The Rise of Boko Haram and the missing girls

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Abstract

The abduction of the 276 Nigerian schoolgirls in April 2014 by the Islamist group Boko Haram gained enormous international attention. Numerous leading female figures such as First Lady Michelle Obama, Malala Yousafzai and Angelina Jolie demanded the rescue of these girls by supporting the worldwide campaign #BringBackOurGirls and at the same time advocating gender equality and the right to education.

This paper provides an analysis on why the abduction of the "famous" Chibok schoolgirls led to this huge international response. This is done by applying the discourse global compassion approach conducted by Birgitta Höijer and the ideal victim theory by Nils Christie, which was adapted by Joris van Wijk to create a wider understanding for the perception of victims of international crimes. It argues that the global attention the case was receiving is based on the compassion the international audience has for the suffering of these girls that did not decide their own fate. It points out that based on their helplessness and vulnerability, the girls deserve the world's compassion. Furthermore, the girls represent the ideal victim of international crimes. They are portrayed as weak and blameless victims that were abducted preparing for their final exams, some probably already sleeping. The perpetrators had no relation to the girls, but were among others known for their tactics of forcefully kidnapping women from communities and schools. Who is viewed as a victim is decided by others and influenced by culture. This perception of the ideal victim can change over time.

In all this the media plays a significant role by spreading the news, portraying a picture of the girls that shapes the perception of the global population. Stories such as the mass abduction of April 2014 make the headlines in comparison to others as the conflict is easy to comprehend, it provides a unique story and has to have a good timing. The uniqueness of the story is the abduction itself, how the militia went about it, the number of girls that were kidnapped, their identity and how the girls are promoted and used as leverage by Boko Haram.

After two years the case has lost a great deal of attention, as there has not been a lot of progress in the case. Only the recent rescue of one of the missing Chibok girls drew the attention on the case once more.

Table of Content

1. Introduction

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, when the Islamic militia al-Qaeda crashed two planes into the World Trade Center during a series of attacks in the US[1], and the subsequent execution of al-Qaeda's Osama bin Laden and other major members of the group, people believed that the "war on terror" had been a huge success and international terrorism was declining, "with some even arguing that terrorism will fizzle out sooner rather than later" (Aghedo & Osumah 2012: 853). But little did we know that this was just the start of a new wave of terrorist attacks.

The nature of modern terrorism, which we are currently experiencing, is based on religion, according to David Rapoport. The Islamic religion is at the center of this development. Since the Americans declared "war on terror" Islamic militants have increased their violent behaviour as they regarded this as a Western aim to further "marginalise and oppress them" (Onapajo et al. 2012: 33).

A group that has managed to increase its power and use the technologies of globalisation to its advantage is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS has risen to enormous power in the Middle East and also across the world. Its ability to mobilise its members and sympathisers across the globe to plan and perform attacks as well as its links to other terrorist groups has posed an increasing danger on the world's population.

The list of terrorist attacks after the 11th September, 2001 has rather increased than dropped as previously assumed: On March 11th, 2004, al-Qaeda fighters detonated about ten bombs in a train in Madrid, Spain, during rush hour, which killed about 192 people and left 2050 injured. A year later, on July 7th, 2005, three suicide bombers on the London tube and a fourth one on a double-decker bus set off explosives during the morning rush hour, killing about 52 people and injuring 700 others. It was the worst single terrorist attack the British experienced on home soil. The men that carried out this atrocity were associated with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We all remember the horrible act of violence and hate carried out by Anders Breivik on July 22th, 2011, as the man slaughtered 77 and injured 319 adults and children in Oslo and on the island Utøya in Norway (McHugh 2016).

[1] One was directed into the Pentagon and another one that was aiming towards Washington D.C. dropped into the fields of Pennsylvania.

At the beginning of 2015 the brothers Said and Chérif Kouachi, born in Paris, France, hit the headlines, after they killed nine staffers of the French satirical weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo during their daily editorial meeting. This assault was an act of revenge against the publishing of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad. On November 13th of the same year, Islamists massacred hundreds of innocent people, civilians, in restaurants, cafés, bars, in the concert hall Bataclan and at the sports stadium Stade de France in Saint-Denis. This crime caused the lives of 130 people and left several hundred injured, making this "the worst assault on French soil since World War II." (McHugh 2016). The terrorist assault which hit the capital of Belgium on March 22nd, 2016 (ibid.), made people in Europe realise that terrorist attacks are not a phenomenon of the South anymore, but can hit anyone and is present more than ever.

The examples give above represent attacks that had gained the most international media attention and led to huge outrage in the past weeks, months or even years. Noticeably is that the attacks referred to, were all carried out in Europe. While the information of these assaults were broadcast all over the world, other attacks did not receive the publicity they should have: On April 2nd, 2015, al-Shabaab fighters rushed into the university dormitories of Garissa, a state in eastern Kenya, and killed not less than 147 people. This terrorist attack was the worst one in Kenya for the past two decades. In June 2015, 39 people were shot dead at a Tunisian beach resort near the northern city Sousse. The terror group ISIS took full responsibility for the worst terrorist attack in the history of the country. On July 17th, 2015, a suicide bomber that "drove a truck bomb into a market in Iraq's eastern province of Diyala as it was packed with families making preparations for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr" (Gamio & Meko 2016), killing at least 130 people in this attack. A day prior to the horrible series of attacks in Paris, France, two suicide bombers of the Islamic State "blew themselves up at a crowded area in a southern suburb of Beirut" (ibid.), which left 43 people dead. Only five days after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Pakistan reported the death of more than 70 civilians, among them many children that were killed by a suicide bomber in an amusement park in the city of Lahore on Easter Sunday (ibid.).

A European state that has been the target point of numerous terrorist attacks, and rarely received the attention it deserved, is Turkey. Only in the past year, Turkey has been center stage of fourteen major terrorist attacks carried out by Kurdish and ISIS militants, which caused the death of "more than 280 people" (New York Times 2016). Istanbul's Ataturk airport, "the third busiest airport in Europe" (BBC News 2016a) "after London Heathrow and Paris Charles de Gaulle" (New

York Times 2016), was targeted by bombings and gun shots on June 28th, 2016. The three attackers that died in the course of the attack were linked to the Islamic terror group ISIS, although the group has not officially taken responsibility for this assault (BBC News 2016a).

Since the beginning of 2015, people in Europe and the Americas have suffered about 50 times fewer deaths caused by terrorism than Asia, Africa or the Middle East. In Europe and the Americas 658 lost their lives in 46 attacks, in comparison to the 28 031 deaths in 2063 attacks in the rest of the world (Gamio & Meko 2016). Despite these numbers, only a few terrorist attacks in the Middle East, Africa or Asia are addressed on the international platform. This paper aims to redirect the focus on the African continent which has experienced violence and terrorism throughout its history, but has been widely ignored in the past. A local terrorist group that has spread its power throughout a country and has publicly declared its affiliation to al-Qaeda and ISIS is Boko Haram. Boko Haram is a local terrorist group that has been carrying out noteworthy terrorist operations for the past seven years, especially in the northeastern part of Nigeria. The African terrorist group is responsible for the deaths of over 13 000 people (David et al. 2015: 2) and the displacement of hundreds of thousands citizens (Smith 2015: 161).

One case that made the group world-wide known is the mass abduction of the 276 schoolgirls that were kidnapped in 2014 in the town of Chibok. In the course of this matter the question that arises is:

Why has the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls led to this huge international response?

2. Methodology

Methodology is a collective term that comprises the "theoretical approaches to research, research design, approaches to gathering and producing data, and approaches to analyzing data" (Ackerly & True 2013: 135). Ackerly and True (2013: 136) quote in their piece *Methods and Methodologies* for *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics* Sandra Hardings (1987) definition on methodology, which stands for the "theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed" (Ackerly et al. 2013: 136). This chapter illustrates the methodological thoughts on this research paper and shall give an idea on the research process, how information was conducted, used and interpreted.

2.1. Secondary Analysis

This project is mainly based on the analysis of data which was conducted by other researchers. The analysis is performed by a secondary researcher who was most likely not included gathering those data. This form of analysis can involve the study of qualitative and quantitative data (Bryman 2008: 296).

Secondary analysis is an alternative way of collecting data, especially for researchers such as students with less resources. It allows one "to spend more time on the analysis and interpretation of data" (ibid.) and gives the opportunity to illustrate what relevant data are or are not available. This way of analysis presents the possibility to access good quality data, which is probably conducted by more experienced researchers or organisations that have established mechanisms to ensure the quality of the data and have the necessary resources (Bryman 2008: 296f.).

Secondary analysis is a suitable approach for longitudinal studies, which is not popular in social sciences as they are time consuming and can involve high expenses (Bryman 2008: 297).

Besides the benefits that this approach provides, it also comes with a few limitations. Since the data was collected by someone else, it takes a certain period to become "familiar with the structure and contours of your data" (Bryman 2008: 300). The complexity of the data set and the period to manage the information underrated. With this method one cannot influence and ensure the quality of data. Furthermore, the collected data may not meet the needs the secondary analyst has, as the information may be conducted focusing on another aspect of the matter. The combination of different data sets can surely help to meet the needs of the secondary analyst. Another limitation could be the absence of one or more vital variables (ibid.).

2.2. Approaching the research statement

The starting point of this paper is the mass abduction case of 2014 by Boko Haram in Nigeria. The desire was to understand the complexity of a real-life issue, by picking out an aspect that was the most appealing to me: *Why has the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls led to this huge international response?*

To answer this question I followed the online media coverage of newspapers such as BBC, The Guardian, Aljazeera, CNN, The Daily Mail and The Time on the topic from 2014 until this day, to see what was talked about and which aspects of the conflict caused outrage.

This step was followed by a wide-ranging literature search of articles and studies dealing with the insurgency of Boko Haram, gender, Islam, victimhood and terrorism. The AAU Library Database served as the main platform.

To complement my findings to this point and gain a deeper insight into the matter a semi-structured, informal interview was conducted with Mr. Ing. Oluyemi Olawale Ogundele, the chairman of Nigerian Diaspora Organisation Europe, who deals with Nigerian related issues and how the country is portrayed within the country and beyond the borders. His interview is a reflection of his personal views, the opinion of an NGO and a Nigerian citizen.

A lot of the studies and articles used in this paper were written by Nigerian scholars, whereas the theories were established by Western academics.

Due to difficulties in finding appropriate theories to analyse the research statement, the thesis portrays a quite one-sided picture, which is still relevant. This paper can help further the research of this specific topic.

2.3. Outline of the paper

Chapter 1 is a swift introduction to how we experience terrorism today and which terrorist attacks are presented in the media. Chapter 2 gives a methodological outline on how the research question was approached, how information was conducted, used and interpreted. Chapter 3 deals with the theoretical perspectives of this paper. It explains the main ideas of the discourse of *global compassion* by Birgitta Höijer and the *ideal victim* theory by Nils Christie. These theories will be applied on the case study in Chapter 6. In Chapter 4 and 5 the emergence of Boko Haram as well as the status of women in Nigeria is presented. This paper ends with a conclusion of all the findings.

3. Theoretical Outline

This paper uses various theories to explain the international response to the case of the Chibok schoolgirls. In order to get a better understanding for the theories applied throughout this research, this section will give a brief outline of their main ideas. Emphasis will be on the discourse of *global compassion* and the *ideal victim* theory.

3.1. Discourse of Global Compassion

According to Höijer's paper *The discourse of global compassion*, compassion is viewed as a measure that frames the way we think about acts of violence and conflicts across the world (Höijer 2004: 513). Compassion is described by Nussbaum (2001: 301 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 514) as "a painful emotion occasioned by the awareness of another person's undeserved misfortune". It is a complex emotion that is felt towards someone that is not responsible for his or her suffering (Nussbaum 2001: 306 ff. as quoted in Höijer 2004: 514). Sznaider (1998 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 514) states that it is "an abstract, theoretical and rational idea of humanity".

People are more and more willing to know about worldwide conflicts that could threaten the global security (Minear et al. 1996 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 514). In general, women often have more compassion for humanitarian disasters and other conflicts than men. Occasionally, female observers can relate to the situation the victim is in and can imagine how equally desperate they would be in that situation (Höijer 2004: 525ff.).

The media plays a significant part in the portrayal of human sufferings and the pictures we receive of victims of international crimes and other violent acts. Media reports primarily form the perceptions citizens have of distant sufferings. Especially television broadcasts shape the way we think and promote the emotion that is felt towards distant victims (Höijer 2004: 513ff.).

In international politics and particularly in the media, victims of crimes do not get equal attention. There are some victims that are perceived worthier than others and receive more empathy as a result. For humanitarian organisations victims are not ranked (Höijer 2004: 516). Herman and Chomsky (1988: 38 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 517) view people that are abused by "enemy states (…) as worthy victims, whereas those treated with equal or greater severity by its own government or clients will be unworthy". Who deserves empathy or not depends on the "political and mass media attention and indignation" (Höijer 2004: 517) it causes.

This concept also differentiates between those that represent an ideal victim and those that do not. Based on Nils Christie, whose work will be focused on in the next subchapter, characterises "children, women and elderly people (…) as helpless in a violent situation, and therefore they are more suitable as ideal victims than males in their prime" (Christie 1996 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 517). When considering the historical and cultural differences in the status of a female victim, it becomes evident that "the ideal victim is a cultural construction" (Höijer 2004: 517). Not every assault against women by men is considered a crime in every culture. Notable is that these constructions can change over time. Höijer alleges the example of how the systematic rape of German women by Russian soldiers during the Second World War was acceptable to a certain degree, but is now condemned (ibid.) and an international crime.

As implied above, compassion is dependent on two things: visual representation of the situation and the images of the ideal victim. First of all, "[t]he compassion that the audience expresses is often directly related to the documentary pictures they have seen on television" (Höijer 2004: 520). The images of a crying person, a child, a woman and an elderly person, are pictures that spark attention and which one cannot get out of their heads. Secondly, the public accepts the media's perception of the ideal victim, as long as the victim is helpless and not to blame for his or her struggles. According to these views, an elderly man that is seen as weak would rather deserve compassion as a man in his prime (Höijer 2004: 521f.). Based on this principle, children represent "the most ideal victim" (Höijer 2004: 522), as they may remind the audience of their own vulnerabilities, when they were their age. We feel like we need to protect them from any kind of suffering (ibid.).

Boltanski (1999 as quoted in Höijer 2004: 522) determines three different patterns of emotional commitment with regard to remote sufferings: The first perspective, *mode of denunciation,* considers the suffering of people as unfair. Anger and indignation over the situation leads to the (constant) denunciation of the perpetrator. The *mode of sentiment* aims its attention to the victim and benevolent person. The public is touched by the sufferings, its compassion is generous and it appreciates the gratitude the victim expresses to a helping doctor, nurse or humanitarian organisaton. The *aesthetic mode* is presented as an alternative perspective by Boltanski, which considers these sufferings as exceptional. It is quite easy to identify the first two modes, however, the aesthetic mode is rather difficult to detect.

These three forms are complemented by the feeling of shame and powerlessness and together they generate four forms of compassion that are seen in people's reactions: *Tender-hearted compassion* aims its attention on the hardships of people and causes spectators to respond with empathy. The *blame-filled compassion* meets the situation with anger and indignation. The anger and outrage is aimed at someone who is viewed as responsible for the hardship. The *shame-filled compassion* reflects the conflict the audience has as they are enjoying their cozy lives, while others suffer. The form of *powerlessness-filled compassion* emerges from the realisation that the options for the audience "to alleviate the suffering of the victims" (Höijer 2004: 523) is limited (ibid.: 522f.). A single spectator can take in various types of compassion at the same time. Compassion can also adopt various shapes depending on the individual spectator (Höijer 2004: 522ff.).

In Höijer's analysis compassion is described as a natural emotion, which everyone has. Nevertheless, there are different strategies to ignore and distance oneself from the sufferings around the world. One way of doing so, which is rather uncommon, is opposing what the media presents as the truth. By levelling critique against the news the emphasis on humanitarian disasters could shift. Another approach would be dehumanising the ones affected or just becoming resistant or unaffected by the distant human sufferings. A quite common strategy, is to accuse the news for commercialising and wanting to create sensations (Höijer 2004: 524). The last way, offered to distance oneself from feeling compassion, is to adopt a dichotomy of us and them, "in which the culture, mentality and way of living and behaving of the others, that is, the suffering people, are dehumanized" (Höijer 2004: 525). By accentuating the differences, the audience rejects its empathy for the primitive and uncivilised and rationalises and legitimises its lack of involvement (ibid.).

Gradually people lose interest in the conflict(s). They are unaffected by the pictures and ongoing reports and are literally fed up of the news that do not present any changes. The sympathy for the ones suffering decreases over time (ibid.).

3.2. "Ideal Victim" Theory

In 1986, Norwegian sociologist and criminologist, Nils Christie introduced the concept of the *ideal victim*. Christie portrays the ideal victim as "a person or category of individuals, who, when hit by crime, most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (Christie 1986: 18 as quoted in Schwobel-Patel 2015; van Wijk 2013: 160). This status is handed

to the individual by others, which he calls the social system (van Wijk 2013: 160). In other words, an ideal victim is a person that belongs to a certain group which is regarded as a victim through someone else. This definition only considers individuals that deserve this status more than others (Spalek 2006 as quoted in Schwobel-Patel 2015). This status is relevant, when justifying intervention measures in international crimes and conflicts (Schwobel-Patel 2015).

According to Christie, there are special conceptions constructed by society which help to identify if a person "qualifies as a deserving victim" (ibid.) or not. Christie determines six features to describe the ideal victim: a victim is weak, carries "out a respectable project" (Schwobel-Patel 2015; van Wijk 2013: 160) and cannot be blamed for the crime. She or he is exploited, mistreated, by a big and bad offender with no personal relation to the victim. At last the victim should be strong enough to make his or her case heard and proof its victim status, to the ones that grant the status, time and time again (Schwobel-Patel 2015; van Wijk 2013: 160).

Christie explains this approach by using the example of a little old lady in his home town, which he perceives as an ideal victim. After tending her sick sister, the old lady heads home and gets attacked by a big, drug addicted man in a hoody in broad daylight. She was doing something honourable by taking care of her sister and can surely not be blamed for walking on the street during daytime. Since she did not know her perpetrator and the attack was not planned, one can assume that the attack could have hit anyone (ibid.).

The concept of the ideal victim is a Western-based approach, which is rather subjective and mainly based on the experiences of the author. His elaborations largely lack of clear definitions. van Wijk, however, manages to use the theory to create a wider understanding for victims of international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and terrorism. Although, the theory lacks in some departments, it gives a possible interpretation why certain stories are heard and others do not make the international agenda.

This paper should follow van Wijk's example and use Christie's approach and van Wijk's elaborations on victims of international crimes to explain how the abduction of the schoolgirls could have attracted worldwide attention (van Wijk 2013: 160).

4. The terrorist group Boko Haram

It is definitely not new to Nigeria that their sovereignty is threatened by militarised groups (Aghedo et al. 2012: 856). But the violence, which is exercised by this Islamic sect has been the most severe and destructive one so far (David et al. 2015: 1). The intensity and frequency of the groups' attacks is striking and alarming. Suicide missions and surprising attacks on uninvolved citizens are some of the tactical approaches of the group (Aghedo et al. 2012: 854).

Since 2009 the northern region of Nigeria has been centre stage of various killings and bombings performed by the Islamist group Boko Haram (David et al. 2015: 1). At the beginning Boko Haram was merely seen as a group that was operating in the less developed North against Western cultivation and for the Islamisation of the state. However, when the United Nations office building in Abuja was attacked in 2011, it was perceived as a major international threat for the first time (Onapajo et al. 2012: 24).

The uprising of the group poses the most challenging threat on Nigeria's security and sovereignty since 1970 (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858). The concern is big that the violence committed by the Islamists could result in the disintegration of Nigeria, the most populous state on the African continent (Aghedo et al. 2012: 854).

4.1. The Emergence and Proliferation of Boko Haram

There are very diverging reports about the occurrence of Boko Haram. Some argue that the group first emerged in the mid-1990s, was led by Abubakar Lawan and rose under names such as *Ahlulsunna wai'jama'ah hijra*, *Nigerian Taliban* or *Yusufiyyah* sect (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858; Onapajo et al. 2012: 26). According to other sources, the group arose after a few undergraduates of Maiduguri University expressed their dissatisfaction towards Western education to Mohammed Yusuf. Together they established teachings and ideas that evolved into Boko Haram (Onapajo et al. 2012: 26).

The name *Boko Haram* originates from the Afro-asiatic language Hausa, mainly spoken in northern Nigeria, the southern Republic of Niger and at times in West African countries such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana or Togo (Humboldt – Universität zu Berlin 2013; Wolff n.d.), and means *(Western) education is forbidden* (David et al. 2015: 1; Onapajo et al. 2012: 26). The term indicates that the group opposes everything that is considered to be Western, in particular education

and democratic elections. They are aiming for the establishment "of an Islamic state in Nigeria, or at least in the country's majority Muslim northern states" (Tonwe & Eke 2013: 235 as quoted in Zenn & Pearson 2014: 46). What many of us don't know, is that the name Boko Haram was not given by the group itself, but constructed in the media by the idea the public had on the group's activities (Onapajo et al. 2012: 26). The public also refers to the group as *Yusufiyah*, "the movement of Yusuf", a former founder of Boko Haram or *Ahl as-Sunnah Wa al-Jama'a ala Minhaj as-Salaf,* which implies to the people that follow the Prophet and "the community of Muslims in line with the earliest generation of Muslims" (ibid.). The terrorist group officially identifies itself as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad,* the ones that follow the Teachings and Jihad of the Prophet (David et al. 2015: 1; Onapajo et al. 2012: 26). The term Boko Haram is perceived by the members of the Islamic group as a discredit of its group and what it stands for (Onapajo et al. 2012: 26).

4.1.1. Boko Haram's Ideology

In a statement the group clarifies its common understanding: they repudiate Western education. In fact, the Islamists rather disapprove of Western culture, on which educational systems are built on. They do not disagree with the acquisition of knowledge as long as it does not dissent from the Islamic religion, as Yusuf stressed on one occasion. The group's ideology is centred on the prevalence of the Islamic culture. The cultural dimension also comprises education, which should not be driven by Western education (Onapajo et al. 2012: 27). Yusuf believed that "Western education as a product of the Western culture corrupts Muslims and society" (ibid.) and is a major element why an Islamic political order has been prohibited and not established yet. In his opinion, the prevailing social system was forced on to the country, which is rooted in its past. This is the reason why Boko Haram militants do not associate with members of government and private institutions, as they are linked to the Western life. According to them, the structures in place and modern technology act as a distraction from worshipping God (ibid.).

State authorities are understood as the representatives of Western culture. The state "facilitates the promotion of Western ideas in society" (Onapajo et al. 2012: 27). Boko Haram's current leader, Abubakar Shekau, declared in a message in February 2011 that those who are close to security or politicians are expected to become targets of attacks. They regard the South as an enemy as it have embraces and promotes Western civilisation to the fullest (Onapajo et al. 2012: 27). The attack on the United Nations base showed that the group's resentment is also directed

against transnational and multinational organisations. The UN is seen as a universal player in the oppression of Muslim believers (Onapajo et al. 2012: 35).

Also Islamic scholars that oppose teachings promoting Boko Haram are perceived as enemies and can become targets of attack. Lecturers disappearing and Boko Haram proponents labelling them as liars and unbelievers, are some of the popular scenarios (Onapajo et al. 2012: 28). With the following statement the group virtually confirmed suspicions and allegations that this was not a coincidence:

> *We are just fighting those who are fighting us, soldiers and police and the rest; and anybody, even if he is a learned Muslim teacher, if we confirm that he exposes us to the government, his children will become orphans and his wife will become a widow, God's willing. That is our way.*
> *(Onapajo et al. 2012: 28)*

Hence, anyone that jeopardises the existence of the terror group is in harm's way. Aghedo et al. (2012: 858) write that Boko Haram "is a militant sect driven by the ideology of a fanatical Islamic practice", which declares war, the jihad, on enemies, people that oppose the Islamic practice. The jihad is perceived as a self-defence mechanism, which is necessary to prevent oneself and the Islamic religion. Every member that is killed in the course of the war is regarded as a martyr (Onapajo et al. 2012: 28).

The group is ultimately aiming for the establishment of an Islamic state, whose political system is designed after the Taliban model in Afghanistan and the educational system is focusing on the Quran and Sunnah teachings. Capitalism would be replaced by an economic system of trading and farming. It's an attempt of an independent state with all features of a modern state and Boko Haram's ideology (Onapajo et al. 2012: 28).

4.1.2. Boko Haram entering the limelight

The ideology mentioned in the section above, was propagated by Boko Haram's first leader and founder, Mohammed Yusuf, an exceptional student of Sheik Jafar Mohammed, a respected Islamic scholar that was assassinated on the evening of the general elections in 2007 in Nigeria. Prior to his death, he and Yusuf had argued over doctrinal matters. As referred to earlier, Yusuf opposed everything Western, in particular the state, which represents the secular character of the West, its perceptions and principles. As a result Yusuf and his advocates segregated themselves from the state and started deliberately and publicly violating constituted laws. Yusuf and his

proponents would rather die than give in to the system of a country, they believe is corrupt. In light of this, the group have clashed with the state security on numerous encounters before 2009 (Onapajo et al. 2012: 29).

The biggest clash between the group and the state security forces, which led to the radicalisation of Boko Haram, took place in July 2009:

> *(…) after the group refused to obey a new national law on the use of crash helmets by motorcyclists, on the premise that, according to Boko Haram's doctrine, the government is illegitimate. Following this, a violent encounter ensued between the group and the state agency responsible for the enforcement of this law in Operation Flush. Seventeen of its members were shot and injured in this process. Many others were also arrested, while their bases were invaded by the security operatives. The group eventually mobilised its members for a reprisal attack, which led to the death of several policemen and innocent individuals. This generated intense violence that spread rapidly to several parts of the North as the group's members across the region unleashed terror in support of their headquarters and brethren in Maiduguri. In response to this, the state launched a massive crackdown on the members of the group in their bases, including mosques and the private homes of their relatives.*
> *(Onapajo et al. 2012: 29f.)*

Both sides carried out armed operations to attack the other party, where it hurts the most. In the course of the riots Mohammed Yusuf, other high-profile members of the sect and their families were taken into custody and eventually executed (Onapajo et al. 2012: 30). The execution ensued "in an extrajudicial manner by the state" (ibid.). Yusuf was shot dead in front of the Police Command Headquarters. His body was exposed for the public to see and a footage of his killing was available on the internet (IRIN News 2011 as quoted in Zenn & Pearson 2014: 46). Only 24 hours later, Buji Foi, the former commissioner of Borno state supposing financier of Boko Haram, was arrested and executed. Yusuf's father-in law, who had no ties to the group per se, was killed after freely reporting for interrogation at the police station. According to further reports, more than 800 people were killed during this riots, most of them innocent. Muslim men in the region were advised to shave their beards as they were likely to become a police target (ibid.).

After all these killings, the leading members of Boko Haram aimed to accomplish one mission: revenge and make sure the Nigerian state becomes ungovernable. The group persecuted those responsible for the death of their members. They maintained their guerilla warfare against the state, used the media as a means of communication to publicly address the government's inability (Onapajo et al. 2012: 30). Aliyu Tishau, a further member of the sect, told the press that

the state should rebuild ruined institutions such as schools, houses and mosques in the state of Borno and Bauchi. In his opinion the government hinders the group from worshipping their religion and fails to guarantee justice for everyone. If this continues, then he is sure that Nigeria will suffer the same faith as Somalia (Onapajo et al. 2012: 30f.).

A year after the death of Mohammed Yusuf and several comrades that claimed the leadership of the Islamic sect at various time periods, Abu Muhammad Abubakar bin Muhammad, former deputy and primarily known as Abubakar Shekau, was appointed the successor to Mohammed Yusuf (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858; Zenn et al. 2014: 46). The group's activities intensified under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau, who released a statement to the press that the 'holy war' has started (Zenn 2013 as quoted in Zenn et al. 2014: 46). He promised that the group would take vengeance for death of its former commander (Oriola 2016: 3). According to the Global Terrorism Database, Boko Haram executed 493 attacks, which killed in total 7112 people, victims as well as perpetrators. 97 percent of those were innocent people. On average each attack caused the life of 15 people. Compared to ISIS, who performed 1241 attacks that killed 9324 innocent people, Boko Haram killed in 2014 per attack about eight individuals more, which made Boko Haram more lethal than ISIS (Oriola 2016: 3).

4.1.3. Who are its members?

Boko Haram claims to consist of over 40 000 members situated in Nigeria and other African countries, such as Benin, Niger Republic, Chad, Somalia and Mauritania (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858). The group attracts members from every stratum of Nigerian society. Elites, such as security agencies or military heads, who may be still executing their office, their children, university graduates, clerics, unemployed teens, drop-outs and migrants of adjacent states are members of this terrorist sect (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858; Onapajo et al. 2012: 27).

The recruitment of new members happens in different ways. A possibility is paying recruits directly, when entering the group, by undergoing training and carrying out attacks. The money is often used to support family members or deposited at the bank (Onapajo et al. 2012: 31). At the same time the members pay daily duties to the group in turn, which contributes to its financial means, besides robbing banks, donations within Nigeria and supposing financial supports from abroad (Aghedo et al. 2012: 858).

Boko Haram has argued their strong ties to other global terrorist networks with whom they aim "for the institutionalisation of a united system for Muslims of the world" (Onapajo et al. 2012: 35). The group claims that its force has meanwhile expanded across all 36 Nigerian states and is no more bound to the northern region.[2] The group strongly associates itself with the Somali terror group al-Shabaab and the Taliban in Afghanistan. According to reports, members of the group have been sent to Afghanistan to undergo trainings in bomb construction. They see themselves as

> *(…) a version of Al Qaeda which we align with and respect. We support Osama bin Laden, we shall carry out his command in Nigeria until the country is totally Islamised which is according to the wish of Allah.*
> *(Onapajo et al. 2012: 35)*

Before the attacks on the United Nations base in Abuja, Boko Haram predominately operated in the northern part of Nigeria, threatening to extend its attacks to other parts of the country (Aghedo et al 2012: 858; Onapajo et al. 2012: 32). The group mainly performs its attacks in northeastern Nigeria, in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe (Aljazeera 2015b).

In 2013, Boko Haram preformed a number of abductions, which underlined a notable change in the tactics of the terrorist group. One main element in this "was the instrumental use of women" (Zenn et al. 2014: 47) as a response to the imprisonment of the wives of Boko Haram members by the government. In early 2012, about a year before the first abduction, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau released a video statement threatening the government officials with the abduction of their wives (Associated Press 2012 as quoted in Zenn et al. 2014: 47).

[2] The 36 states are more or less equally split between majority Islamic population in the north and a mainly Christian population in the south (Aljazeera 2015b).

5. Women in Nigeria

In northern Nigeria girls are married off at an early age. Although, most of marital unions are arranged and forced upon them, several girls honour them as Allah's will, whereas others comply to protect their families from being disowned or losing their homes. The Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey states that girls in the northeast and –west of the country are averagely under the age of 16, when they get married for the first time. Further indications show that 39.3 percent of girls in the northeast and 44.6 percent in the northwest give birth to their first child between the age of 15 and 19 (Oriola 2016: 7f.). As a result only a low percentage of women acquire an education. In 2008, 68.1 percent of the female population in the northeast of Nigeria between the ages 15 to 49 did not have a formal education when entering into their first marriage. In the northwest 74.2 percent of women had no formal educational background. Only a small number of 5 percent in the northeast and 5.3 percent in the northwestern region had graduated from secondary school before marriage. There is a remarkable difference between the rural and the urban areas, as the girls and women living in the rural areas are mostly affected by the lack of school education. Roughly 75 percent of the girls in the countryside have never attended school (Oriola 2016: 8).

5.1. Acquiring women

The way Boko Haram treats and perceives women is more or less in line with gender inequality and the notions of patriarchy that prevail in Nigeria, especially in the Muslim north (Oriola 2016: 2, 6).

There "three major avenues" through which the Islamist group "acquires women and girls" (Oriola 2016: 7): One tactic to acquire females is forceful abduction of women and girls from communities or educational institutions. To this date the mass abduction of 2014 "remains one of the largest exercises the organization has engaged in" (Oriola 2016: 7). Before the Chibok incident, Boko Haram used to go into cities such as Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, capture girls and give their families 1000 to 2000 Naira (3,2 - 6,4 €) as dowry. The members of the group were able to move around freely, their faces exposed as the residents were aware of their identity. Yet, nobody disclosed their location, since they were receiving money from the terrorist militants. Maiduguri is

an example for a very underprivileged state in Nigeria, where it was very easy for Boko Haram to manipulate the dwellers' mindsets (Oriola 2016: 7).

Apparently, another strategy involves fathers that hand over their daughters and/or wives to the Islamists or trade them for cash. Such parents are viewed as "sympathizers rather than formal members of Boko Haram" (Oriola 2016: 7). In December 2014, an at the time 13-year-old girl, "who was arrested in (…) after abandoning a suicide vest in a taxi" (ibid.) argued that her father gave her mother and her as a gift to Boko Haram (Oriola 2016: 7).

The last option to acquire girls and women, discussed by Oriola, are female volunteers, which agree to enter a sexual relationship with a member of the group. The relationship with a Boko Haram fighter that is entered willingly, provides girls and women with the necessary protection in an unstable environment. It is a survival strategy. These relationships can offer a sense of stability and safety for these women, provide them with their basic needs, something parents struggle to give them. About 54 percent of the Nigerian population "live in poverty; and 42 percent of children suffer malnutrition" (Oriola 2016: 8). The numbers are definitely higher in the North, where the poverty rate of the northeast amounts to 72 percent, in comparison to the 26 percent in the southeast (ibid.).

The girls and women that were initially captured by the group, are (probably) presently engaging in violent acts against newer captives (Oriola 2016: 8).

6. The missing Chibok schoolgirls

A case that showed the ruthless character of the terrorist group was the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls in 2014, which was condemned all around the global and led to massive solidarity.

The evening of April 14th, 2014 marks another tragic event in the history of Nigeria and the world. Boko Haram militants attack a government-owned secondary school in Chibok, a remote area in the south of Borno state, abducting 276 young women (Aljazeera 2015a). Originally the schools in the area had been shut down due to increasing threat posed by Boko Haram poses, in particular on Western education. Nevertheless, students from various schools had been asked to partake their final exams (Melvin 2015).

The militants rushed into the secondary school, while taking on the school security guards, forcing the young women to leave their dorm rooms and hurried them into trucks and buses, which most likely took them to Sambisa forest (ibid.). According to other reports, the militants got to the school with multiple vehicles, dressed up in military uniforms and pretended to rescue the girls from the intruders (Oriola 2016: 7).

Until 2015 only 57 girls managed to escape their abductors. Boko Haram's release of a video in May 2015 featuring about 100 of the girls, dressed in a jilbāb, was one of the last proof that the remaining 219 girls were still alive (Aljazeera 2015a).

Newest media reports covered the story of the return of 19 year old Amina Ali Nkeki, one of the missing girls. Military officials claim that the girl was found by army troops that were cooperating with the local vigilante group, the Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF), on May 17th, 2016 in the forest of Sambisa, near the border to Cameroon (BBC News 2016b; Busari & Hume 2016). However, according to other reports, the girl was seen wandering about the forest, asking for help (Busari & Hume 2016). She was holding a baby and was accompanied by a supposed member of the Islamist sect that claimed to be her husband (BBC News 2016b). He mentioned that he had been an abductee of Boko Haram as well and was married off to Amina (Busari & Hume 2016; Soyombo et al. 2016). Mohammed Hayatu, the husband, also known as commander Amir, said that he surrendered to save his family from starvation as the food supply routes were blocked by the army (Soyombo et al. 2016). Hayatu was arrested, separated from Amina and taken to Maiduguri,

the capital of Borno state, for further interrogations. After a brief family reunion Amina and her baby joined for medical checkup and screening. According to her, with the exception of six girls all 218 remaining girls are alive and living in Sambisa Forest (BBC News 2016b, 2016c), but heavily guarded by Boko Haram fighters (Aljazeera 2016). "Source told the BBC that" Amina belongs to the 25 of the girls that were living in a town called Mbalala, which is south of Chibok (BBC News 2016b).

A few days after the return of Amina Ali Nkeki the rescue of a second girl was reported, who was part of the 97 women and children freed by the army in a clash between Boko Haram fighters and the national army in Borno state (Aljazeera 2016; BBC News 2016c). Contrary to initial reports this Serah Luka is not one of the missing 218 Chibok girls. The girl that used a wrong name earlier, turned out to be a student at the secondary school in Chibok, but was in fact captured from her home town in Madagali, a northeastern town in Adamawa, neighbouring state of Borno (BBC News 2016c).

6.1. International Reactions

The case immediately attracted worldwide attention and disbelief. The hashtag #BringBackOurGirls unleashed a growing social media campaign, which demanded the release of the missing girls. This offensive was supported among others by leading figures such as the First Lady Michelle Obama and actress Angelina Jolie (Aljazeera 2015a; Melvin 2015). American singer and songwriter Alicia Keys was filmed while protesting in front of the Nigerian Embassy in Washington D.C., six months after the abduction of the Nigerian schoolgirls. Keys says,

> *These girls represent all the girls that are kept from education. They represent all the girls that are viewed as property. They represent all the girls that are, that rape and violence is used as a weapon of war against and it is just outrageous.*
> *(Newton 2015)*

For Keys these girls are an example for all oppressed women, who do not have access to education or the right to determine their lives (Newton 2015).[3] Actress and Academy Award winner Anne Hathaway followed Keys' example and protested on the streets of Los Angeles. "Nigerian

[3] "Alicia Keys stages 'Bring Back Our Girls' rally" (Video: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3059667/Nigeria-army-says-rescued-200-girls-93-women-Sambisa-Forest.html#v-3839437652001) [Accessed 21. May 2016]

girls are part of the five % of girls who are able to seek an education" (ibid.), she shouted into the megaphone. She called the abductors cowards and continued that "girls should be safe to pursue an education" (ibid.).[4] Malala Yousafzai, youngest Nobel Prize Winner ever, criticised the Nigerian government and the international community for not doing enough to rescue these girls (Aljazeera 2015c).

500 days, more than a year, after the kidnapping of the Nigerian schoolgirls in Chibok families and protestors came together in Abuja, Nigeria, to demand adequate actions from the government to free the missing girls (Aljazeera 2015a, 2015b). In red shirts, with banners and chants of solidarity the demonstrators marched towards the Ministry of Education in the capital. The signs with numbers and names that were held up, represented every student that was abducted in the attack in April 2014 (Aljazeera 2015b). Aisha Yesufu, the woman that started off the 'Bring Back Our Girls' campaign, was at the forefront of this march (Aljazeera 2015a).

Affected parents have repeatedly criticised and showed their resentment towards what seemed to be a lack of appropriate measures on behalf of the government to free their girls. In an interview with Aljazeera Esther Yakubu, an affected parent, described the response of the government as "very slow". According to her, "if these girls were their biological daughters I don't think they would still be missing. It's because they don't care about the poor" (Aljazeera 2015a). But just as the other parents she is not ready to give up hope and therefore joined the "march to mark the grim milestone" (ibid.). During the interview she reassured that the families affected, just want their girls back and nothing more (ibid.). The families clearly believed that their worries were not taken seriously and that they were treated differently than other people in society.

6.1.1. Government's Actions

At the time of the attacks Jonathan Goodluck was the president of the country. In 2015, while campaigning for his re-election, he was defeated by current president Muhammadu Buhari. Many believe that a major reason why Goodluck was not re-elected, was based on his inability to successful overpower Boko Haram. The incoming head of state has assured a more aggressive approach to eliminate the group (Melvin 2015). At the beginning of his term, Buhari made clear that his administration had no indication of the current location of the girls, but was determined to

[4] "Anne Hathaway rouses Bring Back Our Girls rally Los Angeles" (Video: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/video/news/video-1094195/Anne-Hathaway-rouses-Bring-Back-Our-Girls-rally-Los-Angeles.html) [Accessed 21. May 2016]

do everything in their power to bring these girls home, at the same time he made no secret of the challenging security situation within the northeast that makes finding the girls very difficult (Aljazeera 2015a, 2015b; Newton 2015).

6.1.2. International attention begins to fade

The case of the abducted schoolgirls in the town of Chibok in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria, immediately captured the attention of the international community, which finally realised the threat Boko Haram's ruthless and violent actions pose to Nigerians and the rest of the world. The global campaign #BringBackOurGirls helped spread the news (Smith 2015: 159).

In the beginning it seemed like the international response over the case might urge the government to free the girls and other states to help take measures against Boko Haram. The United States, a few European and African nations among others ensured Nigeria their support by locating and rescuing the girls, taking a more offensive approach to overpower Boko Haram's proliferation. Shortly after the kidnapping former Nigerian President Jonathan Goodluck assured actions to bring back the girls. Less than a year after the event, the Nigerian government had failed to locate or free the Chibok girls and defeat the Islamists. Boko Haram continued to kidnap, kill and engage innocent civilians in its operations (Smith 2015: 159f.).

According to Smith, until the kidnapping of April 2014, the news coverage of the international media like the New York Times, BBC or Al Jazeera concerning the emergence and proliferation of Boko Haram had been rather superficial and reluctant. Thereafter, the awareness increased enormously and the hope of a swift military reaction and successful mission rose. Even Boko Haram started to re-evaluate what should be done with the girls within the first few days, as they made remarks on either substituting the girls for imprisoned members of the group or just releasing them. But instead they decided to marry them off, convert them to Islam and use the girls for their own interests after all (Smith 2015: 161).

Prior to the present news coverage, international debates over the Chibok schoolgirls faded and actions of the government as well as the pressure of the populace dropped considerably. The case was occasionally mentioned as a side note in mainstream media. In Daniel Jordan Smith's opinion it was foreseeable that the interest of the media and the global audience in the case would gradually fade, if there is no noteworthy progress. This is a quite common fact and the case of the

Chibok girls is no exception. The world's issues are competing for media attention. Latter stories are rather favoured than ongoing, unsolved conflicts. In Smith's regard the Western world does not really pay much attention when it concerns African issues. Not only is the continent struggling with numerous issues, but has to cope with the West accusing the victims of being responsible for their own faith or the West perceiving the atrocities on the continent as ordinary, recurring events (Smith 2015: 161f.). But how did this case gain international attention in the first place? How did this case withstand competition?

6.2. An ideal victim case

In Smith's contribution *What Happened to the Chibok Girls*, which was cited above, he brings up several issues and aspects that might be interesting when ascertaining why this specific case sparked international interests. He mentions that news is constantly competing for attention. Recent events are more likely to hit the headlines, but sooner or later the interest in those stories fade. At last he also notes the fact that Western societies are less interested in African-related issues, as they are recurring and their victims are to blame for the situation.

6.2.1. Having compassion for the ones suffering

A possible explanation for the global attention is the feeling of compassion. Compassion is an emotion that is felt towards someone that should not be suffering (Nussbaum 201: 301; 306ff. as quoted in Höijer 2004: 514). The compassion the West felt for these girls was due to its perception that these girls were helpless and innocent human beings, not responsible for their faith. With reports of affected parents and activists demonstrating, giving interviews and crying in front of the cameras, video footages of the girls in jilbābs and released statements of Boko Haram members, the media is able to attract attention and trigger the audiences' compassion. The public accepts the media's perception of the ideal victim and what they represent as the truth, mostly without criticising the information (Höijer 2004: 524).

According to the Western notion, the mass abduction of the Chibok girls deserves people's empathy. As children and women, the teenage girls qualify as ideal victims. However, as Höijer mentions not every assault against women by men is considered a crime in every culture.

What we can observe from the international community, albeit states, activists, journalists, scholars or the general population, is the tender-hearted compassion to focus the attention on the

hardship of the people and respond to that (Höijer 2004: 522). At the beginning people seemed to be quite affected by the situation, especially women that were able to relate to the pain and hardship of the abductees and their relatives. The violence against women and the violation of the right to education were the two aspects that upset well-known individuals such as actresses Alicia Keys, Anne Hathaway, Angelina Jolie, who is known for her promotion of education, women's right and in particular her advocacy of refugees, the First Lady Michelle Obama, who started the *Let Girls Learn* initiative, and Malala Yousafzai, human rights activist and promoter of female education. The anger and the indignation was referred to the Nigerian government, which was accused from different sides of not doing enough to bring back these girls.

In the case of the Nigerian schoolgirls there have not been any obvious strategies used to distant oneself from the matter and the people suffering. Nevertheless, people have lost interest in the matter and are less affected by the pictures and reports regarding the girls.

6.2.2. Gaining the status of a victim

As mentioned before, not every crime victim receives equal attention from the public, international politics or the media. Some are viewed worthier and more deserving than others (Höijer 2004: 516ff.), but who qualifies as the ideal victim and who can attract the most attention?

An approach that may understand society's perception on an incident like this, is the *ideal victim* concept by Nils Christie and the corresponding elaborations of Joris van Wijk. This approach shows how an ideal victim is detected, which subsequently receives the status of a victim and the attention it needs to justify any measures that could support him or her. According to Christie, there are special conceptions constructed by society which helps to identify if a person deserves the victim status or not (Schwobel-Patel 2015). In the theoretical outline of this project the ideal victim is defined as a person that is granted a status of a victim by its social system, after he or she was abused (ibid.).

Christie does not clarify who has the ability to grant the status of a victim, when he uses the personal pronouns 'us' or 'we', which might indicate that the social system of a state or region that grants such a status or not. If a region's or country's social system is responsible for the decision-making, one must realise that the ones entitled of giving the victim status may have distinctive views on a case, depending on their cultural and religious beliefs, their political attitude and their point of origin (Schwobel-Patel 2015). In the case of the over 200 abducted girls the

potential giver of the victim status is the Western world, the United States and Europe in particular, and to a certain degree other African countries. The opinions on this matter can be diverse, even within a specific social system. For the Nigerian state and the international community the abducted Chibok students may be the ultimate victim, yet for others they may be competition and seen as those who receive preferential treatment. Rescued captive of Boko Haram Asabe Umaru speaks about the conditions they dwelled "in and how the Chibok girls treated" (Oriola 2016: 12): they were under constant surveillance and were not able to move around freely, whereas the Chibok girls and the key leaders of the group were isolated from the rest of the detainees and group members. The Chibok girls were treated like family members that receive a high security. They used them as leverage to get Boko Haram members back (ibid.). Compared to other former and present detainees, the girls attract more attention and receive better treatment within and beyond Sambisa Forest.

After it turned out that the second girl that was found in the forest, was not one of the missing schoolgirls of 2014, her case was of no interest anymore. Unlike Amina Ali Nkeki, the girl that was found just a couple of days before, Serah Luka's return was not celebrated by the international media, she did not have the chance to meet the president, she was not promised a lifetime of free schooling or ensured "the best medical, emotional and whatever care that she requires to get full recovery and be integrated into the society" (Obaji 2016). The #BringBackOurGirls campaigners were glad to hear about Serah Luka's return and saw this as a victory for all of us (Obaji 2016).

Serah Luka was not the first to experience how different ones fate can turn out to be, when you are not one of the missing Chibok students. "In September 2014, two buses filled with schoolgirls were driven into army barracks in Maiduguri" (Obaji 2016). At first, officer believed they had rescued the Chibok girls and immediately announced their achievement. When it was realised that these weren't *the* missing students, the young women were sent to the crowded camps for internally displaced people in northern Nigeria. The camps are filled with former Boko Haram prisoners that wonder, why their well-being is less valuable than others (ibid.).

Over time those views manage to change, especially in the course of international crimes which may be carried out for months or years (van Wijk 2013: 162). Former British Prime Minister David Cameron, for instance, labelled in 2011 the Libyan population as "courage of lions". In 2015, he described them "as a 'swarm' of people trying to migrate to the UK" (Schwobel-Patel

2015). The moment that defines whether a person is perceived as a victim or not is essential (van Wijk 2013: 162). To gain or lose victim status is as equally easy (Schwobel-Patel 2015). At the beginning of Boko Haram's insurgency the Nigerian population as well as the international community believed that the militants were young men that were unsatisfied with the Nigerian government and felt oppressed. At that time they were called freedom fighters. With the radicalisation of the group in 2009, the bombing of the United Nations office buildings in Abuja in 2011 and the series of female abductions as well as engaging women in terrorist acts, people's perception of the group took a turn.

According to Christie's theory, victims are individuals or a specific group of individuals. Victims of international crimes, as van Wijk puts it, belong to well-defined groups, which share certain tendencies such as belonging to a certain political group, an ethnic, racial or religious minority or live in a specific region (van Wijk 2013: 161f.). It was definitely no coincidence that Boko Haram attacked the Chibok secondary school in northeastern Nigeria. The group mainly performs its attacks in northeastern Nigeria, in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe (Aljazeera 2015b). Borno state was the main base of the group (Zenn et al. 2014: 47). The girls attended a government-run school (Aljazeera 2015a) which in Boko Haram's eyes promotes Western education and opposes Islamic culture. These are girls that wanted to seek an education, something that is not common in the Islamic North (Oriola 2016). Furthermore, the girls were Christian.

Which characteristics must someone have to qualify as a victim? The first feature mentioned by Christie is *weakness*. The weaker a victim seems, the easier he or she may be recognised with the victim status. Christie (1986: 19 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 162) argues in regard of conventional crimes that "sick, old or very young people are particularly well suited as ideal victims". In accordance to van Wijk, this should not make a difference within the scope of international crimes, where children are regularly perceived as victims. When an adult and a child experience abuse or death by the same perpetrator, the disgust and anger will be far bigger in regard to the minor. NGOs perpetuate the image of the weak by using images of suffering children to ask for donations (van Wijk 2013: 162). Besides children, women are viewed as weak, weaker than men and consequently they represent the more ideal victim (Moeller 1999: 107 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 162). Although an ideal victim is depicted as a weak individual, he or she needs strength to claim his or her status and not be "opposed by strong counter-powers" (van Wijk 2013: 166). This is only possible, when their stories are 'known'. Crimes that occur in a distant, remote area

and are hardly noticed by the media stays unknown for the public (van Wijk 2013: 166). In this regard, Hawkins (2004 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 166) proposes the term *stealth conflicts*, which refers to conflicts that were not noticed and did not make the political, academic or news agenda.

It is "easy" to make oneself heard and known in the region one became a victim by reporting the crime to the local police, the local media or politicians. Related to international crimes one needs to rely on additional means such as the assistance of advocacy groups or NGOs such as Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International that document human rights abuses and pressure those in power to change something (van Wijk 2013: 167). "The role of these NGOs is important, but far more important is the willingness of the international media to expose the victims' suffering" (ibid.). The media is needed "to select and summarize their most important findings" (van Wijk 2013: 176). The media needs to spread the word and notify the public of what is happening and has happened, otherwise one might never hear from the victims' hardship.

"Carrying out a respectable project" (van Wijk 2013: 163) at the time of the crime is another characteristic an ideal victim should have. Christie does not clearly state what these "respectable projects" are, however, in his study he views fostering a sick family member as a respectable project, whereas spending time at a bar he regards as non-respectable (Christie 1986: 19 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 163). van Wijk argues that a person in a bar should rather be interpreted as neutral activity. In his opinion a better categorisation would include an additional division of neutral projects. In the context of international crimes victims are mostly innocent individuals that go about their neutral projects (van Wijk 2013: 163). People are raped, abducted, murdered or forced to escape while going about their daily routines, sleeping (ibid.) or preparing for an exam. Those people did not do anything to cause events such as death (Bouris 2007: 37 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 163). The ideal victims, engaging in neutral activities, are those of terrorist attacks. Generally, terrorist groups depict a minority that is provoking the government with tactical actions which involve the victimisation of innocent people. As a result, their actions are not interpreted as respectable, therefore, terrorists that are exploit by the government will not easily gain victim status. Victims that are taking on respectable projects have better prospects on obtaining the status of a victim (van Wijk 2013: 163). After the increasing brutality of the terrorist group, Boko Haram lost its right to be viewed as victim.

An aspect that plays a role throughout this theory is whether a victim can be blamed for being hit by a crime or not. Christie is of the opinion that victims which can certainly not be made

responsible for being victimised, have the main chance to receive a victim status. van Wijk introduces the characteristic case of the young woman in a short skirt, "who is raped while walking alone in a park at night" (van Wijk 2013: 164). For some she might be at fault, since she dressed up this way and was walking around the park at night, for others she is blameless. Whether a victim is to blame or not really depends on the argumentation. Has the victim taken a high risk that could have led to the crime? (ibid.) Can the Chibok girls be blamed for their abduction? Did they take a high risk by attending their final exams, although school had been shut down before due to the threat constituted by Boko Haram members? On the one hand, it was a risk for the girls to go back to school and take their final exams. It was a fact that kidnapping was a prominent way of the African Islamists to acquire women and children. The girls were also in the right age to be married off, run a household to be able to engage in terrorist acts. On the other hand, who could have imagined that the school or rather the Nigerian government did not have enough qualified security agents that could have protected the girls? From this point of view one has to blame the Nigerian government for not ensuring necessary security rather than the girls.

There are two attributes in this theory associated with the offenders: big and bad, and unknown by the victims. Christie did not identify whether the offender is big and bad in comparison to the victim or other offenders. According to his article, the ideal victim generates the ideal offender and the other way around. We, the general audience, want to believe that those that commit international crimes are bad and evil (van Wijk 2013: 165). The less we have in common with the offender the better and the more compassion we have for the victims.

Besides the physique and attitude of the perpetrator, it is important to know the relation between offender and victim as well as offender and "us", the social system. According to Christie, victims that do not know their offenders are most likely to be "granted the victim status". There is no personal relation between offender and victim and has no ties to the potential givers of the status. van Wijk does not agree with Christie's thinking and suspects that a connection between offender and victim does not really affect the victim status. In international crimes it is unlikely to have this kind of close relation, "given the scale and magnitude and setting in which such crimes take place" (van Wijk 2013: 166).

> *The offender who, according to Christie, creates the most ideal victim is 'a person, or rather a non-person, who creates anxiety (. . .) a dangerous man coming from far away (. . .) we need a dehumanized picture . . . the more foreign the better'.*
> *(Christie, 1986: 26, 28, 29)*

The more the offender differs from the social system in appearance, in culture and tradition, the better the chances are for a victim to receive this status (van Wijk 2013: 166). In the Western world today, the classic offender is a bearded man, strangely dressed, which speaks another language and has the only intention to arouse as much fear as possible (ibid).

As noted above the media is a necessary tool, when a victim wants to make his or her case heard. In the context of international crimes it is inevitably to advertise one's case to the international media. The international media is quite selective with their news (van Wijk 2013: 167). Day in and day out people are confronted with numerous animosities, cruelties and atrocities, but only some few are broadcasted in the Western media (Ruigrok et al. 2003: 5 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 167). The ones that make the headlines awake attention especially through the essence of the conflict and less based on the features of the offenders or victims. The media is keen to know more about the conflict itself. On the basis of the presently accessible literature, "the following four attributes of the conflict" (van Wijk 2013: 168) were established that could possibly influence the international media attention: complexity, uniqueness, limited time span and general timing. First of all, the complexity of a conflict determines whether or not a crime is broadcast. The easier a conflict is, the more people are willing to listen. By simplifying the issue and focusing on the key essence of the conflict people are able to understand (van Wijk 2013: 167f.). Secondly, conflicts that are unusual and unique receive more media attention than others. The more bizarre a group, a leader, is, the more brutal its actions are, the more the conflict is noted (van Wijk 2013: 169). It may be more striking the way people die or are killed than the number of casualties (Cohen 2001: 211 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 169). The media is even able to draw attention to a case of a 'non-ideal' victim, like a young man in his prime, if the story has a unique selling point (Ruigrok et al. 2003: 1 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 169). Thirdly, the duration of a conflict can influence whether a story makes the international media or not. "News is not about long-term processes but about short-term events" (Ruigrok et al. 2003: 2 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 169). The general audience may lose interest the longer a conflict continues. Once the media notices the lack of attention from the audience, a new conflict is picked up. The fourth and final attribute, which could impact the awareness of the media, is timing. Timing is vital for victims that wants to spread their story. Conflicts that occur at the same time are competing for attention, since the public is only capable of focusing on a minimum amount of conflicts at once (van Wijk 2013: 169f.). The story of Boko Haram is quite easy to follow: We see an Islamist group that opposes Western culture and

everything that is influenced by it. What is unique about the group is the way they are able to exploit the northern part of Nigeria without anyone stopping them.

The abduction of women and girls is nothing new in the history of the country and the terrorist group. The first kidnapping case occurred in February 2013, when the Islamists captured a French family in the northern part of Cameroon and returned with them to Nigeria (The Guardian 2013 as quoted in Zenn et al. 2014: 47). Within February and May of the same year, "more than a dozen government officials and their families" (Zenn et al. 2014: 47) were kidnapped in towns of Borno state, which is Boko Haram's main stronghold. These abductions were a response to the imprisonment of several Boko Haram members' wives and family members. Reportedly, over 100 women and children had been arrested, among those even the wives of Abubakar Shekau. These types of arrests were a quite common policy practice within the country, which affected the Islamist the most, but in turn had a serious influence on its further tactics. In several video messages between 2012 and 2013 Shekau referred to the mass detentions of Boko Haram's family members. He repeatedly accused the government of kidnapping and sexual abuse. Even a year, prior to the first abduction, Shekau threatened the government officials to abduct their wives and treat them according to Sharia law (Zenn et al. 2014: 48). "These events demonstrate an established cycle of government detentions of women related to Boko Haram, and the group's retaliatory abduction of Christian women" (Zenn et al. 2014: 48). The females on both sides had no part in the conflict, but were rather used for one's purposes. In the case of the abducted women at Bama, their abduction was not planned, as they were clearly "in the wrong place at the wrong time" when "visiting [their] working at the police station" (Aljazeera 2013 as quoted in Zenn et al. 2014: 48).

By gaining the victim status one may enjoy several benefits that could improve one's situation. In the example given by Nils Christie, the little old Norwegian lady might profit in various ways: eyewitnesses could intervene and scarce the offender away. She could receive a fair compensation and/or psychological assistance to process past events. An ideal victim of international crimes would probably receive assistance from two different actors: international politicians and private humanitarian organisations (van Wijk 2013: 171).

6.2.3. Schools as target of terrorism not surprising

> *(…) the fact that the girls were taken from a school—and the disproportionate emphasis in the media on the apparent coincidence that the day they were abducted they were there to take important exams—suggests that Western sympathies were enhanced by the representation of the girls as precisely the kind of young women Westerners would most value: those trying to escape tradition, backwardness (and perhaps by implication Islam) by going to school.*
> *(Smith 2015: 162f.)*

In the above cited sentence Smith mentions that it was not a coincidence that especially this case sparked so much media attention. The fact that these girls were at school, preparing for their final exams and attaining knowledge led a lot of people to sympathise with the abducted victims.

Since the term Boko Haram stands for repudiating Western culture, it is probable that the media emphasised the fact these abductees were *school*girls (Smith 2015: 163).

After the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls Boko Haram continued its series of kidnappings of girls and women. At least on one occasion they took up to 60 girls and women captive "in a single incident". However, this incident did not comparatively receive the media attention the case of April 2014 got. Smith suspects that the number of victims and the aspect of school made a considerable difference in the perception of the international audience (Smith 2015: 163).

Attacks on educational institutions such as schools, colleges and universities are not new to the world of terrorism. Al-Shabaab was responsible for the killing of 147 people, most of them students, at a university in the North of Kenya in 2015. Those target points are favourable as they are hardly protected compared to embassies, military bases or even hotels, which makes access easy for the militants (Burke 2016). "In many parts of the world, the local school is that state's only tangible presence" (Burke 2016).

Besides weakening the legitimacy and the power of a government, these attacks hinder the attainment of education. The Pakistani human rights activist for education Malala Yousufzai became globally known, after she survived gunshots of Pakistani Taliban in 2012 as she was and still is an advocate for female education in her home town (Burke 2016).

UN children's agency states that due to the uprising of Boko Haram more than a million minors have stayed out of school, which points out the concerns "that a lack of education will fuel further radicalism in and around Nigeria" (France-Presse 2015). Attacks on schools, exploitation of schools and setting fire has forced over 2000 schools across Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to close their gates (France-Presse 2015).

7. Conclusion

Since 2009 northern Nigeria has been the target of various killings and bombings performed by the terrorist group Boko Haram. The intensity and frequency of the operations that have been performed by the group is alarming (Aghedo et al. 2012: 854, 856). In 2014, Boko Haram killed about 15 people per attack, compared to the seven killings of ISIS. In that year the group was stated the most lethal terrorist group worldwide. As the name implies the group opposes everything that is considered to be Western or is built on the Western culture like the Nigerian educational system. The acquisition of knowledge is generally not forbidden as long as it does not dissent from the Islamic values. It is believed that "Western education as a product of the Western culture corrupts Muslims and society" (Onapajo et al. 2012: 27). State authorities are understood as the representatives of Western culture and the state as facilitator to promote Western ideas in society (ibid.). The UN is seen as a universal player in the oppression of Muslim believers (Onapajo et al. 2012: 35). Anyone that works for or associates with members of the government or private institutions are viewed as enemies. The South is regarded as an enemy as it embraces and promotes Western civilisation (Onapajo et al. 2012: 27). The group also criticises the use of modern technology which distracts a believer from worshipping God (ibid.). This view contradicts itself, since Boko Haram uses technologies like other terrorist groups too, to stay connected and send video messages to the media, so these can be heard.

The group is ultimately aiming for the establishment of an Islamic state, whose political system is designed after the Taliban model in Afghanistan and the educational system is focusing on the Quran and Sunnah teachings. Capitalism would be replaced by an economic system of trading and farming. It's an attempt of an independent state with all features of a modern state and Boko Haram's ideology (Onapajo et al. 2012: 28).

At the beginning of its mission Boko Haram was merely seen as a group that was operating in the less developed North against Western cultivation and for the Islamisation of the state (Onapajo et al. 2012: 24). Unfortunately, the clashes of July 2009 between the group and the state security forces which left hundred people dead, among them also former leader Mohammed Yusuf and his father-in-law, led to the radicalisation of the group, whose duty was to take vengeance and make sure the Nigerian state becomes ungovernable.

The abduction of the 276 Nigerian schoolgirls in April 2014 by the Islamist group Boko Haram is in principle not new to the Nigerian state. In 2013, Boko Haram preformed a number of abductions, which underlined a notable change in the tactics of the terrorist group. They captured women as a response to the imprisonment of the wives and family members of several Boko Haram fighters by the government. The case of the Chibok girls was, however, differently. It immediately gained enormous international attention. Numerous leading female figures such as First Lady Michelle Obama, Malala Yousafzai, Angelina Jolie, Alicia Keys and Anne Hathaway demanded the rescue of these girls by supporting the worldwide campaign #BringBackOurGirls and at the same time advocating gender equality and the right to education. In northern Nigeria girls are forcefully married before they turn 16 years. As a result only a low percentage of women acquire an education. The increasing awareness and the international sympathy even had Boko Haram re-evaluating its initial plans, as they made remarks on either substituting the girls for imprisoned members of the group or just releasing them. But instead they decided to marry them off, convert them to Islam and use the girls for their own interests after all (Smith 2015: 161).

So, why did this special case lead to this huge international response?

The Chibok are classified as the ideal victims. The global attention the case was receiving was based on the compassion the international audience had for the suffering of these girls that did not decide their own fate. Based on their helplessness and vulnerability, the girls deserved the world's compassion. Compassion is determined by two aspects: visual representation of the situation and the images of the ideal victim. With reports of affected parents and activists demonstrating, giving interviews and crying in front of the cameras, video footages of the girls in jilbābs and released statements of Boko Haram members, the media was able to attract attention and trigger the audiences' compassion.

Which characteristics do the girls feature that classify them as victims?

The girls represent the ideal victim of international crimes for numerous reasons: First of all, they are portrayed as weak, a feature that is attributed to minors, women and very old people. Secondly, the girls should not be blamed for being a victim of this terrorist act. Of course, they took a high risk by coming back to school to take their final exams. It was a fact that kidnapping was a prominent way of the African Islamists to acquire women and children. The girls were also in the right age to be married off, run a household or to be used in terrorist acts. Nevertheless, who could have known that the school or rather the Nigerian government did not have enough qualified security agents that could have protected these girls? From this point of view one has to blame the Nigerian government for not ensuring necessary security rather than the girls.

Thirdly, they were carrying out a respectable project, as they were preparing for their final exams, some probably already sleeping. Fourthly, the Boko Haram members had no relations to the girls and classify as big and bad offenders.

An important aspect is that victims always belong to a defined group, which shares certain tendencies such as belonging to a certain political group, an ethnic, racial or religious minority or live in a specific region (van Wijk 2013: 161f.). The girls attended a government-owned school (Aljazeera 2015a) which in Boko Haram's eyes promotes Western education and opposes Islamic culture. These are girls that wanted to seek an education, something that is not common in the Islamic North (Oriola 2016). Furthermore, these girls were Christian.

In the case of the Chibok girls not everyone views them as victims. For the Western world they definitely qualify as victims, but for others they may be competition and seen as those who receive preferential treatment. As one could publicly see in the case of Serah Luka, who did not have the chance to meet the president, was not promised a lifetime of free schooling or ensured any type of assistance. The story of Asabe Umaru, rescued captive of Boko Haram, also signalises that the Chibok girls even receive preferential treatment in the camps of the Islamist group. Who is viewed as a victim is influenced by culture and can change over time.

At last, the victim needs to bring strong enough to be able to make his or her case heard, to claim a status as victim. By gaining the victim status one may enjoy several benefits as in the case of Amina Ali Nkeki.

It is "easy" to make oneself heard and known in the region one became a victim by reporting the crime to the local police, the local media or politicians. Related to international crimes one

needs to rely on additional means such as the assistance of advocacy groups or NGOs. Through the viral campaign #BringBackOurGirls the story of the Chibok girls was told and managed to spread across the world in a short amount of time.

The media is a necessary tool, when a victim wants to make his or her case heard. Day in and day out people are confronted with numerous animosities, cruelties and atrocities, but only some few are broadcasted in the Western media (Ruigrok et al. 2003: 5 as quoted in van Wijk 2013: 167). The ones that make the headlines awake attention especially through the essence of the conflict and less based on the features of the offenders or victims. The media notifies the public of what is happening and has happened, otherwise one might never hear from the victims' hardship.

Stories such as the mass abduction of April 2014 make the headlines in comparison to others as the conflict is easy to comprehend, it provides a unique story and has to have a good timing. The uniqueness of the story is the abduction itself, how the militia went about it, the number of girls that were kidnapped, their identity and how the girls are promoted and used as leverage by Boko Haram.

The girls are the little old lady in Nils Christie's home town that were seeking education to escape a life, where they are married off and pregnant before they are at full-age. Only five percent of the girls graduate from secondary school before getting married. These girls should have been among these percentage.

It is not arguable that this crime could have hit anyone. The abduction of the Chibok girls was a planned act of violence. The Islamists were dressed up in military uniforms and pretended to rescue the girls from the intruders (Oriola 2016: 7).

After two years the case has lost a great deal of attention, as there has not been a lot of progress. The case was occasionally mentioned as a side note in mainstream media. Only the recent rescue of one of the missing Chibok girls drew the attention on the case once more.

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