between these terrorist groups.

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