

**GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS: THE CASE OF
BOKO HARAM**

by

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Abstract

Do the same dynamics hold for non-state actors as with state-based sexual violence, or are there differences? What are the implications? This study seeks to answer this question by drawing upon gender and conflict theories, and seeing how they suffice in illuminating the systematic SGBV by Boko Haram in the Nigerian civil war. Exploring this unfolding conflict will show how Boko Haram's ideological and structural components shape their repertoire of violence. Moving forward, this paper will illustrate that Boko Haram's diffuse and splintered structure does not restrain its strategic and widespread use of SGBV; however, because of the group's extensive combat socialization methods and nation building objectives, SGBV remains a highly effective and systemic strategy. Examining the dominant gender and conflict theories pertaining to sexual violence will illuminate the dynamic, messy and brutal violence occurring within the Boko Haram.

Lay Summary

Exploring how sexual violence occurs during wartime is vital because the more researchers know about rebel groups the more likely they will be able to contribute to solutions for policymakers to help curtail and to dismantle these groups. Governments must be well-informed on sexual violence and the internal workings of groups such as Boko Haram in order to adopt effective policies to deter or derail sexual violence. While data on sexual violence perpetrated by rebel groups can be challenging to collect, these limitations present even more of a need to engage with sexual violence in order not only to take steps to protect people locally, but also to ensure international security.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of the author, Thea Waldron.

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Dedication

To my family.

Chapter 1: Introduction

To understand sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict requires a departure from just analyzing state militaries; rather, it also requires further analysis of non-state armed groups. Rather than exclusively investigating the outside conditional pressures in combat that motivate non-state armed group violence, an exploration of internal structuring of non-state armed groups will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of their operation and objectives. This article seeks to answer the question: what conditions lead to the use or non-use of SGBV for non-state armed groups in conflict? More specifically, how does Boko Haram employ SGBV and how does it fit into these existing theories of use vs. non-use of SGBV? How does Boko Haram measure up against the existing literature's predictors of SGBV? From here, by analyzing how non-state armed groups utilize combat socialization, this paper will argue that Boko Haram's use of SGBV not only follows from its internal dynamic structure, but also its political-ideological objectives of nation building. This paper will first lay out the existing literature challenges and relevancy of this topic; second, it will move on to discuss prominent authors' theories about use vs. non-use of SGBV; in particular, it will compare and critique the findings from this case to that of Elisabeth Wood's theories of variation in employing violence; third, it will apply these theories to the case study of Boko Haram and the way Boko Haram employs SGBV ultimately as a tool for nation building.

Chapter 2: Current Context of Sexual Violence

This section will acknowledge the data and documentation problems with SGBV, the issues of exclusion of men/boys, and the global trends in violence, along with SGBV definitions. I will use the term non-state armed group and rebel interchangeably, defining them as “armed organizations that fight against a government in an internal armed conflict in order to advance their political, [ideological], or military agenda” (Jo 8). A disclaimer must be made about the availability of data and reporting issues concerning the investigation of SGBV. The consensus across the scholarship on SGBV indicates that pervasive underreporting exists “given the fact that many victims (both women and men) do not disclose” or want to give testimony on their experience with sexual violence.¹ One main explanation suggests that binary gender roles shape the perceived forms of violence a man versus a women (or child) can experience – and in this way “sometimes sexual violence against men...are classified as torture,” due to the preservation of “cultural myths, gendered stereotypes and narrow legal definitions” that indicate what sexual violence looks like.² Ultimately, this contributes to continued individual reluctance of reporting or the labelling of lived abuse because having any sexual component to the reporting notably also involves the simultaneous fear of violating accepted gender roles, laws and policies; in other words, this avoidance occurs in order to intentionally escape the risk of social and criminal types of punishment.³ Moreover, not all survivors are willing to divulge the most intimate and violent experiences of their lives to police, NGOs, policymakers, and researchers. This then makes the investigation of SGBV even more necessary knowing that these limitations exist and are

¹ Heleen Touquet and Ellen Gorris, 2016, "Out of the Shadows? The Inclusion of Men and Boys in Conceptualisations of Wartime Sexual Violence," *Reproductive Health Matters*, 24 (47): 40.

² Ibid, 37.

³ Ibid, 37.

accepted as a reality within the literature: this, however, should not deter critical analysis of SGBV in conflict.

In Nigeria, since an oppressive rule of law regarding homosexual activity exists, this may leave men averse to give testimony about experiencing SGBV – additionally, social stigmatizing and dangerous/violent repercussions contribute to this; altogether, the frequency of “men’s victimisation is significantly higher than initially presumed” in conflict and post conflict settings.⁴ A continuous “gap in the human security literature” has historically been upheld through international organizations such as the UN; for instance, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 stated there must be “special measures to protect *women and girls* from gender-based violence,” and that “all parties” within conflict must strive for compliance.⁵ Carpenter correctly recognizes that “a highly gendered understanding of who is to be secured” and is deserving of “protection” typically includes “the exclusion of civilian males.”⁶ Although this essay might predominantly highlight the SGBV in relation to women and girls, it will thus not avoid the way that this also includes men’s and boys’ experiences.

Examining global trends in violence can indicate the extensiveness of non-state armed groups’ repercussions on international security, as well as civilians within the conflict. It is noteworthy that 86% of victims of terrorist organization attacks are non-western targets.⁷ Conversely, the

⁴ Ibid, 36.

⁵ Charli R. Carpenter, 2006, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence Against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations." *Security Dialogue* 37 (1): 84-85.

⁶ Ibid, 85.

⁷ World Bank Group, 2011, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security a Development*, World Development Report: 55.

2013 Human Security Report states that global trends in violence indicate that overall death tolls in conflict are declining, excluding exceptional cases: Boko Haram is an organization included in this exception.⁸ Such infrequent cases, though, of “high-intensity conflicts – those causing 1,000 or more reported battle deaths...played a significant role in causing global battle death tolls to triple since 2007.”⁹ Furthermore, the conflict in Nigeria by itself has led to thousands of deaths,¹⁰ between 2011-2018 the death toll has reached over 35,000 approximately.¹¹

Despite one-sided violence against civilians being “on a downward trend” since the early 2000’s, in fact, ISIS “was by far the most violent actor in 2015,” where the largest civilian killings occurred in Iraq, Syria and Nigeria – Nigeria taking the highest casualties with approximately 2,500 civilians killed; altogether, ISIS-pledged groups are “responsible for almost 63% of the total number of civilians killed” in 2015.¹² This “transnational jihadist” trend which is apparent in the case of Boko Haram, who pledged allegiance to ISIS on March 7th 2015, indicates the pervasive nature of ISIS’s large-scale and cross-border network, and their desire to establish a caliphate: Boko Haram’s relationship with international terrorist networks will be explored further in this paper through the analysis of SGBV in relation to nation-building.¹³

Additionally, the World Development Report 2011 found that SGBV actually spikes in post-conflict settings as found through a study of fifty countries; overall, this speaks to the importance

⁸ Human Security Report, 2013, “Non-state Armed Conflict,” Chap.5, In *Human Security Report 2013; The Decline in Global Violence: Evidence, Explanation, and Contestation*, edited by Andrew Mack, SFU, Canada: Human Security Press: 96.

⁹ Ibid, 96

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch, 2018, “Nigeria Events of 2017,” Human Rights Watch, Accessed April 12, 2018.

¹¹ John Campbell and Asch Harwood, 2018, “Boko Haram’s Deadly Impact.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, Aug 20.

¹² Erik Melander, Therese Pettersson and Lotta Themner, 2016, “Organized Violence, 1989-2015,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53 (5): 730.

¹³ Ibid, 731.

of understanding SGBV, who it impacts, and why it is utilized or avoided by non-state armed groups.¹⁴ Furthermore, the consensus among feminist scholars is that SGBV does not occur automatically, nor is it inescapable in conflict.¹⁵ In light of this, the World Peace Foundation in 2013 referenced the Peace Research Institution Oslo (PRIO) that showed that “64% of armed forces or groups were reported to have used sexual violence, while the remaining 36% did not.”¹⁶ This PRIO report examined a total of 48 conflicts studied in Africa - with over “236 armed forces and groups” examined within these conflicts.¹⁷ This is an encouraging finding that SGBV is not always a necessary strategy for fighting forces in conflict; however, this also contributes to the larger question as to why some groups strategically utilize - versus avoid - SGBV. Altogether, further documentation of sexual assault for both men and women need to be continuously reported in order to best understand the conflict at hand as well as to protect civilians in the future.

SGBV has varying definitions across the literature and perhaps an entire paper could be spent on understanding this important key concept: who gets included in such definitions, what interests play out through the creation of these definitions, and how do oppressive (post) colonial structures facilitate the inclusion of some people - versus exclusion of others - when defining this term? Men have traditionally been excluded in the definition of SGBV; over seventy states not only still criminalize homosexuality, but also “many national laws do not include male victims in their definitions of rape.”¹⁸

¹⁴ World Bank Group, 2011, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development*, 60.

¹⁵ Dyan Mazurana and Keith Proctor, 2013, *Gender Conflict and Peace Occasional Paper*, World Peace Foundation, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁸ Heleen Touquet and Ellen Gorris, “Out of the Shadows? The Inclusion of Men,” 37.

Gender-based violence includes any form of physical, psychological, or social abuse that occurs on the basis of one's belonging to a particular gendered identity, or on the basis of having certain reproductive functionalities – not only can men and women be victims of this abuse, but also even perpetrators, and this can take on a sexual violence component at times.¹⁹ The ICC's Roman Statute Article 7 paragraph 1 (g) defines sexual violence as a crime against humanity, stating that "rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity" all fall under this definition of SGBV.²⁰ In particular, SGBV functions as a form of "dominance and control," enhancing a repertoire of "both conventional and non-conventional weapons," and can act as an indiscriminate/random action as well as for "strategic military purposes."²¹

The rest of this paper will look at objectives behind SGBV, combat socialization, nation building, and how internal dynamics fit into the use vs. non-use of sexual violence. A variety of authors will be employed for understanding the use vs. non-use of SGBV; these include Dara Kay Cohen, who leads the scholarship in analysing how combat socialization acts as a predictor to sexual violence, and Erin Baines, who links sexual violence strategies to nation building. These authors' theories will be applied to the case of Boko Haram. Subsequently, a section will be dedicated specifically to the work of Elisabeth Jean Wood, who discusses variation in SGBV.

¹⁹ Charli R. Carpenter, "Recognizing Gender-Based Violence," 83-86.

²⁰ *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, (1998): 4.

²¹ Inger, Skjelsbaek, 2010, *The Elephant in the Room: An overview of how Sexual Violence Came to be seen as a Weapon of War*, Oslo: Peace Research Institution OSLO, 27.

Chapter 3: The Case of Boko Haram

When Boko Haram pledged its allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in 2015, Boko Haram became known as Wilayat Gharb Afriqiyyah, the translation of this meaning the Islamic State of West Africa.²² Additionally, since it has “rebranded itself as the Islamic State of West Africa Province” (ISWAP) it also goes by Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad.²³ Moving forward, the name Boko Haram will be used for this group, acknowledging that the group has resisted this name because of its perceived Westernized acceptance and usage.

This section will introduce Boko Haram as a non-state armed group seeking to establish a caliphate in the state of Nigeria. Boko Haram’s goal of establishing a caliphate – having an Islamic caliph ruling the state and seizing control over all aspects of the state’s political, military, religious, legal, and overarching societal systems- requires distinct strategies of nation building within conflict. From here, this section will address the aims and grievances of this armed group; the fractured organization and leadership structure, and the international linkages to other terrorist organizations. This case will analyze conflict beginning from 2009 when the original leader Muhammad Yusuf was killed, and Boko Haram took to widespread local and international violence against civilians and state forces. Due to operational shifts in 2011 the focus will remain predominately on Boko Haram’s activity since 2011. Notably, this shift can be marked by the rapid increase in suicide bombings as a key part to Boko Haram’s repertoire of violence.

²² CNN Library, 2018, "Boko Haram Fast Facts," *CNN*, last modified October 18, accessed Jan 15, 2019.

²³ Darlington Mutanda, 2017, “What Makes Terrorism Tick in Africa? Evidence from Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram,” *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 21(1): 30.

3.1 Grievances

First, the ambitions of Boko Haram are to oppose Western ways of life, to capture the state of Nigeria - or at least the majority of its Northern territory²⁴- and to rule with a radical Islamic form of Sharia law.²⁵ Pervasive Nigerian government corruption, extrajudicial killing, violence against civilians, and systemic poverty, have been some of the components contributing to Boko Haram's resultant rise as "a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency."²⁶ On top of Nigeria's pervasive problems - and despite being the biggest oil exporter in Africa - the country's wealth does not translate to its population; in 2016 the World Bank reported a very low GNI per capita of \$2,450, with pervasive poverty existing;²⁷ in addition, the World Bank's most recent 2009 findings indicate that 46% of Nigeria's population lives below the national poverty line.²⁸ UNHCR reports indicate that currently over "26 million people in the Lake Chad region have been affected by Boko Haram;" this cross-national crisis includes Nigeria, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, where Boko Haram has established a "safe haven" since 2013 by moving through the permeable borders in the Northeast of Nigeria.²⁹ This spill-over effect of conflict illustrates the importance of understanding Boko Haram on a deeper level in order to best counteract their violent nature - as exemplified in 2017 when Boko Haram carried out approximately 150 attacks across Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, which was an 18% increase from 2016.³⁰

²⁴ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, 2014, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5 (1): 46.

²⁵ Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, 2015, "Boko Haram Backgrounder." Council on Foreign Relations, last modified March 5, accessed April 12, 2018.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The World Bank, "Nigeria," The World Bank, accessed April 12, 2018.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jacob Zenn, 2018a, "Boko Haram's Backyard: The Ongoing Battle in Cameroon," *The Jamestown Foundation: Terrorism Monitor* 16 (6).

³⁰ Mark Wilson, 2018, "Nigeria's Boko Haram Attacks in Numbers - as Lethal as Ever," *BBC Monitoring*, January 25.

Boko Haram practices an “exclusivist interpretation of Islam— which rejects not only Western influence, but also democracy, constitutionalism, and more moderate forms of Islam,” and this armed group frames itself through “politics of victimhood that resonate in Nigeria’s underdeveloped northern states.”³¹ Importantly, Boko Haram has “more diverse and less material” grievances. Negotiations, however, have been unlikely given the “lack of clear leadership” and this has actually “hindered peace talks” in the past.³²

3.2 Splintered Leadership

In rebel organizations, a centralized structure is defined by effective “internal monitoring and enforcement mechanism” and “territorial control,” with a clear leadership hierarchy.³³ Boko Haram lacks this unified command structure. Most recently, in August 2016, Yusuf’s son, Shekh Abu Musab al-Barnawi, became “the new leader of Boko Haram” with ISIS support.³⁴ That said, Boko Haram has numerous factions, and unclear leadership contributes to its fractured and diffuse organizational structure.³⁵ For instance, Abubakar Shekau claims to lead Boko Haram, but, since 2016, Sheikh Abu Musah al-Barnawi in fact claimed title as the rightful leader of Boko Haram, indicated through an ISIS publication.³⁶ It remains currently unclear the power Abubakar Shekau holds now - as either a leader of a key faction of Boko Haram, or the leader overall - because many articles have claimed it hard to believe that Abubakar Shekau would willingly step

³¹ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, 2016, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*. US: Congressional Research Service, 3.

³² Mohammed Aly Sergie and Toni Johnson, 2015, "Boko Haram Backgrounder."

³³ Hyeran Jo and Katherine Byrant, 2013, "Taming of the Warlords: Commitment and Compliance by Armed Opposition Groups in Civil Wars " Chap. 13, In *The Persistent Power of Human Rights: From Commitment to Compliance*, edited by Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp and Kathryn Sikkink. Vol. 126: 245.

³⁴ CNN Library, "Boko Haram Fast Facts."

³⁵ International Crisis Group, 2014, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

³⁶ CNN Library, "Boko Haram Fast Facts."

down for a new leader to take his place.³⁷ According to the ICG, in 2014 there were six existing dominant factions and a “splinter group,” called Ansaru, who “focuses more on foreign targets,” but still works closely at times with the main factions of Boko Haram: Ansaru, however, also coordinates, trains and receives funding largely from the al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).³⁸ Altogether, “Al-Barnawi and Shekau are thus the two main rival figureheads, but they do not represent the only factions” of Boko Haram.³⁹

Boko Haram’s leadership diffuses itself further through continuous engagement and ties to international terrorist organizations. Boko Haram recruits can receive training in surrounding states from other terrorist groups: moreover, their funding structures can be tied to both the AQIM providing “financial resources, military arsenals and training facilities available,” as well as links to other organizations such as ISIS, Al-Shabeb, Afghan Taliban and al-Qaeda.⁴⁰ Under Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram pledged allegiance to ISIS in 2015, and at that time the Syria and Iraq-based ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, accepted this, “urging followers to travel to Western Africa and support Boko Haram.”⁴¹ The BBC reported that in 2017 ISIS took credit for only thirteen of Boko Haram’s attacks, which may indicate that Boko Haram’s fragmented structure could “make it difficult for IS to issue claims as it cannot verify which faction is behind an attack.”⁴² This reveals Boko Haram’s fractured organizational structure and the need to further understand its relationship with ISIS.

³⁷ Stephanie Busari, 2016, "Boko Haram's New Leader is Son of Executed Founder, Insider Says," *CNN*, August 4.

³⁸ International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria*, 28.

³⁹ Jacob Zenn, 2018b, “Making sense of Boko Haram’s Different Factions: Who, how, and why,” *African Arguments*, Sept 20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 24.

⁴¹ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria's Boko Haram*, 6.

⁴² Mark Wilson, "Nigeria's Boko Haram Attacks."

Before discussing the forms of SGBV Boko Haram utilizes in pursuit of nation building, it must be noted that Boko Haram's manipulation of Islam and Sharia law serves their radical beliefs and objectives; nonetheless, Islamic feminist scholars contend that "Islamic jurisprudence or Sharia is not a predetermined list of rules," and that the "level of misunderstanding of Islamic texts... lie at the heart of GBV rather than the texts themselves."⁴³ Moving forward, the aim is to capture the reality of Boko Haram's use of violence for nation building by acknowledging their political-ideological goals, but without demonizing Islam as a religion.

⁴³Atta Barkindo, Benjamin Tyavkase Gudaku, and Caroline Katgurun Wesley, 2013, *Our Bodies, their Battle Ground Boko Haram and Gender Based Violence Against Christian Women and Children in North-Eastern Nigeria since 1999*, Abuja-Nigeria: Open Doors, 10.

Chapter 4: Boko Haram's Ideology

Within the broad and interconnected terror network of the Islamic State it remains notable to point out that “that the fundamental ideology of ISIS, Boko Haram, and Al-Shabaab rests on Wahhabism.”⁴⁴ Wahhabism is the ideology that Boko Haram uses to “justify” their behaviour and shape their groups activity.⁴⁵ Wahhabism dates back to the eighteenth century to the “Sunni Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab,” whose stance was to promote the “purest form” of Islam.⁴⁶ The beliefs of this sect are highly conservative and follow the Salafi doctrine – Salafis are associated with Wahhabism; Salafis and Wahhabis argue that only they are destined for heaven, whereas anyone who does not practice this, regardless of the religion or sect, must be denounced.⁴⁷ The current followers of Wahhabism do not reflect the Islamic “principle of tolerance.”⁴⁸ Boko Haram takes a radical approach to the “mainstream Salafi strands of Nigerian Islam;” Boko Haram’s decision-making is based, though, through religious texts of the Quaran.⁴⁹ Importantly, to understand Boko Haram’s use of SGBV means that its ideology cannot go unexplored because “every action taken by Boko Haram thus far can be justified in terms of the Salafi-jihadi ideology.”⁵⁰ Likewise, multiple terrorist organizations sharing this ideology matters because this “interconnectivity” not only strengthens the “sphere of authority” and “sense of purpose” when belonging to these groups, but also indicates the successful spread and expansion of their beliefs.⁵¹

⁴⁴ Darlington Mutanda, “What Makes Terrorism Tick,” 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 29.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 28.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 28-29.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 29.

⁴⁹ Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, eds, 2018, *The Boko Haram Reader: From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, ProQuest Ebook Central, 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 4.

⁵¹ Darlington Mutanda, 2017, “What Makes Terrorism Tick,” 30.

4.1 Takfir and Boko Haram's Factions

Takfir is defined as “a religious concept, which signifies the act of excommunication – declaring a nominal Muslim an infidel,” and the appropriate “punishment for those classified as apostates, namely death.”⁵² Traditionally, takfir was not declared arbitrarily and was the responsibility earmarked for “qualified religious authorities.”⁵³ Takfir is not accepted by all within the Islamic community because it has destabilizing qualities depending on how the concept is interpreted and executed. The Kharijites -the first Islamic sect in the history of Islam- grappled with who should be identified as a true Islamic believer, putting forward the notion that anyone who deviates from Islamic norms should be punished through extreme violence.⁵⁴ Boko Haram has continued this ideological practice of takfir: for instance, the Kharijites argued “Muslims who commit grave sins effectively reject their religion, entering the ranks of apostates, and therefore deserve capital punishment.”⁵⁵

Takfir's interpretation has devastating implications for civilians in Nigeria. Takfir creates distinct variations for how Muslims and non-Muslims are treated across the major factions of Boko Haram. Shekau's faction of Boko Haram has the most exclusive interpretation as to who belongs to their Salafi-jihadi group. Notably, Abubakar Shekau currently retains control over the largest fighting force faction of Boko Haram.⁵⁶ Shekau exemplifies his interpretation of takfir in a 2016

⁵² Jacob Zenn and Pieri Zacharias, 2017, “How much Takfir is too much Takfir? The Evolution of Boko Haram's Factionalization,” *Journal for Deradicalization* (11): 287.

⁵³ Ibid, 287.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 288.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 288.

⁵⁶ Jacob Zenn, 2018b, “Making sense of Boko Haram's Different Factions: Who, how, and why,” *African Arguments*, Sept 20.

speech, arguing “even if a woman is praying and fasting, once she engages in democracy I can capture her in a battle;” he further clarifies his point stating that “even if a woman outwardly expresses the practices of Islam” that any deviation to the accepted Salafi-jihadi practice of Islam remains justifiably punishable with violence.⁵⁷ Accordantly, this currently leads to extreme levels of violence directed towards those “Muslims who refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the movement;” what’s more, this violence has “intensified after [Boko Haram’s] alliance with Islamic State.”⁵⁸

On one hand, Boko Haram’s leadership is splintered and contested, but on the other hand, even with this strife and friction its overarching ideology still binds each faction. Two of the main factions of Boko Haram are lead by Shekau and al-Barnawi. Despite leadership riffs Shekau’s faction still has maintained its pledge to the caliph, al-Baghdadi – even though ISIS acknowledges al-Barnawi as Boko Haram’s main leader.⁵⁹ Shekau and al-Barnawi are similar in that they both attack “churches to prevent the ‘Christianisation’ of Muslim lands;” conversely, “al-Barnawi would leave alone Muslims who do not actively oppose the jihad.”⁶⁰ Even the break off faction of Boko Haram, known as Ansaru, a group pledged to al-Qaeda, “believes ordinary Muslims should not be subject to accusations of takfir so long as they do not actively oppose jihad.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Jacob Zenn and Pieri Zacharias, “How much Takfir is too much Takfir,” 288.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 289.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 283.

⁶⁰ Jacob Zenn, 2018b, “Making sense of Boko Haram’s Different Factions.”

⁶¹ Jacob Zenn and Pieri Zacharias, “How much Takfir is too much Takfir,” 283.

Boko Haram's overarching commitment to expand and solidify a caliphate creates a united and binding objective for these factions. Even if there are leadership fractures -with takfir creating varying levels of systematic violence towards Muslims and non-Muslims alike - Boko Haram still collectively works towards a total rejection of the state and attempts to secure total control.⁶² Altogether, at the end of the day, each faction still targets anyone deemed as a threat to their movement - it is just the severity and extensiveness of this targeting and punishment that has variation.

4.2 Christian and Muslim Targeting

The assumption may remain that Boko Haram's violence disproportionately impacts Christian communities, but they also gravely impact the Muslim community. Boko Haram currently has engaged in an unprecedented number of attacks on Muslim civilians – currently targeting mosques *more frequently* than churches.⁶³ This dramatic shift has been underway since 2015 - where originally churches were the top targets.⁶⁴ Churches understandably were the top target for Boko Haram because they are considered symbols of Western influence and secularism.⁶⁵ Due to the splintered leadership, Shekau has systematically been “targeting Muslim groups that do not adhere to the specific ideology of Boko Haram,” not just those who strictly oppose their movement.⁶⁶ Furthermore, ISIS encouraging al-Barnawi's faction to employ ‘more restrained’ versions of takfir seems to be lost on Shekau's faction- perhaps Shekau's actions can be partially explained as a backlash to ISIS supporting al-Barnawi as the true leader. This may begin to

⁶² Ibid, 283.

⁶³ John Campbell and Asch Harwood, “Boko Haram's Deadly Impact.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

explain the attacks as mentioned above, but some have explained the spike in Mosque attacks as just due to the “popular support” for the Nigerian president, but again it remains unclear the full extent of this recent shift.⁶⁷ Altogether, “attacks on churches notwithstanding, Muslims have borne the brunt of violence since the conflict began.”⁶⁸

In order for Boko Haram to uphold its “legitimacy of the Caliphate,” they have to control territory; therefore, whatever threatens this objective will come under fire.⁶⁹ That said, whatever helps to sustain this objective will also become key to Boko Haram’s operation. Thus, their ideology must be examined alongside their use of SGBV.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Jacob Zenn and Pieri Zacharias, “How much Takfir is too much Takfir,” 298.

Chapter 5: Boko Haram Use versus Non-Use of SGBV

This section will address the strategy of SGBV that Boko Haram uses, its utilization of forced marriage/impregnation for nation building, and the rare cases when Boko Haram does not use SGBV. Though Boko Haram operates a vast repertoire of SGBV, four key strategies will be introduced in this article: abduction, forced marriage/ impregnation, sexual violence and suicide bombing. Forced marriage/impregnation will be the key to this paper's main argument of nation building; however, all of these forms of violence interconnect with each other to support this larger project of nation building. Nonetheless, abduction intertwining into each of these forms of SGBV will be examined as it plays a key role in understanding the overall internal dynamics and violence of this armed group.

5.1 SGBV and Ideology

Even though practices of takfir vary, violence against women and girls is embraced across Boko Haram's factions: even though Muslim and non-Muslim women may be treated differently across cases, they still both experience SGBV – an intrinsic quality to Boko Haram's daily operations grounded in Salafi-Jihadi ideology. Boko Haram uses SGBV against civilians, but what does their ideology say that supports their use of forced marriage and sex slavery? What are the leaders of Boko Haram referencing and teaching with regards to the treatment of women and girls? During a recorded speech by Shekau on May 6th, 2014, he says, “yes, we will capture slaves. Who told you there are no slaves in Islam? ...Any female who has attained the age of 12, I will marry her off. Any girl who has attained the age of 9, I will marry her off, the same way they married the Mother of the Believers, the daughter of Abu Bakr, Aisha, to the Prophet Muhammad at the age of 9 ... My brothers, you should cut the unbelievers' necks. You should

capture slaves.”⁷⁰ In this speech Shekau cites the fourth verse of the forty-seventh chapter of the Quran (Q47:4), where Allah says “strike their necks till you have bloodied them, and fasten the shackles.”⁷¹

Accordingly, a top-ranking leader, Mamman Nur, who is currently allied to al-Barnawi’s faction, spoke against Shekau in a recorded speech on August 2nd, 2016, which indicated that “Shekau ignored al-Baghdadi’s advice on distinguishing female apostates who should be killed and not enslaved.”⁷² More specifically, one criticism hinged on the enslavement of “those who are born unbelievers, such as Christian girls” or “*Kafir Asli*.”⁷³ Regardless of the infighting amongst Boko Haram factions, the issue is not whether SGBV against women and girls is acceptable - it is whether it can be grounded in ideological justification. Ultimately, the consensus across factions remains that Boko Haram supports enslaving and killing women, but al-Barnawi’s faction continues to demand Shekau reign in his overzealous violence against Islamic followers – at least those who do not qualify as apostates or infidels.⁷⁴

5.2 Abduction: Everyday versus Mass Kidnappings

Kidnappings have taken place for the purpose of targeting Nigerian military government officials’ wives, with endless circles of retaliatory kidnapping occurring by/on both sides, including targeting civilians for ransom-funding schemes, targeting for recruits, and targeting of

⁷⁰Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, *The Boko Haram Reader*, 302-303.

⁷¹ Ibid, 303.

⁷² Jacob Zenn and Pieri Zacharias, “How much Takfir is too much Takfir,” 299.

⁷³ Ibid, 299.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 299.

women and girls.⁷⁵ Notably, Boko Haram's repertoire since 2013 has increased its perpetration of "kidnapping and hostage-taking."⁷⁶ For instance, "the number of hostages taken [for ransom] in 2014 alone was 1,298," whereas previously in 2013 only "eighty-nine hostages were taken;" furthermore, abduction of women and girls also increased to 2,000 in 2014.⁷⁷ Boko Haram, being one of the most violent non-state armed groups in existence, tragically took upwards of 6,644 lives in 2014.⁷⁸ Targeting for recruits, and specifically targeting women/girls, will be explored predominately. These abduction strategies that result in Boko Haram taking on so many abductees, conversely drain resources as it takes time, effort and money to take care of them all - so why do this?

Hinshaw and Parkinson report that mass abductions have led to "more than 10,000 boys" being taken for the purpose of training them into radical Islam, then deploying them into conflict.⁷⁹ The rigorous training programs for both boys and girls involve indoctrination, with the aim of supplementing their fighting force and spreading their ideology by creating child jihadists.⁸⁰ Hinshaw and Parkinson make the relevant point that in order even to begin to resolve this conflict the international community has to realize that what they face currently is "a new generation of child combatants raised on an ideology more apocalyptic" than seen with past insurgencies in West Africa. This is a prevalent strategy within many Islamic terrorist organization, where both al-Qaeda and ISIS have "used children in combat, suicide bombings

⁷⁵ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, 2014, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics of Boko Haram," *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5 (1): 48.

⁷⁶ Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, *The Boko Haram Reader*, 288.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 288.

⁷⁸ Darlington Mutanda, "What Makes Terrorism Tick," 28.

⁷⁹ Drew Hinshaw and Joe Parkinson, 2016, "The 10,000 Kidnapped Boys of Boko Haram," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 12.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

and in execution videos,” further exemplifying a similar repertoire of violence within and inherent to its alliances.⁸¹

As well, on February 19th, 2018, a mass school abduction took place, where Boko Haram once more abducted “over 100 female students from a school in Yobe state.” these students were targeted because of their gender.⁸² This recent mass abduction of schoolgirls targeted the Government Girls Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State; however, the vast majority of these 110 girls were returned by March 21st, 2018.⁸³ Leah Sharibu, though, has not been returned because she refuses to convert to Islam from Christianity.⁸⁴ Even though the majority of schoolgirls have been returned from the 2018 abduction many of the schoolgirls from a previous 2014 Chibok abduction have neither been returned nor have managed to escape – over approximately 100 remain missing.⁸⁵

The 2014 Chibok schoolgirl abduction prompted an international wide #bringbackourgirls media campaign, where prominent figures like Michelle Obama promoted further action from the global community; yet, there was no revival of this international ‘bring back our girls’ campaign for the February 2018 attacks.

The #bringbackourgirls campaign benefited Boko Haram, to an extent, because it provided a global audience - providing them “free publicity” and helping them to become a notorious

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² International Crisis Group, "Crisis Watch Tracking Conflict World Wide: Nigeria." International Crisis Group, last modified February, accessed April 12, 2018.

⁸³ CNN Library, "Boko Haram Fast Facts."

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Bukola Adebayo, 2018, “Lone Dapchi schoolgirl in Boko Haram captivity begs for her freedom,” *CNN*, Aug 28.

“world brand for hostage-taking.”⁸⁶ Thus, this global audience increases the stakes and their leverage for future negotiation purposes because the ‘whole world’ was watching the Nigerian state.⁸⁷

Importantly, only a few months after this mass kidnapping in 2014 over “300 students, most of them *boys* age 7 to 17,” were captured in Damasak, held captive, and then put into intensive radical religious training – but no #bringbackourboys campaign occurred for them.⁸⁸ Pervasive kidnapping has occurred since the 2014 social media campaign began, but there has been little media coverage at all.

One might therefore ask if the interest of the public has diminished - or has Nigeria and other states been in fact keeping Boko Haram’s kidnappings quiet due to their inability to prevent them? In light of this, the Nigerian state has condemned Amnesty International for being “critical of the Nigerian military” because it arguably fears that it will cause an international backlash or compromise support and integration from the US and other allies.⁸⁹ So a potential explanation for this suppression of widespread coverage could be that the US currently is engaged in a deal “selling fighter jets and weapons to help Nigeria,” while having assisted them in training operations and in providing funds.⁹⁰ Perhaps by showcasing the widespread kidnapping of

⁸⁶ Darlington Mutanda, “What Makes Terrorism Tick,” 25.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁸ Drew Hinshaw and Joe Parkinson, “The 10,000 Kidnapped Boys.”

⁸⁹ Dionne Searcey and Emmanuel Akinwotu, 2018b, “Nigeria Failed to Act in Schoolgirl Kidnappings by Boko Haram, Report Says,” *The New York Times*, March 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

boys/girls this would indicate a loss for the ‘legitimate’ state actors on the ground in combat, compromising Nigeria’s reputation and relationship with the international community.

Notably, the current ICC preliminary investigation underway not only criticizes gendered violence by Boko Haram, but also state-based violence as well. The ICC tried to engage with “relevant partners and stakeholders,” such as “Nigerian NGOs, communication senders and diplomatic actors,” and has also been assessing the domestic efforts for trials.⁹¹ Altogether, the Nigerian government’s criticisms of Amnesty International can also be explained because Amnesty International provide damning evidence that could prompt the ICC to move from its current preliminary investigation into formal investigation. Amnesty International’s critique illuminates the government’s inability to curtail Boko Haram through the criminal justice system – provoking further ICC involvement.

The Nigerian military, since 2014, has been actively trying to rescue these girls with little operational success. Despite the military’s best efforts to retrieve the Chibok girls in April 2015 a whopping “450 women and girls” were found – but none of them were the Chibok girls.⁹² Again, the military was unsuccessful at finding any Chibok girls in September 2015 where another “241 women and children [were] rescued.”⁹³ The first Chibok girl was not freed in fact until May 2016; the military took credit for finding her despite, multiple sources/ witnesses stating that “the girl wandered out of the Sambisa Forest in the northeast of the country.”⁹⁴ Altogether, this shows

⁹¹ ICC, 2017, “Report on the Preliminary Examination Activities 2017,” *The Office of the Prosecutor*, Dec 4, p.49.

⁹² CNN Library, “Boko Haram Fast Facts.”

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

Boko Haram's strength in holding captive mass abductees effectively *and* as a key strategy to their operations.

When Amina Ali Nkeki, the first Chibok girl, was recovered she had with her a newborn plus a male escapee - both of them claiming that they were kidnapped on separate occasions, then married to each other by Boko Haram in captivity.⁹⁵ Amina Ali Nkeki's testimony supports Boko Haram's widespread objective of nation building through strategies of *forced* marriage and pregnancy - that also functions as a socialization tactic between new abducted recruits – by bonding two abductees as husband and wife, thereby forming a new possibly more cohesive family unit.

These abductions illuminate the prevalent use of SGBV, and they also demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the Nigerian military in counteracting Boko Haram's strategies. Interestingly, Boko Haram has since decided to return the majority of the schoolgirls kidnapped in February 2018, demonstrating two key points: Boko Haram can undermine the Nigerian military's authority through haphazardly kidnapping/returning schoolgirls, while simultaneously also demonstrating its ISIS ties.⁹⁶ Civilians warned security forces that Boko Haram was planning an attack around the days of February 19th, 2018, and once the police found out they deserted the town in fear,⁹⁷ and the military was unresponsive. Boko Haram's actions here illustrate how they

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Dionne Searcey and Emmanuel Akinwotu, 2018a, "Boko Haram Returns Dozens of Schoolgirls Kidnapped in Nigeria," *The New York Times*, March 21.

⁹⁷ Dionne Searcey and Emmanuel Akinwotu, "Nigeria Failed to Act."

can leverage this Nigerian military ‘defeat’ to showcase their control over the civilian population again.⁹⁸

Importantly, Boko Haram returned each student, except one *Christian* schoolgirl: “American military officials have said they believe that the faction of Boko Haram responsible for the kidnapping was backed by the Islamic State,” and this terrorist organization has made it clear to Boko Haram that there should not be any kidnapping of Muslim students.⁹⁹ Boko Haram’s diffuse and fragmented leadership shows through here again when they use indiscriminate forms of violence against Muslim students - going against the approved forms suggested by the ISIS.¹⁰⁰

Even though the #bringbackourgirls campaign remains a national campaign, in the case of the 2018 mass abduction in Dapchi, not having a global recurrence of this campaign might have been advantageous. The lack of international attention meant it was less costly to return the girls a month later – because ultimately a successful brute display of force had been demonstrated, so returning them was not as costly since a desperate global audience driving up the benefits of holding onto the girls did not exist. Although the Nigerian government refuses to state whether they incentivized Boko Haram with funds, resources, or prisoner-exchanges, Boko Haram still had a massive operational win from the kidnapping. There was “a weeklong ceasefire with the Nigerian government,” which not only allowed the group to gain back traction, but also allowed them to reaffirm and to “consolidate its position in its strongholds in northeastern Nigeria.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Dionne Searcey and Emmanuel Akinwotu, "Boko Haram Returns Dozens of Schoolgirls."

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Jacob Zenn, 2018c, “The Terrorist Calculus in Kidnapping Girls in Nigeria: Cases from Chibok and Dapchi,” *CTC Sentinel* 11 (3): 6.

As mentioned, although it remains unclear which faction of Boko Haram abducted the girls, al-Barnawi's faction was argued to have been the group to return them. Interestingly, Boko Haram's threats drastically impact the accessibility to education for all genders alike; one of the main themes Boko Haram iterated was that by capturing these girls they were saving "the Muslim Dapchi girls from Western education."¹⁰² Al-Barnawi's decision not to punish these Muslim schoolgirls, but instead allow them to return, spread Salafi-jihadism, and stop attending their school, therefore, suggests a more restrained interpretation of takfir than Shekau's faction. Thus, a form of "positive publicity" is created and associated with the returning of the Dapchi girls – showing that if deemed a supporter of Boko Haram, one may be spared.¹⁰³ For instance, referring again to the recorded speech from August 2nd, 2016, showed the high-ranking command Mamman Nur maintaining that they "received guidance from the Islamic State to only kidnap, or 'enslave,' Christians. Muslim men and women, however, could not be 'enslaved;' they could only be killed if they were apostates and did not repent."¹⁰⁴ Al-Barnawi, who also criticizes Shekau, states in the recorded speech: "just like Allah gave us power to kill infidels, there are those he said we shouldn't kill without reason."¹⁰⁵ Al-Barnawi concluded by warning Shekau to follow a consistent form of takfir, claiming, "if you leave us alone, we will leave you alone. If you continue antagonizing us, we will also continue. If you

¹⁰² Ibid, 6.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 6.

¹⁰⁴ John Campbell, 2018, "Competing Ideologies at Play in Boko Haram's Return of Dapchi Girls," *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 4.

¹⁰⁵ SaharaReporters, 2016, "New Boko Haram Leader, al-Barnawi, Accuses Abubakar Shekau of Killing Fellow Muslims, Living in Luxury," *Sahara Reporters*, Aug 5.

repent, we will accept you and embrace you. You should repent and fear Allah. This is the open letter to you.”¹⁰⁶

Cases like the Dapchi abduction illustrate the rift between the factions, considering the approach to the schoolgirls return may have been quite different under the command of Shekau.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, testimony from released Dapchi schoolgirls said that while in captivity a Boko Haram preacher, allegedly al-Barnawi, urged, “when you go back, convince your parents to come back here to the Islamic caliphate with you.”¹⁰⁸ Although there may be plenty of explanations as to why the girls were taken and released, this testimony shows Boko Haram intentionally attempting to spread their ideology, illustrating how years of “guidance from [the] Islamic State can have a practical impact on the ground in the insurgency in Nigeria.”¹⁰⁹ That said, although the mass kidnapping of Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls are significant, it also remains important to continue to look beyond the most broadcasted cases, and examine the everyday abductions and treatment of civilians to fully explore the systemic use of SGBV by Boko Haram.

5.3 Combat Socialization: Forced Marriage, Sexual Slavery and Nation Building

Combat socialization can be a key determinant to the use versus non-use of SGBV. Cohen’s main argument stipulates that when you have forced recruits, particularly through abduction, this increases the likelihood that insurgents will use sexual violence through the process of training,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ John Campbell, “Competing Ideologies at Play.”

¹⁰⁸ Ruth Maclean and Isaac Abrak, 2018, “Schoolgirls seized by Boko Haram tell of Christian friend’s escape bid,” *The Guardian*, March 30.

¹⁰⁹ John Campbell, “Competing Ideologies at Play.”

hazing and bonding recruits.¹¹⁰ Since these new members “are recruited by force,” come from a diverse background, and are unfamiliar to each other, the leadership will most likely “use rape to create and maintain unit cohesion.”¹¹¹ Sexual violence thus functions as an effective “socialization tool” because it creates “bonds of loyalty and esteem from these initial circumstances of fear and mistrust.”¹¹² This “collective act of humiliating a victim” through peer pressure or threats against one’s own life if refusing to participate, “can cause individuals to behave in ways that they would never act if alone,” and as a result it can unify members and thereby increase morale.¹¹³

Boko Haram’s training and socialization “casts men in hyper-masculine combat roles, their duty to violently oppose the west;” here, sexual violence not only facilitates socialization and cohesion, but also functions as strategy of ideological expansion and nation building.¹¹⁴ As aforementioned, abduction, conversion and forced marriage are key to an overarching strategy of nation building. Both Baines and Cohen here overlap in ideas of socialization where “sexual violence and forced marriage are regarded as a strategy of socialization or control;” moreover, as Baines has found within her study of non-state armed groups in Uganda, this SGBV expands into a “political project of nation-building.”¹¹⁵ Baines’ findings in the case of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) can expand and directly apply to the case of Boko Haram, where the strategy of “forced marriage [has] increased interdependence” of the women captives because they develop

¹¹⁰ Dara Kay Cohen, 2011, "Causes of Sexual Violence during Civil War: Cross-National Evidence (1980-2009)," *Minnesota International Relations Colloquium*: 29

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

¹¹⁴ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics," 51.

¹¹⁵ Erin Baines, 2014, "Forced Marriage as a Political Project: Sexual Rules and Relations in the Lord's Resistance Army," *Journal of Peace Research* 51 (3): 407.

reliance on “male commanders to provide and protect themselves and their children.”¹¹⁶ These strategies of forced marriage used by both Boko Haram and the LRA have sustained “national imaginings [that] actively produce and reproduce social cohesion.”¹¹⁷ Overall then, for groups like Boko Haram, they are employing sexual violence in particular ways to attempt to re-envision the state of Nigeria into a caliphate; therefore, sexual violence serves more than just a form of humiliation, or a tool deployed against an enemy, but as a means of visualizing a new nation by strategically framing “women’s bodies” as both a space and a vessel for “national imagining.”¹¹⁸

Accordingly, the abductees being used as “sex slaves and fighters” remains a highly intentional and effective way to capture land and inhabit it with members, while also solidifying member bases.¹¹⁹ To this end, forced reproduction also leads to more people who will “inherit their ideology.”¹²⁰ As mentioned, in 2015 the number of abducted women and girls was approximately 2,000;¹²¹ and since the pledge to ISIS, Boko Haram has continuously committed to “large-scale kidnapping” for the purpose of slavery.¹²² Retrieving testimony from those who resisted Boko Haram and escaped from captivity shows an overwhelming consensus and trend for these women and girls: they stated they were “kidnapped simply to be married off to Boko Haram fighters” and to have the fighters’ children.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 407.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 407.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 407.

¹¹⁹ Darlington Mutanda, “What Makes Terrorism Tick,” 33.

¹²⁰ Adam Nossiter, 2015, “Boko Haram Militants Raped Hundreds of Female Captives in Nigeria,” *The New York Times*, May 18.

¹²¹ Hilary Matfess and Valeria M Hudson, 2018, “The Neglected Role of Brideprice in Catalyzing Instability and Violent Conflict,” *Military Review* 98 (1): 44.

¹²² Abdulbasit Kassim and Michael Nwankpa, *The Boko Haram Reader*, 4.

¹²³ Ibid, 288.

Numerous examples exemplify Boko Haram's behaviour: the Christian Association of Nigeria, for example, has documented "women increasingly targeted with kidnap, forced marriage and compulsory conversion to Islam" since 2013, where women's "value was reproductive and productive" in the war effort.¹²⁴ Testimonies given by escaped survivors state they were "locked in houses by the dozen" and sexually abused "sometimes with the specific goal of impregnating them."¹²⁵ This follows the objective for both the women and children to convert to radical Islam; for example, as mentioned above, Shekau stated in a recorded propaganda video that they would marry off the Chibok girls, and Borno Governor, Kashim Shettima, at the time also testified that forced impregnation was a clear strategy and objective of this group.¹²⁶ Furthermore, the boys forcibly recruited by Boko Haram are also involved in this strategy, creating a complex victim-versus-perpetrator complex by utilizing sexual violence, as is the case when young boys are forced to rape other captives.¹²⁷ A UNICEF report stated that these forced recruits are "double victims: kidnapped but unable to go home," or so they may believe – due to the crimes they have committed.¹²⁸

Human Rights Watch has conducted multiple interviews with escaped women/girls where they too have given testimony of their experience of forced marriages and rape by their captors; they also noted that they were used in tactical ways for wartime household labour and combat

¹²⁴ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics," 51.

¹²⁵ Adam Nossiter, "Boko Haram Militants Raped."

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Drew Hinshaw and Joe Parkinson, "The 10,000 Kidnapped Boys."

¹²⁸ Ibid.

operations.¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch also states “the majority [of women survivors] appeared to have been targeted for abduction because they were students, Christians, or both.”¹³⁰ There are many cases where Boko Haram does indiscriminately target women, and other cases where Christian women are distinctly selected: for instance, during a university attack Boko Haram had “the men murdered, the women segregated into Muslim and non-Muslims and the Christian women systematically raped.” Boko Haram socially sanctions civilians that are not followers of their ideology, and all forms of punishment and abuse derive back to the objective of conversion in the hopes of nation building.¹³¹

5.4 Quaranic Education, Sex Slaves, and Identity

For Boko Haram, the purpose of the civil war is spelled out to every recruit through ideological terms and everyone’s behaviour must clearly align to these ideological teachings. Hoover argues that amongst the various processes working together for combat socialization, “political education played the predominant role in successful socialization.”¹³² Hoover suggests that “effective behavioral control cannot be achieved via extrinsic incentives (i.e. pecuniary or non-pecuniary rewards and punishments) alone.”¹³³ Thus, the importance of socialization and ideological education comes into play; this includes “receiving training, separate from military skills training and continuing in some form after deployment, that offered detailed lessons about

¹²⁹ Human Rights Watch, 2017, “Those Terrible Weeks in their Camp: Boko Haram Violence Against Women and Girls in Northeast Nigeria,” Human Rights Watch., last modified October 27, accessed April 12, 2018.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, “Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics,” 50.

¹³² Amelia Hoover Green, 2017, “Armed Group Institutions and Combatant Socialization: Evidence from El Salvador,” *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (5): 698.

¹³³ Amelia Hoover Green, 2016, “The Commander’s Dilemma: Creating and Controlling Armed Group Violence,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53 (5): 619.

history, politics, religion or other theories of social organization.”¹³⁴

Along similar lines, the commander’s dilemma is that “commanders must both create large groups of combatants who unhesitatingly employ violence and maintain some control over the violence that fighters wield.”¹³⁵ Overall, combat socialization must therefore begin the “elimination of natural hesitation and disgust at violence;” further to this notion, “a permanent psychological loss [or desensitization] to the combatant... this assumption does not imply that everyone who joins an armed group is incapable of moral reasoning or uncontrollably violent,” it just means that the likelihood of violence increases due to the extensive processes of this combat socialization.¹³⁶ Hoover notes that rebels’ behavior will most closely align to the preferences of the leadership, come what may, when doing so is “intrinsically rewarding.”¹³⁷ The use of sexual violence also can be ‘intrinsically rewarding’ in a variety of ways, considering the feelings of group cohesiveness and solidifying one’s commitment to the ideological objectives of the group at large.¹³⁸

Pursuant to the main objective of Boko Haram to establish a caliphate, the recruits’ behaviour needs to reflect the larger ideological goals of the leadership. Abducted women and girls, captured with the intention of being married to recruits, must be “groomed before they are

¹³⁴ Ibid, 625.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 620.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 622.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 623.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 623.

eligible,” which consists of extensive “Quaranic education, in which they are subjected to lectures on Boko Haram’s ideologies.”¹³⁹ This distinction cannot be emphasized enough - these women and girls forcibly married off to Boko Haram members are not easily or uncomplicatedly defined as wives, but rather are inhabiting the messy role of a sex slave.¹⁴⁰ Although this paper does not focus on the extent of civilian resistance it remains important to acknowledge that these abductees are not *passive* actors, but are complex individuals with unique lived-experiences beyond their identity as an abductee.

5.5 Voluntary Recruits: Bride price

Marriage secures a familial unit within Boko Haram which in turn sustains a dependency to the group, stigmatizes abductees which reduces their incentive to defect, and also becomes an incentivizing opportunity for potential recruits.¹⁴¹ It is noteworthy to illustrate that “Boko Haram has gained a following of 3,000–5,000 young men with shockingly few reports of defection.”¹⁴² Cohen remarks that in conflict there are multiple incentives that can explain SGBV for both voluntary and involuntary recruits.¹⁴³ Apart from ideological incentives drawing in recruits, it appears that some recruits are drawn into Boko Haram due to its fair bride price. Boko Haram can be seen as an “alternative means” to circumvent a pricey bride-price tax; for male recruits, “wives are used to reward fighters for their service and to cultivate loyalty.”¹⁴⁴ Remarkably, Cohen notes that if people are forcibly recruited then there is a 79% chance that they will end up

¹³⁹ Hilary Matfess and Valeria M Hudson, “The Neglected Role of Brideprice,” 45.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 44.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 44.

¹⁴² Ibid, 45.

¹⁴³ Dara Kay Cohen, “Causes of Sexual,” 4.

¹⁴⁴ Hilary Matfess and Valeria M Hudson, “The Neglected Role of Brideprice,” 44-45.

perpetrating sexual violence; however, combatants who join voluntarily are less likely to perpetrate sexual violence - with only a 38% chance that they will perpetrate sexual violence during conflict.¹⁴⁵ Societal gender inequality does not exacerbate SGBV either;¹⁴⁶ however, Cohen also argues that voluntary recruits motivated by greed, like material resources, are typically more prone to violence. In this instance, Boko Haram can offer material resources to new recruits plus also familial resources – even though Cohen does not include marriage within the ‘greed category’ in her analysis, it would be worth including in future research because the case of Boko Haram illustrates how the potential for marriage can act as a distinct pull factor for some voluntary recruits.

5.6 Suicide Bombings

Gender-based violence also comes in the form of employing combatants because of their gender for strategic incentives. This remains apparent in recent years where a striking shift in combat strategy has led to Boko Haram, and other Islamic terrorist organizations, utilizing women and girls because they spark *less suspicion* than what a ‘traditional’ male combatant would.¹⁴⁷ In 2014, 41.2% of suicide bombers were females “under the age of 18,” exemplifying this.¹⁴⁸ This has been a cross-border strategy as well: Boko Haram in 2018 has seen multiple suicide bombings not only in Nigeria, but also in in Cameroon and the Lake Chad region.¹⁴⁹ This use of indiscriminate violence supports Boko Haram’s strategy that it is not out to win over the public,

¹⁴⁵ Dara Kay Cohen, “Causes of Sexual,” 22.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 8.

¹⁴⁷ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, “Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics,” 49.

¹⁴⁸ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*, 9.

¹⁴⁹ Jacob Zenn, 2018a, “Boko Haram’s Backyard.”

but to take territory through force, with the backing of ISIS.

The use of gendered violence against civilians in conflict has thus been a valuable method of waging warfare for Boko Haram. The abduction of girls/women for the purposes of suicide bombing has been a dominant and successful operational move.¹⁵⁰ According to the ICC “a sharp increase in the use of children under the age of 15 years [old are] women and girls in suicide attacks in 2017.”¹⁵¹ In 2017, in around six months, Boko Haram had used 83 children in suicide bombings, and approximately 66% of those were young girls.¹⁵²

5.7 Non-Use of Sexual Violence

The question remains: does Boko Haram ever avoid the use of SGBV? Do theories of non-use apply here? Hyeran Jo and Katherine Bryant argue that social vulnerability and material vulnerability are key factors in the non-use of sexual violence by armed groups.¹⁵³ Boko Haram uses the reverse ‘Robin Hood’ strategy of funding itself¹⁵⁴ – they are not prioritizing civilian “hearts and minds,” and thus continuously terrorize poor civilians because they are not socially or materially vulnerable in the same way other non-state armed groups might be.¹⁵⁵ The use of SGBV could be deemed as peculiar, considering most non-state actors who seek to hold territory require the allegiance of civilians; nevertheless, the avoidance of SGBV is far from reality.

¹⁵⁰ ICC, “Report on the Preliminary Examination Activities 2017,” p.47.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, 47.

¹⁵³ Hyeran Jo and Katherine Bryant, “Taming of the Warlords,” 240.

¹⁵⁴ Siobhan O’Grady, 2015, “Boko Haram Turns Robin Hood Strategy on its Head,” *Foreign Policy*, March 5.

¹⁵⁵ Idean Salehyan, David Siroky, and Reed M. Wood, 2014, “External Rebel Sponsorship and Civilian Abuse: A Principal-Agent Analysis of Wartime Atrocities,” *International Organization* 68 (3): 633.

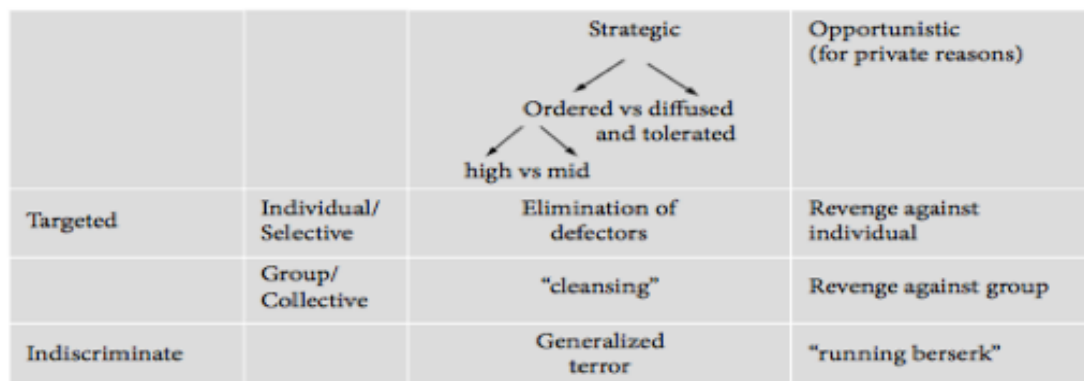
Funding comes from various sources, and international stakeholders for Boko Haram are not the legitimate international organizations with a humanitarian angle to push, but instead are the international stakeholder, ISIS. It remains unclear all the ways ISIS holds Boko Haram to a certain standard of conduct - due to the fact it is difficult to trace the fragmented organization activity to begin with. As mentioned above, though, certain cases, such as the February 2018 schoolgirl kidnapping, show that there may be explicit use of violence against specifically Christian women - whilst employing restraint against Muslim women - that may indicate non-use of SGBV, but this cannot be considered a widespread 'non' use of SGBV.

Chapter 6: Findings: Boko Haram Up Against Wood’s Theory

This section discusses the way Boko Haram’s use of sexual violence fits into Elisabeth Wood’s theory about sexual violence. Beginning with an introduction to Wood’s “typology of violence against civilians”¹⁵⁶ diagram in relation to Boko Haram, a discussion of Wood’s theories of variation will follow with respect to the use versus non-use of sexual violence. Finally this paper will argue for a revision of Wood’s theory to incorporate Boko Haram.

6.1 Typology of Violence

Figure 1. Typology of Violence Against Civilians



Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Sexual Violence During War,” p. 299

Wood, much like other prominent SGBV scholars, acknowledges that, “rape is not inevitable in war as is sometimes claimed” because sexual violence varies in its application across conflicts.¹⁵⁷

Wood’s typology of violence diagram includes who the group targets with their violence, the purpose behind this violence, and the frequency of this violence.¹⁵⁸ To apply this framework to

¹⁵⁶ Elisabeth Jean Wood, 2010. “Sexual Violence during War: Variation and Accountability,” Chap. 13, In *Collective Crimes and International Criminal Justice: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, edited by Alette Smeulers, Antwerp: 297.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 296.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 298.

Boko Haram we first see that the group both targets individuals/groups, as well as uses indiscriminate violence – this covers both of Wood’s targeting categories within the diagram. Various examples of this indiscriminate violence exist, including the Sept 17th, 2013, killing of travelers at checkpoints pretending to be the military, countless attacks on civilians through suicide bombings, raiding and burning villages, and, lastly, in April 2015, the mass grave compiling 400 people found in Damasak after Boko Haram lost control of the area.¹⁵⁹ Boko Haram also practices forms of targeted violence along the basis of gender, as illustrated by the kidnapping of hundreds of girls and boys, forced impregnation and forced marriage.¹⁶⁰ Applying Wood’s ‘purpose category,’ as evidenced in the above examples, includes ‘strategic’ objectives combined with indiscriminate targeting;¹⁶¹ Boko Haram here employs both a strategic and indiscriminate form of violence to invoke terror - as seen with their use of suicide bombings, kidnappings and civilian massacres.

Second, in the purpose category of the diagram, Wood describes individual/group targeting that is for strategic purposes, “i.e. carried out on behalf of the group,” versus for opportunistic ends, where violence is “carried out for private (not group) reasons.”¹⁶² Wood convincingly reasons that such strategic types of violence are either ordered or tolerated by rebel leadership against a large-scale group target, and can be for “cleansing” purposes for instance.¹⁶³ This ‘cleansing’ section of Wood’s diagram can incorporate another objective for sexual violence. This category can incorporate an extension, or can be substituted to include SGBV functioning to support the

¹⁵⁹ CNN Library, “Boko Haram Fast Facts.”

¹⁶⁰ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, “Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics,” 50.

¹⁶¹ Elisabeth Jean Wood, “Sexual Violence during War,” 299.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 299.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 299.

goal of reproductive nation building. Inserting ‘nation-building’ into Wood’s diagram best describes Boko Haram’s strategies at play;¹⁶⁴ this is not necessarily a criticism of Wood’s diagram, but an alternative for this section of her typology. Additionally, Wood’s opportunistic and strategic category overlap for Boko Haram; for instance, they participate in cycles of revenge against government officials by kidnapping their wives after military crackdowns.¹⁶⁵

Lastly, Wood’s frequency category, which is not included in her diagram, but is mentioned separately, applies to Boko Haram in that there is a strategic targeting of civilians.¹⁶⁶ SGBV could be much higher than reported, but as Wood states, there remains a striking “inadequacy of data on sexual violence,” and this is a “negative fact very difficult to prove.”¹⁶⁷ The main point with respect to frequency is that rape can still be a strategy even if it does not appear to occur often; “rape may be infrequent yet clearly a strategy,” versus “rape may be frequent yet clearly not a strategy...[for example when] rape is *not* ordered yet it is frequently reported,” as Wood notes in the case of the interworking of the US military.¹⁶⁸ With Boko Haram, many survivors are reluctant to admit their abuse due to social stigmatization; evidence of this occurs with women in IDP/refugee camps who “deny being abused by the militants,” even though “relief workers here said that when [the survivors] arrived many acknowledge that they had been raped;” conversely, they decided to switch their testimony despite there being “signs of physical and psychological trauma from being repeatedly raped.”¹⁶⁹ This illustrates the challenges of

¹⁶⁴ Adam Nossiter, "Boko Haram Militants Raped."

¹⁶⁵ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics," 47.

¹⁶⁶ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 299.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁶⁸ Dara Kay Cohen, Elisabeth Jean Wood, and Amelia Hoover Green, 2013, "Wartime Sexual Violence: Misconceptions, Implications, and Ways Forward," *United States Institute of Peace*: 9.

¹⁶⁹ Adam Nossiter, "Boko Haram Militants Raped."

reporting the frequency of sexual violence; with respect to this, this paper makes the case that Boko Haram does indeed utilize sexual violence frequently towards strategic ends – despite known reporting problems.

6.2 Variation Theory and Critique

Wood proposes a multipart theory about why there is variation in the use of sexual violence; this section will focus on the four components of her variation theory and apply them to Boko Haram. Wood's theory explains "variation in the dynamics internal to armed groups" organization.¹⁷⁰ First, Wood argues that the use or non-use of sexual violence can be linked to leadership choice of repertoire and the command and control structures; with this assumption it follows that combatant "leaders seek to control the repertoire, targeting, and frequency of violence" of their armed group under their structural hierarchy.¹⁷¹ The leadership can tolerate, promote and control certain forms of violence (or a mixture of these), and does so with considerations of "ongoing supply of recruits, intelligence, other 'inputs' to the war effort, and the legitimacy of the war effort in the eyes of desired supporters."¹⁷² Boko Haram promotes and tolerates sexual violence with impunity against their combatants during conflict, as seen with the detainment of women and repeated sexual assault.¹⁷³ Boko Haram, though, also has distinct methods of control with ideological combat socialization training for cohesion purposes. The idea of 'inputs' Wood mentions also is taken into account where kidnapping remains a form of

¹⁷⁰ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 307.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 308.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 308.

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch, "Nigeria Events of 2017."

maintaining recruits and gathering ransom payments; nonetheless, this idea of legitimacy from outside supporters has been talked about as mentioned above.

Second, expanding off of this idea of control, another part to Wood's theory includes combat socialization, which remains a determinant of use vs. non-use of sexual violence. Wood describes combat socialization very similarly to Cohen in that she proposes it revolves around this end goal of conformity, with practices of "degradation and then rebirth,"¹⁷⁴ where an armed group reshapes a variety of individual identities and belief systems into a homogenous mobilized fighting force through training.¹⁷⁵ This results in combatants having a "strong identification with the primary group ...[and this] contributes to [increased] firing rates" because it "absolves the combatant of individual responsibility for the wielding of violence."¹⁷⁶ With Boko Haram this reflects in recruits being trained/socialized in a way that perpetuates an end goal of converting, practicing, and disseminating radical Islam amongst themselves and others; more specifically, "Boko Haram's emphasis on the forced imposition of radical Sharia law facilitates SGBV through rigidly gendered ideological structures."¹⁷⁷

Boko Haram's abduction recruitment style requires methods of bonding and creating cohesion amongst its forces. Rape can thereby be seen as their way to socialize those in captivity via this idea of a *new nation binding* these recruits - their forced marriages between male and female captives acting as a socialization/conversion tool.¹⁷⁸ Nation building requires a strong

¹⁷⁴ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 309.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 308.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 309.

¹⁷⁷ Jacob Zenn and Elizabeth Pearson, "Women, Gender and the Evolving Tactics," 51.

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Those Terrible Weeks in their Camp."

identification of its members to believe that they are bonded and a part of building this caliphate: it follows then that the aim of combat socialization is to create a bond “stronger than those to family,”¹⁷⁹ and to fulfill this through the strategy of forced impregnation/marriage which helps to grow a nation, solidifying the familial aspect.

Subsequently, Wood maintains that conflict repertoires can expand not only due to “increasing desensitization of combatants to violence and the dehumanizing of victims,” but also because of increased blame attribution of one’s actions through continuous demonization of the enemy.¹⁸⁰ Boko Haram demonstrates this capacity with their flexibility and adaptability in asymmetric warfare, which allows them to survive despite territorial losses and periods of severe military crackdowns. Violence employed through the increasing use of suicide bombings - predominately performed by female combatants, youth in particular - exemplifies this repertoire expansion too.¹⁸¹

Lastly, the ability for military hierarchy to have its commands trickle down to the lower levels of their armed groups indicates whether or not a strong or weak leadership exists.¹⁸² This ties into Wood’s ‘top down’ versus ‘bottom across’ theory of military hierarchy explaining variations in SGBV. Even though Wood’s theories have so far fit the Boko Haram case this military hierarchy top-down versus bottom-across logic does not fully encompass the situation in Nigeria. Wood argues that “the strength of the hierarchy linking combatants and leaders” will explain the use vs.

¹⁷⁹ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 309.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 310.

¹⁸¹ Lauren Ploch Blanchard, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*, 9.

¹⁸² Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 311.

non-use of sexual violence via the amount of control leaders have over their combatants and their objectives.¹⁸³ If rape is determined as a strategy of war by the highest-ranking armed group leaders, and they order this “down the chain of command,” then the top-down logic argues sexual violence will occur.¹⁸⁴ Despite Boko Haram’s fragmented command structure there is a systematic and strategic use of SGBV through forced marriage and forced impregnation. Despite the splintering of command and control structures the leaders’ ideological objectives are being fulfilled in combat through strategies of SGBV. In contrast to Wood’s proposal, sexual violence as a strategy can occur in a diffuse, fractured and fragmented leadership structure¹⁸⁵ – this argument stems from the idea that Boko Haram uses its political and ideological objectives to bind and to socialize its members.

Once more, Wood’s bottom-across logic claims that if the top leadership cannot control its various factions it will lead to “small unit norms” prevailing;¹⁸⁶ yet, one cannot point to the bottom-across logic to explain Boko Haram. The bottom-across logic does not fit Boko Haram because SGBV is not just taking place sporadically as a unique tactic of different small units: this would not explain its widespread strategy of forced marriage and forced impregnation. Instead, Boko Haram has a mix of forced and voluntary recruits, whom have all been socialized/ trained by Boko Haram or other ISIS associated leadership. So instead of seeing a wide variety of violence between small unit groups, in reality the top leadership objectives of forced marriage and impregnation¹⁸⁷ are strategies continuously used in conflict by the armed group, despite

¹⁸³ Ibid, 311.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 311.

¹⁸⁵ International Crisis Group, *Curbing Violence in Nigeria (II)*.

¹⁸⁶ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War," 315.

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Those Terrible Weeks in their Camp."

these small unit groups not always being in contact with the top leadership. Overall, Boko Haram's splintered units use of SGBV indicates that it is not just by chance that they all decided to use similar forms of SGBV; rather, it implies a dedication to the top that replicates itself on lower levels of the armed group.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Boko Haram uses SGBV as a combat socialization tool in its repertoire of violence; sexual violence here supports their objective of nation building, conclusively demonstrating how their diffuse and fragmented organization structure does not inhibit their political-ideological goal with respect to operations on the ground. Further, examining Dara Cohen's pivotal combat socialization theory has ultimately been the key theoretical tool to unravel Boko Haram's actions and its internal structure because it exemplifies how SGBV can help ultimately fulfill the ideological goals of the group in conflict settings that lack cohesive leadership. Combat socialization ties into Erin Baines' pivotal work on SGBV and nation building as well - supporting the idea that sexual violence can serve not only to socialize, but also to solidify an armed group's ideological political objective to nation build. Erin Baines' important argument that forced marriage serves a larger political-ideological purpose also allows for further unprecedented understanding of non-state armed groups. Interestingly, even though it might appear that Boko Haram's repertoire of violence encompasses an ever-changing and wide-ranging scope, this strategy of forced marriage and impregnation is a critical thread throughout. Although Elisabeth Wood's theories of variation in sexual violence applies to Boko Haram to a certain degree, an amendment to her theory about military hierarchy must be made in order to understand a fractured armed group like Boko Haram. Continued analysis of non-state armed groups must continue in order to understand their combat operations, objectives and internal structure further. Knowing that sexual violence is not inevitable means that feminist scholarship has a duty to scrutinize its use versus non-use in order to generate knowledge that in the future might be used to overcome it – or, even better, circumvent it - as a strategic weapon of war.

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