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# From Looting to Libricide: A Comparative Analysis of Nazi Intellectual Warfare and Boko Haram Insurgent Attacks on Nigerian Libraries

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the intersection of ideological conflict and cultural preservation by comparing the "intellectual warfare" strategies of the Nazi regime (1933–1945) with the insurgent tactics of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria (2009–present). Relying on qualitative, historical-comparative research approach based primarily on documentary/literature analysis, this paper's main objective is to identify how the lessons from Nazi intellectual warfare can be used to address Boko Haram's ideology of intellectual erasure in Nigeria and by extension, in societies experiencing similar threats to their cultural and intellectual memory. It specifically compares Nazi intellectual warfare and strategy of looting with Boko Haram's strategy of total erasure, and examines the resistance strategies adopted in the two cases, while identifying the lessons that the Nigerian state can draw from the non-state actors that formed resistance against the Nazi regime's weaponisation of knowledge. The paper explains that while the Nazi approach was characterized by the systematic looting and appropriation of texts to weaponize knowledge against those considered "enemies of the state," Boko Haram's campaign represents a shift toward libricide, the total destruction of books to erase modern "Western" influence. By analyzing these two disparate yet ideologically driven assaults on libraries and information centers, this paper seeks to identify historical patterns of cultural resistance. The paper ultimately provides recommendations for the Nigerian public library system, advocating for digitized decentralization and community-led archival "undergrounds" as a means of protecting national heritage in libraries and information centres against modern insurgency.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, Intellectual Warfare, Libraries, Libricide, Insurgency, Nigeria

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Evidence from recorded history has shown that different periods of human civilisation have experienced the scourge of wars and violent conflicts for as long as man's memory can recollect, leaving devastating impacts on lives and properties, including on man's memory institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs), thus threatening man's continued access to the knowledge assets, and by extension, the cultural identities, which for ages, have sustained man's ability to make the best of the universe he lives in. State and non-state actors have used the influence of military and socio-political might to subjugate not just people, but also to subdue ideologies and cultures they consider 'negative' or threats to their own ideals or goals. Being pivotal for the protection, conservation, preservation, and durability of a population's culture and identity as they contain many valuable materials (Wijayasundara, 2021), libraries, some of the oldest centres and custodians of human recorded history and documented knowledge, have been exposed to the dangers of ideological and physical warfare in conflict zones. As the advancement of documentation, learning and literacy continue to rise, erasing the ignorance that was associated with the dark ages, sources of such enlightenment and the channels through which knowledge is shared have become targets for those who seek to suppress contrary views that question their authority or challenge their perception. This has been the major impetus for ideological warfare, which goes beyond the use of force to enforce beliefs or actions, but also involves engaging in the suppression of the views expressed and documented in libraries and other memory institutions, since large scale attempts at the extermination of races continues to fail in suppressing ideologies. This situation becomes more daring and challenging for autocrats and extremists as democracy continues to gain global traction and acceptance. Thus, the vulnerability of libraries continues to rise in the face of emerging radical violent extremist groups whose ideological survival is tied to the suppression of the knowledge assets domiciled in libraries and information centres.

Historically, libraries have metaphorically been referred to as the birth place of ideas or the healing place of the soul (Nwosu, 2017), the gateways to knowledge, and are responsible for the dissemination of the idea of sustainability (Nwokocha & Horsefall, 2020). Libraries have traditionally existed to collect and organise, make access to knowledge more democratic, and preserve the record of ideas for future generations (Nwosu, Osuchukwu, Obuezie, & Kanu, 2020). According to Otike, Bouaamri, Barát and Kizsl (2021), libraries have always been considered as a vital and integral organ in a society, as they are established to meet the information needs of learners, researchers and other users in the community. The communities served by libraries are therefore influenced by the knowledge asset they are exposed to and acquire, in the same manner that food, substance, and air influence the lives of those who ingest and absorb them consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, whether during peacetime or during conflicts, libraries continue to play strategic roles for members of the society.

The Second World War, which started over two decades before Nigeria's independence was ignited by the infamous Nazi fascist ideology that sought to violently suppress contrary views and beliefs, targeting not just those who possess such views, but the records where such views were documented. As noted by Tuchman (as cited in Knuth, 2014) books are humanity in print.

German poet, Christian Johann Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), when responding to the burning of the *Qur'an* by Spanish inquisitors as depicted in his play *Almansor: A Tragedy* (1823), is also credited to have noted that “where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings” (Covington, 2019; Tearle, 2023), largely because the very ideas contained in books emanate from humans and influence the views, decisions, and actions of humans. This is considered to have established the link between the mass slaughter of human beings and attacks on the cultural heritage around the world (Chauhan, 2020). Thus, libraries were part of the social institutions recorded as casualties of Nazi aggression (European Holocaust Research Infrastructure, 2017; Biblioteka Narodowa, 2020) as they were both considered legitimate spoils of war, when the contents did not contradict Nazi ideologies, and threats to the spread of ideological propaganda, when their contents were in contrast to or challenged Nazi ideologies and worldviews.

Meanwhile, in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, specifically Borno State, geographically and chronologically distanced from Nazism, the birth of “*Boko Haram*” insurgency, occasioned by years of incubation of extreme anti-Western religious ideologies, created a notorious terror group which later got absorbed into ISWAP (Islamic State West African Province), as the most dreaded terror group in the world. This group, whose basic worldview is that “*boko*” (Hausa term for ‘Book/Western education’) is “*haram*” (Arabic word for forbidden) seeks to exterminate western education and lifestyle by every means necessary, including deadly and lethal violence. Afzal (2020) affirms that *Boko Haram's* focus on education is a unique phenomenon among other jihadist movements. The animosity towards Western education among this group is largely attributed to the evident corruption in regional and national leadership, which has been a major reason for the pervasive poverty and underdevelopment that have plagued the oil and mineral-rich nation, especially in the Northern parts of the country, a fault erroneously ascribed by *Boko Haram* to the Western education acquired by the political class (Atoi, 2022). Thus, libraries and educational institutions at all levels have continued to be parts of their major targets alongside security agencies, foreigners, religious places, including mosques and churches, banks, markets, farms, among other places, all in attempt to totally remove all traces of modernity from the Nigerian society. While their activities were initially limited to Borno State at the onset, they have spread through splinter groups and sleeper cells to the North Western and North Central States of Nigeria, including carrying out successful bomb blast at the nation’s capital, in churches in far-away South Western state of Ondo, one of the most educated regions and states in the nation, and several abductions of school pupils and students. Their main target of eradicating Western education makes schools and by extension, libraries, some of the most vulnerable social institutions to their attacks.

While the intents of the two groups discussed above have been observed to be different; appropriation in most cases with *Nazism*, compared to total erasure with *Boko Haram*, the loss of cultural heritage and denial of access to information among the intended community in the two cases present negative implication, not just for the financial investments made on the libraries by their parent bodies, but also for the socio-cultural development associated with

access to information. As libraries continue to offer opportunities for social inclusion and diversified environment (Mojjada & Mojjada, 2025; Loh, & Hamarian 2026), enhanced intellectual freedom, neutrality, inclusive representation (Cao & Wang, 2026), and reduction of inequality through equitable access to information resources (Bello & Adepegba, 2023; Carlsson, Hanell, & Engstrom; 2023), by promoting the independence of thoughts and shared public space, then oppressive, extreme and fascistic ideologues and their proponents may continue to consider libraries as logical targets in the quest to sustain their nefarious aims and objectives. Yet, it does not appear to be certain if Nigerian libraries are prepared to face the challenges of modern terrorism. Echezona, Asogwa and Chigbue (2016) revealed that libraries in Nigeria have policies on security, but such policies have neither been expanded nor updated to cover aspects of terrorism and man-made disasters. This paper therefore, using a qualitative, historical-comparative research approach based primarily on documentary/literature analysis, seeks to compare the Nazi attacks on the libraries to the current impact of Boko Haram insurgency on Nigerian libraries, with the objective of identifying the lessons that can be learnt from the resistance strategies against Nazi strategic intellectual warfare and looting in occupied Europe, in order to propose a blueprint for building strategically resilient libraries in modern Nigeria, against the threats of contemporary asymmetric insurgency

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Nazi Intellectual Warfare: The Strategy of Looting

Intellectual warfare is described by Khan (2025) as the strategic use of knowledge, ideas, and information to influence perceptions, manipulate beliefs, and shape societal narratives in order to control cultural understanding and gain a systemic advantage and understanding in various fields including politics, education, and culture. Rather than a physical combat, it is an ideological clash involving discourse, critical thinking, and propaganda deliberately designed through subtle and pervasive mechanisms that influence thought, belief, and societal structures (Khan, Khan, & Imran, 2025). Intellectual warfare is not just targeted at knowledge itself, it is aimed at influencing the way future generations think and live.

The attacks on libraries by the Nazi Third Reich regime were of two distinct types, depending on the content of bibliographic items in the custody of the libraries targeted. In some cases, the damages to libraries were conducted by non-state actors sympathetic to Nazi ideologies such as pro-Nazi university students (*Nationalsozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund* or NSDStB) in the *Deutsche Studentenschaft* (DSt), the German student body government with the support of Nazi librarian Wolfgang Hermann (United States Holocaust memorial museum, 2025). In other cases, it was state actors such as the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) a specialized Nazi task force that systematically looted millions of books, archives, and cultural treasures across occupied Europe, under the leadership of chief Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg, targeting materials belonging to ideological "enemies", primarily Jews, Freemasons, communists, and leftists, to build a library for a planned Nazi elite university, *Hohe Schule der NSDAP*, the Advanced School of the Nazi Party, and the *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (IEJ), Institute for Research on the Jewish Question (Lipson, 2018; Vermote & Grimsted, 2021).

The systematic and sustained stealing and expropriation of texts for "scientific" research to justify racial hierarchies were the major *modus operandi* of the Third Reich, while destruction of texts that were considered antagonistic to their ideas was massively executed. This implies that the Nazis considered knowledge as a legitimate weapon in their war efforts. In some cases, noted Meżyński (2025), German officials seized Jewish possessions as well as the public lending libraries and private libraries.



(Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2025).

### Resistance in the Shadows: Lessons from the "Paper Brigade" (Vilna Ghetto), the "Other Germany" and the White Rose

The resistance against Nazi cultural and intellectual warfare in Germany was not a unified front but rather small, ideological pockets. It spanned the political spectrum, from the underground labour movement, intellectuals, and radical student groups to conservative military officials and Christian theologians (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2025b). However, most of the civilian resistant groups focused their resistance on non-kinetic methods of protecting intellectual works, as against other military efforts from within Germany.

The "Paper Brigade" (*Di Papier Brigade*) and the "Other Germany" were some of these groups. Known as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," Vilna had its rich Jewish cultural heritage targeted for total destruction by Nazi forces. Parts of the targeted libraries and cultural institutions were the famed Strashun Jewish Public Library and the YIVO Institute. The *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* conscripted a group of forty Jewish writers, poets, and intellectuals to sort through the archives of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) and select the most valuable Jewish texts to be sent to a planned "museum of an extinct race" in Frankfurt (Jewish Museum Milwaukee, 2024; Yad Vashem, 2026; Weitzman, 2026; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2026a).

Under the guise of cataloguing, this group, known colloquially as the "Paper Brigade" (led notably by poets Abraham Sutzkever and Shmerke Kaczerginski), carried out an act of profound

cultural defiance. Instead of surrendering all documents to the Nazis, they risked their lives to smuggle thousands of rare books, manuscripts, and artwork out of the sorting facility (YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2026; Weitzman, 2026). The resistance tactics used by the group was in members hiding manuscripts in their clothing and boots and slipping past ghetto guards. They built underground bunkers, hid items behind false walls, and buried them in concealed basements and cemeteries (Fishman, 2017; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2026a). The Brigade successfully rescued and hid an estimated 30% to 40% of the YIVO archives, ensuring that the history and soul of Eastern European Jewry could not be fully erased. After the war, surviving members went on to retrieve portions of these archives and re-establish YIVO in New York (Frazer, 2022; Wertheim, 2022; YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2026b).

On the other hand, the term "Other Germany" *Das andere Deutschland* refers to the disparate, fractured, and clandestine network of German citizens who actively resisted Adolf Hitler's regime from within. Unlike the Jewish victims who fought for survival and the preservation of their culture, the "Other Germany" consisted of individuals operating from a position of relative societal privilege who fought against their own government's moral abyss (Spollard, 2021). These were some of the organised network of 'clandestine' and covert resistance to Nazi intellectual warfare and looting.

### **The Concept of Libricide and Boko Haram's Strategy of Brutal Erasure**

Libricide is defined as the intentional destruction of entire libraries (Donovan, 2024), the purpose of which is to interrupt educational institutions' capacity to cultivate intellectual development, disrupt the preservation of literary works and other information which challenges and threatens political regimes, and dismantle the literary and historical representation of marginalized groups (Wadsworth, 2023). The Oxford English Dictionary (2025) states that the earliest known use of the noun "libricide" is from 1853, in the writing of W. Blair. Also known as library cleansing (Komnenović, 2024), it is related to biblioclasm, but biblioclasm is limited to the destruction of a single text or a number of texts while libricide is a more complex, deliberate, organised, sponsored and systematic attack on several libraries and the intellectual and cultural memories the libraries represent. Macgregor (2005) revealed that libricide is an "all-encompassing, regime-sanctioned annihilation of books and libraries" which emerged as adjunct to the socio-cultural defilement exported by authoritarian and extreme regimes who also pursue genocide and/or "ethnocide".

Arthur der Weduwen, co-author of *The Library: A Fragile History* (2021) pointed out that libricide is sadly and really ubiquitous throughout human history; and the reason is because books represent both memory and culture that those intent in subjugating another nation, or trying to destroy its heritage would consider legitimate targets (Whiting, 2022). This may be due to the ability of libraries to inspire resistance to subtle or explicit attempts at subjugation and oppression of a people.

Since its emergence in 2009, Boko Haram has sustained its targeting of educational institutions across the North East of Nigeria, in fulfilment of its objective to eradicate Western education in

the North. Thus libraries and all educational institutions have remained its main targets, alongside public spaces where people gather for socio-economic activities. These include banks, hospitals, churches, mosques, markets, police stations, military checkpoints, barracks, and other security posts. States in the Northeastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria have borne much of the brunt of Boko Haram insurgency. Blueprint, a Nigerian media outlet reported on that Boko Haram killed 39, and burnt thousands of buildings including libraries, in Damboa, Konduga and Gwoza Local Government Areas of Borno State in February 2014.

Amnesty International also reported the burning of Chibok Library by the insurgents in 2015. These destructive actions have left devastating effects on the library community. The findings of a study by Usman, Istifanus, Audu and Ibrahim (2023) revealed that the activities of the group have led to complete closure of some libraries, damage to library materials and buildings, reduction in library collections and patronage, and dissatisfaction among users. Anecdotal observations also indicate that some librarians working in the public sectors have sought transfer of service to more stable regions in the country.



(Fig 2: A damaged Chibok Library after a Boko Haram attack (Private, as cited in Amnesty International, 2015).

The impacts of the destruction of these collections in Northern Nigeria, especially in the North Eastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa have been devastating. Busari, Bassey and Agunsoye (2024) who studied the effect of insecurity on library services in the North Central Universities in Nigeria, revealed that insurgency is a threat to the realization of the goals of tertiary institutions, as libraries, which are expected to support the teaching, research and community development goals of the tertiary institutions are forced to operate below the standard performance. In a region that is so educationally disadvantaged that more than two-thirds of students in the North remain illiterate even after completing primary school, as compared to only about 18–28% of students in the South, the effect of insurgency on educational institutions, including their libraries further decreases enrolment as insurgency rages (Bertoni, Di Maio, Molini, & Nostico, 2018), thereby further widening the educational inequality gap in the region and providing the insurgents with more idle hands to recruit.

Nigerian libraries in the Northern parts of the country are largely as vulnerable to terrorist attacks as every other social institution in the country. However, in the North East, educational

institutions including public, private, school, research, and academic libraries face greater danger due to the central position libraries occupy in countering Boko Haram insurgency and in being integral parts of the educational institutions the insurgents target. This vulnerability of Nigerian libraries and information centres to security threats has been aggravated by the fact that libraries are not benefitting from heavy investment on security from proprietors, especially the government, compared to revenue generating government institutions, departments and agencies (Onyemachi & Ayandokun, 2022). As buttressed by Ilo, Furfuri, YoungHarry, Esse, Fagbohun, and Omeje (2022) the lack of important facilities such as bomb detectors, CCTV cameras is worrisome, considering the level of insurgency in Northern Nigeria where Boko Haram insurgents have meted a lot of destructions on institutional facilities as well as lives and property. This concurs with the earlier findings of a study conducted by Ilo, Izuagbe, Mole and Ekwueme (2018) which revealed the worrisome situation where major disaster preparedness facilities are lacking in the academic libraries studied in South West Nigeria. This calls to question, the national security strategy for libraries and information centres in the country.

### **Current State of Defense for Nigerian Libraries**

Proposing a strategic solution to Nigerian libraries against the raging scourge of violent insurgency requires an examination of the existing "National Security Strategy 2019" and its gaps regarding library protection. While studies such as those of Akwang (2023), Nsirim, Clement-Abraham, and Ajie (2024), Jubril and Adam (2024), and have been conducted to emphasise the pivotal national security roles played by libraries and librarians in anti-terrorism and counter-insurgency in Nigeria through their role in public education, sensitisation, mobilisation and awareness programmes, there has not been any recorded evidence of any study identifying or analyzing the position of the existing security frameworks and policies in Nigeria such as the National Security Strategy of Nigeria 2019, on the protection of libraries and information centres.

While the National Security Strategy (NSS) of Nigeria 2019 emphasizes a comprehensive approach to safeguarding the nation's security, stability, and development, through a multi-dimensional security approach that includes physical security, intelligence gathering, community engagement, and resilience building for protecting cultural and informational assets, there is no explicit mention of libraries in specific. The absence of an explicit mentioning of libraries in Nigeria's 2019 National Security Strategy (NSS) can have several negative implications such as lack of specific policy focus, limited awareness and advocacy among policymakers, security agencies, and the public about the importance of protecting libraries against Boko Haram insurgency. It may also lead to inadequate resource allocation, further exposing libraries and making them more vulnerable to attack, destruction, and irreparable loss of cultural heritage and knowledge which can have long-term detrimental effects on community identity, education, and national memory.

## Comparative Analysis: Looting vs. Libricide

Libricide is a term that was pioneered by Dr. Rebecca Knuth, a professor of Library and Information Science, in her 2003 seminal work, *"Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the 20th Century"* (Knuth, 2003). She implied that libricide (book-burning and library destruction) is not a random collateral damage, but a deliberate prelude to genocide and ethnocide by state actors. In this influential book, Rebecca Knuth explores the deliberate destruction of books, libraries, archives, and cultural heritage by political regimes (such as the Nazi regime of the Third Reich) during the twentieth century. The term "libricide" was further explained to refer to the systematic annihilation of written culture as a political tool and ideological control used for suppressing knowledge, identity, and historical memory.

However, as a sequel to the initial publication, Rebecca Knuth published *"Burning Books and Leveling Libraries: Extremist Violence and Cultural Destruction"* in 2006, shifting focus and extending the discussion from state actors to non-state actors including extremist groups, terrorists, and ethnic nationalists who engage in the destruction of cultural heritage as recorded in bibliographic resources. Boko Haram falls within the spectrum of such groups as the group fits into Knuth's description of how anti-modern non-state ideological groups target libraries as physical symbols of the "corrupting" knowledge they wish to eradicate and erase (Knuth, 2006). To the people who commit libricide, Donovan (2024) argues that the library is considered an institution rooted in its history of selection and use by the local community, and as such reflects the users' identity; a reminder that aggressors would wish to eliminate when the goal is pacification by erasure of a population's memory and history. This is also confirmed by the National library of Poland, the *Bibliotheca Narodowa* (2026), which explained that libricide was executed against Polish libraries and targeted at mostly Jewish culture, in accordance with Adolf Hitler's doctrine that no nation (or people) would outlive the material testimonies to, and evidence of its culture (Kordel, 2022). Therefore, the destruction of libraries was a blow aimed directly at the heart of Polish culture and Polish people by the Nazis.

Other areas of comparison were the intents and ideologies of the two groups (Nazis and Boko Haram). Even as the mode of operations of the Nazi Regime and Boko Haram group appear to be different in certain areas, the impacts of their actions on cultural identity and intellectualism appear to be the same. While the Nazi state actors engaged in state-sanctioned intellectual warfare and utilitarian theft, Boko Haram's purgative destruction of intellectual properties attempt to erase documented and recorded ideas contrary to their extreme views, even as they exterminate those who profess such views or seek to acquire such knowledge. In summary, the physical book becomes a proxy for the human "enemy".

The Reich Institute for the History of New Germany (*Reichsinstituts für Geschichte des Neuen Deutschlands*), was founded in 1935 and was one of the most significant destinations for stolen book; Jewish books in particular. The director of the institute was the Nazi historian Walter Frank. Some of his writings published by the institute can be found in the National Library (Lipson, 2018). In 1939, Hermann Wilhelm Göring, Adolf Hitler's right hand man appointed Austrian Art Historian and SS officer, Kajetan Mühlmann as the Special Commissioner/Plenipotentiary for the Safekeeping of Works of Art in the Occupied Polish

Territories, looting public, private, and church collections under the pretext of protection, affecting libraries such as University of Warsaw Library, the National library of Poland, the Zamoyski Family Library, and the Krasiński Family Library ((Kordel, 2022; Kordel, 2024). Between 1940 and 1944, Mühlmann moved to The Hague, and established *Dienststelle Mühlmann* (Mühlmann Agency), which served as a clearinghouse for stolen Dutch art, which were later expropriated and auctioned (Wladika, 2023).

While the Nazi state actors focused on looting intellectual works for intellectual warfare, there were occasional libricides committed as documented by Knuth (2003). However, Boko Haram strictly adopts libricide as a means of eradicating and erasing western-oriented knowledge, in an attempt to purge the Nigerian society of the influence of Western civilisation, which it considers corrupt. Another critical observation to be noted and for lesson here is the fact that the Nazi intellectual warfare was executed by state actors while the resistance came from non-state actors, compared to the Nigerian situation whereby the act of war on cultural and intellectual institutions is being waged by non-state actors, with little or no resistance from state and non-state actors in protecting libraries and information centres.

### The Consequences of Libricide

The effects of libricide on national memory are far reaching beyond the gory sights that are left on the aesthetic and orderly world of knowledge domiciled in libraries. Busari, Bassey and Agunsoye (2024) and Usman, Istifanus, Audu and Ibrahim (2024) revealed that insecurity and the actions of insurgents leave devastating effects on libraries and the educational institutions they represent by elongating the academic calendar, destabilizing staff motivation for efficient library services delivery, disruption of access to learning resources in libraries, reduction in library patronage, disruption of staff training, stimulating theft, loss of facilities and wreckage of vital knowledge assets in the North Central part of Nigeria and the North Eastern state of Borno, respectively. The impact of the loss of years of painstakingly conducted, documented and organised research reports cannot be overemphasized, not just for the members of the research and library community, but for the society as a whole.

If these losses continue unaddressed, years of intellectual efforts could be lost to insurgency while future research efforts and their documentation are discouraged. Researchers and the library and information academic community need to focus research efforts not just on the roles of libraries in counter-insurgency efforts but also on how to protect the libraries from the dangers of insurgency such as looting and libricides.

| Dimension                     | Nazi regime                                             | Boko Haram                                                    |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Main actors</i>            | State actors                                            | Non-state insurgents                                          |
| <i>Treatment of knowledge</i> | Looting, appropriation and selective destruction        | Deliberate destruction/ total erasure                         |
| <i>Ideological objective</i>  | Control and manipulation of knowledge                   | Eradication of Western-oriented education                     |
| <i>Target</i>                 | Libraries, books, archives and cultural materials       | Libraries, educational institutions and information resources |
| <i>Consequences/ Effect</i>   | Suppression/control of intellectual and cultural memory | Destruction and denial of access to knowledge                 |
| <i>Resistance</i>             | Paper Brigade, Other Germany and White Rose             | inadequate organised resistance                               |

**Table 1:** Dimension and summary of Nazi regime and Boko Haram attacks on Libraries (Author)

### Lessons for the Nigerian Library System

Having noted the differences and aligning modes of operations and effects of the Nazi and Boko Haram war on intellectual properties and cultural memory, it is important to underline the critical lessons that can be obtained from the German situation by the current Nigerian library system. The following steps can be taken in the meantime:

- i. **Strategic Decentralization:** The Nigerian library system can prioritise moving from high-value target buildings to distributed community collections. This should be done in areas that are considered to be prone to insurgent attacks in order to reduce the dangers of attracting insurgents to a single structure losing and losing a large volume of collections in an instant. Both groups have been reported to exploit the centralization of library systems to maximize damage. This strategy will help to mitigate an outright memory institution collapse in the event of an attack. This strategy, previously executed in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and proven to be a successful one by the "*Paper Brigade*" (Vilna Ghetto), the "*Other Germany*" and the White Rose, has also recently been adopted in nearby West African nation of Mali, where heroic librarian Abdulkader Haidara led the 'covert' operation that saw many of the established libraries and family collections removed from their buildings in Timbuktu and hidden from view in separate locations away from the reach of deadly Al-Qaeda-allied insurgents in 2012 (Kotoor, 2013; University of Cape Town, 2026).
- ii. **Digital Undergrounds:** Implementing "Digital Fortresses", off-site cloud storage and biometric-secured digital repositories will help create surrogates of library and archival collections. While physical libraries are still highly valued for their historical and cultural values, it is essential to prioritise provision of digital fortresses that are less prone to "cheap" physical attacks. Unlike during the reign of the Third Reich, modern libraries'

exposure to the dangers of modern insurgency can be mitigated by the potentials of digital technologies to safeguard their collections to a large extent. The adoption of technology can also be extended towards the security of on-site collections by employing threat detection systems in libraries. Echezona, Asogwa and Chigbue (2016) recommend the installation of electronic detective machines for finding dangerous weapons in libraries by the federal government, alongside the introduction of library policies on security. This is similar to the views of Akor, Ekere and Akor (2019), who suggested that to provide adequate security, libraries should adopt telecommunication technologies such as alarm systems, access control systems, video surveillance, tele-surveillance, among others.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This paper adopts a qualitative historical-comparative documentary research design, involving the systematic review and analysis of secondary literature, historical records, institutional reports, policy documents and previous empirical studies, which were comparatively examined to identify similarities, differences, consequences and lessons from Nazi intellectual warfare and Boko Haram's attacks on Nigerian libraries.

The study relied on a qualitative research approach, with historical-comparative/documentary analysis. The sources of evidence used were scholarly literature, historical records, institutional reports and policy documents. Specific sources used included books, journal articles, government documents (National Security Strategy, 2019), reports from organisations such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Amnesty International, and institutional/archival sources. The cases examined were specifically Nazi intellectual warfare and Boko Haram attacks on Nigerian libraries. The analytical procedure included comparison of intent, ideology, methods, targets, effects and resistance, while the purpose/objective of the paper was to deriving lessons for library resilience and security in the Nigerian context.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Libraries and information centres continue to exist to sustain the preservation of the body of human recorded knowledge and by extension, culture and human memory. Unfortunately, these noble social institutions have been inadvertently exposed to the brutality of state and non-state agents that target the elimination of human knowledge as expressed in books and other bibliographic items as domiciled in libraries and information centres, which they consider as proxy for the human enemy. While the deliberate destruction and illegal appropriation of human recorded knowledge is not a recent societal problem, there are lessons that current custodians of human recorded knowledge can acquire from historical experiences like the resistant bodies against Nazis, and adapt to curb current trends in the destruction of libraries by non-state actors such as Boko Haram insurgents. As looting and intellectual warfare of the Nazi regime necessitated the risky non-state actions of resistant groups in the shadows such as the "Paper Brigade" (Vilna Ghetto), the "Other Germany" and the White Rose in order to ensure the survival of large volumes of information materials against Nazi intellectual

warfare, modern Nigerian libraries can leverage on being on the side of state actors to secure libraries and information materials from the scourge of libricide as brutally executed by Boko Haram insurgents. This will help preserve the nation's cultural heritage and memory, while sustaining the statutory roles of libraries, and by extension, combating the very ideology that Boko Haram seeks to impose on humanity; ignorance. The Nigerian state must reaffirm its commitment to the preservation of cultural heritage as parts of its national security plans and objectives.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

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In the light of the current trends in insurgent attacks by Boko Haram and other insurgents on educational and cultural social institutions which libraries and information centres represent in Nigeria, there is a urgent need for a coordinated call to action by critical stakeholders. Some of the actions are highlighted below:

- i. **Final Call to Action:** There is a need to advocate for a specialised "Cultural Protection Unit" within Nigeria's security framework, which must be well-documented as a policy in the Nigerian National Security Strategy. This should outline the roles and responsibilities the various stakeholders in the Nigerian security architecture in the protection of social institutions such as libraries, archives, museums and any other memory institution that is, or may be targeted by aggressors seeking to eliminate or illegally appropriate the nation's recorded knowledge, cultural and national memory. Nigeria must prioritise its national memory institutions as assets that must be protected.
- ii. **Community-Led Preservation:** This should involve the training of "Librarian-Protectors" in intelligence sharing and clandestine archiving against the scourge of violent extremism. This training should be a nationwide training for library and information science professionals through the National Library of Nigeria and the Nigerian Library Association in order to ensure a comprehensive and proactive approach towards the protection of library and information resources, including library personnel as insecurity has spread to other geopolitical zones beyond the North East zone.
- iii. **Advocacy and Rebuilding:** The federal government should pursue policies and programmes for "bibliographic restitution" and revitalizing libraries in liberated areas. This will help restore the libraries' image as resilient institutions and rebuild community confidence in library patronage. Library and Information Science professionals must also redirect research and advocacy efforts towards the protection of library and information resources against the scourge of violent extremism in the country.

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