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Love in a Time of Crisis?¹ Terrorism, ‘Brides’ and the Implementation of UNSCR 2242

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ABSTRACT

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2242 promotes further integration of the women, peace and security, counter-terrorism, and countering violent extremism agendas, among other things. Thus, this policy brief analyses the stories of brides of two United Nations’ designated terrorist organisations to develop recommendations for the consideration of African states in achieving this integration.

Introduction

In October 2015, the United Nations Security Council passed its eighth Resolution (UNSCR) on women, peace and security, UNSCR 2242.² The eight resolutions recognise that armed conflicts and its aftermaths affect women and girls more negatively than men and boys. Furthermore, they argue that women can contribute significantly to the maintenance of peace and security, but are underrepresented in related spaces. Additionally, UNSCR 2242 acknowledges the emerging and evolving security threats taking centre stage in current (2015-2016) global discourses such as terrorism and related violent extremism.

While the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ can be contentious to define and identify in practice, Boko Haram and the Islamic State (IS) have been designated by the UN as terrorist organisations.³ The inclusion of women and girls in their methods of insurgency provide good case studies for UNSCR 2242’s call for “greater integration by Member States and the [UN] of their agendas on women, peace and security, counter-terrorism [and related] countering violent extremism [CVE]”. This policy brief will only focus on the

category of women and girls described as ‘brides’ of these militants to provide recommendations for the consideration of African states in the implementation of UNSCR 2242.

Boko Haram and IS Brides

Boko Haram⁴ operates primarily in Northern Nigeria and to a lesser extent in other parts of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. There are different opinions as to its origins but it was formally established in 2002 with a marked increase in violence 2009, following the death of its first leader in police detention.

IS’s presence is predominantly in Syria and Iraq but it operates a global network either through formalised cells or radicalised lone wolves. IS’s origins can be traced to late 1990s Afghanistan to Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi’s training camp in Herat⁵ and the organisation he created in 1999.⁶ This organisation metamorphosed into different establishments over the years to become Al Qaeda in the Iraq (AQI) in 2004.⁷ Then on 28 June 2014, it was proclaimed an “Islamic caliphate”⁸, with the self-introduction by its leader as its Caliph on 4 July 2014.⁹

¹ The title was inspired by Gabriel García Márquez’s novel, *Love in a Time of Cholera*.
² The others are UNSCRs 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013).
³ See United Nations, 26 June 2014. *Security Council Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee Adds Boko Haram to Its Sanctions List*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11410.doc.htm> [Accessed 30 August 2016] in which the UN regarded Boko Haram as an associate of Al-Qaida; militants the UN also regards as terrorists and Kumar, C., 2015. Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) a Global Threat: International Strategy to Counter the Threat. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(4) p. 346. Other countries have also labelled these insurgents as terrorists.
⁴ Formally known as Jama’at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-da’wa wal-Jihad
⁵ See Tonnessen, T. H., 2015. Heirs of Zarqawi or Saddam? The Relationship between al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, IX (4).

⁶ See Mohamedou, M.-M. O., 2014. ISIS and the Deceptive Rebooting of Al Qaeda. *GCSP Policy Paper* 2014, August 2014. Issue 5 p. 2, al-Shishani, M. B., 2014. The Islamic State’s Strategic and Tactical Plan for Iraq. *Terrorism Monitor*, XII(16) 8 August 2014, p. 6 and Saltman, E. M. & Winter, C., 2014. *Islamic State: The Changing Face of Modern Jihadism*, London: Quilliam, pp. 28-29.
⁷ See Mohamedou, 2014, p. 2 and Schori Liang, C., 2015 (1). *Getting a Digital Foothold Against the World’s Most Dangerous Start-Up*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.gcsp.ch/News-Knowledge/Global-insight/Getting-a-digital-foothold-against-the-world’s-most-dangerous-start-up> [Accessed 16 July 2015].
⁸ Mohamedou, 2014, p. 2
⁹ See Mohamedou, 2014, p. 2 and Schori Liang, C., 2015(2). *Cyber Jihad: Understanding and Countering Islamic State Propaganda*. *GCSP Policy Paper*, February 2015, p. 3

In March 2015, Boko Haram was reported to have sworn allegiance to IS¹⁰; thereby becoming the latter’s presence in West Africa. However, the degree of collaboration and closeness of these two organisations have been questioned in recent times inferring that it is more prudent to assess them as separate entities than as members of the same network¹¹. They both profess some form of territorial ambition and try to manipulate religion to justify their aggression. Yet there are differences with respect to their principal enemy or enemies, the extent of their territorial conquest, the composition of fighters, methods of warfare and the real root cause of their insurgencies. Moreover, while both sets of militants have been involved in indiscriminate killings of civilians, bombings, kidnapping, rape and the ‘recruitment’ of women and girls as brides and for other ‘positions’, the strategic objective for these tactics are different. Table 1 highlights this and other differences between the two groups, focusing on their ‘brides’.

Table 1: Boko Haram and IS Brides: Differences

No.	Issues	Differences	
		Boko Haram	IS
1	Purpose of Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prisoner Exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building a Caliphate
2	Method of Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Radicalisation
3	Activities of Female Brides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fighters’ wives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fighters’ Wives and Mothers Recruitment of Others
4	Main Perception of the Recruited by their Home States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrorists or Victims
5	Primary Global Focus with respect to the ‘Brides’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departure

¹⁰ See British Broadcasting Corporation, 7 March 2015. *Nigeria’s Boko Haram Pledges Allegiance to Islamic State*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31784538> [Accessed 25 April 2016].

¹¹ See Reuters, 9 June 2016. *U.S. Sees No Major Islamic State Links to Boko Haram, Despite Claims*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-usa-insight-idUSKCN0YV0BW> [Accessed 10 June 2016].

¹² See Ola, L., 12 May 2014. *Boko Haram Offers to Swap Kidnapped Nigerian Girls for Prisoners*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-girls-idUSBREA4A0B620140512> [Accessed 30 August 2016].

¹³ See Blair, D., 14 August 2016. *Boko Haram Releases New Video claiming to Show Nigeria’s Abducted Chibok Schoolgirls*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/14/boko-haram-releases-new-video-of-alleged-chibok-girls/> [Accessed 30 August 2016].

Explanation of Table 1

1. Purpose of Recruitment

Prisoner Exchange: Boko Haram called for the release of its fighters from state incarceration in exchange for the Chibok girls, in May 2014, shortly after the latter’s abduction¹². A similar call was made in August 2016 following the rescue of two Chibok girls¹³.

Building a Caliphate: IS’s leader called “on Muslims from around the world to immigrate to the new Emirate”¹⁴, in the early days of its inception; on 4 July 2014. IS recognises its need for a female population including, but not limited to, being wives to its fighters and mothers to the next generation of IS ‘citizens’.

2. Method of Recruitment

Abduction: Boko Haram abducts women and girls some of whom end-up as wives of its fighters. While it has kidnapped a large number of women and girls from parts of Nigeria and Cameroon over the years, this trend was only brought to the forefront of global security exchanges with the capture of 276 schoolgirls from Chibok, northern Nigeria on 14 April 2014. So far, apart from the 57 who managed to escape shortly after their capture, only 24 girls as at 9 November 2016 have escaped or been rescued or freed from the Chibok group and a few others from the wider conglomeration of abducted women and girls.

Radicalisation: IS’s main method of recruitment for both its fighters and brides are its narratives. These its spurns through a sophisticated multi-media marketing and recruitment machinery with specific gender targeting, using both traditional and new media effectively¹⁵. Furthermore, its use of social media extends its global reach to even persons not looking to be radicalised. For example, its Umm Network has “websites...mixed with ideological indoctrination coupled with seduction for those who are seeking to marry” and has “content...meant to make extremism a normal lifestyle decision”¹⁶ and its “Zora foundation, is dedicated to luring young women with romantic illusions”¹⁷.

3. Activities of Female Brides

Fighters’ Wives: Boko Haram’s ‘wives’ perform domestic duties and some have had the children of their militant ‘husbands’.

¹⁴ Mohamedou, 2014, p. 2 and see Schori Liang, 2015 (2), p.3

¹⁵ A close human contact who may have been radicalised and left to join IS may also be of influence, see Saltman, E. M. & Smith, M., 2015. ‘Till Martyrdom Do Us Part’: *Gender and the ISIS Phenomenon*, London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, p. 20 and on group dynamics p. 44.

¹⁶ Schori Liang, C., 2015. *Cyber Jihad: Understanding and Countering Islamic State Propaganda*. *GCSP Policy Paper*, February 2015, p. 6. Schori Liang explains that Umm is “honorific name in Arabic used to address women as a mother figure”.

¹⁷ Schori Liang, C., 2015. *Getting a Digital Foothold against the World’s Most Dangerous Start-Up*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.gcsp.ch/News-Knowledge/Global-insight/Getting-a-digital-foothold-against-the-world’s-most-dangerous-start-up> [Accessed 16 July 2015].

Fighters' Wives and Mothers and Recruitment of Others:

IS brides are recruited as wives of fighters and mothers but some appear to have taken part in direct and indirect recruitment of women and girls to the IS¹⁸.

4. Main Perception of the Recruited by their Home States

Victims: Boko Haram's 'wives' are mainly perceived by their home state(s) as victims to be rescued.

Terrorists or Victims: IS brides over 18 years of age are considered adults and thereby legally responsible for their actions including allegations of involvement in terrorist activities. Any adult, male or female can be arrested by their home state or other for any involvement in terrorist acts or incitement as well as if found attempting to or actually travelling to Syria to join the IS¹⁹.

5. Primary Global Focus with respect to the 'Brides'

Return: Boko Haram's capture of the Chibok girls ignited the global #BringBackOurGirls campaign. The campaign with women in the frontline²⁰ has called on the Nigerian government to find and rescue the missing girls and has indirectly shed light on the plight of other girls and women in Boko Haram's captivity.

Departure: IS brides' related discourses focus on reasons for the migration of women and girls to Syria. One school of thought alludes to romantic illusions of teenagers, another focuses on online radicalisation, while another on inadequate integration of immigrants into their new Western countries. Yet, even though there are certain triggers towards the radicalisation of these women and girls, these are individuals who may also have personal reasons for their move to Syria and their fascination with IS.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The differences and experiences of these brides validate the inclusion of countering terrorism and related CVE in the women, peace and security agenda. They also point out the danger of grouping seemingly similar terrorist organisations into one bracket, when there a poignant variances requiring special strategies for the engagement of each organisation. Moreover, they highlight the importance of 'romance' either in the recruitment or the retention of women and girls as well as men and boys. This could be 'romance' with respect to

a mate or with respect to the establishment of the perfect state.

Thus, African states could consider the following options in the implementation of the terrorism and violent extremism provisions of UNSCR 2242.

- First, the development and dissemination of alternative narratives specifically for women and girls as two separate groups: IS has projected the effectiveness of targeted marketing in its recruitment of women, girls, men and boys. Boko Haram adds the necessity of integrating local issues into any narrative for home-grown insurgencies. And they both have validated the global CVE tool of narratives, which transcends different disciplines from security to fashion, from historical grievances to romantic novels, from geography to popular trends and so on.
- Second, the integration of information technology into the implementation of UNSCR 2242: IS has extended the parameters of cyber warfare to hearts and minds. Boko Haram has underlined the importance of data collection in tracking its abduction and the escape of its female captives. And they have both shown that non-military modern technology is as important as that of the military in combatting terrorism.
- Third, the primacy of the civilian in all military strategies: IS inspired or directed lone wolf attacks have shown that physical battlefields are not centred in specific locations between easily identifiable armies. Boko Haram's activities have also highlighted that protecting and rescuing women and girls, for example with regard to kidnapping, necessitates research and data collection on women and girls to be able to track disappearances and returns. And both have shown that to attack the state(s) or press for demands, civilians are targeted and at times, specifically women and girls.
- Fourth, research and negotiations on the socio-economic and political factors behind each insurgency or individual cause: IS narratives interweave historical and current grievances among other things, to which certain groups of people can identify. Boko Haram's insurgency is said to stem from what it believes are governance shortfalls that affect the socio-economic

¹⁸ "See Gardner, F., 2015. *The Crucial Role of Women within Islamic State*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33985441> [Accessed 12 October 2015] and Sherwood, H. et al., 2014. *Schoolgirl Jihadis: The Female Islamists Leaving Home to Join Isis Fighters*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/schoolgirl-jihadis-female-islamists-leaving-home-join-isis-iraq-syria> [Accessed 29 September 2014]. But then, as certain sentences in these articles imply, there is the challenge of not being able to verify the actual author of an online post. See also Saltman, E.M. & Smith, M. 2015, pp. 7, 21-26, 29-35, 38-42.

¹⁹ "See United Nations. (2014). *Security Council Resolution 2178(2014)*. United Nations

document S/RES/2178 (2014). New York: United Nations. The resolution does not explicitly mention prosecution for just travelling or attempting to travel but arrests have been made on these bases as travel to join IS would mean supporting terrorist acts in one way or the other.

²⁰ Though the hashtag was created by a man see Butter, S., 2014. *Lena Dunham wants to #BringBackOurGirls: How a Hashtag Stated a Global Protest for the Kidnapped Nigerian Students*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/london-life/lena-dunham-wants-to-bringbackourgirls-how-a-hashtag-started-a-global-protest-for-the-kidnapped-nigerian-students-9337994.html> [Accessed 18 September 2014].

welfare of particular groups of people. And both militant groups’ reasons point to inroads for finding diplomatic solutions based on better integration of persons from all backgrounds, the rule and fairness of law, national and international systems of reprieve in which all voices can be heard and the engagement of young persons, female and male, in brainstorming new avenues for the inclusion of the youth in development, security and peace.

- Fifth, public education and awareness raising on terrorism and related CVE: IS’s recruitment

net has captured persons who were not seeking to be radicalised in the first place. Boko Haram female escapees have included girls for which the communities were not prepared for their return both in terms of community stigmatisation or fear of the girls²¹ and possible children from Boko Haram ‘husbands’²² as well as in terms of psychological support for the girls²³. And both cases have shown the need to empower women and girls both in knowledge and skills to identify risks, protect themselves and provide inputs on countering terrorism and related CVE within their subgroups and wider communities.

²¹ “See International Alert; UNICEF Nigeria, February 2016. *‘Bad Blood’: Perceptions of Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Women and Girls Associated with Boko Haram in Northeast Nigeria - Research Summary*, London/Abuja: International Alert/UNICEF Nigeria, p. 9, 14, 15.

²² “See Mazumdar, T., 5 July 2015 and Leithead, A., 14 April 2016. *Boko Haram Abductions: Freed ‘Bride’ Tells of Stigma Ordeal*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world--africa-36041860> [Accessed 25 April 2016] and regarding the fear of the “bad blood” transmitted to the children by their biological fathers, see International Alert; UNICEF Nigeria, February 2016, pp. 15-16.

²³ International Alert and UNICEF’s report calls for preparations for returnees and also provides recommendations including details on sensitisation and engagement of relevant stakeholders. See International Alert; UNICEF Nigeria, February 2016, pp. 23-24.

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