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COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER

at West Point



# ***Boko Haram Beyond the Headlines:***

*Analyses of Africa's Enduring Insurgency*

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*Editor:*  
**Jacob Zenn**

## CHAPTER 2: Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Question of the Female Suicide Bomber

*By Elizabeth Pearson*

### Introduction

In the three years since then Boko Haram leader Abubakr Shekau pledged allegiance to Islamic State ‘Caliph’ Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, both movements have experienced a change in fortunes. In March 2015, Boko Haram’s pledge led to the movement’s rebranding as Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP). The Islamic State at that time was attracting global recruits with its vision of a utopian Islamist state. It boasted of well-functioning education, health, and police services, and a growing amount of territory acquired through violent jihad. Boko Haram was led, meanwhile, by an increasingly ambitious Shekau, known worldwide for the group’s April 2014 abduction of more than 270 schoolgirls in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, and monitoring the changing landscape of global jihad. Just two months after al-Baghdadi declared the ‘Islamic State’ in June 2014, Shekau had announced his own ‘Dawla Islamiyya,’ or Islamic state, in northeastern Nigeria.<sup>185</sup> Boko Haram leadership appeared to emulate Islamic State rhetoric and operations, from the holding of territory in northeastern Nigeria, which was new to Boko Haram, to integrating its media team with the Islamic State’s.

Yet in June 2014, Boko Haram also introduced a tactic directly at odds with both al-Qa`ida Central and Islamic State doctrine and practice: female “suicide” terrorism (FST). By late 2015 the scale of Boko Haram female suicide attacks was already globally unprecedented.<sup>186</sup> Boko Haram deployed its first female suicide bomber in an attack on a military barracks in Gombe State in June 2014, and since then it has far outstripped any previous terrorist group’s deployment of FST, whether religious or secular. As of February 28, 2018, a recorded 469 female “suicide bombers” have been deployed or arrested in 240 incidents, and they have killed more than 1,200 people across four countries: Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon.<sup>187</sup> Almost 3,000 more people have been injured. Meanwhile, the Islamic State reportedly only first used FST in Syria and Iraq in 2017, as its caliphate project succumbed to sustained attack. Since then, there has been an October 2017 newsletter directive and a February 2018 propaganda video endorsing female violence as part of the Islamic State jihad.<sup>188</sup> However, FST is controversial—and mostly not approved of—in violent jihadi ideology.

Through an analysis of the aims and organization of both Boko Haram and the Islamic State, this chapter explores this anomalous use of FST in West Africa. It argues that, as Gonzalez-Perez claims of female bombing in other groups, Boko Haram FST can also be understood as a tactic employed to

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185 At the time of Shekau’s pledge in March 2015, the new “West Africa Province” held almost 12,000 square miles of territory across Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states in northeastern Nigeria, an area the size of Belgium. David Blair, “Boko Haram Is Now a Mini-Islamic State, with Its Own Territory,” *Telegraph*, January 10, 2015; Brandon Jones, “New video: Abubakar Shekau announces Boko Haram ‘Islamic State’ caliphate in Nigeria,” *Global Dispatch*, August 28, 2014.

186 Elizabeth Georgina Pearson, “Boko Haram and Nigeria’s Female Bombers,” RUSI, September 25, 2015. There are NGO reports of female bombers before 2014, however the author has been unable to triangulate them through media sources.

187 All figures on Boko Haram FST are drawn from a database maintained since June 2014 and initially collated with Jacob Zenn. Data is drawn from triangulated English- and French-language media reports, both national (Nigerian) and international, where possible. This database was also augmented with figures from UNICEF. “Failed” attacks, killing only the bomber, or where a bomber is “intercepted,” arrested (with or without later conviction), or shot, are included in the data. Open source media reports often cite officials from emergency services, but error in numbers is likely. The inclusion of French-language media data and contemporaneous data collection may explain the higher bomber figures than those in the CTC’s August 2017 report. Jason Warner and Hilary Matfess, *Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational And Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram’s Suicide Bombers* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2017).

188 Lizzie Dearden, “Isis Propaganda Video Shows Women Fighting for the First Time,” *Independent*, February 8, 2018; Rita Katz, “How do we know ISIS is losing? Now it’s asking women to fight,” *Washington Post*, November 2, 2017.

“legitimize acts that are strategically and militarily utilitarian.”<sup>189</sup> This chapter explicitly contrasts the gendered practices of the Islamic State and Boko Haram, showing the importance of a prohibition on Islamic State female violence until 2017 and the collapse of the Islamic State’s ‘state project.’ It seeks to understand Boko Haram’s prolific use of female suicide bombers, despite otherwise emulating the Islamic State. The central argument is that for both movements, female suicide bombing and female violence—or its absence—are primarily linked to the material needs and objectives of the group. When Boko Haram relied on female violence and the Islamic State did not, the discrepancy lay in the importance of the state project and symbolic male violence to the Islamic State, versus the absence of a similarly coherent governance project for Boko Haram. While it had territory, the Islamic State operated a strongly codified gender ideology, wherein male violence was legitimized and female violence was not, and benefited from this in three key ways: recruitment, regulation, and unification. Without a similar state project, Boko Haram had greater freedom to improvise. The chapter also argues that Boko Haram’s tactical use of FST differs from that of any previous group because Boko Haram gives these women and girls no symbolic status.

The argument proceeds in four sections. The first sets out the organizational advantages of FST and how these are evident in five evolving waves of Boko Haram female suicide bombing since June 2014. The second section explores the issue of coercive female bombing within Boko Haram and its implications for the ‘symbolic role’ of the bomber. The third section examines the prohibition on female violence in Islamic State ideology as central to the ‘state project,’ until its 2017 collapse. The fourth section discusses similarities in the approach to women by Boko Haram and the Islamic State, despite differences regarding FST. In particular, it emphasizes that both movements instrumentalize women and gender-based violence (GBV) for tactical gain. The focus on the relationship between these two movements means detailed comparison with other groups using FST is not undertaken in this chapter.

### Organizational and Tactical Perspectives in FST: The Case of Boko Haram

What was new to Boko Haram in June 2014 was not new to global terrorism. In 1985, the secular Syrian Nationalist Army sent 16-year-old Sana’a Mehadli to kill herself and two Israeli soldiers in Jezzine, southern Lebanon.<sup>190</sup> In the coming decades, FST was adopted by at least 16 other groups, including the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK); Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which conducted an estimated 26-75 female attacks between 1994 and 2009; the Black Widows of the Chechen rebels, which carried out 26 attacks from 2001 to 2013; Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ); Hamas; and al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI), which under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi carried out between 50-174 attacks in the mid-2000s.<sup>191</sup> Yet by the end of February 2018, Boko Haram almost exceeded these groups’ female suicide attacks combined, through incidents involving single, double, and multiple bombers. In August 2017, Warner and Matfess additionally noted that Boko Haram, which first used a male bomber in 2011, was reliant on female bombers in preference to males.<sup>192</sup>

Boko Haram’s use of FST is prolific. The data shows that Boko Haram deployed 469 female suicide bombers in 240 total incidents from June 2014 to the end of February 2018, killing an estimated 1,259 people (bombers excluded), 1,673 people (bombers included), and injuring 2,967 more people (see

189 Margaret Gonzalez-Perez, “The False Islamization of Female Suicide Bombers,” *Gender Issues* 28:1-2 (2011): p. 62.

190 Mehadli is remembered today as “Bride of the South,” a legacy she left through a video martyrdom message in which she justified the attack. See Mia Bloom, *Bombshell: The Many Faces of Women Terrorists* (London: Hurst, 2011), p. 23.

191 Claudia Brunner, “Female Suicide Bombing,” in Jill Steans and Daniela Tepe-Belfrage eds., *Handbook on Gender in World Politics* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016), p. 215; Bloom, *Bombshell*, p. 216; Yoram Schweitzer, “Introduction,” in Yoram Schweitzer ed., *Female Suicide Bombers: Dying for Equality?* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 2006), p. 8. Figures vary due to discrepancies in criteria used in counting incidents as well as the inclusion/exclusion of failed attacks.

192 Warner and Matfess, p. 28.

Figure 1).<sup>193</sup> Most incidents affect Nigeria (179, 75% of attacks), with the majority of those in Borno State (133, 55% of attacks). The second-most affected area, the Far North of Cameroon (48, 20% of attacks), has experienced almost as many attacks as the rest of Nigeria. Chad has seen six attacks (2%) and Niger seven (3%). The female suicide bombers are scarcely identified by name in the press, nor are their basic demographic details provided. In the majority of reported cases (53%, 250 bombers), the attacker's age is not stated. However, media reports describe 29% (136) as “teenagers” (13-19 years, i.e. including some adults), and 6% (29 so-called “bombers”) as younger girl children. Only 12% (54 people) were reportedly “adult,” perhaps because age is only mentioned if attackers are perceived as very young. The engagement of minors suggests existing definitions of “suicide terrorism,” which emphasize bomber complicity, cannot easily be applied.<sup>194</sup> While this chapter uses the terminology of existing literature on suicide bombing/bombers/terrorism, it is important not to assume that a Boko Haram “attacker” is always complicit or even “self-aware” during attacks.

## FEMALE SUICIDE TERRORISM (FST) BY MONTH

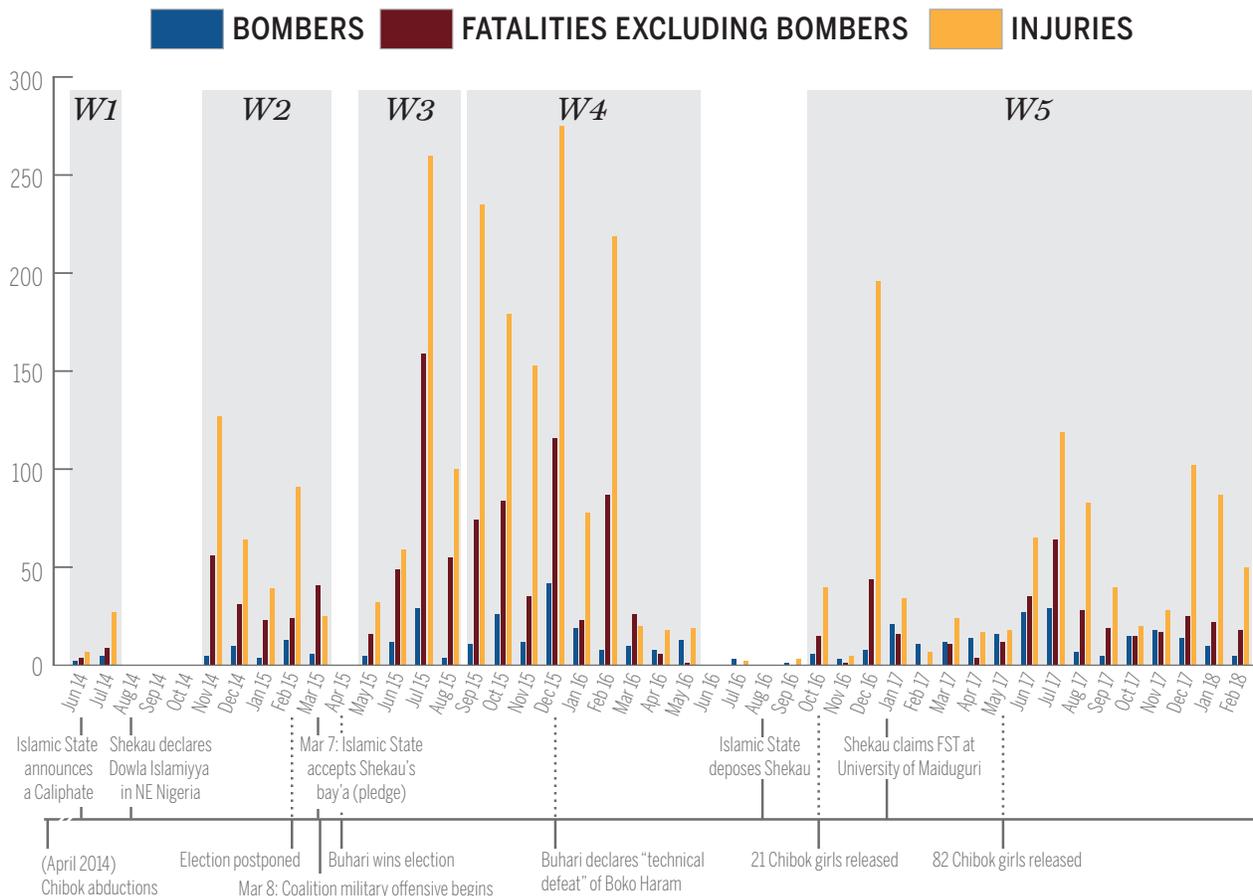


Figure 1: Suspected Boko Haram female suicide attacks by month

Scholars seeking to understand FST in other groups typically adopt a multi-level approach, considering individual, societal, organizational (strategic and tactical), and ideological factors, which may

<sup>193</sup> See footnote 187 for notes on data collection.

<sup>194</sup> See, for example, the definition offered by Yoram Schweitzer, “Suicide Terrorism: Development & Characteristics,” in *A Lecture Presented in the International Conference on Countering Suicide Terrorism*, February 21, 2000.

overlap.<sup>195</sup> Contrasted with male suicide attacks, FST has been subject to greater analysis at the individual level. This is due in part to bias tending to frame female violence as apolitical and assuming more personal motivations; additionally, some primary source interviews emphasize motivations such as loss or revenge.<sup>196</sup> There is little academic data on the motivations of Boko Haram female suicide bombers. Journalists frequently cite coercion, with many accounts from women and girls who have refused to detonate devices.<sup>197</sup> Some 4,826 females including 2,438 children have reportedly been arrested for links to Boko Haram—more females than males.<sup>198</sup> It is unclear how many were bombers, and how many were coerced into Boko Haram, as few personal stories are known. The data in this chapter cannot offer personal motivations; it can only reveal patterns.

These patterns are consistent with organizational-level analysis that explains FST in terms of tactical and strategic advantage for a terrorist movement.<sup>199</sup> FST has five key advantages. First, the ‘shock value’ of initial use of female attackers may ensure publicity and therefore have a propaganda effect. Second, women and girls can have easier access to targets because females are less often “suspected, inspected, or detected” as attackers.<sup>200</sup> This can be especially true in Islamic societies where there are strong social barriers to predominantly male security officers subjecting Muslim women to checks.<sup>201</sup> This ultimately renders FST a short-term tactic since security forces can and do adapt.<sup>202</sup> Third, the use of female suicide attackers avoids disrupting predominantly male lines of leadership, particularly if men see women as “burdensome.”<sup>203</sup> Fourth, militant groups suffering shortages of male recruits amid, for example, an intensification of external pressures can resort to FST in an act of “desperation.”<sup>204</sup> Fifth, FST can be used to shame men to fight.<sup>205</sup>

Organizational capacity and strategic motivations also impact when and why groups use suicide bombing. Pape suggests suicide terrorism is a matter of “strategic logic,” aimed at coercing liberal democracies out of territorial occupation.<sup>206</sup> While rigorously challenged,<sup>207</sup> his research was significant in deemphasizing the role of religion and emphasizing strategy. Yet religious ideology has been central

195 Mohammed M. Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:2 (2006): p. 166.

196 Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 145; Patricia Pearson (1997) cited in Jeffrey P. Rush and Elizabeth Schafluetzel-Iles, “Fem Fatales: The Evolution and Significance of Female Involvement in Terrorist Networks and Suicide Bombing,” *Professional Issues in Criminal Justice* 2:1 (2007): p. 60; Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, “Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31:4 (2008): pp. 304–326; Bloom, *Bombshell*.

197 See, for instance, Ruth Maclean, “Dressed for Death: The Women Boko Haram Sent to Blow Themselves Up,” *Guardian*, May 5, 2017; Dionne Searcey, “Boko Haram Strapped Suicide Bombs to Them. Somehow These Teenage Girls Survived,” *New York Times*, October 25, 2017.

198 Olatunji Omirin, “Army parades 3 female bombers, 8 foreigners,” *Daily Trust*, March 2, 2017.

199 Gonzalez-Perez; Debra D. Zedalis, “Female Suicide Bombers,” Strategic Studies Institute, June 2004.

200 Jacob Zenn cited in Morgan Winsor, “Boko Haram Enlists Female Suicide Bombers To Kill 100,000; Violence Now Akin To ISIS,” *International Business Times*, December 6, 2014.

201 David Cook and Olivia Allison, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks: The Faith and Politics of Martyrdom Operations* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2007), p. 134; Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (New York: Columbia University Press; New Ed edition, 2007) p. 108.

202 Jeffrey William Lewis, *The Business of Martyrdom* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012), p. 255.

203 Jessica Davis, “Evolution of the Global Jihad: Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 36:4 (2013): p. 288; Lewis, p. 138.

204 Cindy D. Ness, “In the Name of the Cause: Women’s Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:5 (2005): p. 357; Brigitte L. Nacos, “The Portrayal of Female Terrorists in the Media: Similar Framing Patterns in the News Coverage of Women in Politics and in Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:5 (2005): p. 436.

205 Bloom, *Bombshell*; Anne Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31:11 (2008); Davis, pp. 284, 288; Ness, p. 357; Nacos, p. 436; Lewis, p. 138.

206 Robert A. Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *American Political Science Review* 97:3 (2003): p. 355.

207 Assaf Moghadam, “Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of Dying to Win,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:8 (2006): p. 707.

to moral and theological arguments by salafi-jihadi groups encouraging male suicide bombing, and prohibiting female violence. For example, female suicide bombers will in death reveal their bodies, and unaccompanied, young and ‘attractive’ females are not permitted among men. This is despite historical precedent for the female fighter from the time of the Prophet Muhammed.<sup>208</sup> Indeed, the requirements of defensive jihad do not, in theory, disbar women.<sup>209</sup> Nonetheless, leading ideologues, including Abdullah Azzam, Anwar al-Awlaki, and Usama bin Ladin, as well as influential Islamist scholars such as Abu Basir al-Tartusi and Abu Umar as-Sayf have repeatedly refused to sanction violent jihad for women.<sup>210</sup> In particular, al-Qa`ida Central was always unwilling to condone female suicide bombers,<sup>211</sup> a legacy that the Islamic State maintained until the summer of 2017 and the fall of Mosul.<sup>212</sup>

Gonzalez-Perez argues that in the exceptional cases where FST has been used by Islamist groups, it is rarely more than a tactically opportunistic act. For example, in Palestine, Hamas followed PIJ in permitting female suicide bombers, which in turn had followed al-Fatah. Competition between the groups to recruit Palestinian women prompted the spread of the tactic.<sup>213</sup> When al-Zarqawi instituted a campaign of female suicide bombing for AQI in the mid-2000s, he knowingly challenged AQI doctrine. He exploited local patriarchal dynamics to engage minors and women into tactically expedient attacks, without even justifying them theologically or allowing martyrdom videos.<sup>214</sup> His aim was to shame men into action and innovate regionally. His tactic quickly became predominant.<sup>215</sup> With FST, as Brachman notes of terrorism, “winning comes first.”<sup>216</sup>

Boko Haram might share this motto, and indeed Shekau has openly sought to emulate al-Zarqawi. Analysis of the FST data until the cut-off date of the end of February 2018 reveals five distinct waves (see Figure 1),<sup>217</sup> each giving the movement a particular tactical advantage as internal and external (military) pressures change.<sup>218</sup> Waves are identified through either a clear gap in suicide bombing campaigns (Waves One to Two, Two to Three, and Four to Five) or a significant regional shift (Wave Three to Four, which is contiguous in time). The shifts can be contextualized with knowledge of internal and external dynamics and events. Analysis of “waves,” therefore, yields more insight into FST’s evolution as a tactic than analysis of specific “years” because looking at years renders invisible significant changes in bombing patterns occurring *within* years. For instance, Figure 2, which shows casualties per bomber *by years* reveals a steadily uniform decline, while patterns by waves indicate a more complex dynamic.

208 Cook and Allison, p. 130; Nelly Lahoud, “The Neglected Sex: The Jihadis’ Exclusion of Women From Jihad,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26:5 (2014): pp. 780-802.

209 Lahoud, “Neglected Sex,” p. 792; David Cook, “Women Fighting in Jihad?” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:5 (2005), p. 376; Farhana Qazi, “The Mujahidaat: Early Female Warriors of Islam;” in Laura Sjoberg and Caron E. Gentry eds., *Women, Gender and Terrorism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 33-35; Davis, pp. 279-291.

210 Lahoud, “Neglected Sex;” William F. McCants ed., *Militant Ideology Atlas* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006), 99–106, 127–28.

211 Davis.

212 Jack Moore, “ISIS Unleashes Dozens of Female Suicide Bombers in Battle For Mosul,” *Newsweek*, July 5, 2017.

213 Gonzalez-Perez, p. 58.

214 Bloom, *Bombshell*, 209–11; Alexandra Zavis, “Grooming a Female Suicide Bomber - Latimes,” accessed *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 2017

215 Bloom, *Bombshell*, 210; Joby Warrick, *Black Flags: The Rise of ISIS* (New York: Doubleday, 2015), p. 271.

216 Jarret M. Brachman, *Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice*, first edition (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 82.

217 Data collection is ongoing. The end February point marks the final submission date of this chapter.

218 Elizabeth Pearson, “Nigeria’s Female Suicide Bombers: A Show of Strength,” *War on the Rocks*, October 16, 2014.

## BOKO HARAM'S CASUALTIES PER BOMBER

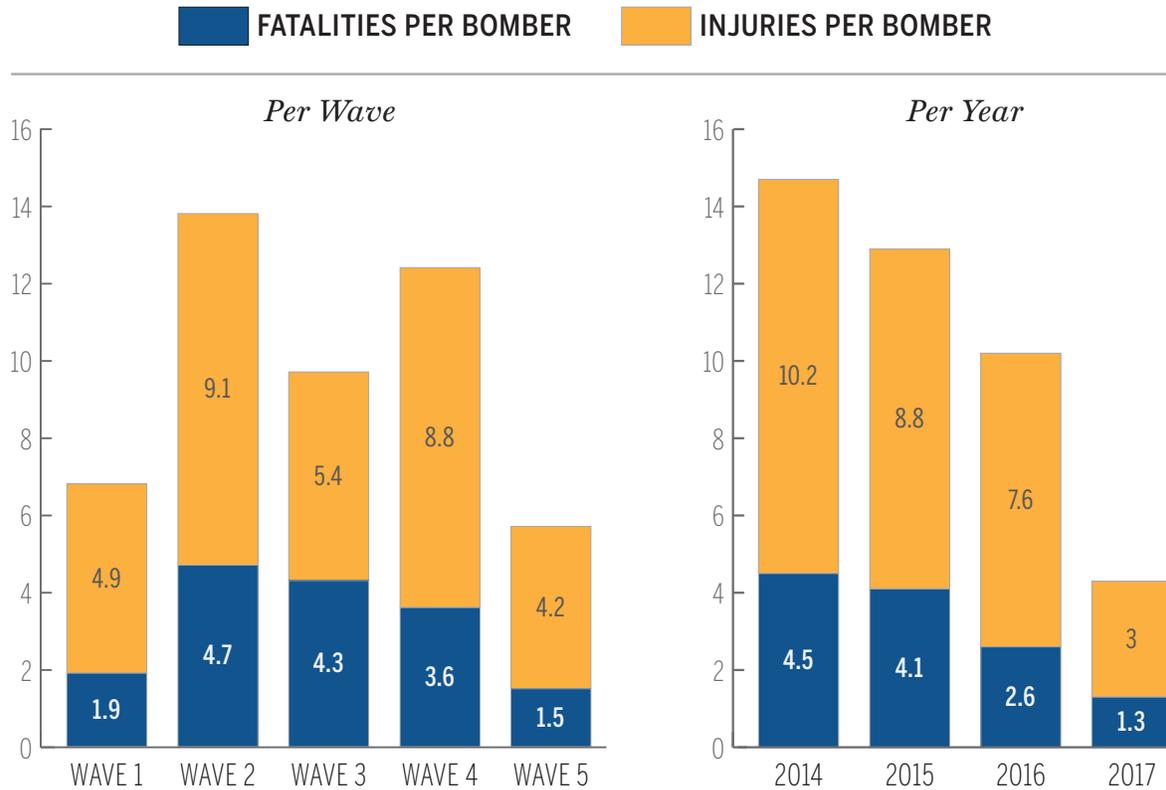


Figure 2: Casualties per bomber, per wave and per year

**Wave One: Publicity [7 attackers in 6 successful and 1 failed attack: See Figure 5 for locations]**

The first wave, which took place in June and July 2014, saw six female suicide attacks in two months, and one other arrest, of a young girl wearing a suicide vest in Katsina State. Targets were diverse: a military barracks, educational facilities, a market, and a gas depot. As first noted in 2015, and re-emphasized by Warner and Matfess, this may have been an opportunistic ‘publicity wave,’ capitalizing on the global interest in Boko Haram following the Chibok kidnappings of more than 270 schoolgirls in April 2014.<sup>219</sup> Fatalities and injuries per attack, all engaging single (lone) bombers, were low (2.2 fatalities and 5.7 injuries) (see Figure 3). However, the impact was amplified by the timing, with fears that the female suicide bombers were ‘Chibok girls.’ At the same time, Boko Haram made incursions in northeastern Nigeria and acquired towns and destroyed roads and bridges, largely out of the spotlight of the media, ahead of Shekau’s August 2014 declaration of a Dawla Islamiyyah.

219 Elizabeth Pearson, “Boko Haram and Nigeria’s Female Bombers,” *RUSI Newsbrief* 35:5 (2015): p. 20; Warner and Matfess, p. 24.

## BOKO HARAM'S CASUALTIES PER ATTACK

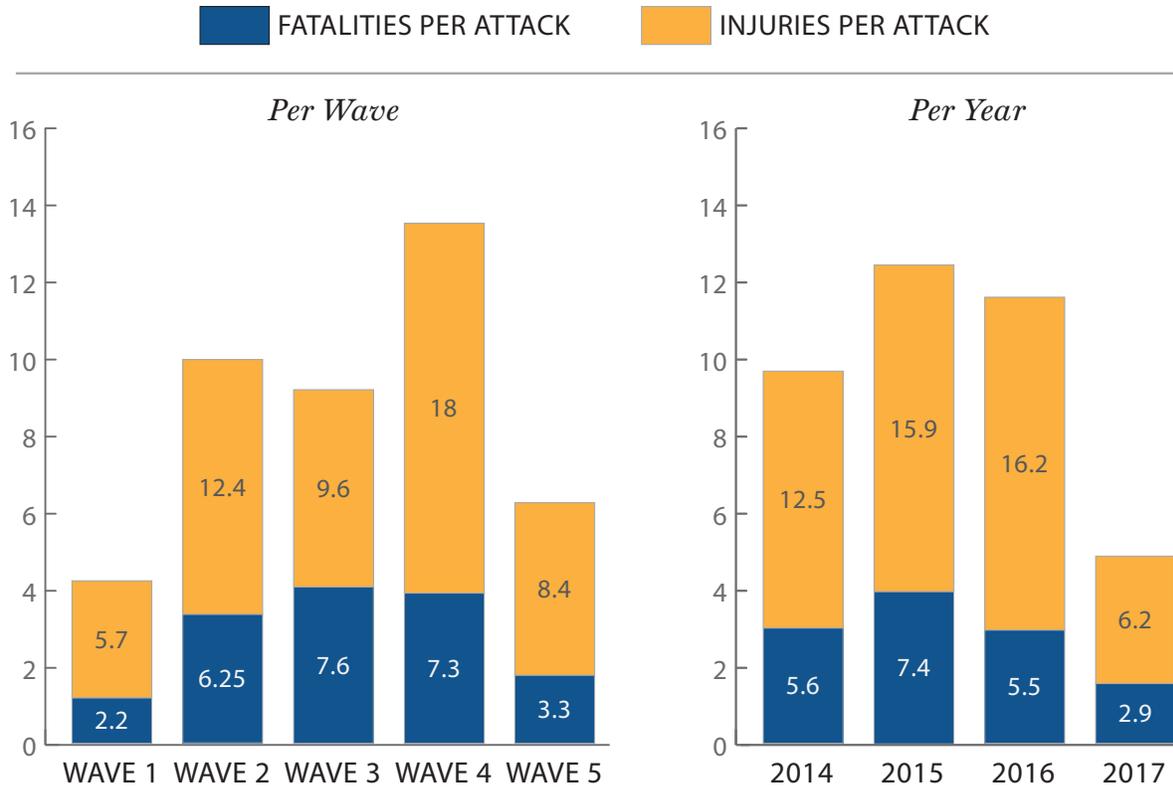


Figure 3: Casualties per attack, per wave and per year

**Wave Two: Innovation [38 attackers in 18 successful and 10 failed attacks]** A clear gap of three months followed Wave One, until November 7, 2014, when a second wave commenced that lasted until March 10, 2015. The wave spanned the postponement of the presidential elections scheduled for February 14, 2015, until the acceptance of Shekau's pledge to al-Baghdadi on March 7, 2015, and the Nigerian and sub-regional offensive against the insurgents, which commenced on March 8, 2015.<sup>220</sup> The wave almost trebled fatalities per attack through a number of innovations. Firstly, although reliant on single attacks, this wave introduced tandem female suicide bombings; secondly, active attacks used children and young girls for the first time; and thirdly, the geographical reach of the attacks spread to Borno State and two female suicide attacks were in Niger near the Nigerian border, as well as incorporating Bauchi, Gombe, Kano, Taraba, and Yobe states. This wave represented a highly effective response to security checkpoints instituted in Nigeria late in 2014 because child female suicide bombers were able to subvert military expectations and gain access to soft targets, such as markets, which accounted for 62% of targets in this wave.

**Wave Three: Resistance [32 attackers in 16 successful and 2 failed attacks]** Following a temporary cease in FST due to the Nigerian and sub-regional military offensive, which put Boko Haram under significant pressure, the militants launched Wave Three from May 2015 to July 2015. This wave shifted

220 "Islamic State 'accepts' Boko Haram's Allegiance Pledge," BBC, March 15, 2013; "Allies Begin Push against Boko Haram," BBC, March 8, 2015.

focus to security targets (at 22% of Wave Three attacks, now equal to markets) and also included three mosques and a church. Boko Haram continued to innovate, with three attackers or more a feature of attacks, and single attacks now 60% of all incidents, down from 71% in Wave Two (see Figure 4). Women were sometimes teamed with men. The increase in bombers per attack was effective in increasing fatalities per attack during this period, although by a relative small increment (7.6 per attack from 6.25). Although under sustained pressure, Boko Haram maintained the FST offensive. This wave saw attacks in Borno, Kaduna, Kano, and Yobe states.

### TYPE OF ATTACK BY NUMBER OF BOMBERS

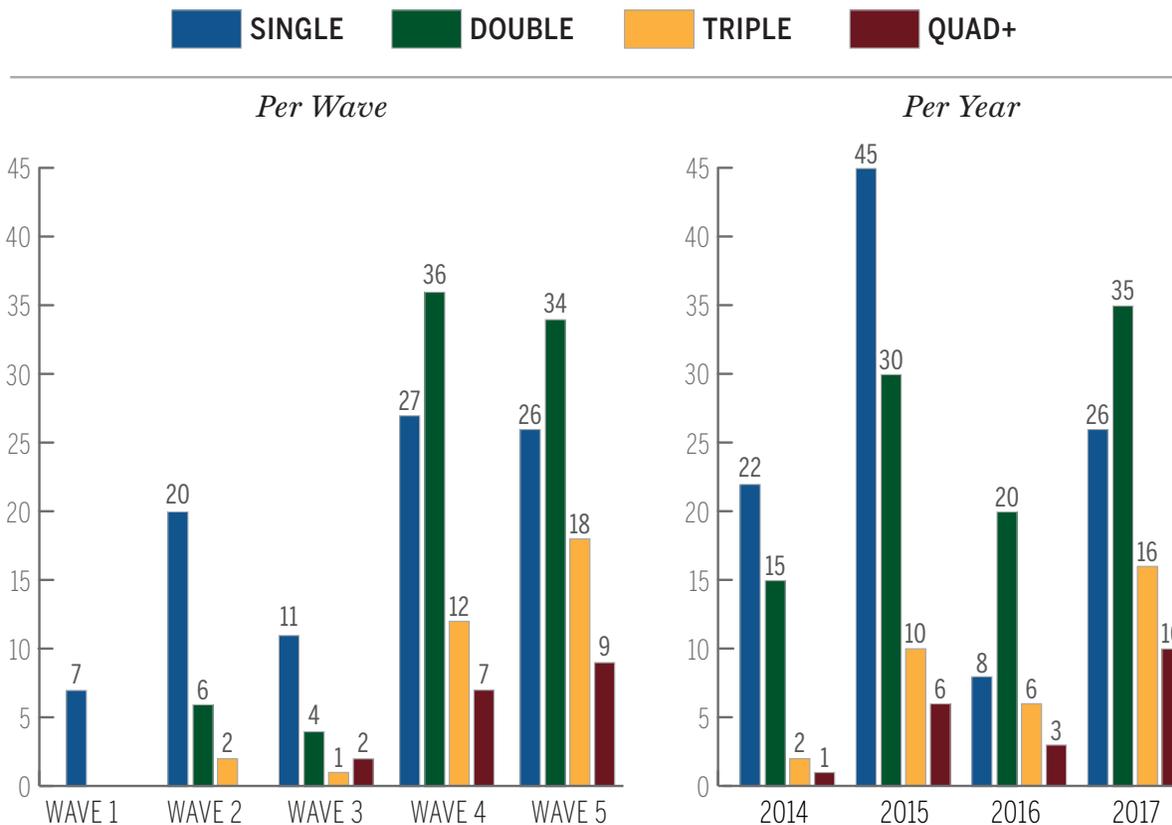


Figure 4: Number of bombers per attack, by waves and by year

**Wave Four: Retrenchment [167 attackers in 56 successful and 26 failed attacks]** The fourth wave commenced in July 2015 and did not ease until the end of May 2016. This wave is differentiated from Wave Three through, first, the predominance of multiple female suicide attackers, with for the first time more tandem attacks than single attacks (see Figure 4); and second, with a new geographic focus in the Far North of Cameroon, which saw 28 attacks (34%), Chad, which saw six attacks (7%), and Niger, which saw two attacks (2%). This was likely a result of Boko Haram relocating its bases as the Nigerian Army cleared territory formerly held by the insurgents in northeastern Nigeria. Attacks, however, demonstrated not expansion, but retrenchment around a reduced geographical space focused on Borno State and the border areas with its neighbors. While fatalities per attack were slightly reduced in this wave, the reliance on multiple attackers succeeded in almost doubling injuries per attack (from 9.6 to 18). Female suicide attackers continued to predominantly target civilian areas (60% of attacks), such as markets (24%), bars, or restaurants, and from September 2015 began to assault

camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (8%). These are easily accessible locations to female suicide bombers, given the high proportion of women and children in camps.<sup>221</sup> Some 14% of attacks impacted government, political, and security targets. Military action to combat FST, however, meant a high number of failed attacks, with 26 (16%) of Wave Four bombers shot. This means that in 15% of attacks, the target was unclear.

Boko Haram's use of FST almost disappeared between May and October 2016. There were only two attacks through June to September, and all four bombers in this 'gap' period were shot. Boko Haram faced numerous challenges at this time. For example, a key bomb-maker was arrested in late May 2016, and there were also factional struggles within the movement.<sup>222</sup> Boko Haram splinter group Ansaru saw Khalid al-Barnawi arrested in April 2016, and the Islamic State replaced Shekau as West Africa Province leader in August 2016 and installed as the new leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the reported son of former Boko Haram leader Muhammed Yusuf. Al-Barnawi disapproved of Shekau's targeting of innocent Muslims in attacks. An arrested insurgent commander has also suggested disagreement on Shekau's use of girl children as bombers was a source of tension between Boko Haram leaders that eventually led to splits.<sup>223</sup>

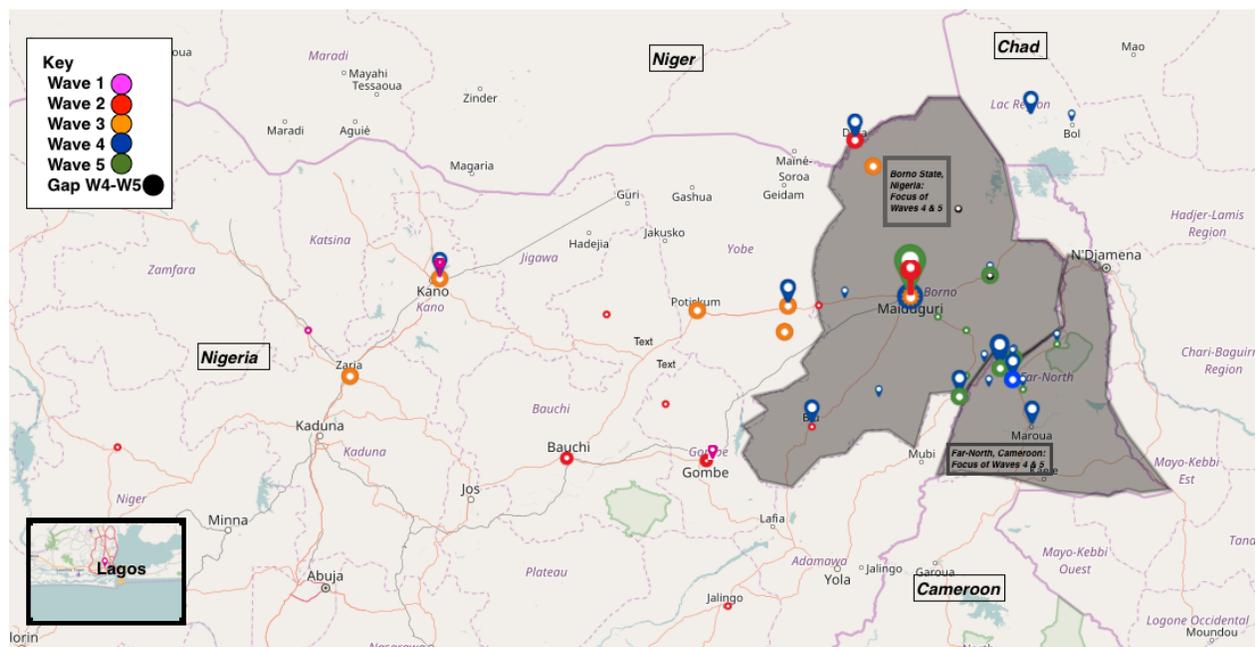


Figure 5: Map of waves

**Wave Five: Factionalization [174 attackers in 41 successful and 39 failed attacks]** The Fifth Wave of female suicide attacks is evident since October 2016 and is ongoing and centered on Borno State (76 attacks, 74%) and its capital, Maiduguri (55 attacks, 54%), with a maintained presence in Cameroon, including 20 attacks there in this period (19%). It coincides with Shekau's attempt to reassert his status after being deposed as the Boko Haram wali ("governor") in August 2016, an announcement he publicly contested.<sup>224</sup> IDPs remain a focus (17%) of attacks, as do general attacks against civilians (21%),

221 The majority of these attacks took place in 2016, amid the Nigerian government's attempts to return 2.2 million internally displaced people.

222 "B'Haram Chief Bomb Maker Killed by Shekau's Body Guard, Another Blinded," THISDAYLIVE, May 23, 2016.

223 "Boko Haram Fracturing over Islamic State Ties, U.S. General Warns," Reuters, June 21, 2016; "Ex-Boko Haram Intelligence Chief Speaks on Shekau, Albarnawi, Others," *Premium Times*, December 24, 2017.

224 Abdulkareem Haruna, "In new video, Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, threatens to attack Buhari in presidential villa," *Premium Times*, August 8, 2016.

with continuing pressure on security targets (14%). While ongoing, this wave is the least effective, mirroring Wave One. This likely reflects movement fragmentation; Shekau's reduced status; increased military activity, including the 'interception' of bombers; reduced fighter numbers; and possibly less materials and expertise. Some 18% of Wave Five bombers (39) have been shot and a number of others have aborted attacks prior to detonation. For a variety of reasons, therefore, half of the attacks have been failures, and 25% of intended targets impossible to identify.

As a result, the Fifth Wave has seen average fatalities per attack halved, from 7.3 to 3.3—and per attacker from 3.6 to 1.5. Despite a continued reliance on multiple bombers, this wave has been unable, as was possible in prior waves, to utilize multiple bomber “teams” to maintain casualties per attack, at the expense of casualties per attacker.

Matfess and Warner suggest Boko Haram suicide bombing (male and female) per bomber is less effective than for other groups, pointing to the decreased lethality year on year.<sup>225</sup> (See also Figure 2.) However, a consideration of “waves” over “years” offers a different interpretation of the effectiveness of Boko Haram's female suicide bombings. Firstly, when considering “waves” of attacks, the decline becomes dramatic only in Wave Five, in which Shekau is no longer ISWAP wali. Here, the impact is similar to Wave One. The military offensive clearly impacted FST efficacy, particularly in terms of geographical scope, but apparently not so dramatically as factionalization. Second, while it is true that average fatalities per Boko Haram female bomb attack across all incidents (excluding bombers) are at 5.5, which is lower than figures offered for other groups (11 mean average per mission in Moghadam's data of all groups using suicide terrorism, but rising to 23 when only salafi-jihadi groups are considered),<sup>226</sup> the salient point about Boko Haram's female bombing is its unprecedented prevalence. Lethality is only one measure of efficiency. Female suicide bombing data from West Africa reveals an onslaught of sustained attacks, the sheer frequency and unpredictability of which have impacted perceptions of security, particularly human security, in ways that are unmeasurable. A recent report suggests 86% of IDPs are “not ready to return” home as they are afraid.<sup>227</sup> The Borno State government is considering plans for the concentration of security on urban settlements, practically ceding rural areas to the insurgents.<sup>228</sup> FST has been an important tactic in achieving fear and communicating Boko Haram's unrelenting endurance, even when under duress. Importantly, this undermines President Muhammadu Buhari's December 2015 claims of the “technical defeat” of the insurgency. FST has effectively targeted the most vulnerable, such as IDPs, often using the most vulnerable. Low average lethality notwithstanding, female suicide bombing has been effective in hugely amplifying the key effects of terrorism as a tactic: creating fear, sending a symbolic message to diverse audiences, killing civilians, and asserting power over governments and communities.

### Coercion and Symbolism in Boko Haram FST

Among other terrorist groups using FST, the symbolic power of the female bomber as a willing “martyr” has been key.<sup>229</sup> In Chechnya, for example, the so-called “Black Widows” shared experiences of brutality and rape by Russian security forces to elicit public sympathy prior to their bombings.<sup>230</sup> By contrast, Boko Haram has not “capitalized” on female suicide deaths with martyrdom videos, or “wasiyeh,” which have in other terrorist groups elevated women as “poster-girls.” There is no evidence

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225 Warner and Matfess, pp. 10-11.

226 Assaf Moghadam, “Motives for Martyrdom Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks,” *International Security* 33:3 (2008): p. 49; Assaf Moghadam, “Shifting Trends in Suicide Attacks,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:1 (2009).

227 “Boko Haram: 86 Percent of Borno IDPs Not Willing to Return Home - Report,” *Premium Times*, October 12, 2017.

228 Paul Carsten and Ola Lanre, “Nigeria Puts Fortress Towns at Heart of New Boko Haram Strategy,” Reuters, December 3, 2017.

229 Lewis, pp. 38, 253.

230 Lindsey A. O'Rourke, “What's Special about Female Suicide Terrorism?” *Security Studies* 18:4 (2009): p. 710.

of Boko Haram using attacks to publicly promote female commitment to the cause, or garner support in local Muslim populations. A 2014 Pew Report found only 20% of Nigerians surveyed found the idea of suicide bombing justifiable, although this marked a rise on views in 2013, and a separate study showed Nigerian women in particular tend not to support terrorism.<sup>231</sup> Studies of populations elsewhere additionally indicate increased moral outrage at the use of female violence in terrorism campaigns.<sup>232</sup> Yet gaining support in local populations is historically among the main purposes of FST by other groups. Notably, however, al-Zarqawi, who initiated a wave of female suicide attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq in 2003-2008, also avoided martyrdom videos for women and girls, and did not even record their names.<sup>233</sup> AQI also coerced female bombers into attacks, a factor familiar in reports of Boko Haram FST. Coercion renders meaningless theological justifications for jihad, and disturbs the narrative of martyrdom, which is by contrast central to Islamic State suicide operations.

Primary knowledge of the identities of Boko Haram female suicide bombers is scant, as mentioned, and a literature on broader female involvement in the group is only gradually emerging. Research shows Boko Haram has routinely engaged in GBV, abusing and harassing both Muslim and Christian women in northeastern Nigeria. They have also instrumentally used women and girls well before the use of FST, for example, to recruit or to smuggle arms.<sup>234</sup> There is growing evidence of the coercion of females into roles as suicide bombers, from NGO reports from women liberated from Boko Haram camps, the accounts of officials, and media interviews with young women who refused to self-detonate.<sup>235</sup> The methods and extent of this coercion vary. For instance, UNICEF suggests child attackers are 20% of the total bombers, and 75% of these are female.<sup>236</sup> This chapter's data suggests 29 female suicide bombers were pre-pubescent children (6%) and 136 (29%) teenagers. Minors cannot be understood to legally consent, even if "willing." Some stories reveal parents "donating" girls to Boko Haram. Zaharau Babangida, a 13-year-old girl who aborted an attack in Kano, described how her parents ordered her to join Boko Haram, which they supported. Another account of coercion comes from an adult, "Hauwa." She willingly married an insurgent but after his death rejected the advances of another militant and was ordered to blow herself up. She refused.<sup>237</sup> There are other complex accounts like theirs that "defy neat categories" and demonstrate a spectrum of agency.<sup>238</sup>

Members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) and Operation Lafiya Dole command believe both hypnotism and enforced drug-use also coerce females to bomb. In 2016, a woman abducted in Maiduguri described how she and two other women were injected with a tranquilizer before being strapped with bombs.<sup>239</sup> Eyewitnesses have also reported seeing men accompanying female suicide attackers to ensure they see through their task. Coerced remote detonation is possible, although U.N. reports

231 "Concerns About Islamic Extremism on the Rise in Middle East," Pew Research Center, 2014, pp. 10-11; C. Christine Fair and Bryan Shepherd, "Who Supports Terrorism? Evidence from Fourteen Muslim Countries," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29:1 (2006): p. 58.

232 O'Rourke, p. 692.

233 Bloom, *Bombshell*, 216.

234 Atta Barkindo, Benjamin Gudaku, and Caroline Wesley, "Our Bodies, Their Battleground: Boko Haram and Gender-Based Violence against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999," Open Doors International, November 2013; Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5:1 (2014); Chitra Nagarajan, "Gender Assessment of Northeast Nigeria," February 2018, for Managing Conflict North East Nigeria (MCN), via [chitrasudhanagarajan.wordpress.com](http://chitrasudhanagarajan.wordpress.com).

235 Author interview, Civilian Joint Task Force Member, Borno, February 2016; author interview, Air Commodore Dele Alonge, Spokesman Operation Lafiya Dole, February 2016; Freedom C. Onuoha and Temilola A. George, "Boko Haram's Use of Female Suicide Bombing in Nigeria," Al Jazeera Center For Studies, 2015.

236 "Bad Blood," UNICEF and International Alert, February 2016, p. 2.

237 "13-Year-Old Girl, Teenage Suicide Bomber Confesses 'Boko Haram Told Me I'll Enter Paradise If I Blow Up Myself,'" *Naijagists.com*, December 25, 2014; Haruna Umar, "Nigerian Suicide Bomber Gets Cold Feet, Refuses to Kill," Associated Press, February 12, 2016.

238 Christina Luchetta, "Motivations and Empty Promises: Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth," Mercy Corps, April 8, 2016, p. 11.

239 "Boko Haram: Suicide Attack on Kano Market Aborted," *Today (Nigeria)*, May 22, 2016.

suggest this is less prevalent, as photographs of dead attackers reveal self-detonation via wristband.<sup>240</sup> Perhaps most compelling are the reported cases of GBV in aborted or prevented FST, in which females subsequently describe both threat and deception.<sup>241</sup> A number of women and girls say insurgents told them they would be safe when they detonated, as in this account: “[He said] there are soldiers at a checkpoint over there. When you get there, see what you’ll press, when you press it – nothing will happen to you. The belt will disengage from your body – [so] go and harm the soldiers, don’t have any fear, just press it when you get there.”<sup>242</sup> Other “failed” female suicide attackers report being paid for their attack, in one case as little as 200 Naira (60 cents); some are among the up to 2,000 women and children UNICEF estimates were abducted by Boko Haram between 2012 and February 2016.<sup>243</sup> Reports of the involvement of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls being used in FST are not thus far supported by evidence.<sup>244</sup>

Analyzing FST through a multi-layered prism—societal, cultural, organizational, and personal—situates Boko Haram’s female operations more closely to other African conflicts, than to Islamic State practice.<sup>245</sup> Conflicts in Mozambique, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone have seen women abducted, raped, and forced into marriage and combat.<sup>246</sup> The mass abduction of schoolgirls witnessed in Chibok was first seen in Uganda by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) under Joseph Kony.<sup>247</sup> Such abductees, however, after time supported the LRA, finding agency and status, as has been reported in the case of some females taken by Boko Haram.<sup>248</sup> Boko Haram’s abuses of women emerge partly from salafi-jihadi interpretations of sharia and partly from entrenched patriarchal legal and social structures in the northeast, which can politically marginalize women and enable abuses of male power, even when women also feel they benefit from other aspects of Islam, and indeed sharia.<sup>249</sup> They are likely also the result of simple criminality. However, they also follow local patterns of regional conflict, which as Turshen suggests, primarily seek to exploit and objectify women “for their assets, and as ‘assets’ in themselves.”<sup>250</sup> Clearly such GBV in conflict has global resonances; but in the case of Boko Haram, there are shared regional particularities.

Additionally, Shekau, like al-Zarqawi before him, has instrumentalized religious and cultural narratives to justify GBV, including FST, with little regard for the advice of others with greater theological knowledge. Justifying criticisms of Boko Haram sex slavery, for example, Shekau refutes rival leader

240 Dionne Searcey, “Nigeria Vexed by Boko Haram’s Use of Women as Suicide Bombers,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2016.

241 Ibid.; author interview, Air Commodore Dele Alonge, 8 October, 2016.

242 Transcript from an interview of a young female Boko Haram ‘bomber,’ with thanks to *Libération* journalist Patricia Huon. Similar stories have emerged in author’s interviews with journalists who have talked to women who did not detonate. See also Patricia Huon, “Boko Haram : ‘Je Suis Étudiante, j’ai Une Bombe, n’approchez Pas,’” *Libération*, August 23, 2017.

243 It should be noted that men and boys are also forcibly recruited as fighters, or paid for their services. “Bad Blood;” Samuel Osborne, “Nigerian Woman Says Boko Haram Gave Her 50p to Carry out Suicide Bombing Attack,” *Independent*, February 8, 2017.

244 See Elizabeth Pearson and Jacob Zenn, “#BringBackOurGirls? Two Years After the Chibok Girls Were Taken, What Do We Know?” *War on the Rocks*, April 14, 2016, for discussion of the focus on FST and Chibok.

245 Lewis, p. 138.

246 Dyan Mazurana and Susan McKay, “Where are the Girls? Girls in Fighting Forces in Northern Uganda, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique: Their Lives During and After war,” International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, 2004, pp. 11–17; Meredith Turshen, “The Political Economy of Rape: An Analysis of Systematic Rape and Sexual Abuse of Women During Armed Conflict in Africa,” in C. Moser and F. Clarke eds., *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors: Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence* (London: Zen Books, 2001), p. 5.

247 Meredith Turshen, “The Political Economy of Violence against Women During Armed Conflict in Uganda,” *Social Research* 67:3 (2000): pp. 811–12.

248 See Susan McKay, “Girls as ‘Weapons of Terror’ in Northern Uganda and Sierra Leonean Rebel Fighting Forces,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:5 (2005): pp. 385–397 and also Hilary Matfess, “Rescued and Deradicalised Women Are Returning to Boko Haram. Why?” *African Arguments*, November 1, 2017.

249 “Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency,” International Crisis Group, December 5, 2016, p. 2.

250 Turshen, “The Political Economy of Rape,” pp. 55–68; Chris Coulter, Mariam Persson, and Mats Utas, “Young Female Fighters in African Wars Conflict and Its Consequences,” *Nordic Africa Institute*, 2008.

Mamman Nur on whether an apostate can be enslaved, where he says “they said, it is not permissible for me to capture women participating in democracy, to fight them or to handle them as slaves. I replied to them that I will continue to capture and sell them just as our predecessors did. This is my creed.”<sup>251</sup> Shekau again presented a selective ideological justification for preferred tactics with a significant development on January 17, 2017, when he claimed a suicide attack on the University of Maiduguri, Borno State, reportedly involving a seven-year-old girl. Just two weeks before, he had warned the “battle was just beginning.”<sup>252</sup> On January 17, he stated:

This is my message to you, we carried out the bombings and you saw a female detonate the bombs and this is done for a reason; but it is not in our creed for women to go to war but we know the reason God gave to us in his Book, when it warrants for a woman to do so; we know because you are not our tutors, the Quran is our teacher ... a woman can do it when the need arises and it is there in the book of God.<sup>253</sup>

Although there was a prior claim of a June 2014 suspected female vehicle suicide bombing in Apapa Wharf, Lagos, the University of Maiduguri explosion was the first female suicide bombing incident to be both explicitly claimed as such and “theologically justified” in public.<sup>254</sup> This effectively stamped the tactic, and the ongoing Fifth Wave of attacks, with Shekau’s signature. Shekau and Boko Haram have not claimed 99% of overall attacks. No female suicide attacker has been eulogized as a fighter for God, unlike a handful of cases of Arabic-language claims of high-profile attacks by men/boys in Boko Haram. The “justification” of attacks by women, however, provides no back-story to the bomber, and no reference to her courage in fighting for Boko Haram, as has accompanied claims of male suicide attacks.<sup>255</sup> Female suicide bombers have been accorded no symbolic value by the group.

### Islamic State: Masculine Heroes, Territorial Aims, and the Challenge to Boko Haram

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria was defeated in 2017. One by one, the Islamic State lost key cities, including Mosul and the self-declared capital of the caliphate, Raqqa. It was in Mosul in July 2017 that Iraqi television crews filmed a woman carrying a baby, catching the moment both explode.<sup>256</sup> Dozens of other female suicide bombers were soon reported, with profound implications. There had been previous rumors of Islamic State bombers in Turkey, of female “training groups” in Syria and Iraq, and news of female suicide bomber training among Libya-based Islamic State forces and Indonesian pro-Islamic State cells.<sup>257</sup> However, reports from Mosul appeared to demonstrate a reversal of the previous strict policy barring women from violence within Iraq and Syria, which is the ideological center of the Islamic State eschatology.<sup>258</sup> After this, in October 2017, an article suggesting women had

251 “Shekau responds to his Critics,” audio, December 2016, translated by Abdulbasit Kassim, with thanks to Kassim for allowing its inclusion.

252 Katie Mansfield, “Boko Haram - ‘The Battle is just beginning’ threatens leader in chilling new video,” *Daily Express*, January 3, 2017.

253 Shekau, January 17, 2017, transcript of YouTube audio claiming University of Maiduguri bombing, with thanks to Jacob Zenn.

254 In a number of reports, women and girls appear to be told missions are Islamically justified by Boko Haram members in camps.

255 For an alternative perspective, see also Mia Bloom and Hilary Matfess, “Women as Symbols and Swords in Boko Haram’s Terror - ProQuest,” *Prism* 6:1 (2016): pp. 104-121. Abba Ibrahim, “Sako Zuwa Ga Duniya (A Message to The World)!” YouTube, September 30, 2012; “Adetutu Alao, Sako Zuwa Ga Jonathan 1\_ Imam Abubakar Shekau.flv,” YouTube, January 11, 2012; Zenn and Pearson, “Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram.”

256 “Suicide Attacks amid ‘final’ Mosul Battle,” BBC, July 4, 2017; “Female Suicide Bomber Cradles Baby Moments before Blowing Them Both Up,” *Independent*, July 9, 2017.

257 Constanze Letsch, “Pregnant Istanbul Suicide Bomber Was Russian Citizen,” *Guardian*, January 16, 2015; “Inside the female jihadist training group: Female fanatics chant as they are trained to use assault rifles (though they’re making at least one firearms blunder),” *Daily Mail*, April 10, 2015.

258 Bel Trew, “Isis Sends Women into Battle in Libya,” *Times*, February 29, 2016; Haeril Halim, Arya Dipa, Ganug Nugroho Adi, and Suherdjoko, “Women Playing Greater Role in Terrorism,” *Jakarta Post*, December 16, 2016; Simon Cottee and Mia Bloom, “The Myth of the ISIS Female Suicide Bomber,” *Atlantic*, September 8, 2017; Elizabeth Pearson, “Why Female Suicide Bombers Mean the End of ISIS’s Caliphate Dream,” *Newsweek*, July 18, 2017.

a duty to participate in “all forms of jihad” appeared in the official Islamic State newspaper al-Naba,<sup>259</sup> suggesting another shift toward tactics of female violence already instituted in the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). Then in February 2018, a propaganda video citing al-Zarqawi appeared in which women with guns were shown shooting in a battle to “avenge the chaste women,” in a “new era” of war.<sup>260</sup> The collapse of the caliphate in Syria and Iraq seemed to signal the collapse of the Islamic State prohibition on female violence.<sup>261</sup>

Initial academic skepticism rightly followed.<sup>262</sup> Media obsession with myths of violent female “jihadis” had led to prior false alarms.<sup>263</sup> Although Islamic State predecessor AQI, as mentioned, used female suicide bombers under al-Zarqawi, al-Baghdadi effectively closed this chapter of the Islamic State’s history when in February 2015 he catalyzed Jordan’s execution of the last imprisoned attempted female suicide bomber from that era, Sajida al-Rishawi.<sup>264</sup> Instead, al-Baghdadi emulated al-Qa`ida Central’s exclusive use of male suicide terrorism as symbolic elevation. Under bin Ladin, the narrative of altruistic “hero-martyr” was instrumentalized to mobilize communities, who revered bombers as public heroes. By fostering group approval and admiration for male suicide bombing, al-Qa`ida was better able to recruit bombers and realize the group’s operational goals.<sup>265</sup>

The Islamic State under al-Baghdadi expanded al-Qa`ida’s doctrine of a strictly gendered ideology with a “culture of male militancy.”<sup>266</sup> At the backbone of Islamic State governance was a gendered “double binary” that first distinguished the roles of Islamic State men (constructed as warriors/combatants/state-builders) from Islamic State women (constructed as mothers/wives) and, second, distinguished the Islamic State’s “own women” from “enemy, or ‘infidel,’ women” (constructed as the spoils of war/slaves). The gender binary of the Islamic State men/women is hierarchical: warrior culture, and in particular male suicide bombing, or *istishhadi*, represented the highest status, or ‘hegemonic’ masculine role within the group.<sup>267</sup> This followed bin Ladin, who put male martyrdom at the heart of al-Qa`ida’s ideology when he declared to the West “these young men love death as you love life.”

The power of this gender binary and the high status of male martyrdom in the worldwide recruitment of male suicide attackers cannot be underestimated. A reported 27,000-31,000 foreign fighters traveled from 86 countries to join the Islamic State.<sup>268</sup> Many of the new Islamic State male warrior-citizens did so as aspiring martyrs. Martyrdom reportedly commanded a waiting list of eager young men, willing to use bribes to reach its top. Photographs posted online depicted dead martyrs in a Photoshopped state of ecstasy, with male suicide attacks publicly claimed in Islamic State “round-ups” of

259 “Islamic State Calls on Female Supporters to Take Part in ‘Jihad,’” *Middle East Eye*, October 6, 2017.

260 Dearden.

261 Charlie Winter and Devorah Margolin, “The Mujahidat Dilemma: Female Combatants and the Islamic State,” *CTC Sentinel* 10:7 (2017).

262 Cottee and Bloom.

263 Just one example was evident in reports of a female suicide bomber in Paris in 2015. “Paris Attacks: Woman ‘was Not Suicide Bomber’ in Raid,” *BBC*, November 20, 2015.

264 “Jordan Executes Sajida Al-Rishawi after Pilot Murder,” *Al Arabiya*, February 4, 2015. This was in response to the Islamic State immolation of a captured Jordanian pilot and appears to be a calculated action by al-Baghdadi, knowing al-Rishawi’s execution was likely.

265 Lewis, p. 11; Shaun Best, “Liquid Terrorism: Altruistic Fundamentalism in the Context of Liquid Modernity,” *Sociology* 44:4 (2010): pp. 678-694; Liz Sly, “Al-Qaeda Backs Away from Radical Fighters in Syria, Iraq,” *Washington Post*, February 3, 2014; Bloom, *Bombshell*, 210-212; Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, “The Dawn of the Islamic State of Iraq and Ash-Sham,” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 16 (2014); O’Rourke, p. 697.

266 Nelly Lahoud, “Can Women Be Soldiers of the Islamic State?” *Survival* 59:1 (2017): pp. 61–78.

267 R. W. Connell and J. W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender & Society* 19:6 (2005): pp. 829–859.

268 “An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq,” Soufan Group, December 2015, p. 4.

the activities across its provinces.<sup>269</sup>

Men's high-status role as warriors and bombers was propagandized alongside an opposing narrative of the empowerment of women through the domestic setting. This provided strong regulation around the gender binary (male violence/female non-violence) for citizens' behavior in the fledgling State. One of the most important English-language vehicles for the articulation of the roles of men and women was the (now discontinued) Islamic State propaganda magazine *Dabiq*. Editions included articles explicitly for women. *Dabiq* Issue 11 "A Jihad Without Fighting" is typical. It both acknowledges and admonishes the women who wish to fight and bomb: "My Muslim sister, indeed you are a mujahidah, and if the weapon of the men is the assault rifle and the explosive belt, then know that the weapon of the women is good behavior and knowledge." Even where female violence appears to be condoned in Islamic State ideology, as for example in *Dabiq* Issue 13, which praises husband and wife Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik for their San Bernardino, California, shooting that killed 13 people, the intention is not to encourage other women to action, but to shame men to fight instead.

Analysis of the now-defunct *Dabiq* shows how it regularly and explicitly reinforced the gender binary in theological terms, through representations of both men and women. *Dabiq* provides four key representations of women, all of which validate male violence and delegitimize female. First, women are victims, whose abuse by the enemy justifies men's jihad to both avenge and protect them.<sup>270</sup> Second, women are depicted as symbolically sanctified mothers and sisters and incubators of the next generation. While men's existence as fighters was precarious, it was the women who represented *baqiya*, or permanence.<sup>271</sup> This message was intended for both women and men.<sup>272</sup> For example, the al-Khansaa Brigade's Arabic-language manifesto aimed at Saudi Arabian women emphasized the "hallowed" domestic role of Islamic State women and "divine duty of motherhood" as opposed to the "beauty salon culture," hypocritical feminism and consumerism of the West, where women have forgotten their "fundamental" role and men are "emasculated" through women's self-reliance. The manifesto states of the Islamic State woman, "The greatness of her position, the purpose of her existence is the Divine duty of motherhood." This feminine sanctity, contrasted with Western women's immorality, aimed both to attract disenchanting foreign women to the Islamic State, and then regulate their behavior when there.<sup>273</sup>

Third, the status of Islamic State women is defined not only against men, but against "enemy women," who may be enslaved according to their interpretation of the Qur'an, creating a double gender binary. Enslavement, which plays a central ideological role in the Islamic State's state project, represents a complete erasure of the agency of female slaves and therefore any perceived violation of their rights, legitimizing GBV. *Dabiq* Issue 4 "The Failed Crusade" outlines the fate awaiting captured Yazidi women, according to the *dhimmi* laws of the second Caliph governing the rights of Christians and Jews. While the payment of *jizya*, a religious tax, protects adherents of Christianity and Judaism ("People of the

269 Katherine E. Brown, "Gender in the Apocalyptic and Utopian Thinking of Daesh," King's College, February 8, 2016; Rob Virtue, "Islamic State Nutters Moan about Fellow Jihadists Jumping the Queue to BLOW THEMSELVES UP," *Daily Express*, May 22, 2015; Jürgen Todenhöfer, *Inside IS - 10 Tage im "Islamischen Staat"* (München: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 2015); Mark Thompson, "Why Suicide Bombings Are So Terrifying," *Time*, October 18, 2016; Sudarsan Raghavan, "Inside the Brutal but Bizarrely Bureaucratic World of the Islamic State in Libya," *Washington Post*, August 23, 2016; "Exclusive: Seized Documents Reveal Islamic State's Department of 'War Spoils,'" Reuters, December 28, 2015; "An Updated Assessment of the Flow of Foreign Fighters into Syria and Iraq," Soufan Group, December 2015.

270 *Dabiq* frequently cited the rape of Muslim women as reason for vengeance. Female civilian deaths as "collateral damage" in coalition attacks were used as examples to justify the beheading of American journalist James Foley. *Dabiq* Issue 3, "The Call to Hijrah," pp. 3 and 12.

271 With thanks to conversation with Dr. Katherine Brown, 2016.

272 Sarah Ladbury, Hamsatu Allamin, Chitra Nagarajan, Paul Francis, and Ukoha Okorafor Ukiwo, "Jihadi Groups and State-Building: The Case of Boko Haram in Nigeria," *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 5:1 (2016): p. 9.

273 Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith, "'Till Martyrdom Do Us Part' Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, May 2015; Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford, and Ross Frenett, "Becoming Mulan? Female Western Migrants to ISIS," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2015; Charlie Winter, "Women of the Islamic State," The Quilliam Foundation, 2015, p. 18; *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Book”), Yazidi women are treated as *mushrikat*, believers in a deity that is not God. The Islamic State therefore justifies their enslavement in ideological terms; however, videos of ‘slave markets,’ online discussion between men, and testimonies by Yazidi women of their abuse indicate that the realities of enslavement are less often representations of piety, and more often simple criminal rape and abuse.<sup>274</sup> The Islamic State persists, however, and gives slavery ideological meaning as a symbolic God-given institution, because “one of the signs of the Hour [was] that ‘the slave girl gives birth to her master.’” Slavery is therefore eulogized as part of the apocalyptic project, with the sexual lives of citizens as much the domain of the Islamic State as their public lives. These narratives are again instrumentalized to attract men to the Islamic State, and also appeal to women, even while they may resist their husbands raping slave women, or indeed taking a second wife.

Fourth, propaganda ensured women served as their own police. The state made public the roles required of men and women and regulated and enforced women’s behavior according to these narratives, with the gender binary serving as a litmus test of the smooth functioning of Islamic State governance. Every citizen of the state, whatever their country of origin, was made aware of these rules, codified by the Islamic State’s sharia laws, which served as a unifying feature of the political and physical space. Vast billboards forbade the display of skin, of see-through clothing, of tight or masculine clothes, perfume, of patterned or branded clothes, of clothes that might distract male observers.<sup>275</sup> Women meted out brutal punishment for female transgressions of these rules as readily as men, as for example in the all-women al-Khansaa Brigade.<sup>276</sup> Women were also encouraged to police one another online.<sup>277</sup>

Strict maintenance of this gendered bifurcation of roles, or what Guidère calls the “theology of sexuality,” was ostensibly ideological, but also strategic. It served a fundamentally organizational role for the Islamic State, which is committed to eternal military conflict until the Apocalypse. As noted, Islamist theology need not deny women violent roles. Nor can the Islamic State be analyzed solely in terms of ideology.<sup>278</sup> The strict gender binary of Islamic State propaganda allowed action to be justified through reference to ideology, but also strategically supported Islamic State material aims in three ways: first, the international recruitment of much needed male fighters and women citizens through the symbolic meaning of each gender’s role; second, the regulation of citizens and institutions in the caliphate through the repeated articulation of its fundamental rules in gendered terms, enabling the production of Islamic State male fighter-citizens far into the future; and third, unification of the 30,000 fighters and female migrants of many nationalities through shared ideological boundaries and the repeated public display of the rules of Islamic State sharia laws. This was crucial for social cohesion, as a significant proportion of Islamic State fighters were from non-Muslim and secular lands (Dar al-kuffar), and in fulfilling the promise that all Muslims were equal in this new land. The binary was also fundamental to the highly bureaucratized systems of the new “warrior State” and, as Lahoud has emphasized, there was therefore an “ideological cost” in any Islamic State move to permit female fighters.<sup>279</sup> The frequent articulation of the deeply entrenched binary to a global audience created its own constraint, limiting the Islamic State from engaging FST without challenging its state project.

274 Laura Huey, “Exploring Women’s Participation in Online Radical Milieus,” presentation at Kanishka Symposium (Building on International Research Partnerships to Understand and Address Violent Extremism and Terrorism, London: Public Safety Canada, 2015); Mathieu Guidère, “Isis’ Politics of Sex,” in Martin Schmetz and Janusz Biene eds., *Kalifat Des Terrors Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven Auf Den Islamischen Staat*, Sicherheitspolitik-Blog, 2015, p. 22; *Ibid.*, p. 21; Dabiq Issue 4, “The Failed Crusade,” p.15.

275 Nick Gutteridge, “Islamic State Fanatics Put up Billboards Ordering Women to Wear the Burka...or Else,” *Daily Express*, July 17, 2015; Kathy Gilsinan, “The ISIS Crackdown on Women, by Women,” *Atlantic*, July 25, 2014.

276 Loulla-Mae Eleftheriou-Smith, “Escaped Isis Wives Describe Life in the Punishing All-Female Al-Khansa Brigade,” *Independent*, April 20, 2015; Elizabeth Pearson, “Wilayat Twitter and the Battle against Islamic State’s Twitter jihad,” *VOX-Pol*, November 11, 2015.

277 See Elizabeth Pearson, “Online as the New Frontline: Affect, Gender, and ISIS-Take-Down on Social Media,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, September 5, 2017, pp. 1-25.

278 Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, *A Theory of ISIS: Political Violence and the Transformation of the Global Order* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), p. 11.

279 Lahoud, “Can Women Be Soldiers of the Islamic State?”

However, without a functioning state project, the strategic need to adhere to the binary as a unifying, recruiting, and regulating system was removed. Winter and Margolin have drawn attention to the ways in which the Islamic State has been dismantling the binary and preparing for a phase in which they can instrumentalize female violence.<sup>280</sup> It was through strict gender division of violence that the emerging caliphate was united; as it collapses, so do its ideological structures. Calls for female non-violence or as appears the case now, female violence, show the boundaries between the two are strategic after all. So, too, for Boko Haram.

### **Boko Haram and the Islamic State: Comparisons**

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has been adapting its doctrine on female suicide bombing and violence to its new situation. Such adaptation had been evident however for months in other Provinces, suggesting that “outposts” of Islamic State are on a looser ideological leash. Female suicide bombers allied to groups sympathetic to the Islamic State have been arrested in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Pakistan, and deployed in Libya.<sup>281</sup> However, the only wilaya with prolific use of FST is West Africa Province, where Boko Haram’s campaign as outlined in Sections I and II represented an exception to the carefully managed gendered binaries of jihad previously fostered by the Islamic State. Boko Haram’s FST contradicted the aims, meanings, and symbolism of martyrdom in the caliphate, as well as the majority view of salafi-jihadi scholars that women should neither fight nor engage in suicide bombings. It transgressed the “double binary” of the Islamic State gender doctrine and instead, effectively merged male and female roles. Until the demotion of Shekau in August 2016, however, Islamic State leadership appears to have tacitly endorsed his FST campaign. Rather than criticize Boko Haram for challenging its gendered ideology, the Islamic State instead emphasized high-profile actions that apparently cohered with it, such as the abduction and “sale” of the Chibok schoolgirls, which was praised in Dabiq Issue 8 “Shari’ah Alone Will Rule Africa.”<sup>282</sup> Additionally, ISWAP suicide attack numbers published by the Islamic State appear to have included female suicide attacks, or they would be even more inaccurate. Boko Haram FST, meanwhile, revealed the Islamic State’s ideological inconsistencies and raised the possibility of female violence in Iraq and Syria, which became a reality.

The differences in approaches from 2014–2017 lie in the differing aims, objectives, and local contexts of each group. The three organizational goals of the Islamic State’s state project (international recruitment, regulation, and unification), which were achieved through the Islamic State’s well-propagandized gender binary in which only male violence was legitimized, are absent in Boko Haram, which had no “state.” Importantly, Boko Haram has never maintained long-term systems of governance beyond rudimentary sharia court punishments and mediation between Boko Haram fighters and villagers under their control. The Islamic State inherited sophisticated governance systems, complex infrastructure, and urban centers, and it successfully held and governed some territories for sustained periods. Parts of northeastern Nigeria conversely have a history of poor governance.<sup>283</sup> Boko Haram formally held territories there only briefly, although much land is still inaccessible, had no urban centers and its own insurgency had, in fact, destroyed much infrastructure.

First, therefore, Boko Haram has not needed to “sell” its message to a global audience of foreign fighters or female “citizens;” rather, its recruitment pool has always been comprised of traffickers, paid male

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280 See Winter and Margolin.

281 See, for example, Charlie Campbell, “ISIS Unveiled: The Story Behind Indonesia’s First Female Suicide Bomber,” *Time*, March 3, 2017; Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan Probes Detained IS Female Suicide Bomber Who Planned to Assault Christians,” VOA, April 17, 2017; “IS uses female suicide bombers in Sirte,” *Libya Herald*, December 2, 2016; “Bangladesh Police Arrests 4 Women Militants of JMB,” *Indian Express*, September 5, 2016.

282 Dabiq Issue 8. The fact the women taken here are Christian and not *mushrikat* is not addressed.

283 Brandon Kendhammer, *Muslims Talking Politics: Framing Islam, Democracy, and Law in Northern Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016; Kindle edition), position 103.

fighters, forced male conscripts, spouses and kin of pre-existing members, alongside the ideologically motivated fighters, most of whom are from the Lake Chad sub-region.<sup>284</sup> Nor does Boko Haram need to recruit foreign women to populate its territories in northeastern Nigeria. Again demonstrating the importance of assuming nothing regarding female agency and Boko Haram, local women were reportedly early supporters of the group, particularly as a means to gain religious knowledge, or marriage.<sup>285</sup> Journalist Ahmed Salkida, who has written extensively on the movement, suggested in February 2016 “there are [now] more women than men [in Boko Haram], since it is the men that are in the battle front.”<sup>286</sup> Boko Haram is known to consolidate networks through marriages of widows to other members, suggesting women and men may share convictions.<sup>287</sup> Wives have anecdotally taken part in violence alongside their husbands, although it is not believed they are routinely fighting.<sup>288</sup> Additionally, there has been one media report of the discovery of the body of a female fighter, and Nagarajan reports in Adamawa women sometimes take up arms, but this is not the norm.<sup>289</sup> A Mercy Corps report suggests women may burn buildings during raids, but female members mostly occupy domestic roles, rarely also teaching or preaching.<sup>290</sup> Nor are women apparent in videos of Boko Haram members fighting. Women have, though, reportedly been active in organizational roles, such as the “female wing” arrested in June 2014, suspected of recruiting new members and spies.<sup>291</sup> Boko Haram’s international messaging, however, has mainly focused on women as victims of its power, as with videos boasting of the Chibok abductions.

Second, Boko Haram has not formalized its gendered ideology. Ladbury et al. stress that Shekau’s sharia, as opposed to that of the Islamic State, was nowhere clearly articulated, and there was, therefore, no coherent manifesto for governing a Nigerian ‘caliphate.’<sup>292</sup> Boko Haram’s vision of “state” was a shadow of that of the Islamic State. Lacking a repeated formal articulation of a gendered manifesto, the constraints of the strict gender ideology seen in the Islamic State are absent, leaving Boko Haram less constrained and more able to shape its gender ideology according to its tactical needs, without the risk of self-contradiction. This is partly due to differences in organizational cultures, based around the intended audience and how they digest material. While the Islamic State has produced thousands of publications and videos asserting violence for men only, Boko Haram has primarily spread its message through videos and tapes, and only around 100—not thousands—of them. This is due to Boko Haram’s fewer resources, but also cultural differences regarding proselytization: northeast Nigeria has a tradition of traveling Islamic preachers who evangelize in person. Boko Haram’s founder Muhammad Yusuf mainly relied on oral Dawa’ around Maiduguri, Borno State, to gain followers, although he also

284 Jacob Zenn, “Boko Haram: Recruitment, Financing, and Arms Trafficking in the Lake Chad Region,” *CTC Sentinel* 7:10 (2014); Freedom C. Onuoha, “The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria’s Boko Haram Crisis Explained,” *African Security Review* 19:2 (2010): pp. 54-67.

285 Luchetta, p. 15.

286 Author conversation, Ahmad Salkida, February 2016.

287 Andrew Walker, “Join Us or Die: The Birth of Boko Haram,” *Guardian*, February 4, 2016; “Nigeria women and the Boko Haram Insurgency,” Ahmad Salkida, “Reporting Terrorism In Africa: A Personal Experience With Boko Haram By Ahmad Salkida,” Sahara Reporters, April 19, 2012; author interview, anonymous Nigerian Army officer, October 2014; Dr. Freedom Onuoha, presentation at EUTANS conference in Abuja, Nigeria, October 2015; Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, “A Sectarian Jihad in Nigeria: The Case of Boko Haram,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27:5 (2016): p. 879.

288 Author interview, Air Commodore Dele Alonge, Operation Lafiya Dole, February 2016; author interview, anonymous military officer, October 2014; “Insight: Boko Haram, Taking to Hills, Seize Slave ‘Brides,’” Reuters, November 17, 2013

289 Author interviews, anonymous military sources, (March 2016, December 2016, February 2017). See also Eromosele Ebhomele, “Breaking: Top Female Boko Haram Fighter Killed (Photos),” Naija.ng, February 27, 2017. A recent article by Botha and Abdile suggests women also routinely act as foot-soldiers. However, the definition of foot-soldiers is not clarified, and this contradicts other evidence from the region. Nagarajan, p. 8; Josephine Para-Mallam, “Promoting women’s engagement in peace and security in northern Nigeria report of baseline survey (Adamawa, Plateau & Gombe States of Nigeria),” UN Women, 2016.

290 Luchetta, p. 15; Hadassah Egbedi, “The Wives of Boko Haram Jihadists Share Their Stories from a Safe House,” *Ventures Africa*, September 26, 2016; Dionne Searcey, “Women, Children and Razor Wire: Inside a Compound for Boko Haram Families,” *New York Times*, October 10, 2016; “I Miss My Boko Haram Husband - Rescued 16-Yr-Old Nigerian Girl,” *African Spotlight*, February 5, 2016.

291 “Authorities Arrest Three Women ‘Secretly Working for Boko Haram,’” *Daily Mail*, July 5, 2014.

292 Ladbury, Allamin, Nagarajan, Francis, and Ukiwo, pp. 11-12.

produced written tracts and widely circulated audio and video recordings.<sup>293</sup>

A third reason for Boko Haram's FST is Shekau himself. He innovated female suicide bombing at a time when it maximized not just Boko Haram's global status, but his own. Shekau's own personality likely has some bearing on this innovation, as with al-Zarqawi in AQI before him. On the rare occasions when Shekau has explicitly articulated Boko Haram's position on gender, it has served his tactical goals and legitimized GBV. Shekau, for example, emphasized the inadmissibility of violence against women, consistent with salafi-jihadi doctrine, when Boko Haram's wives were being arrested.<sup>294</sup> Other notable Shekau pronouncements on gender have (mis)used "ideology" to justify GBV, as in the May 2014 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping claim and in January 2017, the claim of FST. As previously noted, this led to criticism by Mamman Nur and likely influenced the August 2016 split in the movement and Shekau's dismissal from ISWAP.

Like their approach to gender, the partnership between the Islamic State and Boko Haram from 2014-2017 appears first and foremost strategic, with insistence on an ideologically coherent partnership secondary. The Islamic State strove to further its "brand" through expansion, and the addition of new provinces, including in West Africa.<sup>295</sup> It tolerated Boko Haram FST, at least until the removal of Shekau as ISWAP wali, while surely recognizing that the coercion of any women or girls into suicide bombing completely transgressed Islamic State ideology, effectively inverting the high-status role of bomber and symbolic power of the willing male "martyr."<sup>296</sup> The use of abducted women as female suicide bombers in particular would transform those with lowest status under the Islamic State (enemy slave women) to the highest status role (martyrs). This transgresses not only the primary ideological boundary between men and women, but also the second binary, distinguishing enemy women from women of the state. Again, this suggests FST is a campaign with primarily—albeit not exclusively—tactical and organizational objectives for Boko Haram. The Islamic State was not only willing to turn a blind eye, but to adopt FST itself when the need arose.

## Discussion

Whatever their differences on female suicide terrorism, this chapter has sought to show that the gendered stances of both Boko Haram and the Islamic State fulfill the same goal: advancing each movement militarily and enabling GBV. One was focused on the creation of a "religious" state (the Islamic State) and the other on the defeat of an "irreligious" one (Nigeria). Until 2017, the Islamic State demonstrated strict division of gender roles and was careful to justify GBV as part of a highly codified and well publicized "Islamic" system. This helped it recruit and build its governance project. Lacking a similar goal, Boko Haram's justifications were more sporadic, less systemized. However, both movements clearly abuse women and adapt theology to justify this. The ostensibly theologically systematized violence endorsed by the Islamic State is, in practice, irregularly applied and permits rape and other criminality. Boko Haram's violence may often appear chaotic and lacking rigid ideological explication; yet it fulfils a strategic aim. Boko Haram's GBV and the Islamic State's treatment of women suggest shared practices rooted in the adaptation of salafi-jihadi practices, exploitation of cultural patriarchal norms, and crucially, prioritization of strategy over ideology.<sup>297</sup>

293 Atta Barkindo, "How Boko Haram Exploits History and Memory," Africa Research Institute, 2016; "Nigeria's 'Taliban' Enigma," BBC, July 31, 2009; Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge," pp. 57-58; Andrew Walker, *"Eat the Heart of the Infidel": The Harrowing of Nigeria and the Rise of Boko Haram* (London: C Hurst & Co, 2016).

294 See Zenn and Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram."

295 Peter R. Neumann, *Die neuen Dschihadisten: ISIS, Europa und die nächste Welle des Terrorismus* (Berlin: Econ, 2015), pp. 98-99; Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (New York: William Collins, 2015), pp. 2,822-2,859.

296 Lewis, p. 38.

297 This violence affects men as well as women. Examples of gender-based violence against men include the execution of gay men in Islamic State; the targeting of boy children to carry out attacks by both groups; men in both areas subject to forcible recruitment or execution during raids, while women are spared or 'enslaved.'

This chapter has also linked Boko Haram's use of FST to Shekau. Boko Haram is, as of the end of 2017, a fractured movement, with at least two competing leaders and a lack of coherent ideology. Shekau has little to attract recruits but fear and violence. The Islamic State is also no longer a winning side. Any status afforded to Boko Haram fighters through the link to the Islamic State's global jihad is diminished. This dent to the Islamic State's reputation offers those West Africans seeking violent jihad the prospect of collaboration with al-Qa`ida-aligned militants in North Africa; it also further threatens the coherence of Boko Haram, which has often consisted of factions. While fluidity has previously been a strength of the movement, this threatens to become a weakness in the absence of clear goals, splitting efforts to recruit and even leading to open confrontation.<sup>298</sup>

The dynamic events on the ground, alongside the complexities of female suicide bombing in West Africa, suggest an increasingly open future for female Boko Haram supporters. After a period of inactivity from June to September 2016, female suicide bombers returned as Shekau apparently reasserted his authority. How further internal shifts may impact on this situation is not clear. Women in IDP camps are under increasing pressure, with reports of sexual exploitation enabling food shortages in northeastern Nigeria.<sup>299</sup> They present possible targets for Boko Haram recruiters who are regrouping after internal conflict. Another factor is the return to reclaimed areas of women sympathetic to Boko Haram's cause, and men released from detention. Such factors provide a possible enabling environment for female violence. Additionally, state actions such as the shooting of suspected bombers, the accidental Nigerian Air Force bombing of an IDP camp, or failure to provide humanitarian assistance against famine may increase local support for an "alternative" approach. There is no room for complacency even while Boko Haram is "technically defeated."<sup>300</sup>

Additionally, as al-Zarqawi perhaps inspired Shekau in female bombing, Shekau may inspire others. Active female involvement in Boko Haram, even if frequently coerced, may have—through "contagion"—encouraged female supporters of the Islamic State who desired a greater role in the violence. The October 2017 Islamic State edict in al-Naba magazine and the February 2018 video now apparently legitimize this, and may further incite women in Europe, Bangladesh, or Indonesia who are seeking permission to become female suicide bombers.<sup>301</sup> Since factionalization and Shekau's decline in power, West African female suicide bombing may be less effective; yet after a period in 2014–2015 in which FST was only evident in West Africa, it is now appearing in other parts of the world in which violent jihadi groups are active.<sup>302</sup> The fall of the caliphate and the "fall" of Shekau may ironically open violent opportunities for female Islamic State supporters, if not real power.

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298 "Boko Haram Supremacy Battle: Shekau Loses Grounds to Albarnawi Faction," *Ripples Nigeria*, December 14, 2017.

299 Ndahi Marama, "BORNO Food Crisis, Malnutrition, Prostitution Rock IDPs Camp," *Vanguard News*, August 28, 2016.

300 "Buhari: Nigeria Has 'Technically' Defeated Boko Haram," VOA, December 24, 2015.

301 Sam Adams, "Female 'ISIS Suicide Bomber' Plotted 'to Blow up Austrian Defence Ministry,'" *Mirror*, October 27, 2016; "IS Shifts Focus to Female Suicide Bombers," *Jakarta Post*, December 13, 2016; Avi Issacharoff, "The Palestinian and Israeli Media on Female Suicide Terrorists" (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies: Institute for National Security Studies, 2006), p. 48.

302 Avi Issacharoff, "2016 Was Deadliest Year Ever for Suicide Bombings Worldwide," *Times of Israel*, January 6, 2017; Yoram Schweitzer, Aviad Mendelboim, and Yotam Rosner, "Suicide Attacks in 2016: The Highest Number of Fatalities," Institute for National Security Studies, January 5, 2017.