C thesis

Boko Haram: why they became an affiliate of Daesh

(2FU32E)

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Abstract

This study investigates the terror group Boko Haram in Nigeria, its’ history and its subsequent pledge to Daesh otherwise known as the Islamic State. By joining Daesh, the most ruthless terror group currently, it has thrust Boko Haram into the targets of regional and international coalitions begging the question why would they take such a step putting them at risk. This research paper aims to view Boko Haram as a rational collective entity thus seeking to underline factors as to why they deemed it beneficial to pledge allegiance to Daesh.

This thesis tries to fill the gap of knowledge regarding why terror groups, in this case Boko Haram, pledged loyalty to another terror organization. This research paper is carried out and organized as a case study whilst applying the method of abduction and uses rational choice theory when analyzing the factors behind the pledge to explain what cost-benefit and/or rational choices could be seen.

The findings show that social, religious, and financial utility on the collective level can help in analyzing the factors and the reasoning behind Boko Haram’s pledge to Daesh however I argue for another utility, that of knowledge, to be included when viewing factors behind other terror groups allying with one another.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Daesh, Islamic State, ISIS, Nigeria, Pledge, Case Study, Alliance, Terrorism
# Table of Contents

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem  
1.2 Research Objective  
1.3 Research Question  
1.4 Relevance  
1.5 Theoretical Framework for the Study  
1.6 Methodological Framework for the Study  
1.7 Structure of Thesis  

## 2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction  
2.2 The Debate on Rational Choice  
2.3 How Rational Choice Has Been Previously Applied  
2.4 Definition of Rationality  
2.5 Rational choice – weak & strong  
2.6 The Definition and Concepts of Cost-Benefit and Utility  
2.7 Bounded Rationality  
2.8 The Debate on Rational Choice Theory  
2.9 Individual & Collective Utility  
2.10 Selection & Comprisal of Elements / Criteria  
2.11 The Literature Debate on the Conceptualization of Terrorism  
2.12 Conclusion of Theory Chapter
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Methodological Framework</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Abductive Reasoning</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Case Study</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Selection &amp; Delimitation of the Case</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Text Analysis</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Conclusion of Methodology Chapter</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Literature Review</th>
<th>26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 What Research on Terrorism Tends to Focuses on</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Conclusion of Literature Review</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Findings</th>
<th>28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 The Birth of Boko Haram</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 The Rise of Boko Haram</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 2009-2015 The Escalation of Conflict and War with the Nigerian State</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Post- 2015 The pledge of Boko Haram to Daesh</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Conclusion of Findings</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Analysis</th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Religious Utility</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Social Utility</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4 Financial Utility

6.5 Conclusion of Analysis

7. Conclusion

8. Bibliography
1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

Al-Qaida, the pinnacle of terrorism in the twenty-first century is now competing against Daesh (a previous al-Qaida affiliate) otherwise known as the Islamic State or ISIS. This terror organization in a matter of years has carved out large swathes of land which remain under their control and has areas of influence globally since their expansion in 2013. Four years later with its territorial gains diminishing in Syria & Iraq, its de-facto capital Raqqa being partially surrounded as of May, 2017 and with the international community on its heels, why then are groups still pledging allegiance to Daesh and more specifically why did Boko Haram join despite knowing the consequences of such actions? From this point on in the paper I will be using the term Daesh to define the group instead of ISIS because I and many argue by using the term Islamic State it gives them legitimacy which they seek above almost all other things.

Terrorist groups and non-state violent actors have become the target of the international community and therefore subsequently international coalitions form and collaborate with one another in efforts to combat them. The United Nations Security Council can designate and condemn certain groups as terrorist organizations, which then provides the framework for enhanced cooperation in fighting terrorism and terrorist groups. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2253 was unanimously adopted in 2015, which highlighted and expanded the sanction framework to include Daesh thus showing the impact and longevity of the group (Security Council, 2015). Cooperation on the international level has also lead to a global coalition in the fight against Daesh. The Global Coalition against Daesh has currently 68 partners and was formed in September of 2014 with the aim of ‘degrading and ultimately defeating Daesh’ (Global Coalition, 2017).

This broad international support exemplifies how vital the fight against Daesh is and how Daesh is not only viewed as a threat to the Middle East North African nations (MENA) or Asia Minor regions, but to the world as a whole. The threat of Daesh’s expansion is cause for concern as there are at least 30 known affiliates with confirmed additions as recent as the fall of 2016 (Miller, 2016). This threat leads us to the research problem, which is why would these smaller terror groups like Boko Haram align themselves with Daesh? In regards to other non-state violent actors and terror groups, why then would they choose to affiliate themselves with a group like Daesh which would automatically put them at the forefront of national, regional
and international campaigns to destroy them? Day (2016) also ponders over this phenomenon in which he states that “pledges of allegiance to Daesh will invariably draw attention from the global counter terror network and although these domestic resistance groups operate in secrecy and the shadows, a pledge of alliance draws them out into the sunlight of global anti-terror campaigns” (Day, 2016 pg. 2-3). Setbacks and pressure are mounting on Daesh in Syria and Iraq (territorially) yet just last October three more oaths were accepted, thereby expanding Daesh’s influence further into the Sahel (Menas Associates, 2016). As the international community is only ever-growing in their cooperation against Daesh and other non-state violent actor groups, why then would Boko Haram still find the will to join them? The research paper will based be upon a case study of Boko Haram by applying the theory of bounded rational choice in order to test its validity. Boko Haram was chosen for this study because they are one of the largest terror groups to join Daesh and have been operationally active since 2009 and thus exists material pre and post-pledge to Daesh.

Previous research argued that the main drives for terrorist and non-state violent actor groups looking to ally with one another were done so for survivability (Chenoweth, 2010, Karmon, 2005). However this does not solve the pledge puzzle to Daesh entirely because of the risk by affiliation and subsequent counter-terrorism campaigns which ensued after. Therefore it seems that when terror groups and non-state violent actors ally they operate much more tactically and rationally in their decision before cooperation then we might like to think. I questioned this gap as well as Horowitz and Potter when they say, “when groups reach out, they do not do so arbitrarily, but rather seek out those endowed with substantial and complementary capabilities” (Horowitz & Potter, 2013).

Existing research on relationships of terrorist groups focused on the relationship developed between individuals within the groups’ therefore, alliances between groups are still classified as under-theorized and understudied (Horowitz & Potter, 2013). Even highly detailed studies on terror networks have come up short of explaining and analyzing the intricacy behind terror groups’ alliances, connections and sharing of resources and intelligence (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, Horowitz & Potter, 2014). Current holes in the literature and theories as I have mentioned previously are not able to fully explain why groups such as Boko Haram become affiliated with Daesh, therefore this topic is highly relevant as it will seek to explain and bring forth new insight into this phenomena.
1.2 Research Objective

The research objective of this paper is to analyze the events that transpired pre and post-pledge to Daesh and to investigate the factors which could have influenced the reasoning behind Boko Haram’s pledge.

1.3 Research Question

What collective cost-benefit group analysis factors could frame Boko Haram’s pledge of allegiance to Daesh?

1.4 Relevance

This subject is extremely relevant as we are still witnessing the conflict and chaos left behind from Boko Haram who is now allied with Daesh. The findings and analysis could hopefully lead to enlightenment around the factors of why groups join and how to counter these factors with the aim of leading to peace and security, as research surrounding terror cooperation is limited and under-studied. Boko Haram is still conducting operations to this day and therefore this paper seeks to understand what factors were in play that led Boko Haram to make the decision to join a larger terror organization.

1.5 Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework applied in this research paper will be that of a rational choice one with attention to bounded rationality.

1.6 Methodological Framework for the Study

This study is carried out as a qualitative desk study. I will be using the method of text analysis while taking into consideration abductive reasoning which will be applied to the case study of Boko Haram.
1.7 Structure of Thesis

The research paper is divided into eight chapters.

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter, *Theoretical Framework*, outlines key definitions and concepts, which will be used in this research paper. It contains an overview of key categories of theories that is based upon Hugh Miall’s work. Furthermore, it will explain the chosen theoretical framework, bounded rationality, as well as its application, benefits and limitations.

*Methodological Framework*, the third chapter, will explain and justify the chosen research method, which is that of a case study performed as an abductive qualitative text analysis. In addition, it also includes the methodology behind the selection and resources used for this thesis paper.

In the fourth chapter, *Previous Research*, the difficulty of defining terrorism and its’ meanings will be addressed. Moreover, it will briefly explain the previous debate surrounding terrorism as well as presenting previous research within terrorism studies on; formation, participation, recruitment and collective action. Lastly, an argument for the rationality of terrorists is presented.

Chapter five, *Findings*, will present the results collected during this research thesis. It will be presented as an historical narrative split into three categories; 2002-2009, 2009-2015, 2015 post-pledge.

In the sixth chapter, *Analysis*, the presentation of results found in the findings chapter will be analyzed in accordance to the research question of this thesis paper.

The chapter, *Conclusions*, will summarize the main findings of this research paper.

Lastly the eighth and final chapter is the *Bibliography*. 
2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will be presenting my theoretical framework for this thesis paper. The topic in question will be based upon a case study of Boko Haram whilst applying the theory of bounded rational choice in order to test its validity. I will first begin by highlighting and outlining three key categories of conflict theory as used in the field of peace and conflict resolution which will be based upon Hugh Miall’s work in the book *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Miall et al., 2011). Then I will outline how they have been used to explain terrorism, moreover I will explain the unsuitability of both internal and contextual theories in explaining the group behaviour (of pledging). In addition, I will explain how rational choice stands out to explain motivations of groups and how it has successfully been used to study terrorism. Furthermore I will define rationality, rational choice in a strong and weak sense, as well as associated concepts such as utility and cost/benefit and the limits of simple rational choice approaches. Afterwards I will introduce bounded rationality, how bounded rational choice theory could be used successfully in answering the research questions, the limits of my chosen theory and why it remains nevertheless a suitable theory. Lastly I will conclude the chapter and briefly summarize the main points.

2.2 The Debate on Rational Choice

Since the beginning of systematic studies within the social sciences with regards to violent conflict, considerable differences between the major thoughts of analysis have been highlighted. These different and complementary approaches to the study of the causes of conflict are as follows; internal, relational and contextual (Miall et al., 2011). These approaches have been used to decision-making which has helped shaped the approach I have chosen which is why I believe it is relevant to mention these categories. The first group of theories is defined as internal in the sense that they locate the sources of conflict within the nature of the protagonists (ethological and anthropological theories). Secondly, by relational it is meant in terms that they look for sources mainly in relations between conflict parties (theories in behavioral sociology and social psychology). Lastly, contextual, because they look mainly outside to the conditioning contexts that structure the conflict and in some
versions also generate the conflict parties themselves (neo-Realist, Marxist theories) (Miall, 2011, pg. 94).

Approaches designed with a behavioral-economic approach in mind investigate factors which can hinder and limit decision-making and choices. Contextual theories or approaches based upon group and individual psychology exist. They investigate factors which influence the choices group members and leaders make as well as the organizational and interpersonal dynamics which can be shifted away from the presumed likely choice or thought of as the ‘average’ choice of the people involved (Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969). Sociological, political science and historical approaches examine a wide view of context when taking into consideration how groups and organizations operate as well as factors which influence preferences within the group or its’ constraints (McCormick, 2003).

Rappoport and Sedgewick have put forward global systemic explanations which led to their arguments that terrorism is more of a reaction of event dynamics in certain periods as well as developing an argument based on the ‘life-cycles’ of terrorism (Rappoport, 2001, Sedgewick, 2004). Cronin builds upon this where she states that terrorism in a sense is just a by-product of international changes of power and historical shifts in the world (Cronin, 2003). Although I believe the global systemic explanations for terrorism are quite interesting we must also consider the criticism it has received. Namely, it has been criticized for historical inaccuracy, the difficulty of defining boundaries of so-called global systemic and wave theories as well as being inconsistent and more interesting than compelling (Norricks et al, 2009). Although some psychological and behavioral theories have strong qualities and influence within social sciences and have been applied when analyzing terrorism, they lack the ability to properly
address the reasoning of why terror groups and non-state violent actors ally with one another. Contextual theories comprising of social psychology and behavioral sociology would be unsuitable for this thesis because they mainly look for relations between the sources.

2.3 How Rational Choice Has Been Previously Applied and its’ Results

Previously, not all actors were considered rational and therefore unfit to study, however contemporarily, a central argument supporting that of rational choice approach is that decision-makers (in this case terror organizations) have logically consistent goals (whatever they are), and, given these goals, choose the best available option (Nee & Snijders, 2013). I chose this relational theory because it seeks to view Boko Haram as making rational and cost-benefit calculations when taking into consideration its’ actions, and coupled with abductive reasoning to analyze and view why such actions transpired. This approach I believe is applicable to this topic as it defines terror groups as rational actors in a group following what they believe to be taking rational decisions. This framework firmly applies the notion that actors and respectively in this case their organizations’ are rational entities and therefore their decision making can be viewed in a scope of rationality. When applying a rational analytic framework, the processes of terrorist organizations can be generally understood, if we are able to properly divide ourselves from our misperceptions and biases.

According to the authors of the RAND report (which is released by RAND corporation, a non-profit global policy think tank), some of the best-regarded work in quantitative research on terrorism has been successful due to rational-choice application (Norricks et al, 2009). Berrebi (2009) in several studies has argued rationality from some of the results including; where and when terrorists chose to attack (which assessed risk, target value and attack cost), timing of attack (inferences made on value attributed to targets by terrorists), the usage of suicide bombers (as special assets used against difficult targets, which argued older and more-educated according to the data were shown more likely to succeed), and strategic-level rationality (studies supporting the objectives stated by terrorists in regards to economic hardships ex. Osama bin Laden on ‘positive exchange ratio’ between the September 11th attacks and cost of so-called “war on terror” (Norricks et al, 2009).

To summarize, in regards to previous research in terrorism, rational-choice is supported by several empirical studies which show that individuals and/or terror organizations do have a
basis for imagining they can achieve certain goals through the use of violent means. Although by no means is a rational choice approach spared from criticism and such weakness will be considered and addressed below.

2.4 Definition of Rationality

“Rationality” as it is applied presently, provides the framework for understanding and often modeling social and economic behavior within contemporary social sciences. There are three levels of distinguishable rationality. In the lowest sense of the form, all reactions are rational if an individual uses them to complete prearranged objectives. Another level of rationality is one that (requires) that individuals choose the best action according to stable utility functions and constraints faced (Norricks et al, 2009). A stable utility function in this case is assumed as rational people maximizing their utility subject according to the constraints found by them. Moreover this definition requires transitivity of choice and consistency, or explained in other terms as i.e A to B and B to C, then your preference becomes A to C. In this case then even the subject of suicide terrorism would be rational. Finally, the last level would require individuals responding to incentives and behave according to rational expectations (Caplan, 2006). Achieving goals seems to be an underlying factor in most notions surrounding rationality in individuals, as Simon states, “behavior is substantively rational when it is appropriate to the achievement of given goals within the limits imposed by given conditions and constraints” (Simon, 1976). Hence this definition postulates that rational behavior is determined by the characteristics and environment in which it occurs. Therefore, classical analysis is based on two distinct assumptions 1) the actor has a particular goal (utility maximization in this case), 2) the individual is substantively rational (Simon, 1976).

2.5 Rational choice – weak & strong

Rational choice argues that individuals choose the best action according to stable preference functions and constraints facing them and accordingly respond to incentives (Norricks et al, 2009). Theorists distinguish usually between two types of rationality, being defined in a ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ sense. For Mises, “rationality” is quite weak in the sense that he argues any action is rational by definition (Mises, 1966). To attain a stronger and more robust definition would stress that individuals choose the best action with regards to utility functions and
constraints facing them, meaning the rationality we take into consideration such as time
constraints and our measures of preferences over some set of goods otherwise known as
utility. Wintrobe for instance postulates that rationality is a “well behaved ordinal utility
function (Wintrobe, 2003). Stronger definitions and standards of rationality would stress three
notions; 1) responsiveness to incentives, 2) narrow selfishness, 3) rational expectations (that
the person’s beliefs are correct on average) (Caplan, 2006, Norricks et al, 2009). However,
rationality is ‘limited’ in a sense that it cannot foresee future events which will be addressed
later on in this chapter.

2.6 The Definition and Concepts of Cost-Benefit and Utility

A cost-benefit (analysis) is the examination of a decision in terms of its consequences or costs
and benefits (Dreze et al, 1987). The aim and direction of the application of cost-benefit is to
provide a dependable measure in which to evaluate decisions in terms of their consequences.
Berrebi argues in his paper that in regards to taking cost-benefit considerations, terrorists are
aware and sensitive to this occurrence. When applying rational choice / judgment on cost-
benefit considerations, Ganor stresses they must be addressed as perceived by the enemy
(Ganor, 2005).

Utility within rational choice theory and economics is defined as a measure of preferences
over some set of goods. Utility is a core concept within economic theory that argues that
individuals acting rationally will pursue actions that maximize their utility. However, it does
not explain why these purported individuals might pursue paths of action that might maximize
the utility of the group despite the fact that such actions might lead to a less than maximal
outcome for the actor. Individual utility is accomplished through economic actions whereas
collective utility would be accomplished through actions in a group or in such activities that
on behalf of the group achieve collective goods. Gupta argues that a person’s self-perception
is consisting of himself/herself as both an individual and as a member of a group, therefore,
an actor’s individual utility is comprised of both the individual and collective (Gupta, 1990).

Approaches that frame decision makers as rational actors do carry with them some
limitations. Such limitations include imperfect information (communication problems which
hinder coordination), divergence of interests within the organization and in some cases bad
luck. Therefore the quality of information which can result in unforeseen reactions are a limit and a consequence as a result.

2.7 Bounded Rationality

As mentioned above, rationality is limited or ‘bounded’ in the sense that one cannot see and/or predict the future. Therefore, an individual’s behavior and choices might be rendered futile due to lack of knowledge or unpredictability in the external world, which are the elements in which Nobel peace prize winner Herbert Simon described as “bounded rationality”. Simon concludes that individuals might be inclined to settle for solutions which materialize as “good enough” despite whether they are the best choice or not (Simon, 1982). Therefore when taking these factors into consideration actions result often in decision-making which is heuristic.

Bounded rational choice theory could successfully answer the research question in mind. By applying rational choice whilst keeping in mind the concept of bounded rationality, actions and events that I study in this paper would seek to explain them while trying best to remove bias and misperception while analyzing them.

2.8 The Debate on Rational Choice Theory

When applying the rational choice model one must also take into consideration the limitations which it carries. Limitations to the rational-choice model include; bounded rationality, cognitive biases in decision-making, character of individual leaders, physiological circumstances and leaders’ idiosyncrasies (Norricks et al, 2009). Bounded rationality has a limitation in the sense of some inability to gather the information warranted for ideal rational-analytic calculations & misperceptions. ‘Cognitive biases’ is a limitation in terms of applying information that reinforces our preferences. A leader’s character can be a limit in terms of risk-taking capability/probability. Emotions are regarded as a limit in the terms of fear or fervor (for example) can instill. Paranoia and exhaustion for example can be taken into consideration as a physiological limitation. All these factors comprise some of the limitations facing the theory in question.
Although rational choice models have their limitations, it does give us insight into actions of terrorists and their organizations rather than assuming they are acting erroneously, irrationally and unpredictably. Another benefit as mentioned previously is the successful empirical results gathered from quantitative studies as well as anecdotal evidence. Even though non-state violent actor’s and their members’ rationalities may be bounded as Herbert Simon argues, they are understandable to an extent. Therefore, when applying the rational choice model to terrorism, we need to keep in mind and use realistic assessments of non-state violent actors perceptions’ comparatively than ours.

During the last decade or so, contemporary knowledge was pointing towards the fact that individuals who became terrorists had done so because they had mental health issues and an inability to make what we would call rational decisions, however studies have shown that they are rational (Sageman, 2006, Crenshaw, 1981). This nomenclature highlighted and argued that mental illness, education, zealotry or economic hardships as the root causes. These arguments which took this standpoint were based upon so-called common-sense approaches. Alternative assumptions were based upon at times on, traditional economic theory of crime, economic theory of suicide as well as the theory of economics of religious sects (Becker, 1976, Hamermesh & Soss, 1974, Berman, 2000).

Krueger and Maleckova went as far as to argue that engaging in terrorism could essentially offer more benefits to individuals who have obtained higher education (Krueger and Malecokva, 2003). Similarities between the previous approaches argued that terrorists contained fewer marketable choices, however, ‘a large body of empirical work tends to disconfirm the underlying common dominator both at the individual and organizational levels’ (Norricks et al, 2009).

According to Hoffman, traits of terrorism such as; (1) the reality of a terrorist organization with a chain of command structure, (2) acts of violence and threats against non-combatants, (3) intended influence and reverberation past current objectives, and (4) the pursuit of political goals, are characteristics which shape public sentiment and how governments approach and define terrorism (Hoffman, 1998).

The recent success—or apparent success—of terrorism as a strategy, anywhere in the world, is what explains others’ embracing it, and the resultant global waves of terrorism (Norricks et al, 2009, Pg.15). This argument I believe adds to the debate of regarding terrorists and non-state violent actors as rational beings, applying a strategy of terrorism which has only been
systematically studied since post-WWII of which there is empirical proof that it has worked in regards to stated terrorist group objectives.

In regards to the subject of affiliates aligning themselves with Daesh, rationality not only occurs on the individual level but the group level as well. Berrebi and Lakdawalla found evidence to support economic rational decision-making when looking at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict between 1949 and 2004 (Norricks et al, 2009). They concluded from their study that four key indicators were apparent with regards to a calculated attack: proximity of terror home bases, presence of key population (in this case Jewish), international borders and a hub of government administration (Norricks et al, 2009, pg. 171-172). They argued that these attacks were not sporadically planned but showed operational rationality in their choices of effectiveness, cost, accessibility and attractiveness. Rationality on the group and operational / tactical dimension is also applicable. As stated earlier, the notion of labeling a terrorist as a rational entity has been criticized from the inception of terrorism studies, even more the subject of suicide terrorism. Although one might find irrationality in applying suicide tactics, when such events are viewed through a rational framework we would be able to identify some rationality and understanding in their actions. When viewing the results gathered from studying suicide terrorism we can argue through a rational choice theory perspective that it makes sense for organizations to assign older operatives with more education and experience against heavily defended targets. Benmelech & Berrebi also argue that older and more educated suicide bombers are employed to attack harder to hit targets and that less-educated and younger bombers are more likely to fail or get caught, which provides evidence for operational rationality (Benmelech & Berrebi, 2007). Rationality seems to be prevalent in the terrorist organizations’ ability to assessing targets, probabilities and their success rate, implying tactical and operational rationality. Here we can even view terror groups or non-state violent actors following more or less short and long-term goals with consideration to cost, benefits and utility.

Boaz Ganor writes in his book, The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle that:

“In general, terrorist organizations usually conduct rational considerations of costs and benefits, but they often attribute different weight to the values taken into account in their cost-benefit calculations, and occasionally, may even consider values that are different from those of the ones coping with terrorism, thus making a decision that appears irrational to an outside
observer. In most cases, though, the leadership of a terrorist organization will not make a
decision whose cost is perceived to outweigh its benefits, that is, an irrational decision”
(Ganor, 2005).

Rational choice postulates that individuals will choose the best action according to stable
preference functions and their constraints and will react accordingly to incentives (Norricks et
al, 2009). Therefore in rational choice theories the idea is that both real and expected
consequences will lead to the motivation of why individuals participate in terrorism. The
motivating consequences I will use in my thesis will be about the collective utility of Boko
Haram and are used and applied in the RAND Report and are listed below. These include;
financial utility, social utility and religious utility. I will not be examining the rationality of
the leader of Boko Haram. Of course it would be false to say that the leader does not play a
role in the events which transpire however I will be analyzing the rationality on the group
level therefore this is a limit of my thesis paper.

2.9 Individual & Collective Utility:

Individual – utility is reached through economic activities

Collective – utility is reached by participating in group activities or in such activities that
reach collective goods on behalf of the group

2.10 Selection & Compraisal of Elements / Criteria

Religious utility – the aspect of religion has been studied and shown to be a motivating factor

Social utility – the aspect of social utility has been researched and is shown to be a
motivating factor as well (Soibelman, 2004, Hafez, 2006, Post & Sprinzak & Denny, 2003,
Silke, 2008)

Financial utility – the aspect of financial motives has always been an underlying part factor
of why individuals participate in terrorism and therefore has been proven to be a factor too
(Wright, 2006, Soibelman, 2004)
Religious utility such as martyrdom for participation in suicide terrorism with the perceived reward of the forgiveness of one’s sins and the guarantee of entering heaven is prominent. Participation in what would be seen as fulfilling a divine mandate is another religious utility to take into consideration. Social utility is another key factor of why individuals and groups participate in terrorism. Taking part in the heroic ‘struggle’ leads to a multitude of utilities including the honour they receive from their community and/or supporters, an increase in social status where they gain admiration and respect as well as the friendships and comradery they develop on an individual and group level basis. Group factors assure individuals that they have chosen the right path can are socially motivated. Such processes also reinforce the ideological factor that is at play in regards to commitment and participation. Group factors as well as the utilities received from participation are a result of why individuals join terror groups. Therefore, perceived rewards (which may or may not be real) which are a result of terrorist participation are presumed as motivating factors (Norricks et al, 2009).

2.11 The Literature Debate on the Conceptualization of Terrorism

Defining terrorism is not an easy task, as events and nomenclature around it are constantly changing and gives rise to what many would see as a never-ending deliberation, something Gallie has touched upon, as well as the inability of other researchers and organizations to come up with an all-encompassing definition of terrorism and what it entails (Gallie, 1995). This scope is key when taking into consideration relevant material, as previous literature exists on terrorism in regards to civil war, insurgencies and rebellions to name a few, despite the knowledge and difficulty of specifying the term.

Philosopher and political theorist Walter Gallie invented the term “essentially contested concept” which in his words is defined as “concepts the proper use of which inevitably involves endless disputes about their proper uses on the part of their users” (Gallie, 1956). Here already only halfway through the 19th century Gallie has exposed a dilemma, one that has continuously carried over into the social sciences and still stands today. Furthermore in the book Political Terrorism, Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman present over 100 different definitions of the word terrorism from which they canvassed from experts in the field and have gone as far as to say that “authors have spilled almost as much ink as the actors of terrorism have spilled” (Schmid & Jongman, 2005). Begging the question, is it not insanity, trying a new definition yet finding it inadequate and then repeating, as per the definition of
Albert Einstein. Although Gallie might be correct in his term and thought as we are forever bound new arguments and formulations I believe it is still important to mention a few academic definitions of terrorism.

Walter Laqueur uses quite a simplistic and vast definition by stating “terrorism is the illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective by targeting innocent people” (Laqueur, 1977). Here we see him stressing the fact the force is illegitimate with the goal of a political aspiration. Crenshaw’s definition is a little more specific when she constitutes “the deliberate and systematic (in the sense that it is not mindless and random or sociopathic) use or threat of violence to coerce changes in political behavior (in the sense to alter demeanor, not primarily economic as ordinary crime). It involves symbolic (not instrumental) acts of violence, intended to communicate (the target audience in most cases lies beyond the direct victims a political message to watching audiences”, (Crenshaw, 1981). Bruce Hoffman writes in his book Inside Terrorism, “Terrorism is designed to create power where there is none or to consolidate power where there is very little, through the publicity generated by their violence, terrorists seek to obtain the leverage, influence and power they otherwise lack to effect political change” (Hoffman, 1998).

Quite simplistically here we can see the challenges and/or the inability to find consensus among researchers and academics for an all-encompassing proper definition for terrorism. This obstacle is even furthermore highlighted at the highest level on the global field today, namely that of the United Nations, which despite twelve UN conventions, has still been unable to reach an agreement of a formal international definition for terrorism (Miall, 2011). This ineptitude has and will most likely create more obstacles and hurdles in the field until a consensus for a definition has been properly implemented on the global (UN) level. However, as mentioned above and stated by Walter Gallie, perhaps striving for a universal definition accepted on the international level will never cease and only provide us with as he says ‘an endless dispute’.

However, with regards to definitions used by governments, some common characteristics of terrorism can be found. Paul Pillar explains and summarizes in his book Terrorism and U.S Foreign Policy, four common elements of governmental definitions: 1) Premeditation – must be intent and prior decision to commit an act that would qualify as terrorism (terrorism is not a matter of momentary rage or impulse), 2) Political Motivation – excludes criminal violence motivated by monetary gain or personal vengeance, 3) Targets are Noncombatants – terrorists
attack people who cannot defend themselves with violence in return, 4) Perpetrators – are either sub-national or clandestine agents (Paul Pillar, 2001).

In the book, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, terrorism is taken as “a set of actions or strategies adopted by groups for certain purposes, not the identity of these groups or the nature of those purposes (Miall, 2011, pg.81) This inclination I believe would best be applicable for my research case and subject, that of why groups align themselves with Daesh, as adopting certain strategies and actions for specific purposes denotes a sense of rationality behind the actor and/or group entity.

2.12 Conclusion of Theory Chapter

In this chapter I have introduced core concepts and key definitions such as rationality and bounded rationality. Furthermore, I have highlighted their application in the use of previous work / studies as well as stating the benefits and limitations which entail them. In the next chapter I will be addressing the methodological framework for this thesis paper.
3. Methodological Framework

3.1 Introduction
This chapter will explain and justify the methodological framework applied to this research paper. I will begin by presenting the research method and then by justifying the selection of this method for this study. Furthermore, I will cover the material used for operationalization in the thesis as well as the methodology. Lastly, I will highlight the boundaries of this study as well as covering ethical considerations.

3.2 Abductive Reasoning
The method of text analysis with abductive reasoning will be applied to the empirical material used for the study. Abductive inference or reasoning is, “applied on a phenomenon within the scope of a frame of interpretation (rule), this so-called interpretation frame constitutes various frames and in turn the interpretation of the phenomenon as one of this possible interpretations” (Danermark, 2002). Abductive reasoning will be applied and is defined as a form of reasoning that grounds social scientific accounts of social worlds in the perspectives and meanings of participants in those social worlds (Bryman et al, 2016).

Another argument for the use of applying abduction is the new insight the conclusion will shed on the subject at hand. This is the task at hand, as Denzin states, the conclusion is one of many possible conclusions because we relate different knowledge and ideas to one another (Denzin, 2000). This is regarded as a central element in scientific practice which is to re-contextualize, which is to observe, interpret and explain something within the frame of a new context (Danermark, 2002).

3.3 Case Study
This study will analyze why non-state violent actor groups such as Boko Haram have allied themselves with the terror-designated organization Daesh. With the topic in mind, the following process will be conducted as a case study the purpose of answering the stated research question above. A case study is a research design that contains the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman et al, 2016).
A case study is beneficial because it allows researchers to attain high levels of conceptual validity or leading to the identification and measures the indicators that could best suit the theoretical concepts the researcher intended to measure (Bennett et al, 2005, pg. 19). By applying a case study approach, which can be defined as the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test explanations to this thesis it can (hope) to help me achieve and led to explanations which might be generalizable to other events (Bennett et al, 2005, pg.5). A case study is suitable in answering the research question because it allows looking at information pre and post Boko Haram’s pledge to Daesh and coupled with abductive reasoning seek to view the information through their perspective and therefore I chose a case study as how I would conduct this research. Some advantages of performing a case study would be the potential for conceptual validity, strong procedures which can lead to new hypotheses, the value in examining causal mechanisms in the context of the case (s) and its capacity for addressing causal complexity (Bennett et al, 2005, pg. 19).

3.4 Selection & Delimitation of the Case

Case study selection

The case study of Boko Haram was chosen firstly because it is an official affiliate of Daesh, secondly because the terror group has operated since the 2000’s and therefore exists material and research about them and lastly because they pledged allegiance back in early 2015 which does provide some time frame to analyze the group’s actions post-pledge. Other affiliates could have been selected, however as the information is already limited, choosing Boko Haram as the case study seemed to be optimal.

Limitations and Delimitations

The delimitations of this research are specific as it will not cover the entire field of terror groups or non-state violent actors collaborating with one another. This research paper will only focus on the terror group Boko Haram who has pledged allegiance to Daesh therefore it has been limited to one case. This might then in turn reduce the broadness of the topic and result in more generalized output. Furthermore, due to the limited amount of available
information accessible for this study since terrorist groups are violent, clandestine organizations, collecting data on their internal functioning is challenging under the best of circumstances (Silke, 2004). Therefore, it is important to point out that we will never know all the cooperation or factors behind these groups as secrecy is vital for their survival which does imply a limitation from the start of the research. Boko Haram’s leader’s personalities will not be taken into consideration. This subject is constantly changing as Daesh and its’ affiliates are still a formidable opponent at this time and expanding and therefore information is limited.

The period that I have selected to conduct this case study for this research paper has been from 2002-2017. This period was chosen and subsequently split up into finer categories (2002-2009, 2009-2015, 2015 post-pledge) with the aim of being able to view Boko Haram through different time periods of its organization and analyze their group utility and reasoning behind their pledge of allegiance. This first period was selected as prior to 2002 the group was not officially formed. The second period of 2009-2015 was chosen as this is when Boko Haram became operationally and militarily active resulting in the ensuing chaos and counter-campaigns to this day. The third and final period was chosen from 2015 when Boko Haram pledged allegiance until present day.

The sources used for this study are mostly comprised of second-hand sources such as articles and journals in regards to events surrounding Boko Haram which needs to be taken into consideration. Other sources comprise of primary sources to the United Nations for example or literature in regards to the method which has been studied and applied.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

There is a very limited amount of ethical considerations that need to be taken into account for when performing a desk study. For instance, I will not be conducting interviews or asking individuals sensitive questions which would then have to be taken into consideration. However, since I will be applying the method of text analysis, where I myself find the sources and information used in this research, it has been a challenge to remain neutral and I must do my best to not let my beliefs or bias interfere with the results gathered for this thesis paper. Therefore, while taking these facts into consideration I conclude that there are no relevant ethical considerations to be accounted for while conducting this project.
3.6 Text Analysis

Text analysis aims to explain the life world within which the text is embedded; to open up the perspective of the author that is delineated by his/her social and cultural context and to draw attention to the structural aspect of everyday practices and meaning patterns (Bauer et al, 2014). The method of text analysis is chosen since it allows for the re-contextualization of the gathered information in accordance with the theory to deduce a new reasoning into the phenomena. Since the aim of this study is to examine why the non-state violent actor Boko Haram has allied themselves with Daesh, a qualitative abductive case study is appropriate as it can analyze phenomena with the goal of providing a new frame of context to the issue at hand.

The chosen method does contain limitations and weaknesses that require attention. A weakness of text analysis would be the fallibility of the researcher when applying the method and a limitation of applying text analysis could be that the scope of the analysis is limited to documents and texts which were produced before and not currently. However, as this method seeks to analyze text gathered information with the aim of reaching a new conclusion or a hypothesis, a way of trying to mitigate the problem would be through remaining as neutral and impartial as possible when analyzing the content.

3.7 Conclusion of Methodology Chapter

Taking into account these methodological benefits and in regards to using it on the case study at hand, applying a qualitative abductive text analysis was considered the most appropriate for this research.
4. Literature Review

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce and explain the difficulty in defining terrorism. Furthermore, this chapter will look at previous research within recruitment, participation, formation, and collective action and why it can be useful for the case study of Boko Haram and their pledge to Daesh.

4.2 What Research on Terrorism Tends to Focuses on

Previous research into recruitment of non-state violent actor groups has been shaped by studies of guerrilla groups and terror groups. Faria and Arce (2005) argue that the differences between recruitment in guerrilla groups compared to terror groups can be defined as control versus influence. Terrorist recruitment seems to be a by-product from their die-hard and popular support base for terrorist acts whereas territorial control seems to be the defining factor group recruitment with guerrilla groups (Faria and Arce, 2005). According to Dr Magnus Ranstorp (2004) who worked at the Center for the Study of Terrorism Al-Qaida is in a sense a type of organization. He explains that recruitment in certain mosques for example are canvassed and used by “talent spotters” looking for potential members. Recruits are then based roughly on two criteria; 1) their skills sets and psychological make-up, 2) their perceived level of commitment to the Islamist cause (Upton, 2004). These studies can help explain how individuals are recruited into Boko Haram.

Individuals who comprise and willingly partake in joining and forming a terrorist group most likely share some similar processes which (generally) dictate group formation. Previous research in terms of examining group formation in a (broad sense) has been developed (Truman, 1951; Olson, 1965; Salisbury, 1969). Olson’s hypothesis in regards to understanding group formation states that there in a sense must be a level of satisfactory within the incentive structure in order to convince people into joining an organization / group. If not, a so-called “free-rider” problem could occur in which members who are not willingly to pay the costs, despite the lack of action could attain and enjoy the benefits. These studies can help analyze how Boko Haram was formed.
There are two prevalent types of members which participate in terrorist and non-state violent actor groups. Firstly there are die-hard believers who join voluntarily and secondly there are the types which are recruited or convinced to join the group as they share the same political motivation (Faria & Arce, 2005). The hard-core believers do not need convincing to participate they are convinced of their cause and will fight to achieve their goals. On the other hand, the other group despite sharing the same political cause, needs convincing to participate in actuality. Moreover as stated above, Maleckova and Kreuger’s (2003) studies argued that participants who chose to participate in terrorist related activity are neither uneducated nor poor. This argument was further tested and found to have correlation in which Bruce Bueno de Mesquita presented his findings which found in order to assuredly carry out successful attacks, terror leaders and their organizations screened potential members to maintain ‘high-quality’ membership with its’ ranks (Bueno de Mesquita, 2005). These studies will help understand why some individuals participated in Boko Haram.

Eriksson in The Journal of Peace Research in 2003 argued that there was a decline in use of violent or armed force for political endeavours. Moreover they were able to highlight and discuss four key traits of collective action in regards to terrorism and armed conflict; 1) terror is part of armed conflict, 2) terrorism can serve as a supplementary measure, 3) for some groups terrorism is more important than armed action, 4) there are groups which only resort to terrorism (Eriksson et al, 2003).

4.3 Conclusion of Literature Review

In this chapter I have explained the difficulties in defining the word terrorism and how still even at the UN level there exists no universal definition used by all. Moreover, I introduced previous research into; formation, participation, collective action, and recruitment with the goal that they will help to analyze my study of Boko Haram and factors behind their pledge. In the next chapter I will discuss the findings and present Boko Haram from its emergence to its acceptance into Daesh.
5. Findings

5.1 The Birth of Boko Haram

The groundwork for Islamic history and culture in Nigeria which have subsequently led to the birth and shaping of Boko Haram (specifically around the regions of Borno and Yobe) is born out of 800 years or so of powerful sultanates which thrived in this area. During the beginning of the 1800’s, Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, a religious teacher and promoter of Islam led a jihad against these sultanates and for a period of 10 years he conquered them under one unified caliphate called the Sokoto Caliphate. After his death in 1847 the caliphate was ruled by his descendants and lesser sultanates. Later on in the 19th century colonial attempts by Britain to penetrate into the modern day northern parts of Nigeria were met with resistance but ultimately were successful and conquered by British forces in 1905. The decedents of this group are residing in what we call today Nigeria (mostly the north and neighboring countries). Resentment against Western influence is purported to have remained since then. The combining of the southern and northern parts of Britain’s (then) colony into present day Nigeria in 1960 was met with strong opposition and further brought resentment and has helped in laying the groundwork for modern day social, ethnic and religious tensions. Dan Fodio’s legacy and image still holds sway and pride by Muslims in northern Nigeria to this day.

Mohammed Marwa otherwise known as Maitatsine, was what some would say was a result of the emergence of Islamist fundamentalism among the population in the northern parts of Nigeria and neighboring countries. A self-declared prophet, he began advocating that it was a sin to read any other book other than the Qu’ran and denounced Western teachings. Eventually, armed conflict and clashes began during the 1970’s and 1980’s resulting in over 4000 deaths including Maitatsine himself, who has now become a hero and martyr for Boko Haram and its’ supporters. (Ngwodo, 2010)

Nigeria is quite unique as it is almost evenly divided, geographically speaking as well between Muslims in the north and Christians to the south. Although tensions and conflicts have occurred in Nigeria between its religious supporters, religious fundamentalism had not been a defining trait of the political divide within Nigeria until after the ensuing chaos after the emergence Boko Haram. One could look back as others have who have argued the fact that Maitatsine’s movement might have laid the groundwork for later dissent in the northern region. This movement coupled with social, religious and economic disparity in the northern
regions has ensured that Islamic fundamentalism has not only survived but remained resilient and has grown in strength.

5.2 The rise of Boko Haram

Jama’atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda’Awati Wal Jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram, (meaning: Western Education is forbidden) is a terrorist group which formed and has engaged in conflict and guerrilla warfare across (mostly) the north of Nigeria since 2002. The Islamic sect known as Boko Haram was founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri, the capital of the Nigerian state of Borno. During this time, Yusuf had attracted ill-educated and less-fortunate Muslims individuals and families (even from neighbouring countries) to his religious complex which also comprised of a school. This religious and educational complex had a stated political goal of creating a ‘pure’ Islamic state in its area, as they viewed the current Muslim leadership as impure and morally corrupted. Its members argue that their way of life is under threat, and that the political culture in the north (where they tend to reside) has been seized by a group of false Muslims. Yusuf’s and his groups message was clear, Western education (“boko”) had led to the corruption seen in the Nigerian elites and government and should be cast aside, however telephones and medicine for example are technology and advancements and therefore not haram for all knowledge is Allah’s (Last, 2009).

Economic disparities between the oil-rich south and the less well-off north, a rising population and subsequent mass unemployment led many disenfranchised Muslims in the north to turn to religion in times of need. Such disparities between the North and the rest of the country are particularly stark. In the North, 72 percent of people live in poverty, compared to 27 percent in the South (Sergie & Johnson, 2015). These multitudes of factors including, social disenfranchisement, economic inequality as well as religious duty (influence) in turn lead to the center becoming a breeding ground for jihadists (Cook, 2011).

For many men and women who have no prospect of getting a job due to; low English skills, little education and other factors, becoming a pious member of the religious community presents itself as a one of the best available choices. Numerous ill-educated and poor men have no prospect of finding a wife due to their limitations; however, becoming part of the religious community gives the possibility of attaining; learning in (classical) Arabic which
enables a person to provide Islamic services, as well as earning respect within the community and the chance you might find a wife (Last, 2009).

During the period from 2002 to 2005, Boko Haram had mostly withdrawn from society and had established camps and schools in outer regions of Borno and Yobe. However as pressure from the police and government increased throughout the years, smaller groups merged into more or less one large group of followers who were working actively against non-Islamic practices, such as drinking alcohol and gambling with respect to their strict interpretation and religious identity. Such actions and activities within the group coupled with its social and religious identity began to shape the essence of Boko Haram (Last, 2011). The ensuing chaos to follow in Nigeria seemed like it was only a matter of time as Chris Ngwodo stated, “the group itself is an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos” (Ngwodo, 2010).
5.3 2009-2015

The Escalation of Conflict and War with the Nigerian State

Despite the fact that Boko Haram emerged in 2002, it remained relatively peaceful (in terms of operations) and had been isolated to their remote areas in the north-eastern part of Nigeria for about seven years.

Despite this, in 2009, facing mounting condemnation and harsh government crackdowns and reprisals, Boko Haram began regularly increasing attacks against public institutions, religious structures, army and police individuals / installations, civilians and countless other targets. During the crackdown, Nigerian officials stated that the police had been successful in their mission against Boko Haram and showed off some of their prisoners to the media and went as far as to say they had captured a member who had claimed to have been sent by Boko Haram to Afghanistan to train in bomb-making skills (Last, 2009).

It is an interesting note that prior to 2009, Boko Haram did not have a violent overthrow of the government in mind as an objective. Up until that timeframe, Yusuf had voiced his criticism of Muslims residing in the north for participating in political and social activities in what he and Boko Haram viewed as illegitimate since it was not abiding by Islamic values. However, a harsh government crackdown combined with mistreatment and blatant police brutality against the general population residing in the north, among other social inequalities emboldened the group to become further radicalized.

July of 2009, led to an implementation of a motorbike helmet law throughout the nation, which members of Boko Haram had refused to yield because of concerns of lice or the helmets casting spells which lead to subsequent police actions and in turn sparked and armed uprising in the northern Nigerian state of Bauchi, which later spread into the states of Borno, Kano and Yobe (Friedman, 2014). In a short span of about five days this armed uprising between Boko Haram supporters and security forces in these states left more than eight hundred killed. In response to what seemed to be a deteriorating situation, the Nigerian government took swift action that resulted in the leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf being arrested along with other supporters during the clashes. Less than one month later Human Rights Watch stated that Yusuf along with his father-in-law (the following day) and others were subsequently executed in an extra-judicial killing on the 30th of July (Human Rights Watch, 2011). According to a report by Amnesty International, police brutality and
impunity stoked tensions with hundreds of accounts of people being killed in extra-judicial killings, and with countless disappearances which have never been investigated and/or punished (Amnesty International, 2009).

The killing of their cult-like leader and hundreds of members was what would be seen as the tipping point or catalyst Boko Haram needed as a group. Continued attacks led to Nigeria assembling a joint task force (comprised of military and police units) to combat the terror group, however, further reported extrajudicial killings and social tensions may have attributed to growing support for the group. In the aftermath of this, what would be seen as Islamist insurrection in the north began to take hold under the splintered leadership of Abubakar Shekau. What was left of Boko Haram and its’ supporters, including Shekau, who was the second-in-command after Yusuf (and who would later be its de-factor ruler) retreated and regrouped for some time prompting some Nigerian officials to believe they had dealt with the uprising. The opposite of this was to occur, as no longer would Boko Haram abstain from arbitrary retaliation and met (what they saw as) oppression with violence in return. In September of 2010 the group conducted a prison break that reportedly freed over 700 prisoners, which then made Boko Haram more operationally active (BBC, 2010). From then on a string of attacks began targeting; military personnel, police personnel, universities & teachers, banks & markets, frequent attacks on non-Islamic practices, churches & pastors as well as assassinations and (at times) influential kidnappings (Cook, 2011).

However, arguably in 2011 the most important transition Boko Haram had undergone to date took place when on June the 16th of 2011 the group targeted the police headquarters in Abuja by use of suicide tactics (BBC, 2011, b). This was an unsettling event as up until this point no group other than al-Shabab in Somalia and some sporadic use by al-Qaida linked factions in the Maghreb had conducted such practices. Reports indicated that there was a possibility that al-Shabab had trained a member of Boko Haram who had taken part during the attack in Abuja (BBC, 2011, a). Numerous analysts and spectators began to suggest that Boko Haram was trying to look for help and seek allies from neighboring and/or global jihadist / Salafist movements.

Due in part to some Nigerian military successes against Boko Haram during 2010-2011 some officials argued that Boko Haram’s influence was diminishing, however, the president at the time, Goodluck Jonathan, (who was seen as illegitimate by Boko Haram) showed his growing concern for the group when he stated that in reality all branches of government including the
army and police had been infiltrated by Boko Haram supporters (Adetayo, 2012). A wave of deadly attacks led to a state of emergency being put into place in the northern regions. In lieu of sixty attacks on police stations and with over hundreds of police killed by mid-June 2012, the government responded by increasing security spending to $5.5 billion which accounted for 20% of the overall budget (Owen, 2012). Despite the large amount of money spent on defence, security analysts have noted that Boko Haram is not dependent on external flows of money as they seem to be conducting low-cost operations (Stewart & Wroughton, 2014).

Perhaps as a result of continuing growth and use of suicide bombings the U.S Department of State designated Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organization in 2013 (Botelho & Labott, 2013). However it was not until one year later that Boko Haram received global attention almost overnight with the abduction of over two hundred schoolgirls in April of 2014 resulting in an international campaign called ‘bring back our girls’. In the beginning of January 2015, Boko Haram launched a surprise attack on a military installation in Baga, resulting in one of the biggest loss for Nigerian forces in terms of equipment and civilian casualties. This spurred a coalition comprised of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger forces to launch a campaign against Boko Haram shortly afterwards. In February of 2015, Nicholas Rasmussen, director of the U.S National Counter-terrorism Center testified that Boko Haram had ties to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb / Arabian Peninsula and al-Shabab and that communications between Boko Haram and Daesh had been detected as well.

5.4 Post-2015

The pledge of Boko Haram to Daesh

In March of 2015, Boko Haram’s (then) leader, Abubakar Shekau pledged allegiance or Bay’at (Arabic: an oath of allegiance) to Daesh via an audio message (Chandler, 2015). After a short time of only five days, a spokesman for Daesh released an audiotape in which, he accepted the pledge of allegiance and welcomed the expansion of the caliphate into West Africa (Yahoo, 2015). Many have argued, including Matthew Henman that this was just a matter of time, as Boko Haram had been seen signalling shifts towards the Daesh model, as the group had been mirroring rhetoric, flags and tactics in some months leading up to their pledge (Vinograd, 2015).
Military figures within Nigeria and some analysts believe at this point that this alliance was a sign of weakness or desperation as the group was possibly seeking a moral, image and local support boost. Military efforts against Boko Haram has drained its manpower during the last few years leading the terror group to offer loans or ‘clandestine dispensation’ to young individuals, which usually end up with the individual being forced to join the group when his/her loan has not been repaid on time (Gigova, 2016).

However, some experts had expressed concern at the possibility of the two groups exporting knowledge, strategy and tactics with one another. Counter-terrorism expert Dr. Ashraf from the Royal United Services Institute argued that we should not dismiss the pledge as propaganda. He argues that Daesh has resources it can export at its disposal such as ‘know-how’, however he points out that from this alliance Boko Haram would be the one gaining the most in terms of manpower, expertise and funding (Vinograd, 2015). According to Olivier Guitta who is a security analyst at Globalstrat, the alliance with Daesh gives them brand recognition, which can be beneficial to Boko Haram as this allows for recruits, money and media attention (Vinograd, 2015). He further argues this will have an effect on where coalition forces will intervene and the pledge remains a ‘win-win’ for both Boko Haram and Daesh, as it cements its group’s dominance over other competing regional actors.

Although until this point no clear operational cooperation has been discovered between the two terror groups, Ahmad al-Assir, a hard-line cleric who is suspected to have been the unofficial emir of Daesh in Lebanon was arrested in Beirut international airport in August of 2015 en route to supposedly Nigeria, which some have speculated as increasing ties between the two terror organizations (Cummings, 2016). Collaboration between Boko Haram and Daesh were further suspected when a report stated that upwards of 1000 Boko Haram fighters had been smuggled into Libya to fight alongside Daesh affiliates there (Paton, 2016). Not shortly after this reports started circulating that Daesh was luring recruits from countries neighboring Libya and offering up to $1,000 to sign up (Freeman, 2016). Ahmed Bolori, an activist in Borno state (the heart of Boko Haram) stated that the economic factors which led to people joining Boko Haram in the first place are why other subsequently ended up travelling to Libya (Paton, 2016).

A study released by Finn Church Aid Act Alliance a Finish NGO interviewed 119 former members of Boko Haram and found that the key factors behind joining the terror group were; revenge, religion and personal needs (Abdile & Botha, 2016. The study found that poverty,
coupled with little education and the lack of employment opportunities attributed to an individual’s decision to join the terror group (Abdile & Botha, 2016). Although it would take time to find concrete evidence of operational links between the two terror organizations, the immediate change and aftermath one could see after the pledge was accepted, argues Raymond Gilpin, has been the lethality of Boko Haram targeting civilians in which the group was later deemed as 2015’s deadliest terror group by the Global Terrorism Index (Gilpin, 2016).

Up until this point operational times between Boko Haram and Daesh were purely speculative however in April of 2016 Brig. Gen. Bolduc, commander of the US special operations in Africa, stated that they uncovered a weapons convoy coming from the Lake Chad Basin (which has been dubbed as ground zero in the fight against extremist militants) which included light and medium weapons (rifles, machine guns) from suspected Daesh affiliated fighters traveling from Libya, providing what military officials called “one of the first concrete examples of a direct link” (Cooper, 2016). Commander Bolduc further stressed the concern of cooperation between the two terror groups when he said they clearly share “tactics, techniques and procedures” from the way they partake in high-profile attacks on hotels to complex ambushes and improvised explosives (Klapper, 2016). Moreover in 2016, Boko Haram led by Barnawi successfully raided a military post in Bosso, Niger in which they acquired ammunition and weapons which unequivocally showed that Boko Haram was not beaten and still a threat (Searcey & Schmitt, 2016).

In fall of 2016, Abubakar Shekau was replaced by Abu Musab al-Barnawi as the de-facto leader for the group (Maclean, 2106). Al-Barnawi is believed to be the son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf (Sergie & Johnson, 2015). This came after reports that a high-ranking member of Boko Haram had informed Daesh leadership that Shekau had become unpredictable with his demeanour and tactics as he increasingly targeted more moderate Muslims, mosques and markets using young girls as suicide bombers (which Daesh frowned upon) and at times even his own men. This warranted Shekau’s removal from his position however this did not sit well with him. He claimed that al-Barnawi had assumed the leadership role by lieu of a coup and denounced him in a message but also finished with saying Shekau’s allegiance and his supporters remained loyal to Daesh. The terror group then splintered into two groups, one following Shekau and the other the Daesh-backed al-Barnawi. A short time after Shekau’s removal, new attacks on army targets by al-Barnawi’s faction as well as a UN convoy suggested that its top levels of organization had been re-organized
Whereas Shekau’s group began to attack more military and western targets, al-Barnawi and his faction of Boko Haram gained sub-regional ambitions.

Since Boko Haram’s pledge, they have become increasingly active on Twitter, showing off on occasion training camps for child soldiers as well as mirroring Daesh’s propaganda releases. Although the group was only exerting its dominance in north-east Nigeria when it began, during the last few years and since their pledge their targets have enlarged regionally with attacks in neighbouring nations, going from targeting (mostly) regional Nigerian or neighboring forces to international organizations such as the United Nations. Boko Haram’s devastation in the country was apparent as Nigeria’s Chief of Defence Staff stated that Nigeria had spent more than $2.6 billion dollars to address the humanitarian needs caused by the group in 2016 (Amin, 2017).

Peter Pham who works at the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank, argued that military progress had been made against Shekau’s faction this year in 2017 but even less progress had occurred in combatting al-Baranawi’s faction (Smith, 2017). He expressed concern that al-Barnawi’s group had been displaying signs of more complex tactics and weapons which could be the result of Daesh being expelled from Libya to the north (Smith, 2017). Just earlier this year, Nigeria’s Department of State Services (DSS) uncovered a plot by Boko Haram’s members to attack British and American embassies as well as other international / western targets (Akinfenwa, 2017). According to a United Nations Security Council report earlier this year, they discovered that both factions of Boko Haram have run out of means to pay salary and have subsequently resorted to attacks in order to acquire money, food and equipment (Security Council, 2017).

### 5.5 Conclusion of Findings

Boko Haram is a major terrorist group which has grown out of resentment from the north of Nigeria and has changed quite much from its inception along the way to their alliance with Daesh making it rather unique and hard to define. From following the martyr Maitatsine and his teachings, to Yusuf, their cult-like leader and his extra judicial killing and subsequent insurrection which followed has led Sergie and Johnson to conclude that “while Boko Haram can’t be neatly characterized as an insurgency or terrorist organization, its origins appear rooted in grievances over poor governance and sharp inequality in Nigerian society” (Sergie
& Johnson, 2015). The NGO study highlights the importance of these religious, social and financial factors for joining Boko Haram.

The goals of the organization have also shifted from imposing Islamic traditions such as Sharia law and courts and ridding themselves of what they viewed as corrupted western influence to imposing a Caliphate within Nigeria which has brought fears of division within the state as Nigeria is comprised of majority Christians residing in the south and Muslims in the North. These religious tensions were only exacerbated when they pledged allegiance to Daesh. This was only exacerbated when they pledged allegiance to Daesh. Despite all the gains, losses and changes the group has endured and gone through one thing remains clear, Boko Haram’s actions and ideology still pose a very serious threat. Although in the end Nigeria might defeat the group on the battlefield militarily speaking, ridding themselves of the ideology poses a whole other challenge, one which might never truly be defeated as Medgar Evers once said, “you can kill a man, but you can’t kill an idea”.
6. Analysis

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will analyze the information found in the findings chapter above by using bounded rationality. I will present the analysis in three sections, religious, social and financial utility. Due to the fact that the categories of religious, social and financial are quite broad, at times some information analyzed might naturally fall under two or more categories, as they are quite interconnected.

6.2 Religious utility

Originally Boko Haram did not have the ultimate goal of creating an Islamic state within Nigeria, however after their founding leader was executed following and amidst a violent government crackdown that ensued subsequently afterwards the group was pushed further to radicalization and violence. It was only after these events and the years following that Boko Haram changed its goal from ‘purifying’ the north of Nigeria from western influence to wanting to establish an Islamic state. This goal of establishing a caliphate with a judicial system built upon sharia law as well as following the strict interpretation of Salafism is something that both Boko Haram and Daesh share. The capture of an unofficial Daesh cleric supposedly en route to Nigeria shows the intent of religious utility which can be shared between the two terror groups.

The splitting of Daesh and al-Qaida into two separate competing terror organizations certainly affected Boko Haram, despite the fact that an ideological link between the three is incontestable.

The religious utility in joining Daesh by Boko Haram can be seen in the latter’s audio message by its then leader Shekau who said, “We pledge allegiance because there is no cure of the dissimilarity that Ummah (global Muslim community) have except the Caliphate, we also call all the Muslims to join us in this goodness, because it would enrage the enemy of Allah, by Allah, our gathering under one banner, under one Imam is more heavy to the enemy” (Svirsky, 2015). This can be seen as providing increased legitimacy to Daesh’s claim to be the only legitimate (ruler) jihadist group. This also works the other way around, by having Boko Haram legitimize their caliphate it in turn gains Daesh’s support and thus
legitimizes Boko Haram’s fight. This can be interpreted as Boko Haram pledging loyalty in order to be on the winning side of the conflict between the two major terror organizations al-Qaida and Daesh. This religious legitimacy might have also been seen as a way to attract legitimacy within Nigeria and hopefully attract foreign fighters and/or supporters. This ideological expansion of a global Islamic Caliphate could lead to an expansion of reach and territory used to foster support and recruitment.

According to a poll, only 2% of Nigerian Muslims had a positive view of Boko Haram, compared to favorable numbers Daesh receives in Arab countries in which they are conducting war in (Pew Research Center, 2013). Perhaps this is a calculated decision to garner supporters in Nigeria by adopting the brand of Daesh. Many foreign fighters have joined Daesh out of the desire to jihad and join the caliphate because they believe that this is required by Allah. By joining this caliphate, Boko Haram perhaps is looking to gather international support and thus foreign fighters for its organization as they have been drained in manpower during the last few years and have alienated its local support base as the Pew Research Center Poll shows. Moreover it could be seen as a counter to having its traditional support base leave Nigeria and join Daesh in Syria or Iraq as one son of a former Nigerian chief justice had left Nigeria and joined Daesh in Syria (Obaji Jr. and Youssef, 2015).

Although by pledging allegiance and alienating Boko Haram’s traditional support base as the group shifted objectives and operations from in and around Nigeria to a more trans-national terror group with international focus, the pledge does postulate some benefits within the scope and use of religious utility which we can conceptualize. Ideologically speaking, with Daesh’s declaration of an Islamic Caliphate it in a sense triggers and outbidding process with (supposed) true believers pledging allegiance as per the Qu’ran. Whether or not the intent behind Boko Haram’s pledge was solely religiously motivated, it does in accordance to their ideology and stated goal (of an Islamic State) create a sense of legitimacy for the group, which effectively outbids other regional terror organizations seeking cooperation of some sorts with Daesh. Takfirism, which is an extreme view within Salafism, accuses other Muslims of not being true and justifies their death for apostasy is something both Boko Haram and Daesh believe. This ideological similarity coupled with the declaration of a global Islamic Caliphate and also with Daesh’s gains and al-Qaida’s losses in Africa could be seen as a motive as to why Boko Haram sought them as an ally.
6.3 Social utility

The aspect of social utility in regards to Boko Haram pledging allegiance to Daesh is prominent. Although as mentioned above, this pledge runs the risk of somewhat alienating the mainly local Nigerian Muslim support base in the north, due to losses in manpower because of successful counter-campaigns by the Nigerian government and some of its’ neighbors during the last few years, this could be interpreted as trying to lure wider international support. An argument emerged that the pledge of allegiance to Daesh was nothing more than a re-branding campaign or something to boost its image and support, even if this is partially true, we can assume due to bounded rationality, that Boko Haram must have seen this as a positive utility when taking in the cost-benefit calculations by joining a larger organization with many resources at its disposal. This step Boko Haram took in aligning themselves came during a time when Daesh had a strong influence and presence in Libya compared to what they have presently (Daesh is said to be operating underground in Libya still). Previously Boko Haram cooperated with al-Qaeda affiliates which had been operating in the MENA and Sahel regions but due to waning strength of these affiliates and the increased presence and expansion of Daesh in Libya and neighboring regions, greater social utility might have been seen in joining Daesh at that time in terms of attracting attention, supporters and recruits. As mentioned in the findings chapter, a weapons shipment (empirical evidence) from suspected Daesh affiliates had been uncovered. Although the factor of weapons falls more under the category of financial, I mention this discovery because of the notorious smuggling routes in which it was found. These infamous smuggling routes, used for all kinds of black market material, run from Nigeria and near the Lake Chad Basin (AKA Ground Zero) up through Niger and eventually lead to Libya. Geographically speaking this could be seen as an advantage in that aspect in terms of flows of goods and people between two groups wishing to collaborate. Daesh had been operating for several years in the Middle East, yet Boko Haram did not pledge its’ support until Daesh had cemented a foothold in Libya. Perhaps the decision to pledge was in due in part to the proximity of the two organizations.

Although no current and credible public estimates regarding the current number of fighters within Boko Haram’s ranks (keeping in mind it is a clandestine organization) exists, Hoffman argues that a terrorist organization’s ability to attract attention and subsequently recruits is predominantly a function of its ability to perform attacks (Hoffman, 2006). The sharing of knowledge regarding tactics and bomb-making has been reported between the two groups, something I will go further into depth below, however, I mention this because Boko Haram
post-pledge 2015 was declared as the deadliest terror group of that year (Amnesty, 2016). Awareness of Boko Haram had tremendously increased which, according then to Hoffman, could be seen as a rational step towards the group’s ability to attain new recruits. Even if the reverse is true, meaning that they ended up losing more support by their pledge due to unseen circumstances or events (bounded rationality) the intent to take the step of forming an alliance with Daesh is still rational one as there is empirical evidence that, terror groups with a larger membership size tends to outlast other terror groups with fewer members (Blomberg, Gaibulloev & Sandler, 2011).

6.4 Financial utility

Financial utility such as monetary flows and payment are usually major factors behind individual participation in terrorism. Therefore in this case, the collective utility (Boko Haram) would rationally act towards achieving the same objectives. We can rationally deduce that the group would not have solely pledged if they assumed their financial situation would be in jeopardy. Although Boko Haram was reported earlier to have received financial and technical support from al-Qaida, no links of financial transactions between Boko Haram and Daesh have been discovered yet (Mark, 2012). We do not know the extent of financial transactions between Boko Haram and al-Qaida but contact between these two terrorist groups seemed to drop off when Boko Haram started to approach Daesh when the latter group effectively broke off from al-Qaida. An argument circulating around Boko Haram’s pledge to Daesh argues that they might have done so to be on the winning side in the conflict (as al-Qaida’s power diminished compared to Daes), which can postulate some long-term calculation. We do not know whether or not Boko Haram receives financial aid from Daesh, however joining a larger organization that has been deemed the world’s richest terrorist group could postulate that financial aspects may have been a motivating factor in the group’s decision (Bender & Macias, 2014). The fact remains that Boko Haram pledged once Daesh had seemed to have gained the upper hand in the regions where al-Qaida had previously been active, begging the notion of rationality of joining a network with larger financial possibilities and revenues during a time when Boko Haram’s previous partner had diminished. Empirical evidence regarding a transfer of weapons between the groups exists and was discovered along the infamous smuggling routes, begging the question if weapons can flow between the groups then so could money or goods to sell.
As stated in the findings chapter above, some security analysts indicated that Boko Haram runs low-cost operations and does not purchase advanced and expensive weaponry which argues that they might be less reliant on large monetary flows. Moreover, Boko Haram has been largely seen as self-sufficient with financing from; kidnappings, extortion, bank robberies and dealings in the black market. Coupled with these findings and no claims or links being discovered of financial transactions between Boko Haram and Daesh yet, perhaps this postulates that Boko Haram might have pledged fealty with financial aspects in mind yet however did not pledge solely out of economic regard. Furthermore, as stated above in a recent UN report, Boko Haram seems to be attacking targets with the objective for food and equipment as they are purportedly low on financial funds and under strain. Recent events such as these has led to the statement from certain member states of the UN arguing that Boko Haram is no longer able to pay a monthly salary for all of their fighters resulting in some defections (UNSC, 2017). Even though in northern Nigeria 70% of the population lives on less than $1 per day (McCoy, 2014) and coupled with the findings regarding fighters joining Boko Haram due to monetary gain or out of economic incentives I argue that these factors attribute to why individuals might have joined Boko Haram but they do not sufficiently explain why Boko Haram necessarily pledged allegiance to Daesh.

In conclusion, financial motives might have been a factor in the reasoning behind Boko Haram’s pledge to Daesh, although little evidence up until this point has shown substantial financial transactions between Boko Haram and Daesh since their pledge and subsequent acceptance. This could indicate that due to it being a clandestine entity we have not uncovered such activities yet. Otherwise it begs the notion that perhaps in this case, the collective group Boko Haram had economic aspects in mind when joining Daesh however they did not pledge allegiance wholly out of financial utility but rather for other motives and utilities then.

6.5 Conclusion of Analysis

Following the pledge and subsequent acceptance to Daesh, numerous analysts and officials boasted in confidence that it was nothing short of arbitrary, a simple morale boost to gain attention. However, even if this is slightly true and the mergers of these two groups were done to boost attention on the global scale they succeeded when in 2015 Boko Haram was declared the world’s deadliest terror group of that year (Amnesty, 2016). Furthermore, cooperation between the terror groups was dismissed as farfetched and improbable however there is
evidence of weapon shipments and the appearance of knowledge being shared when viewing attacks conducted by Boko Haram after their pledge. The relationship forged between Boko Haram and Daesh is one built on collaboration. According to Karmon, terror groups who collaborate instead of becoming adversaries, build cooperative ties which involve substantive logistical or operational coordination, such as joint training or conducting joint operations in combat (Karmon, 2005). These cooperative links grant terror organizations access to new knowledge and tactics (Horowitz, 2010).
6. Conclusion

Boko Haram is hard to define, as I have presented in this research paper, what once emerged as a movement is now a terror group which has joined Daesh, the most ruthless and notorious terror group presently which led me to question, why would Boko Haram submit fealty to such a group? Through this case study I viewed Boko Haram and their actions post-pledge to Daesh with a rational lens to view them as actors which took logical calculations. This rationality and analysis helped guide the research paper along.

Boko Haram’s desire and motivation in declaring allegiance to Daesh may have been opportunistic and fallen into place when the group heard of al-Baghdadi’s declaration of an Islamic Caliphate. This can be viewed as a stable utility function in regards to actions being transformed by influence of incentives within the scope of a rational-choice model. Aaron Zelin explains that Daesh only requires fealty from its affiliates and that their domestic goals must intend on establishing governance according to Islamic rules, something which Boko Haram wants to implement. This ‘resource-light’ Daesh model approach makes it seem, according to Zelin that “Daesh is doing more than it actually is” (Cummings, 2016).

In light of these findings and the aforementioned authors and their previous research, including the reported links and suspicions of know-how and intelligence sharing I argue the need for another category, called information (when viewing why terror groups ally with one another), which comprises the sharing of knowledge in operationalization, tactics such as ambushes, training in IED’s (improvised explosive device), bombs, media and marketing as well as procedures as a factor in collective utility as why terror groups might seek to ally with one another.

As I have demonstrated throughout the paper, rational decisions could be deduced in terms of receiving financial help from Daesh or using their religious identity and legitimacy as a boost in fighters as well as empirical evidence of a weapons shipment between the two terror groups.

Due to the fact of informal and formal ties being established between the two groups over a period of years and underlying religious, social, financial and knowledge factors to consider which I presented in this research paper ultimately could have influenced and led to Boko Haram’s pledge which is why I agree with Zenn when he argues that, Boko Haram’s “history and evolution suggests the merger was a strategic, calculated and long-term decision” (Zenn,
2015). Jennifer Cooke, director of the Africa program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington further argues that due to ever-increasing pressure, both Boko Haram and Daesh have increasing incentive to deepen the center-affiliate bond (Searcey & Schmitt, 2016).

There remains a distinct research gap in regards to why terror groups cooperate with one another which is what this research paper’s relevance was tied too and tried to improve. Future research should address this gap and analyze common factors between them as reasons for joining groups differ from the individual to group level. Analyzing future phenomena of cooperation between terror groups can be benefitted by applying a rational-choice framework which is what this paper argued as well.

Although I believe that the financial, religious and social utilities as applied in the RAND Report and as well as in my research paper are strong indicators for why individuals join terror groups I find them lacking in explaining the conundrum of the terror organization Boko Haram’s pledge of allegiance to Daesh.
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