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# Affecting the end of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Chad D. Maddox

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AFFECTING THE END OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University

by

Chad David Maddox

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

September 2015

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Charles Town, WV

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my incredible wife. Your love motivates me daily to do my best, and your strength as the mother of our children impresses me immensely. Thank you for your relentless support during my pursuit of higher education, which included frequent library trips, rambling discussions about Boko Haram, and numerous proofreading requests.

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

AFFECTING THE END OF BOKO HARAM IN NIGERIA

by

Chad David Maddox

American Public University System, September 11, 2015

Charles Town, West Virginia

Dr. Donna Kenley, Thesis Professor

Boko Haram remains a destabilizing force in Nigeria and gains international attention because of its brutal terrorism. State efforts to defeat the group contribute to its capability and popular support. The author conducted qualitative research using grounded theory applied through a case study and data analysis that incorporated the examination of more than 400 terrorist groups. Research illuminated the importance of defining the goals and strategies of Boko Haram and chronicling past Nigerian state responses to accurately determine how it will most likely end defined by Seth Jones and Martin Libicki: politicization, policing, military force, or victory. Analysis of Boko Haram and the Nigerian state indicate that the group's goals are regime change and social control, pursued through intimidation, provocation, and polarization. Findings conclude that Boko Haram's terrorist activity likely end due to policing, which requires Nigerian security forces to become a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and the capture and prosecution of Boko Haram's leadership.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, but recent high-profile terrorist events, increased capabilities among some groups, continuous international media cycles, and improved access in the globalized world continue to thrust terrorism into the world purview. Accordingly, terrorism remains at the forefront of national security priorities across the globe. Terrorism remains an effective tactic employed by many groups, but “there is not one terrorism...there have been many terrorisms, greatly differing in time and space, in motivation, and in manifestations and aims” (Laqueur 2007, *Introduction*). Productive counterterrorism strategies require an understanding of the terrorist organization to be countered, and the employment of deliberate means informed by an understanding of the group and the history of counterterrorism.

Understanding how terrorist organizations end is important to formulating such strategies, because it describes the ways and means that were effective in affecting such ends in similar groups. It was only recently that comprehensive studies were conducted to formulate generalizations about how terrorist groups end. The two seminal studies on the end of terrorist groups concluded with recommendations for countering Al Qaeda. However, a research gap exists in the formulation of counterterrorism strategies for specific current terrorist organizations, other than Al Qaeda, based on the historic end of terrorist groups. This thesis seeks to identify the most likely end to one such terrorist group, Boko Haram, and to propose the most effective counterterrorism strategy to affect its end.

## **Research Question and Hypothesis**

Boko Haram continues to plague Nigeria with violence and instability. The Nigerian government has attempted to counter the group, with little success. The limitations of the Nigerian government may be due in part to an ill-designed counterterrorism strategy. Determining a better strategy requires defining the way by which Boko Haram may end, and identifying the best methods to facilitate its end. This research will answer the question: What factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria? The author's hypothesis is: Ending Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram's leadership.

## **Research Methodology**

The author chose grounded theory as the research methodology for this thesis. Grounded theory, also referred to as the "constant comparative method," is a form of "inductive qualitative inquiry" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 273; Charmaz and Bryant 2008, 375). Such a general methodology allowed the author to develop a theory "that is grounded in data systemically gathered and analyzed" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 273). It requires and allows for "continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 273). Grounded theory supports this research because of the multitude of influencers involved with Boko Haram. The organization's identity, ideology, and goals must be considered and paralleled with other organizations, and the role of the Nigerian state must be considered as well. Such a theory is

supportive of the research intent, because it “is able to specify consequences and their related conditions, [and] the theorist can claim predictability for it, in the limited sense that *if* elsewhere approximately similar conditions obtain, *then* approximately similar consequences should occur” (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 278).

This thesis employed data analysis of documents and a case study comparison of the findings of such analysis. The data analysis included existing literature that amalgamated raw data on terrorist groups, formulated categories for such groups, and described how those groups ultimately ended. Studying the various theories on the end of terrorist groups allowed the author to form a holistic view of historic ends of groups. The author then conducted a case study of Boko Haram as a terrorist organization, and the environment in which it operates in Nigeria. The author categorized Boko Haram, compared it to former groups with the same characterization, and determined the most likely means by which Boko Haram will end. Doing so allowed the author to then theorize the most appropriate and effective means to affect the end of Boko Haram, and prove or disprove the hypothesis that: Ending Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram’s leadership.

### **Limitations**

Such research includes inherent limitations, and presents an atypical approach to grounded theory. The research is limited by the inherent differences in terrorist organizations. No two organizations are identical, so arguing that Boko Haram will end precisely the way that

another organization ended would be inherently flawed. Instead, this thesis intends to compare Boko Haram to other organizations generally in order to characterize it within the existing parameters offered by literature. Additionally, Boko Haram remains a functioning terrorist organization, so the understanding of its ideological goals is limited to the present understanding of the group offered by published literature and government information. Lastly, the comparison of Boko Haram vis-à-vis other groups will be formulated through the study of secondary sources, namely the processed data in the aforementioned literature, rather than raw data. That literature includes the studies of more than 400 terrorist organizations, and those studies will supply the comparative data. The biases of the authors of existing literature may have influenced the characterization of terrorist organizations in their works, so multiple studies on how terrorist groups end were used.

### **Summary**

Boko Haram remains a dangerous and destabilizing terrorist group despite state efforts to eradicate the group and its members. This thesis seeks to formulate a more effective counterterrorism strategy to defeat the group in Nigeria in a holistic, yet specific manner, since state efforts have been ineffective to date. Doing so incorporates political and social variables that are often considered independently, to include organizational goals and ideology, the group's operating environment, the historic response of the state, and contemporary counterterrorism theories. The following chapters analyze the existing literature on ending terrorist groups, study Boko Haram, and determine the most likely end to the group based on comparisons to historic data.

Chapter 2 summarizes the most prevalent theories that contribute to the study of the end of terrorist groups. A review of pertinent literature describes the theories regarding the strategies and goals of terrorist groups, how states respond to terrorism, and how terrorist groups end.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology used to apply the theories to Boko Haram, namely through a case study of the group and comparison to other groups using grounded theory.

Chapter 4 uses the methodology in a case study of Boko Haram. The study defines Boko Haram as a terrorist organization, defines the Nigerian environment in which the group operates, and categorizes Boko Haram. The analysis of Boko Haram allows for the determination of the most likely way by which the group will end, and the most effective counterterrorism strategy for the Nigerian government to affect that end. Chapter 5 presents provides a synopsis of the thesis, conclusions and suggested topics meriting additional research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of terrorism has generated a considerable amount of literature across a broad spectrum of topics. Terrorist groups, attack trends, the consequences of terrorism, the causes of terrorism, the effectiveness of terrorism, the effectiveness of counterterrorism strategies, the history of terrorism, and even the definition of terrorism have all been explored critically (Sandler 2014, 257). However, the analytical study of how groups end is fairly new. Recently, experts conducted substantive research to support the formulation of more refined counterterrorism strategies by examining the history of terrorist groups. In order to do so, authors elucidated many facets and variables that support the study of terrorism and terrorist groups. The research that contributes to such studies describes the goals and strategies of terrorist groups, suggests the most effective state responses to terrorism, conceptually illustrates historic trends of terrorism, or aggregates historic data about international terrorist groups in order to develop concepts about them. Existing literature also describes the ways by which terrorist groups end or decline.

While variances certainly exist between the conclusions of different authors, many of the theories share fundamental similarities. The studies shed light on different aspects of the same issue, although the research objectives affected the level of refinement in conclusions. Ultimately, the review of existing literature provides a foundation for the generalization of terrorist groups, from which comparisons may be made. That foundation is critical, since “[o]ver-simplified analysis of the phenomena tends to induce simplistic and dangerous proposals for panaceas” (O’Sullivan 1986, 210). From that starting point, refined research and analysis allows for effective development of critical theory for specific groups.

## **Goals and Strategies of Terrorist Groups**

Understanding how terrorist groups end requires an understanding of what groups want, and how the groups intend to pursue their goals. Recent research defined the goals and strategies of terrorist groups. Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter (2006, 49) explained the strategies employed by terrorist groups and the conditions under which those strategies were successful or unsuccessful in their study of the 42 foreign terrorist organizations. The groups included in their analysis were those recognized by the U.S. State Department at the time of publication. The authors intended their work to facilitate the formulation of more effective counterterrorism policy. They concluded, “[e]ffective counterstrategies cannot be designed without first understanding the strategic logic that drives terrorist violence. Terrorism works not simply because it instills fear in target populations, but because it causes governments and individuals to respond in ways that aid the terrorists’ cause” (Kydd and Walter 2006, 50). They identified five major goals and five “strategic logics,” or strategies, used by terrorist organizations (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51).

Kydd and Walter determined, “[a]lthough the ultimate goals of terrorists have varied over time, five have had enduring importance: regime change, territorial change, policy change, social control, and status quo maintenance” (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52). Terrorists groups may seek one or more of the five ultimate goals, as one goal may facilitate the accomplishment of another (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52). The explanation of terrorist goals is important to the study of the end of terrorist groups, because the classification of groups by goal(s) allows for an historic comparison to other terrorist groups.

Groups pursuing regime change want to overthrow the government and to replace it with a government led by the terrorist group or one that it supports. Territorial change aims to take territory from the state to create the terrorists' own state or to merge the territory into another state. The aim of policy change is precisely what it suggests: a change to existing policy. Social control aims to modify or control the behavior of the population rather than the government. Lastly, status quo maintenance seeks to maintain current conditions in the face of political organizations that intend to change it (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52).

The five "strategic logics," or strategies were identified as attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51). The attrition strategy aims to convince the terrorist group's enemy (the government or intermediary force) that the group is capable of imposing significant costs and will do so if the enemy adheres to a particular policy (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51, 59). It does so to convince the enemy to accommodate the terrorist group's demands. Groups use the intimidation strategy to convince the population that the group is capable of punishing the population for disobeying it, and that the government is incapable of preventing the actions of the terrorists (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51).

Whereas intimidation includes direct influence on the population, provocation influences the population indirectly. Such a strategy elicits a specific response from the enemy with the aim of radicalizing the population (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51). For example, terrorists could use the indiscriminate or inhumane response of the government to their acts of terrorism to convince the population that the government is the real enemy, and that support should be given to the terrorists. Groups seeking regime change or territorial change most often used that strategy, according to Kydd and Walter's research (Kydd and Walter 2006, 69).

A spoiling strategy is used to frustrate attempts to reach peace settlements. This strategy uses attacks to convince the enemy that the moderate members of the terrorist group cannot control the group or cannot be trusted (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51). An outbidding strategy seeks popular support by using violence in an environment filled with vying groups to convince the population that it is more capable of fighting the enemy than its rivals (Kydd and Walter 2006, 51). Outbidding requires the presence of two conditions: “two or more domestic parties... competing for leadership of their side,” and a population “uncertain about which of the groups best represents their interests” (Kydd and Walter 2006, 76).

Audrey Kurth Cronin conducted similar research, and suggested that terrorist groups engage in two kinds of wars with the state: those of attrition or annihilation. In wars of attrition, the group seeks to threaten the state’s purpose, and in wars of annihilation, the group aims to influence the state’s behavior (Cronin 2009, 117). Within that context, Cronin identified five strategies of terrorist groups: compellence, provocation, polarization, mobilization, and erosion. Compellence uses the threat of force to get the state to stop a certain behavior or to start a certain behavior (Cronin 2009, 118). This strategy shares characteristics with Kydd and Walter’s attrition strategy.

Cronin’s strategy of provocation echoes the conclusion made by Kydd and Walter about their strategy of the same name. Provocation attempts to elicit a certain response from the state that will cause it to lose favor with the population. Polarization seeks to pull the state apart by creating or exacerbating lines of division in order to delegitimize the state. Mobilization is a strategy that aims to “invigorate and energize those who would support a group or its cause and to raise its profile internationally, attracting resources, sympathizers, and allies” (Cronin 2009, 119). Mobilization does not necessarily seek change in itself, and is likely employed alongside

another strategy. Lastly, erosion seeks to degrade the state's legitimacy domestically and internationally (Cronin 2009, 119).

G. Davidson Smith reached similar conclusions in his 1990 work, *Combating Terrorism*. His scope of research was far narrower than that of Kydd and Walter and Cronin, but Smith (1990, 11-15) defined ten "aims and strategies" of terrorist groups as publicity, over-reaction by the government, loss of public confidence, destabilization, coercion, discipline, logistics, extortion, legislative, and costs in lives and property. Smith's explanation of publicity, discipline, logistics, and costs in lives and property describe terrorist tactics more so than strategies. Publicity and costs in lives and property were described as means to generate awareness of the group, rather than ways of furthering organizational goals. Logistics, now commonly referred to as financing or funding, was offered as a reason why terrorist groups might resort to criminal activity. Smith defined discipline as a means of intimidating group members and community members, so as to preserve support and frustrate law enforcement attempts to disrupt group activity.

The remaining six strategies correspond to theories presented by Kydd and Walter and Cronin. Over-reaction by the government aim seeks "a draconian response from those in a position of authority," similar to the provocation strategy described by Kydd and Walter and Cronin (Smith 1990, 12). Loss of public confidence dovetails off of the over-reaction aim, by attempting to "undermine public confidence in the government, expose apparent weaknesses, and demonstrate the righteousness of the terrorist cause" (Smith 1990, 12). Kydd and Walter described such goals in their intimidation strategy, as did Cronin in her provocation and erosion strategies. Smith's (1990, 13) destabilization strategy describes the efforts of terrorist groups to "keep the pot boiling," which Kydd and Walter described in their spoiling strategy.

The coercion and extortion strategies both seek concessions from the government. Coercion uses acts to strong-arm an opponent, while extortion uses acts to extract favorable responses (Smith 1990, 13). These two strategies share similarities with Kydd and Walter's attrition strategy and Cronin's compellence strategy. Lastly, Smith (1990, 14) described the legislative strategy as seeking "to obtain the passage, modification, or rescinding of laws and regulations in conformance with their aims." Those goals were described in Kydd and Walter's attrition strategy, and Cronin's compellence strategy, although they described the use of violence in such strategies more effectively than Smith.

Some of Smith's aims and strategies fit into the theories presented by Kydd and Walter and Cronin, but he offered his ideas in a fragmented manner. Also, he did not delineate between the aims and the strategies, which clouds the reader's conceptualization of his theories. Despite those facts, it is interesting to compare the conclusions that he made more than a decade before the 9/11 attacks to those published after the attacks. The definitions of the goals and strategies of terrorist groups presented by Kydd and Walter, Cronin, and Smith are important to understand before considering state responses, because effective responses should be tied to the idiosyncrasies of the targeted group.

### **Effective Government Responses to Terrorist Strategies**

Kydd and Walter determined through their research the most effective government responses to each strategy. That is not to suggest that one response will summarily end a terrorist group engaging in a particular strategy. Instead, certain responses will likely prove more effective given certain circumstances, which include the strategies of the terrorist group. They determined that a strategy of attrition could be best met with five counterstrategies. The

government can concede to the terrorist group to gain peace, employ targeted retaliation, harden potential targets to limit the effects of terrorist acts, deny access to weapons of mass destruction, and develop measures to limit the psychological impact and overreaction to acts of terrorism (Kydd and Walter 2006, 64-65).

Kydd and Walter accounted for the ultimate goals of the terrorist group in formulating the best responses to strategies of intimidation. Those groups employing a strategy of intimidation with a goal of regime change are best countered by retaking territory (Kydd and Walter 2006, 68). This counterstrategy, described familiarly as a clear-and-hold or clear-hold-build strategy, was famously espoused by David Galula in 1964, General Creighton Abrams in 1969, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2005 (Galula 1964, 78-97; Bowman 2008; AP 2005). It involves the government regaining control of an area from terrorists and establishing or reestablishing government control.

Terrorist groups following a strategy of social control are best met by the strengthening of law enforcement and the judicial system (Kydd and Walter 2006, 67, 69). This includes increasing the proficiency of officers and officials, building more effective systems, and increasing penalties and punishment for crimes. They determined the best response to a strategy of provocation to be a discriminating counterstrategy that isolates terrorists from the population and eliminates them while limiting collateral damage, which depends greatly on the intelligence capabilities of the state (Kydd and Walter 2006, 72).

Spoiling strategies are often employed by groups pursuing an ultimate goal of territorial change when the radical members of the group fear that the moderates are close to brokering peace with the government (Kydd and Walter 2006, 73). The best counterstrategy to spoiling is

to build trust between the two sides and limit the vulnerabilities of those capitulating (Kydd and Walter 2006, 75). The use of third party intermediaries and international organizations can contribute positively to this kind of counterstrategy, as well as making certain accommodations to the participants.

Kydd and Walter identified two effective counters to the last strategy, outbidding. The government can encourage competing groups to unify thereby eliminating the need for competition, or the government can diminish the acts of violent groups by accommodating the non-violent groups (Kydd and Walter 2006, 78). Potential drawbacks exist with outbidding counterstrategies, especially the creation of greater strength among unified terrorist groups.

Max Abrahms in *What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy* offers a valuable perspective on counterterrorism strategy. His study of the motives of terrorists and implications on counterterrorism strategies defined the three most prominent counterterrorism strategies employed by states to reduce the political efficacy of terrorism. The intent of his study was to illuminate the need to shift from solely political considerations in counterterrorism policy. He determined that states pursue strategies that either strictly deny concessions, attempt to appease terrorist groups, or promote peaceful engagement of citizens through established political systems in order to limit the political benefits of the terrorist group (Abrahms 2008, 78, 103-104). Abrahms concluded that counterterrorism strategies would prove more effective if they centered on social factors rather than political ones. His recommendations included the focused application of law enforcement on socially marginalized groups and social networks, attacking the social bonds between terrorist group members, protecting and developing endangered populations, and curtailing collateral damage during counterterrorism operations

(Abrahms 2008, 104-105). Abrahms also acknowledged the dichotomy between socially-centered and politically-centered counterterrorism theories.

### **How Terrorist Groups End**

Defining the goals and strategies of terrorist groups and the most effective state responses is fundamental to understanding how terrorist groups end. Literature may or may not directly link how groups end to the former two topics, but research on the end of terrorist groups always accounts for them in one form or another. Studies of the end of terrorism or terrorist groups generated broad conceptual conclusions as well as more refined conclusions linked to specific case studies. The literature reviewed below contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how terrorist groups end.

David C. Rapoport offered a broad explanation on the lifespan of terrorism through his wave concept. That concept suggests that terrorism expands and contracts in cycles that can be categorized when viewed at a macro level (Rapoport 2004, 47). His work generalized how and why terrorist groups act in respect to global trends. He identified four waves: “(1) the Anarchist wave that started in the 1880s, (2) the “anticolonial wave” that lasted from the 1920s to 1960s, (3) the “New Left wave” that continued until the beginning of the twentieth century, and (4) the “religious wave”” (Maddox 2014; Rapoport 2004, 47-54). He suggested that the last wave, the religious wave, frames contemporary terrorism.

Rapoport’s research is beneficial to contextualizing terrorism. His work is helpful in framing the eras of terrorism, and allows researchers to better understand the major influences on terrorist groups and states during different periods of time. However, more recent scholarly research formulated theories on how terrorist groups end by defining how specific terrorist

groups ended, and determining generalized theories based on the study of many individual groups. Those studies are more beneficial to the formulation of counterterrorism strategy for a specific group, because they offer a more refined basis from which to embark on scholarly research. Two of the most useful studies are Seth Jones and Martin Libicki's RAND report entitled, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qaeda*, and Audrey Kurth Cronin's *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*.

Seth Jones and Martin Libicki used the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Incident Database to study 648 terrorist groups that existed between 1968 and 2006 in order to determine how terrorist groups end, and to assess the implications for countering Al Qaeda (2008, v, xiii). The 648 groups included active groups, which made up 38 percent of the total (Jones and Libicki 2008, 35). However, the active groups were excluded from the statistical conclusions of the ways in which terrorist groups end. Groups that splintered were also excluded, since splintering does not equate to members rejecting the use of terrorism. Instead, splintering generally involves the continued use of terrorism in other groups. Accordingly, groups that splintered were considered active, and excluded from the study. The exclusion of active groups resulted in a total of 268 groups "that came to an end in ways that eliminated their contribution to terrorism" (Jones and Libicki 2008, 35). Their research made several significant conclusions.

Their analysis determined that terrorist organizations end in four ways: politicization, policing, military force, and victory (Jones and Libicki 2008, 10-19). Specifically, their analysis of the 268 groups found that 114 ended by political means (43 percent), 107 ended by policing (40 percent), 27 ended by victory (10 percent), and 20 ended by military force (7 percent) (Jones and Libicki 2008, 19). Their conclusion was further refined to note that terrorist groups *primarily* end in one of two ways: "[t]hey decide to adopt nonviolent tactics and join the political process,

or local law-enforcement agencies arrest or kill key members of the group” (Jones and Libicki 2008, 9).

Of the four means identified by Jones and Libicki, “a transition to the political process is the most common way in which terrorist groups ended” (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiii). That means of ending was tied to the variable of the breadth of the terrorist group’s goals. Specifically they found that “most terrorist groups that end because of politics seek narrow policy goals, such as policy change, territorial change, or regime change” (Jones and Libicki 2008, 20).

The most effective strategy to defeat terrorist groups that can or will not transition to non-violence through the political process is through policing (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiii). Jones and Libicki (2008, xiii-xiv) noted that local police forces are generally the most effective in ending terrorist groups because of their permanent presence in effected areas, understanding of the local area, ability to collect human intelligence, and engagement with the population. Local police forces were also found to be more effective than military forces because of the aforementioned reasons, which are typically absent among military forces.

Comparatively, few terrorist groups ended because they achieved their goals and even fewer ended by military force (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiii). Notably, “[r]eligious groups rarely achieve their objectives,” and in fact, “[n]o religious group *that has ended* achieved victory since 1968” (emphasis added; Jones and Libicki 2008, xiv). Military force was generally only effective against large terrorist groups engaged in an insurgency, and the use of force was most effective when supported by local police and intelligence services (Jones and Libicki 2008, 31). The use of military force also appeared to be hindered by the ability of terrorist groups to flee to another area, and prolonged military activity correlated to less effectiveness (Jones and Libicki 2008,

31).

Audrey Kurth Cronin's work, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, presented "an intellectual framework that explains the recurrent patterns, common elements, and crucial points leading to their demise" (Cronin 2009, 1). The objective of developing such a framework was to facilitate the formulation of more effective counterterrorism strategies, and her study, similar to that of Jones and Libicki, offered suggestions for countering Al Qaeda. Her research included the study of 457 late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century non-state terrorist organizations drawn from the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Knowledge Base in order to form her conclusions. From the hundreds of groups examined, several dozen were also included as case studies to support her conclusions (Cronin 2009, 7-9).

Cronin identified six "patterns of endings," described as decapitation, negotiations, success, failure, repression, and reorientation (2009, 9-12). Cronin's work also detailed when such ways were successful and when they were not, and illuminated the importance of understanding an organization prior to employing a certain type of counterterrorism strategy. Cronin's work adds to Jones and Libicki's conclusions, and deserves further examination.

Cronin defined decapitation as "the removal by arrest or assassination of the top leaders or operational leaders of a group" (Cronin 2009, 16). Decapitation by arrest demonstrates the application of the judicial system and the rule of law, and historically the arrest and subsequent prosecution is the "optimal solution" for ending a terrorist group through decapitation (Cronin 2009, 17, 32). Such a solution requires a functional justice system, and includes potential consequences like further radicalization of individuals while incarcerated and the return to

terrorism post release. This pattern of ending appears to fit into Jones and Libicki's policing concept.

Decapitation through assassination or targeted killing will remove a leader in the organization, but "unless second- and third-order effects are considered in a wise and dispassionate way, the dynamic of terrorism and counterterrorism may drive events just as easily toward escalation as de-escalation" (Cronin 2009, 34). The consequences should be considered prior to implementation, and the potential for each varies according to the group and environment. Killing a leader could create a martyr and strengthen the resolve of the group, diminish the fervor of the group, splinter the group, or usher in a new leader with better or worse consequences.

Negotiations afford a means of transition from terrorism to legitimate political processes (Cronin 2009, 35). While negotiations appear to be common even with democratic governments, they "have rarely been the single factor driving an outcome" (Cronin 2009, 35). They are also difficult, complicated, and long lasting. Negotiations do not result in an immediate end to violence, and could result in increased violence by some members, as described by Kydd and Walter's spoiling strategy.

However, negotiations offer the government some ancillary benefits to the ultimate goal of ending terrorism, which include intelligence gathering and the potential for brief pauses in violence, and can shape popular opinion about how to express emotion without terrorism. Negotiations could also endanger the credibility of the state in some circumstances. Research of 457 terrorist groups found that only 18 percent of recent terrorist groups entered into negotiations, and those that did were generally older groups seeking territorial control (Cronin

2009, 40-41). Research also demonstrated that groups with more centralized control are more likely to engage in effective negotiations, and that religiously motivated groups are less likely to do so (Cronin 2009, 62).

Cronin's concept of success implies that terrorist groups reached their objectives and disbanded or stopped using violence as a result. This means of ending is similar to Jones and Libicki's victory theory. Success is more likely to be reached by groups seeking territorial change, because the issue is easily passed to new members and through generations of supporters. Groups seeking goals that conform to internationally recognized ideals might be more likely to reach their objectives. Groups that use terrorist tactics in conjunction with other means of reaching their goals are also more likely to succeed. Lastly, success may be facilitated through the inclusion of powerful legitimate actors. It is important to note that in the realm of modern terrorism only those groups that assumed responsibility for state governance achieved true success (Cronin 2009, 93). Other successes should be classified as tactical successes instead of strategic or true success.

The failure of groups can be attributed to three main factors. The group could implode because of in-fighting among members, a loss of control of the group, acceptance of government concessions, or a loss of continuity in membership (Cronin 2009, 94-95). It could lose popular support and become marginalized as a result of popular apathy, popular acceptance of or return to the government, or a popular loss of interest in the organizational ideology and goals (Cronin 2009, 105). Lastly, it could create a backlash against it because of its actions like misguided targeted violence that the populace rejects.

Another pattern of ending is repression, which Cronin defined as, “crushing terrorism with force” (2009, 115). Repression is successful “when it mobilizes the rightful forces of the state effectively against the violent perpetrators...within a community, without either catalyzing a larger countermobilization by that community or a demobilization of the government’s own support” (Cronin 2009, 143). Cronin noted that repression is generally not successful in ending terrorism unless it is combined with another means of affecting the terrorist group, and that repression carries the risk of unwanted consequences for that state. That conclusion appears to support Jones and Libicki’s conclusion about the limited effectiveness of military force in ending terrorist groups.

Reorientation was Cronin’s last suggestion for the ways by which terrorist groups end. In such a way, terrorist organizations “transition out of a primary reliance on terrorist tactics toward either criminal behavior or more classic types of regular or irregular warfare” (Cronin 2009, 146). Terrorist groups may adopt the primarily economic-based activity and goals of criminal groups, or their actions may build into insurgencies or conventional war. Such transitions could have positive or negative consequences for the state. For example, states are generally structured and equipped to deal with criminal organizations, so their responses to criminality may gain more traction than those aimed at terrorism. However, the transition from acts of terrorism to conventional war is clearly more dangerous for the state.

The research conducted by Jones and Libicki and Cronin is valuable to the study of ending contemporary terrorist groups, but they are not alone in their search of answers for why terrorist groups end. Other studies have been conducted, which reinforced or supplemented their conclusions. Leonard Weinberg’s work, *The End of Terrorism?* argued that terrorist organizations ultimately end in three ways: defeat, success, and transformation. His definitions

of the ways by which terrorist groups end shared concepts similar to those presented by Jones and Libicki and Cronin, and consolidated their theories into more encompassing categories. Weinberg drew from their work in his study, but generated his conclusions based on the study of 433 groups that existed from 1900-2006 drawn from several data sources (Weinberg 2012, 37, 40). In framing his work, he recognized an argument that “generalizing about terrorist groups is a virtual impossibility,” but countered that such generalizations could be effective if based on empirical data that does not lose sight of the intricacies of the studied groups (Weinberg 2012, 16).

Weinberg described the external or internal influences that lead to defeat. External influences include government repression, the killing or arrest of group members and supporters, and the decapitation of a group by arresting or killing its leaders. Internal influences include the alienation of the population and the loss of support or interest of the population (Weinberg 2012, 7-9). Terrorist groups could also successfully reach their objectives, although he noted that success is rarely achieved. Lastly, groups could transform into legitimate organizations in the political system or could build into an insurgent force (Weinberg 2012, 12). Interestingly, Weinberg’s conclusion of the foremost reasons for terrorist groups ending matched the conclusion of Jones and Libicki exactly, finding the reasons to be politicization, policing, victory, and military force (Weinberg 2012, 40).

Martha Crenshaw conducted a similar study about terrorist groups with a slightly different objective. Her study of 77 terrorist organizations explained the reasons why the use of terrorist tactics *declines* among terrorist groups. The groups that she included in her research began using terrorism between 1950 and 1984, and the set included groups still in existence. Her research also focused significantly on the U.S. response to terrorism. Crenshaw concluded that

terrorism declined among the subject groups because of three reasons: physical defeat by the government, abandonment of the cause by the group, and disintegration of the group (Crenshaw 2011, 193). Her conclusions support the findings of the aforementioned studies focused on the termination of terrorism, rather than the decline, which indicates a commonality among research conclusions.

### **Summary**

Defining the predominant goals and strategies of terrorist groups, and examining the most effective state strategies to counter terrorist groups is important to the formulation of effective counterterrorism strategy. The theories generated from the study of each topic allow for a better understanding of individual terrorist groups, and the ways that a state might best approach the problem. Kydd and Walter defined the goals of terrorist groups as regime change, territory change, policy change, social control, and status quo maintenance, and the strategies of terrorist groups as attrition, intimidation, provocation, spoiling, and outbidding (2006, 51-52). Cronin's strategies shared some commonality with those of Kydd and Walter, but were defined as compellence, provocation, polarization, mobilization, and erosion (2009, 118-119). Defining the most appropriate government response to a terrorist group requires careful consideration of those goals and strategies, as illustrated by Kydd and Walter. Such consideration may also lead to a socially-focused approach versus a political one, such as those recommended by Max Abrahms.

Contextualizing the main ways that terrorist groups have ended is equally as important. The conclusions generated from those studies indicate the most likely ways by which groups will end, and the means necessary to advance those ways. Such conclusions may validate or repudiate proposed counterterrorism strategies. Each of the four studies reviewed theorized how groups

end or decline in different ways, although they shared many similarities. Some notable conclusions deserve restating. Terrorist groups very rarely achieve success or victory (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiii; Cronin 2009, 93; Weinberg 2012, 10), and “[n]o religious group that has ended achieved victory since 1968” (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiv). Additionally, religiously motivated groups are less likely to negotiate than other groups (Cronin 2009, 62). Lastly, the effectiveness of state intercession relies significantly on the characterization of the group and the capabilities of the state.

The conclusions drawn from the reviewed literature provide the most value to the study of contemporary groups when used in conjunction, rather than independently. Boko Haram was not included explicitly in any of the reviewed literature, and was not found in the datasets published within the literature (Kydd and Walter 2006, 54-55; Jones and Libicki 2008, 142-186). However, the datasets, theories, and conclusions reviewed herein will be used to help define, characterize, and compare Boko Haram to other terrorist groups, and to answer the research question of what factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology used to explore those topics and formulate conclusions about how Boko Haram will likely end, and the most effective means for affecting that end in Nigeria.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The literature reviewed in this thesis illustrated distinct theories of how and why terrorist groups operate, how states respond, and how terrorist groups end. Those theories are valuable to the study of terrorism and the formulation of counterterrorism strategies. The intent of this thesis is to apply those theories in the study of Boko Haram in order to determine how the group will likely end, and the best means of furthering that end. However, applying those theories to a contemporary group without analyzing the group would prove inadequate, since “[o]ver-simplified analysis of [these] phenomena tends to induce simplistic and dangerous proposals for panaceas” (O’Sullivan 1986, 210). Accordingly, the author employed specific research methodologies and a theoretical framework to collect and analyze data in a structured manner in order to develop substantiated findings and to prove or disprove the hypothesis. This chapter describes those research methodologies, theoretical framework, and means of data collection in detail.

### **Methodology**

This research will answer the question: What factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria? The author’s hypothesis is: Ending Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram’s leadership.

The application of the reviewed theories to Boko Haram required a detailed understanding of the group, to include its history, ideology, activity, and operating environment. Qualitative research in the form of a case study and data analysis of documents was used to examine the group in that way. A detailed case study of Boko Haram was vital to this thesis. In addition to studying the group itself, the study of Boko Haram required an understanding of its operating environment in Nigeria. Accordingly, the thesis also includes a concise summary of Nigeria's response to Boko Haram, and the potential contributing state factors that influence Boko Haram's operability.

The case study of Boko Haram and its operating environment in Nigeria involved the data analysis of literature from several sources. The author examined documents and literature from scholarly peer-reviewed journals, government organizations, non-government organizations, and news outlets. The author diligently reviewed the data in an attempt to filter out counterproductive biases, remove exaggerated claims, and provide the most lucid account of Boko Haram's history. Defining Boko Haram established a base from which the group was compared to past groups, and characterized within established parameters.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Grounded theory was used to characterize Boko Haram as a terrorist group, compare it to past terrorist groups within the parameters established by the reviewed literature, determine how it will likely end, and the best means of affecting that end. Grounded theory, or the "constant comparative method," proved the most valuable to this research because the theory allowed for "continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 273). That interplay is relevant and important, especially in categorizing Boko Haram in terms of its

strategies and goals, defining how it will likely end, and identifying the most appropriate state response to affect that end. Data analysis of documents continued outside of the case study of Boko Haram. The group was constantly compared to the theories presented in the reviewed literature in order to properly analyze and define it.

Additionally, grounded theory supported the study of this contemporary group to those that ended, since the theory suggests that if an author “is able to specify consequences and their related conditions,” as demonstrated in the literature review, then “the theorist can claim predictability for it, in the limited sense that *if* elsewhere approximately similar conditions obtain, *then* approximately similar consequences should occur” (Strauss and Corbin 1994, 278). Incorporating qualitative analysis and grounded theory allowed the author to use the historic ends of comparative groups to answer the research question: What factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria?; and to test the hypothesis that ending Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram’s leadership.

### **Data Collection**

The data collected during the case study of Boko Haram was compared to the theories presented in the reviewed literature in to order generate findings by means of data analysis. The content analysis of additional documents and literature allowed the author to define the group’s goals and strategies within the categories presented in the literature review. From that

characterization, and the analysis of the group's history and the historic Nigerian government response, the author determined the most likely way the group will end in accordance with published findings. Building upon the first two conclusions allowed for the suggestion of the most effective state means for ending Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria.

### **Summary**

A research gap exists in employing recent literature on the end of terrorist groups to the formulation of appropriate counterterrorism strategies for current groups. Formulating a more appropriate and effective response to Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria starts with a thorough understanding of the group. Studying the group and its operating environment, then contextualizing the group within existing theories and categories, allowed for the refined formulation of conclusions about the group's end. Qualitative analysis and the grounded theory support that formulation. Chapter 4 describes the findings and analysis of the research, answers the research question, and tests the validity of the hypothesis by using the methodology and framework as described.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Boko Haram is a fundamentalist Sunni Islamic terrorist group seeking “to replace the secular Nigerian state with a regime adhering to strict Islamic sharia law, applicable throughout the entire country” (Onuoha 2014, 3). The group gained international notoriety after bombing the United Nations compound in Abuja, Nigeria in 2011, and even more so after kidnapping nearly 300 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in 2014. The group’s history extends beyond those attacks however, and chronicling that history helps to define the group’s goals and strategies. Its primary operating environment, Nigeria, specifically the northeastern Nigerian states, also plays a role in the group’s operability. As does the nature of the Nigerian response to Boko Haram’s terrorist activity. Those variables are explored in this chapter in order to define the group’s goals and strategies, and to determine how the group will likely end.

Several references were used to study Boko Haram as a terrorist group, and describe the Nigerian state and its response to Boko Haram. Information and data was gathered from peer-reviewed scholarly journals, governmental and non-governmental organization sources, and news articles. The author used the definitions presented by Kydd, Walter, and Cronin to describe the goals and strategies of Boko Haram following the case study. The group’s goals and strategies helped to determine the most likely way that Boko Haram will end, which was supported by filtering the analysis through the findings of Kydd, Walter, Jones, Libicki, and Cronin on how terrorist groups end. The findings presented herein seek to answer the research question: What factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria? The author’s hypothesis is: Ending Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force

committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram's leadership.

### **Defining Boko Haram**

In 2002, a subset of a radical Islamic youth group that worshipped at the Alhaji Muhammadu Ndimi Mosque in Maiduguri, Nigeria broke away from the group after declaring the city corrupt and out of line with Islam (Walker 2012, 3). The group, led by Mohammed Ali, moved to Kanama, where it sought the establishment of a hardline Islamic society. The group earned the moniker of the Nigerian Taliban, because of the ideas that it espoused and the fact that it referred to its compound as "Afghanistan" (American Foreign Policy Council 2014, 4). The Nigerian Taliban eventually gained the attention of the police after a community quarrel over local fishing rights (Walker 2012, 3). When confronted by the police, the group overwhelmed the police and seized their weapons. That action eventually resulted in an army seizure of the group's mosque and the killing of nearly all of the members, including Mohammed Ali. The few members that remained moved back to Maiduguri to reunite with their original group.

The Maiduguri youth group, now under the leadership of Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, established the Ibn Taimiyyah Masjid Mosque in Maiduguri in 2003, and formed a society of its own with seemingly functional governance and limited food production (Walker 2012, 3). The group's intent was to establish a community adhering to the "Wahhabi interpretations of Sharia law" (IEP 2015, 53). The group called itself *Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad*, which translates as, "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad" (Onuoha 2014, 3). However, the group was given the moniker Boko Haram by its neighbors in

Maiduguri, which essentially translates as, “Western education is forbidden,” because of its rejection of most Western ideas and principles (Walker 2012, 3). The local name was given to the group partly in jest, but the name stuck. Although the group is internationally recognized as Boko Haram, its official name remains *Jama’atu Ahlissunnah Lidda’awati wal Jihad*.

Boko Haram embraced the use of violence from its inception. It was linked to attacks on police stations in Borno state in 2004 that killed several police officers and the killing of prominent Sheikh Ja’afar Mahmoud Adam in 2007 (Onuoha 2014, 3; Walker 2012, 4). However, Boko Haram’s regional notoriety and consequential popularity came as a result of clashes with the police in 2009. Members of Boko Haram were traveling by motorcycle in a funeral procession for one of their deceased members, and were stopped by police for failing to abide by newly stringent enforcement of a helmet law. It was reported that a member of the group fired upon the police during the confrontation, and the group subsequently attacked several police stations in two Nigerian states (Walker 2012, 4). Another account suggests that the police shot 17 members of the group during the confrontation, which led to retaliatory acts by the group (Forest 2012, 63-64). Regardless of the order of violence, after the confrontation Mohammed Yusuf articulated threats of the use of violence against the police in sermons released via DVD after the clashes.

The Bauchi state government responded to the police station attacks, and presumably Yusuf’s statements, with a massive operation against the group that included Nigerian army support. That operation lasted for days, and led to the perpetuation of indiscriminate violence across several states. One report claimed that 700 members of Boko Haram were eventually arrested, and another claimed that over 800 members were killed as a result of the government

response (Walker 2012, 4; Onuoha 2014, 4). Thirty police officers were also killed during the operation (Amnesty International 2015b, 12). The government forces eventually captured Mohammed Yusuf on July 30, 2009. He was transferred from army custody to police custody, and shortly thereafter was extrajudiciously executed. The government's response, especially as it relates to Yusuf's killing, proved pivotal to the group's trajectory.

Boko Haram members went underground or fled the country after the 2009 government operation, but reemerged in 2010 under the leadership of Yusuf's deputy Abubakar Shekau (Onuoha 2014, 4). The group's capabilities and violence grew extensively after its return, and its goal expanded from the development of an Islamic state to include the persecution of the Nigerian government and those not abiding with its interpretation of Islamic law. The group's tactics matured to include kidnapping, arson, robbery, home invasion, killings, bombings, and suicide attacks, which it propagated through online videos and messages. It is well known for attacking schools, churches, government buildings, military facilities, and police stations, and was responsible for at least one attack on a prison that resulted in the release of over 150 inmates (U.S. Department of State 2015b, 19). By 2014, the group's attacks routinely caused hundreds of deaths per instance (U.S. Department of State 2015, 41-42). Additionally, its operational tempo increased since mid-2011 to attacks nearly every week (Walker 2012, 6). The deaths attributed to Boko Haram's violence continue to grow as well. For instance, "[i]n 46 bomb attacks between January 2014 and March 2015, the group killed at least 817 people" (Amnesty International 2015b, 4). Several of the more notable terrorist acts deserve attention.

In June 2011, members of Boko Haram attacked the national police headquarters in Abuja with a vehicle borne improvised explosive device (VBIED). Then in August, the group attacked the United Nations compound in Abuja with a VBIED, which drew considerable international attention. Despite speculation that the U.N. attack demonstrated a transition from a Nigerian focus to an international one, that transition never truly materialized. In 2014, two separate bombings in Abuja killed nearly 100 civilians in the months running up to the World Economic Forum conference in that city (Blanchard 2014, 146). The group once again gained international notoriety in 2014 after kidnapping nearly 300 schoolgirls from Chibok, which sparked the *#BringBackOurGirls* Twitter campaign amid other international condemnation. That abduction was the largest in the group's history, but not its only mass abduction of women and children. As recently as June of 2015 Boko Haram renewed its use of children as suicide bombers, with girls and as young as ten, in order to infiltrate secured areas and conduct attacks.

It is estimated that Boko Haram is responsible for more than 1.5 million displaced persons and as many as 15,000 people killed in Nigeria, Chad, and Cameroon since 2009 (Blanchard 2015). Official Nigerian reports from 2014 estimated the death toll in Nigeria around 10,000, and also attributed an estimated \$40 million worth of property destruction to the group (Akpan, Ekanem, and Olofu-Adeoye 2014, 152). Another report suggested that the group was responsible for about 300,000 displaced Nigerians by 2014 (Blanchard 2014, 143). Additionally, the group's terrorist activity accounted for more than 80 percent of terrorist attacks in Nigeria between 1970 and 2013, and almost 70 percent of terrorist attack fatalities in Nigeria in the same time period, despite only existing organizationally for about a quarter of that time (START 2014, 4).

Boko Haram's activity extends outside of Nigeria's borders into neighboring states, but the majority of its activity remains in Nigeria and especially within the northeastern Nigerian states. The group "draws its members mainly from disaffected youth, unemployed high school and university graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to northern Nigeria" (Onuoha 2014, 3). Boko Haram now operates in a cell structure that allows for great autonomy, and hinders traditional disruption practices (Amnesty International 2015b, 15). The group once controlled considerable territory in northern Nigeria, but government operations in 2013 and 2015 forced the group to displace to areas of relative security, to include the Sambisa Forest in Borno state (Amnesty International 2015a, 5). Boko Haram's loss of terrain did not equate to a reduction in terrorist acts, however, and the group is now more lethal than ever.

There are several reasons why Boko Haram successfully continues to recruit new members. One study suggested, "Boko Haram insurgents are driven by a combination of factors such as poverty, unemployment, bad governance and politics of North-South divide" (Akpan, Ekanem, and Olofu-Adeoye 2014, 152). Another study concluded that the group radicalizes new members and sympathizers through "a narrative of resentment and vengeance for state abuses" (Blanchard 2014, 143). That narrative "easily appeals to impoverished, alienated, and jobless northern Muslim youth" (Onuoha 2014, 7). A synopsis of the state of Nigeria helps to explain those factors.

## The State of Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populated country in Africa and is one of the top six petroleum exporters in the world (Harmon 2014, 113). However, the country remains ranked as one of the world's 20 poorest (Harmon 2014, 113). The government cannot provide basic political goods to its people for several reasons to include geographic breadth, ethnic tension, widespread government corruption, and ineffective municipal systems. The Nigerian government has failed to provide common support since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1960. Popular discontent with the lack of political goods resulted in the adoption of sharia law in 12 of Nigeria's 36 states in the early 2000s (Harmon 2014, 115). However, the adoption of new penal codes failed to generate the desired progress in those states, and made a negligible difference in government support in comparison to states ruled by traditional law. Additionally, the country's history is replete with coups and rampant corruption.

Nigeria's diversity and disparity defines and shapes it. Its diversity is a contributing factor to instability, because of the amount of tension between groups and the government. There are three major ethnic groups, around which the country's initial constitution defined subordinate government and territory (Forest 2012, 19). However, there are over 250 ethnic groups across the country (CIA 2015, under *People and Society*). A notable disparity exists between the north and south in Nigeria, and several factors contribute to the inequality. The country's population is about 50 percent Muslim and 50 percent Christian (Forest 2012, 19). A great percentage of the Muslims live in the north, and the majority of the Christians live in the south. Religion is only one factor in a complex north-south dichotomy that fuels tension in the country, however. Another factor is that the petroleum resources reside in the southern Niger Delta, which provides a great deal of the country's wealth. The north faces higher poverty and illiteracy rates, and the

northeast is the poorest region in Nigeria (Forest 2012, 27). Boko Haram operates primarily out of the northeast, and uses the disparity to recruit new members and sympathizers.

Boko Haram poses a significant threat to the stability of Nigeria. Former President Goodluck Jonathan twice declared a state of emergency in portions of northern Nigeria because of the level of violence predicated by Boko Haram. Concurrently, northern international borders were closed and additional military troops were deployed to combat the threat (Forest 2012, 3). More recently, newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari identified Boko Haram as the “most immediate” challenge confronting Nigeria (Seyi 2015).

The government’s response to Boko Haram has been primarily through the heavy-handed use of security forces, and the government spends over 20 percent of its budget on internal defense (Akpan, Ekanem, and Olofu-Adeoye 2014, 152). However, the use of force to combat Boko Haram in Nigeria has been counterproductive. President Buhari’s 2015 inaugural address aptly described the role of the state in facilitating Boko Haram’s rise in Nigeria:

Boko Haram is a typical example of small fires causing large fires. An eccentric and unorthodox preacher with a tiny following was given posthumous fame and following by his extra judicial murder at the hands of the police. Since then through official bungling, negligence, complacency or collusion Boko Haram became a terrifying force taking tens of thousands of lives and capturing several towns and villages covering swathes of Nigerian sovereign territory. (Seyi 2015)

State security forces have a record of human rights abuse that extends far past the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, and appears to have encouraged additional support for Boko Haram within the state. Nigerian security forces conducted “extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, beatings, arbitrary detention, mistreatment of detainees, and destruction of property” in retaliation to Boko Haram activity, but operate with near impunity in the country (U.S. Department of State 2015b,

1-2). The Nigerian military, currently responsible for Boko Haram counterterrorism operations, is notorious for inhumane practices. Notably, “Nigerian military forces have extrajudicially executed more than 1,200 people; they have arbitrarily arrested at least 20,000 people, mostly young men and boys; and have committed countless acts of torture” (Amnesty International 2015a, 4).

One tactic that is often employed by the Nigerian security forces is mass arrests or indiscriminate violent retaliation at the site of an attack. For example, in response to the killing of a Multinational Joint Task Force soldier in Baga, attributed to Boko Haram in 2013, Nigerian army soldiers shot indiscriminately at individuals nearby and destroyed over 2,200 homes (U.S. Department of State 2015b, 17). Similarly, in response to Boko Haram’s attack on Giwa Barracks in 2014 that released many detainees, the military killed at least 640 males that included many of the released detainees (Amnesty International 2015a, 6).

Police also often employ “parading” to deter crime, which involves parading arrestees through the streets while bystanders ridicule or assault them (U.S. Department of State 2015b, 5). Also, the deplorable conditions in government detention facilities and lack of due process contribute to significant numbers of deaths while in custody. One report suggests that more than 7,000 people died in custody since 2011 (Amnesty International 2015a, 58). Such methods are counterproductive, as they create more animosity between the people and the government, which contributes to Boko Haram’s ability to recruit.

Although the Nigerian government’s response to Boko Haram is framed by the extremely violent and indiscriminate use of force, it employed other means of countering the group in the past. Former President Goodluck Jonathan’s administration attempted to negotiate with the group

shortly after his assumption of the presidency. Specifically, “[o]n April 24 [2011], President Jonathan inaugurated a Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North. Self-appointed Boko Haram spokespersons rejected dialogue or amnesty” (U.S. Department of State 2015b, 1). The rejection was likely because “[Abubakar] Shekau believes that Boko Haram cannot negotiate any final solution to the conflict with the Nigerian government until Boko Haram has created an Islamic state or Nigeria adopts a Boko Haram-approved version of sharia law” (American Foreign Policy Council 2014, 1-2). Additionally, in May 2011, the governor of Borno state offered amnesty to Boko Haram, but the group publically refused the deal. In a BBC interview, the group’s spokesman explained, “we do not believe in the Nigerian constitution and secondly we do not believe in democracy but only in the laws of Allah” (Forest 2012, 109-110). More recently, current President Buhari suggested that his administration is also open to legitimate negotiations with Boko Haram, specifically for the release of the Chibok schoolgirls (Buhari 2015). Negotiations have not been successful.

The government has also not succeeded in quelling the north/south tension or ethnic animosity in the country. Under former President Jonathan, “[t]he Nigerian government’s efforts to address grievances among Northern populations, which include high unemployment and a dearth of basic services, made little progress” (U.S. Department of State 2015, 40). Additionally, pervasive corruption continues to hamper the government’s response. In fact:

Widespread corruption in Nigeria has not only deprived communities of needed amenities and infrastructure but has created an environment conducive for recruitment and radicalization. Pervasive malfeasance, especially in the public sector, provides a key referent around which extremists can frame antisecular ideology and radicalization (Onuoha 2014, 7).

## **Categorizing Boko Haram**

The group's history, the state of Nigeria, and the state's response to Boko Haram all contribute to defining the group's goals and strategies. The combination of all of those factors help to determine the means by which the group will most likely end, and the most effective ways to affect that end. Boko Haram seeks the goals of regime change and social control within Nigeria, and pursues those goals through strategies of intimidation, provocation, and polarization (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52-53, 66-72; Cronin 2009, 119). Those findings are described below.

Boko Haram's founder Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf stated, "[o]ur land was an Islamic state before the colonial masters turned it to a kafir land. The current system is contrary to true Islamic beliefs" (Forest 2012, 14). Boko Haram's goal remains in line with his initial vision, and seeks to "abolish the secular system of government to implement Wahhabi interpretations of Sharia law in Nigeria" (IEP 2015, 53). That goal, defined as regime change, seeks "the overthrow of a government and its replacement with one led by the terrorists or at least one more to their liking" (Kydd and Walter 2006, 52). The replacement that it seeks is the establishment of an Islamic state. However, it is important to note, "Boko Haram wants to bring about Sharia law rather than control areas and service delivery. As such, the majority of its activity is aimed at destabilising [sic] the Nigerian Government and increasing religious tensions rather than becoming the government" (IEP 2015, 53).

The group seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria, and expects Nigerians within the state to abide by the group's interpretation of Islam. Mohammed Yusuf's death, the government response to the group, and the assumption of leadership by Abubakar Shekau contributed to an increase in more intense and frequent violence perpetrated against anyone the

group considers *kafir*, or unbelievers (Amnesty International 2015b, 13). Boko Haram's leadership claimed it is waging "an uprising against secular authority and a war against Christianity" (Blanchard 2014, 148). That violence is most often used to constrain the behavior of the Nigerian population to the group's strict interpretation of Islam, and to further its goal of social control (Kydd and Walter 2006, 53).

The group may have initially employed a strategy of attrition in an attempt to prove its strength and persuade the government to yield to its goal of establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria. However, the group eclipsed the efficacy of such a strategy. It demonstrated its ability to inflict serious harm to the state, and the Nigerian government has not capitulated to its demands. Currently, the group is employing one main strategy supported by two others. It is engaged in an intimidation strategy aimed at shaping the populace and government in order to elicit governmental change in the form of compliance with its demands. That main strategy is supported by the group's aim of exacerbating existing state tension and divide, and capitalizing on socially deplorable government actions. It employs polarization and provocation strategies to do so.

The intimidation strategy "is most frequently used when terrorist organizations wish to overthrow a government in power or gain social control over a given population" (Kydd and Walter 2006, 66). Boko Haram seeks such end-states, as described previously. The intimidation strategy is often employed after terrorists' demands are consistently rejected by the state. In such cases, groups target representatives of the state like police and government officials, and "impose the desired policy directly on the population, gaining compliance through selective violence and the threat of future reprisals" (Kydd and Walter 2006, 66). The group's history demonstrates such behavior.

Boko Haram's intimidation strategy is supported by provocation and polarization strategies. The provocation strategy "helps shift citizen support away from the incumbent regime" by capitalizing on the heavy-handed response of the government to terrorist acts (Kydd and Walter 2006, 69). This seems evident in Boko Haram's recruiting efforts that rest upon "a narrative of resentment and vengeance for state abuses" (Blanchard 2014, 143).

The group also exacerbates existing tension and division in the country through a strategy of polarization. In addition to using violence to force its ideology on the populace, violence also serves to "further the social divide between Muslim, Christian groups and the Federal Government," and "spark widespread sectarian conflict in order to destabilize the government" (IEP 2015, 53; Forest 2012, 2).

### **Affecting the End of Boko Haram in Nigeria**

Kydd and Walter (2006, 68-69) determined, "[w]hen the terrorist goal is regime change, the best response to intimidation is to retake territory from the rebels in discrete chunks and in a decisive fashion," and "[w]hen the terrorist goal is social control, the best response is strengthening law enforcement." Boko Haram is pursuing an intimidation strategy to further both goals of regime change and social control. As such, both recourses suggested by Kydd and Walter are applicable. The Nigerian government has proven its ability to regain control of territory from Boko Haram. It did so in 2013 and 2015, as described previously. However, the government relied mainly on heavy-handed military forces in those operations, which are less likely to affect the end of terrorist groups than police forces (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiii-xiv). Additionally, the government did not take control of all territory, as is the case in all such clear and hold operations. The strengthening of law enforcement would certainly benefit the Nigerian

government in its counterterrorism strategy, especially in reducing corruption and building rule of law among the government and police.

Kydd and Walter (2006, 72) also found the “best response to provocation is a discriminating strategy that inflicts as little collateral damage as possible,” which requires a superior government intelligence capability. The response of the Nigerian security forces to date appears to be the antithesis of that recommended response. In addition to lacking sufficient intelligence capability, the Nigerian government continues to rely more heavily on military forces than police. Jones and Libicki explained the drawbacks of such reliance, as mentioned in Chapter 2.

Countering a polarization strategy is complex and difficult, but necessary in this case to target significant contributing factors of Boko Haram’s success. The group is able to exacerbate the existing division in Nigeria because of state acts of commission and omission. Boko Haram capitalizes on the retaliatory acts of the state to paint the government as the enemy of the people. In addition, the state’s inability to provide political goods to the northeast factors into the generation of new members and supporters of Boko Haram. The employment of discriminating police forces committed to the rule of law would prove more effective than the use of the military, and would frustrate Boko Haram’s ability to pit the population against the government. Addressing the disparate government support between the north and south would reduce the pool of potential recruits and ease some tension within the state.

More broadly, Jones and Libicki’s research suggested that terrorist groups are most likely to end by one of four means: victory, military force, politicization, or policing (Jones and Libicki 2008, 10-19). Their conclusions support the analysis drawn from Kydd and Walter. It is unlikely

that Boko Haram will end through victory, since “[r]eligious groups rarely achieve their objectives,” and “[n]o religious group that has ended achieved victory since 1968” (Jones and Libicki 2008, xiv). Additionally, the international community would not accept the establishment of an Islamic state in Africa’s largest state that is responsible for a significant amount of international petroleum production. Finally, the fanaticism and cell structure of the group would likely obstruct organizational calls for disbanding.

Military force has proven ineffective thus far in defeating Boko Haram, due in large part to the rampant abuse perpetrated by the military. The use of indiscriminate force by government forces in response to terrorist acts continues to fuel state tension and bolster Boko Haram’s recruiting efforts. Nigerian security forces also attempted to defeat the group on several occasions through a decapitation strategy in the form of the killing of group leaders. However, that counter strategy has proven ineffective (Forest 2012, 91). For example, the killing of Mohammed Yusuf strengthened the resolve and capability of the group instead of dismantling it.

Boko Haram is unwilling to negotiate with the Nigerian government, since it rejects the state’s moderate ideology and unwillingness to adopt the group’s ideology and conform to its goals. The Nigerian government attempted on at least three occasions to broker a deal with the group, but the opportunities were rebuffed. Boko Haram publically rejected the government’s offers to negotiate. Additionally, while Boko Haram seeks the establishment of an Islamic state, it does not endeavor to rule the state and does not support a political party to do so either. It is unlikely, therefore, that the group will end through politicization.

The most likely option, according to Jones and Libicki’s research and supported by the analysis of Boko Haram and Nigeria, is an end caused by policing. Decapitation through the

targeted killing of leaders has not worked. However, the targeted arrest of leaders and members is more likely to affect an end to the group, because “[c]apturing a leader, putting him or her on trial and then presumably behind bars, emphasizes the rule of law, profiles leaders as criminals, and demonstrates the appropriate application of justice” (Cronin 2009, 17). The application of rule of law would demonstrate the government’s care for the people, which could relieve some of the polarization within the state. Additionally, employing a local force committed to the rule of law would curtail the rampant retaliatory abuse committed by the military, which would hamper the Boko Haram’s provocation strategy.

### **Summary**

The case study of Boko Haram and its operating environment in Nigeria allowed for the characterization of the terrorist group within the parameters presented in Chapter 2. That characterization then allowed for an informed proposal of how the group will most likely end. Boko Haram seeks regime change and social control, which it pursues through intimidation, provocation, and polarization strategies. The most likely way that it will end is via policing supported by an adherence to the rule of law and common government support throughout the state. Those conclusions answered the research question of what factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria, and validated the hypothesis: Ending Boko Haram’s terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram’s leadership. Chapter 5 concludes this thesis. It provides a synopsis of the thesis, to include a review of the research question, hypothesis, literature review, research methodology, and

theoretical framework. It also discusses the conclusions presented in this chapter, and provides recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

Understanding how terrorist organizations end is important to determining the most appropriate counterterrorism strategies, because it describes the ways and means that were successful in affecting such ends in similar groups. Nigeria is currently employing an ineffective counterterrorism strategy against Boko Haram, and state practices are contributing to Boko Haram's perpetuation of terrorism in the state. As a result, Boko Haram's strength and capability continue to grow, and its terrorism threatens the stability of the largest state in Africa and one of the global leaders in petroleum production. Applying the theories generated by recent terrorism studies with a thorough understanding of the group and its operating environment allows for the formulation of more appropriate strategic goals to affect the end of Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria.

### **Synopsis of Thesis**

This thesis posed the research question: What factors are most likely to influence the end of Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria? The purpose of the work was to prove or disprove the hypothesis: Ending Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram's leadership. To answer the research question, and to validate the hypothesis, the thesis began with a review of scholarly literature pertinent to the subject.

The reviewed literature covered three complementary topics: the goals and strategies of terrorist groups, effective government responses to terrorist strategies, and how terrorist groups end. Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter's 2006 work, "The Strategies of Terrorism," defined the goals of terrorist groups. That study, as well as Audrey Kurth Cronin's, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, and G. Davidson Smith's, *Combating Terrorism*, all contributed to a comprehensive examination of the strategies that terrorist groups employ to reach their goals. The most appropriate government responses to terrorism were detailed through a review of Kydd and Walter's work and Max Abrahms', "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy." Lastly, Cronin's research, David C. Rapoport's, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," Seth Jones and Martin Libicki's, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qaeda*, Leonard Weinberg's, *The End of Terrorism?*, and Martha Crenshaw's, *Explaining Terrorism: Causes, Processes and Consequences*, all supported the study of how terrorist groups end. The theories and conclusions revealed in those works supported the study of Boko Haram and its terrorist activity in Nigeria through the remainder of the thesis.

Grounded theory was employed as the research method, because of the interwoven nature of influencers to Boko Haram's terrorism and the theory's framework for predictive analysis. Within that methodology, Boko Haram and its operating environment in Nigeria were examined through a case study and data analysis of documents from multiple sources including government and non-government organization publications, peer-reviewed journals, and news outlets. Boko Haram's goals and strategies, the characterization of the state, and the state's historic response to Boko Haram were revealed as a result. From those results, the author determined the most appropriate government responses tailored to each goal and strategy within

the framework presented by Kydd and Walter and Cronin. Additionally, the most likely way that Boko Haram will end was determined through an analysis of Jones and Libicki's findings vis-à-vis the conditions in Nigeria and characterization of Boko Haram.

### **Synopsis of Findings**

Boko Haram perpetuates its terrorism in Nigeria in the hope of achieving goals of regime change and social control (see Kydd and Walter 2006, 52). The group's desired end state is the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria that adheres to the group's strict interpretation of Islam. In order to do so, it seeks regime change to overthrow the government, which it considers out of line with Islam. It is important to note that Boko Haram does not intend to serve as the replacement for the government as the provider of political goods for the state. The group also aims to modify or control the behavior of the population, which defines its goal of social control. It inflicts brutal violence on those considered *kafir*, or outsiders, in an attempt to force Nigerians to abide by its rules directly, as it continues its campaign against the government.

Boko Haram employs three strategies, one main strategy supported by two others, in an attempt to achieve those goals. Its main strategy is one of intimidation, which it facilitates with subordinate strategies of provocation and polarization (see Kydd and Walter 2006, 66-72 and Cronin 2009, 119). The group uses an intimidation strategy to convince the population that it is capable of punishing the people for disobeying it, and that the government is incapable of preventing its actions. The violence that the group inflicts upon those it considers *kafir* demonstrates its employment of such a strategy, as does its historic targeting of police, government officials, and their facilities.

The intimidation strategy is supported by a provocation strategy to elicit a specific response from the government with the aim of radicalizing the population. Specifically, it capitalizes on the indiscriminate inhumane response of the government to build resentment toward the government and support for its cause. That resentment is easily generated, because of the Nigerian security forces' history with the group and the social fragility of the state. Boko Haram also employs a polarization strategy in an attempt to pull the state apart by creating or exacerbating the existing lines of division in order to delegitimize the state. Its success with this strategy relies heavily on the existing ethnic and political tension in Nigeria and the inability of the state to provide political goods to its people, especially those in the northeast.

The goals and strategies of the group, its operating environment, and recent research on how terrorist groups end all factored into the conclusion of how Boko Haram will likely end, and the factors that will most likely influence that end. Jones and Libicki's research, coupled with that of Cronin, supported the conclusion that the group will most likely end through policing. However, several obstacles must be overcome before policing can effectively end Boko Haram in Nigeria. The findings of this thesis validated the hypothesis that ending Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria would most likely be influenced by (1) the reformation of Nigerian security forces to a legitimate force committed to rule of law and human rights, (2) the ability of the Nigerian government to provide governmental support to its geographically isolated population, and (3) the lawful capture and prosecution of Boko Haram's leadership.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

This thesis was limited in scope by design and by ungovernable variables, as described in Chapter 1. Therefore, considerable subject matter about Boko Haram and Nigeria remains available for further research. This thesis focused on Nigeria, but Boko Haram is not restricted by sovereign boundaries. Its regional impact is worth examination. The evolution of the group and state offer opportunities to validate the conclusions herein, and to propose new suggestions based on observed change. Additionally, the suggestions presented herein for affecting the end of Boko Haram require consideration as to the most appropriate means of putting them into action. Lastly, recent political change in the state presents an opportunity for further scholarly exploration.

Boko Haram, like any terrorist group, exists in a state of constant evolution. As a terrorist group, that evolution depends significantly on its operating environment and its opposition. The conclusions presented in this paper seek to affect the end of Boko Haram's terrorist activity in Nigeria. However, those conclusions are based on information and events current as of the period of study, and are not the only variables that may affect the group. Further research is necessary to chronicle the group's evolution, and the effectiveness of state strategies employed against it. Just as the group modifies its actions, so too must the state.

This thesis focused exclusively on Boko Haram's terrorism in Nigeria, but the group's influence extends beyond the state's borders. Additional research should focus on how Nigeria's border states, particularly Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, could form a more effective strategy to counter Boko Haram while supporting the recommended Nigerian strategy presented herein. Notably, the role of the newly formed Multinational Joint Task Force, comprised of forces from

each of the previously mentioned states, deserves critical analysis. Lastly, this thesis intentionally excluded the role of the United States, but not due to a lack of national focus on the group. Boko Haram has been of national security interest for some time. It was named specifically in the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, and was designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. Department of State in 2013. The role of the United States, and other states, in supporting Nigeria and the region merits consideration.

Reforming the Nigerian security forces, extending the provision of political goods throughout the state, and developing functioning rule of law are highly complex solutions that require fundamental and long-term change. Considerable emphasis was placed on the role of the Nigerian police in affecting the end of Boko Haram. However, the Nigerian police forces require additional training and the support of legitimate government services in order to effectively counter Boko Haram. Reforming the police and other elements of the Nigerian security forces requires a far more thorough examination of the forces, and the study of how to properly implement organizational change. Additional research on how states have conducted fundamental transitions would provide policymakers with a perspective on the timeframe and transitional elements to anticipate. Examining the historic response of terrorist groups during such transitions would also benefit the government in detailing its implementation strategy. The results of such research would also allow international governmental and non-governmental organizations to determine how best to support a transitional Nigeria.

Lastly, the effectiveness of the Buhari administration in dealing with Boko Haram and fundamental Nigerian state issues deserves examination. President Buhari ran on an anti-corruption platform, and delivered a hope-filled and inspiring inaugural speech after his 2015 election that described his administration's resolve to defeat Boko Haram. Since then, he

delivered polished public statements regarding the state. However, his predecessor's claims of government overhaul, intelligence capacity improvements, and international cooperation proved insufficient in producing warranted change (Akpan, Ekanem, and Olofu-Adeoye 2014, 153). Additionally, Buhari is not new to Nigerian politics. He ruled the state from 1983-1985 after a successful military coup put him in power. His political history in the state and identification as a Muslim of northern Nigerian origin may serve as polarizing factors within the divided state. Buhari may be in a position to affect change in the state, but determining his effectiveness as Nigeria's president requires examination as his term continues.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Chad Maddox earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from Loyola College in Maryland in 2004. Shortly after graduation, he was commissioned into the United States Army. The experiences offered by the Army and the rapid change in world events during ten years of military service generated additional interest in the study of National Security that was initially sparked during his undergraduate studies. That interest led to the pursuit of a Master of Arts degree in National Security Studies from American Military University.