

**Domestic Media Coverage of Boko Haram Insurgency in  
Nigeria**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
University of Central Lancashire, for the award of

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**School of Journalism, Media and Performance  
University of Central Lancashire, Preston, United  
Kingdom**

July 2018

## **Student Declaration**

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, I have not been a registered candidate or an enrolled student for another award of the University of Central Lancashire or other academic or professional institutions.

I declare that no material contained in this thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my work. All secondary sources were duly acknowledged in the citation.

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. It focuses on the media coverage between 2011 and 2014. The thesis employs a mixed methods approach – content analysis, interview and questionnaire to critically evaluate the nature of coverage of the insurgency. The use of mixed methods allows the study to not only analyse media content but also situate it within its context of production thus broadening our understanding of the relationship between media and terrorism. The study applies seven predetermined (deductive) frames in its analysis. It establishes that political, religious and ‘ethnic’ frames were dominantly used in the coverage of the insurgency. The frames indicate a lack of nuance or texture in the coverage with various critical aspects of the insurgency ignored. Beyond the predetermined frames, ten new sub-thematic (inductive) frames also emerged from the analysis. By knitting the multi-layered arguments in the coverage of the insurgency, this study finds evidence of the Government’s hegemonic narratives and strategic influence in the coverage of the insurgency. The study also notes that institutional weaknesses within news organisations and a hostile legislative environment forced journalists to source stories from the foreign media. Most of these stories are often decontextualized and therefore only give a partial view of a situation and particularly conflict situations in Africa. As a consequence, the domestic media adopted the language of ‘international terrorism’ and now institutionalised the ‘war against terror’ narrative. This ‘homogenous’ or ‘universal’ ‘war against terror’ implies that the media covered the Boko Haram insurgency from the same perspective that terrorist groups in the Middle East and other parts of the world are covered without necessarily recognising the different dynamics that led to their emergence. The thesis thus argues that overtly or covertly, external forces influenced the direction of the coverage thereby eroding the domestic media’s editorial independence. This study therefore offers both quantitative and qualitative contributions to an issue that has largely been approached from normative and prescriptive perspectives.

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## ACRONYMS

ACF	Arewa Consultative Forum
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AFPC	American Foreign Policy Council
AIT	Africa Independent Television
APC	All Progressives Congress
AQIM	al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BBOG	Bring Back Our Girls
BH	Boko Haram
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
CNPP	Conference of Nigeria Political Parties
COAF	Chief of Army Staff
CVs	Contradicting Viewpoints
DHQ	Defence Headquarters
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FG	Federal Government
FoIA	Freedom of Information Act
FoIB	Freedom of Information Bill
FomGoM	Foreign media, Government and Military
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organisation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTI	Global Terrorism Index
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IS	Islamic States
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

MASSOB	Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MRA	Media Rights Agenda
NAN	News Agency of Nigeria
NCTC	National Counterterrorism Centre
NDA	National Security Adviser
NDPSF	Niger-Delta Peoples Salvation Force
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
NUJ	Nigeria Union of Journalists
NYSC	National Youth Service Corps
NYT	New York Times
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PRE	Politicisation, Religion and Ethnicisation
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
TETFUND	Tertiary Education Trust Fund
VTM	Violence, Target and Motive
WAB	War against Boko Haram
WoT	War on Terror
WTC	World Trade Centre
WWII	World War II

## **Dedication**

For my parents – Gabriel and Josephine Ogbodo

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## LIST OF CONFERENCES

### Conference papers

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2. Ogbodo, J.N. (2015). *Media capture in democracy: framing the Boko Haram insurgency in the race for the 2015 presidency in Nigeria*. A paper presented at the *Mediating Democracy* conference (5-6 November 2015), University of Chester, UK. [http://www.chester.ac.uk/sites/files/chester/PSA\\_MPG\\_Chester\\_2015.pdf.pdf](http://www.chester.ac.uk/sites/files/chester/PSA_MPG_Chester_2015.pdf.pdf).
3. Ogbodo, J.N. (2015). *Doing media and terrorism research: The challenges*. A paper presented at the Future of Journalism Education conference organised by the Association of Journalism Educators, conference held at Greenwich University, UK. (25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> June 2015).



# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background to the study and statement of the problem

Over the years, research on terrorism has attracted considerable scholarly attention. This has particularly been the case in the past two decades. For instance, Schmid and Jongman (1988) argued that about 90% of all terrorism-related literature was written from 1969. Similarly, Silke (2008, p.28) contends that “research on terrorism and terrorism-related issues has increased dramatically in the wake of the 9/11 attacks”. This is another way of saying that the terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre (WTC) and the Pentagon signalled a rebirth and increased research interest in terrorism. The attack often rated as the deadliest in the history of terrorism attacks (Silke, 2008) and masterminded by the late Osama bin Laden is perhaps the reason why terrorism research keeps expanding, especially as more insurgents emerge and attack people and institutions everyday across the globe. According to the Global Terrorism Index, 32,658 people died of terrorism attacks worldwide in 2014 alone. This represents an 80% increase in deaths associated with terrorism, and Iraq, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria account for 78% of the entire global cases of terrorism (GTI, 2015).

The growing interest in media and terrorism studies has been attributed to the increase in the coverage of terrorist attacks. Asogwa *et al.* (2012, p.179) argue that “terrorists would not exist in the minds of many if the media did not give them coverage”. Similarly, Chermak and Gruenewald (2006, p.434) contend that “terrorists use the media to accomplish strategic and tactical goals”. They also employ various available communication devices to send their messages across to the public. According to Schmid (2006, p.100) the presence of the terrorist is perpetuated “through media coverage, rumours, and speculation and gains a longevity it could not generate by itself”. Therefore, as the major conduit of information dissemination, scholars such as Nacos (2003a, 2003b) have accused the media of playing a significant role in the calculus of terrorists.

For the above reason, Conway (2012, p. 447) prescribes that “terrorism and media scholars should engage in straightforward descriptive activity, asking: ‘What is the message? Who is the sender? And to whom is it directed?’” However, this approach fails to take into consideration the interplay between the complexity of media production, delivery and

consumption. On 11<sup>th</sup> May 2015, Aljazeera published a report in which it claimed that “ISIL still holds significant territory in Iraq and journalists know that to go there amounts to risking their lives for a story the militants clearly want told their way” (Aljazeera, 2015). This paints the gory picture of the risks and challenges that confront reporters or researchers doing terrorism-related research.

Against this backdrop, this thesis examines the media coverage of the terrorist organisation, Boko Haram in Nigeria. The study focuses on the period between 2011 and 2014. Boko Haram gained international notoriety in 2014 when they kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok in Borno State Nigeria. This attack among others was enough to raise the international profile of the group. The global media attention to the Boko Haram insurgency was heightened by the magnitude of the abduction of these teenagers (Weeraratne, 2015). It generated wide media coverage and global concern (Zenn, 2014). The Chibok abduction has a symbolic resonance that Boko Haram exploited. For instance, the leader of the group Abubakar Shekau infamously said he seized “your young women” and that he would “sell them in the market”. In this instance, ‘your young women’ to be sold ‘in the market’ symbolise the vision of moral disorder and the objectification of women. Shekau further mocked the bounty placed on his head and threatened to “sell Presidents Jonathan and Obama into slavery” (Thurston, 2016). In view of its growing profile, assessing the coverage of the insurgency provides a critical opportunity to further examine and understand the relationship between media and terrorism, especially in the Nigerian context. The study thus employs analytical and descriptive strategies to explore the nature of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Significantly, previous research on the coverage of the insurgency has ignored a focus on the views of the Nigerian journalists involved in the coverage. This study incorporated journalists’ views (via interviews and questionnaires) in covering the Boko Haram insurgency because as Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p.5) argue, “...editors and reporters make choices about what to report and how to report it”. This prompted the use of mixed methods to enable cross-verifications of data from different approaches. This thesis thus offers both quantitative and qualitative contributions to an issue that has largely been approached from normative, anecdotal and prescriptive perspectives.

This study further focuses on the language that shaped the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. While there is a substantial body of work on the relationship between terrorism and the media (see Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012; Keranen and Sanprie, 2008; Hoffman, 2003; Miller, 1982; Hodges 2011; Ross, 2007; Weinmann and Winn, 1994; Laqueur, 1977; Altheide 2006, 2007, 2009; Asogwa *et al.*, 2012), most of them have been non-linguistic in nature. To this end, this study adds what it considers another important dimension to understanding some of the dynamics of the broader relationship between media and terrorism.

## **1.2. Original contribution of this study**

This study made a few contributions to knowledge as highlighted below:

By knitting together the multi-layered arguments in the coverage of the insurgency and the interviews, this study finds evidence of Government's hegemonic narrative and strategic influence of the media. In other words, this study found that the Government and the military exercised both subtle and direct control of the media. They ran their own information regime, limiting media access to areas under military operation and thus being the only sources of information for media organisations. Nigerian Government and the military were also the main sources of information for most of the stories on Boko Haram and therefore defined the narratives relating to the coverage of the insurgency. For example, they positioned Boko Haram as a common enemy of Nigeria and rallied for public support. This, by implication, enlisted the media as a participant in the fight against the insurgency thus shaping its narratives on the coverage accordingly.

Research on the Boko Haram insurgency and media in Nigeria (e.g. Okoro and Odoemelam, 2013; Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012) have previously focused on anecdotal samples usually of less than 144 news items/articles. In addition, they have mainly focused, albeit at varying degrees on frequency, depth and direction of coverage. In the case of Ekwueme and Obayi above, there was no identified sample. Critically, these studies have ignored other vital aspects of the coverage on how the broader media environment or ecology – law, politics and culture shaped the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Also ignored have been how internal factors (editorial policies, news values and orientations) within media organisations affected the coverage of the insurgency. This study has extended its focus to include how such external and internal factors affected the coverage of the insurgency.

In addition, whereas the studies mentioned above only studied framing of the insurgency without specifying the period of study in most cases, this thesis focused on 2011-2014, which was significant because it represents the time the group started its large-scale bombing, intensified its attacks and increased its local and international profile. This study is aware that Boko Haram's profile has grown exponentially, especially after the 'coordinated' abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls and other subsequent attacks that have ranked them ahead of ISIS as the world's 'deadliest terror group' (NYT, 2015). The study is timely and wider in scope than previous ones. Having used fewer framing categories and a year's sample, Okoro and Odoemelam (2013) recommended further research to include a much longer timeframe, scope and the inclusion of other categories of analysis. This is also why the 2011-2014 timeframe provided a bigger context to understanding the dynamics of the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. More findings are summarised in chapter nine.

### **1.3. Study Aim**

- This study aims to critically analyse the nature of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria over a four-year period (2011-2014). The selected domestic media include *Leadership*, *The Punch*, and *The Sun*, which are among Nigeria's most widely read national dailies.

#### **1.3.1. Specific objectives**

Apart from the main aim of this study, the following specific objectives are addressed:

1. To evaluate the dominant news frames used by domestic media (*Leadership*, *The Punch*, and *The Sun*) in covering the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the patterns of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency over the four-year study period (2011-2014).
3. To examine the nature of the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency focusing on among other things, the language.
4. To evaluate the views of Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.
5. To determine how the broader media environment – legal, political and cultural shaped the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.
6. To assess how professional and internal institutional factors affected the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

### **1.3.2. Research questions**

1. What were the dominant frames used by the domestic media in covering the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria?
2. To what extent did the pattern of the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency vary over the four-year study period (2011-2014)?
3. How was language used in the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?
4. What are the views of Nigerian journalists on the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?
5. How did the broader media environment or ecology (legal, political and cultural) shape the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria?
6. How did professional and internal institutional factors affect the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria?

### **1.4. Boko Haram: The birth of an insurgent group**

‘Boko Haram’ loosely translates as “Western education is forbidden” (The National Counter-Terrorism Centre, 2014). It also translates as ‘Western education is sin’ or “Western Civilisation is forbidden” (Peters, 2014, p.186). The Boko Haram insurgents have carried out several attacks on schools, churches, mosques, banks, military, paramilitary and police formations, media houses, markets, and other strategic places resulting in many deaths and increased media coverage. The group, according to the Global Terrorism Index (2014) aims to overthrow the Federal Government and entrench Islamic or Sharia rule in Nigeria. Since 2011 when the insurgents started their large-scale bombings and killings mainly in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, an estimated 15,000-18,000 citizens have been killed (CNN, 2015; Vanguard, 2015). Similarly, *The Punch* reports that “Boko Haram has devastated Northeast Nigeria in its quest to create an Islamist state, killing over 20,000 people and displacing 2.6 million from their homes” (*The Punch*, 29/10/2016). The group has also intensified attacks in neighbouring countries such as Niger, Chad and Cameroun.

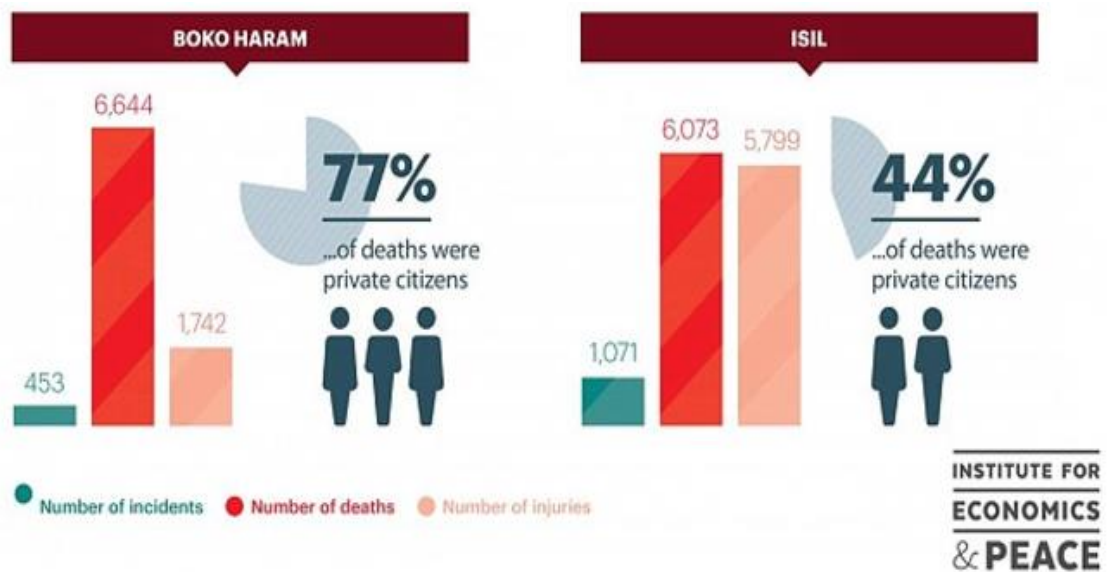


Figure 1: The number of attacks and deaths recorded by BH & IS in 2014. Source: GT1, 2015

As the above figure shows, Boko Haram recorded fewer attacks than the IS, but the former killed more people than the latter. Although the group is rated as the world’s ‘deadliest’ terrorist group (*The New York Times*, 2015; Hiribarren, 2016), it has pledged its loyalty/allegiance to the Islamic State<sup>1</sup>.

Boko Haram’s activities fit with the most accepted definitions of terrorism. According to Poland (1988), terrorism is the premeditated, deliberate, systematic murder, mayhem, and threatening of the innocent to create fear and intimidation in order to gain a political or tactical advantage, usually to influence an audience<sup>2</sup>. Martin (2013, p.9) says of terrorism as “a dark feature of human behaviour since the dawn of recorded history”. From a broader perspective, terrorism has a long history in Africa before the emergence of Boko Haram insurgents. For instance, Oyeniya (2010) argues that:

From the Sherifian dynasty of the Alawites and Filali in Morocco to the Regencies of Algeria, Tunisia and Libya under the effete suzerainty of the Sultan of Turkey, the Berber-Arab population of North Africa experienced one form of terrorism after another, even before the colonial rule. The French invasion of Algeria in 1830, the establishment of French rule in Morocco in the 1900s and their occupation of Tunisian (sic) in 1880 were all characterized by one terrorist act after another (p.1).

<sup>1</sup> The Islamic State (IS) is a jihadist group that burst on to the international scene in 2014 when it seized large swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. It has become notorious for its brutality, including mass killings, abductions and beheadings.

<sup>2</sup> Poland, J. M. (1988) *Understanding Terrorism: Groups, Strategies, and Responses*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall. His argument is that terrorism is not a spontaneous act that happens without premeditation.

While tracing the evolution of the Boko Haram terrorists, Onuoha (2010) contends that the insurgents had existed under different designations such as the ‘Nigerian Taliban’ (local people so nicknamed it because of their similar ideological alignment with the Taliban’s ‘Yusufiyyah’ (probably because Mohammed Yusuf was its acclaimed founder); ‘*Jama’atu Ahlissunnah Lidda’awati wal Jihad*’ (people committed to the prophet’s teachings for the propagation of jihad); ‘Boko Haram’ (civilization is forbidden), and lately the group has declared itself as the ‘Islamic States in West Africa’ (Independent<sup>3</sup>, 2015).

In 2013, the U.S. Department of State announced the designation of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). This prompted the definition of Boko Haram as “a Nigeria-based militant group with links to al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) that is responsible for thousands of deaths in Northeast and central Nigeria over the last several years including targeted killings of civilians”<sup>4</sup>. The American Foreign Policy Council refers to Boko Haram as “a network of Islamist militant factions in Northern Nigeria that trace their ideological origins to the slain imam Mohammed Yusuf (1970 – 2009)” (AFPC, 2014, p.1). The group which according to *Vanguard* (10/05/2014) has turned the North-East of Nigeria into a ‘theatre of absurd’ has claimed responsibility for many killings in Nigeria. In precision, Ekwueme (2011) argues that Boko Haram came into being in the 1960s but only started drawing attention in 2002 with Mohammed Yusuf emerging as its leader in the same year. Ekwueme notes that the group moved to Kanamma, Yobe State in 2004, where it set up a camp called ‘Afghanistan’. They operated from this base and in one of their attacks, killed some policemen in the nearby police stations.

Still contributing to the complexity of its historical, Obayiuwana (2011) argues that Boko Haram was ostensibly established by Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 at Maiduguri, North-eastern Nigeria. The Global Terrorism Index, GTI (2014) also insists that Boko Haram was founded in 2002. According to Walker (2012), Boko Haram started with a group of Muslims believed to be members of a mosque in the North-eastern Nigeria led by Muhammad

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<sup>3</sup> Independent UK reports that Boko Haram has changed its name to *Islamic States of West Africa* to align with the name of its parent terrorist organisation, ISIS: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/boko-haram-renames-itself-islamic-states-west-africa-province-iswap-as-militants-launch-new-10204918.html>

<sup>4</sup> Being the definition of Boko Haram by the U.S. Department of State following the designation of the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) on November 13, 2013. Refer to this link for details <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266565.htm>

Yusuf. The group was interested in implementing a separatist community that aligns itself with the Wahhabi<sup>5</sup> principles. In another account, Bederka (2014) argues that Boko Haram was rather founded in 2009 as a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist group that strictly advocates for an all-inclusive sharia rule in the entire Nigerian states. As time passed, the group became more radicalised and developed into a Nigerian version of Salafist-jihadi<sup>6</sup> movement. This also reflects in the magnitude of their attacks and the increasing number of people it has drawn to its side.

Amidst the growing number of attacks, there have also been allegations of the Northern elites' complicity in the Boko Haram insurgency (Akinola and Tella, 2013, p.73). Boko Haram according to Malachy (2013) is not just insurgents of Islamist fanatics, but seems to enjoy the support and sympathy of some 'disgruntled' elites of the Northern extraction as partly made manifest in the desperation of some Northern politicians who made many provocative utterances that triggered off large scale violence before, during and after the 2011 general elections. Malachy is one of the scholars who argue that Northern political 'desperadoes' started Boko Haram for immediate political gains, but they never knew it would escalate beyond their control as it is the case today. In contrast, Thurston (2016, p.8) claims that "it is misleading to treat Boko Haram as a socioeconomic protest with an Islamic veneer, an ethnic revolt, a puppet of foreign jihadis, or a resurgence of an earlier religious movement. Rather, analysis should examine the interaction between structural factors, politics, and ideas in North-eastern Nigeria, and how this locality both reflected and diverged from broader global trends in militancy". To Okpaga, Chijioke and Eme (2012, p.85), some Northern politicians may have started Boko Haram insurgency, but "it would be simplistic to suggest such politicians completely control Boko Haram".

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<sup>5</sup> Wahhabi(sm), according to Commins, David (2009, p.ix) in *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia* is a derogatory term for adherents. A neutral observer could define the Wahhabi mission as the religious reform movement associated with the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792). He and his followers believe that they had a religious obligation to spread the call (in Arabic, *da'wa*) for a restoration of pure monotheistic worship. See also, Fattah, H. (2003). 'Wahhabi' Influences, Salafi Responses: Shaikh Mahmud Shukri and The Iraqi Salafi Movement, 1745–19301. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 14(2), 127-148. <http://jis.oxfordjournals.org/content/14/2/127.short>

<sup>6</sup> The terms "Salafist jihadist" and "Jihadist-Salafism" were coined by Gilles Kepel in the book *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* to describe "a hybrid Islamist ideology developed by international Islamist volunteers in the African Anti-Soviet jihad who had become isolated from their national and social class origins.



The varied and conflicting reports on the historical origin of Boko Haram also reflect in the plethora of theories that explain the insurgency. For instance, Alozieuwa (2012) argues that “the apparent confusion generated by the plethora of theories attempting to explain the Boko Haram challenge also characterizes the origin of the insurgents. The confusion not only reflects in the narratives about the exact date, and who the actual founder was, but also as to the true source of these expositions”. In addition, Madike (2011, in Adibe 2012, p.50) argues that although many people trace the origin and founding of Boko Haram to 2001 and Mohammed Yusuf, the group historically emerged in 1995 and went by the name, *Sahaba* when one Lawan Abubakar who attended University of Medina, Saudi Arabia *Sahaba*, founded it. Uzodike and Maiangwa (2012) also agree that the group is traceable to Lawan Abubakar. This further adds to the conflicting reports on the origin of the insurgent group.

Meanwhile, Adibe (2012) is one of the scholars who believe that Muhammed Yusuf, the widely acknowledged founder of the group became the leader of the group following the departure of Lawan Abubakar. Thus, when Yusuf took over from Lawan, he (Yusuf) “indoctrinated” the insurgents “with his own teachings, which he claimed were based on purity” (Adibe, 2012, p.50). The notion of “purity” which Yusuf allegedly promoted was an inspiration drawn from the works of Ibn Taymiyya, a fourteenth century Islamist legal scholar who spent his life preaching Islamic fundamentalism, and often considered a "major theorist" for most radical militants in the Middle East (Johnson, 2011).

Thus, the group kept growing until 2009 when it took a different direction. When police acted against some members of the group for violating motorcycle laws, the group began incessant attacks at different police stations and government offices in Borno State. This led to jailbreaks and burning of police stations. It was during that time that the Nigerian Government mobilised police and the military against the group and succeeded in arresting their late leader Mohammed Yusuf (Okpaga, Chijioke and Eme, 2012). Subsequently, Yusuf died in police custody after an alleged scuffle. The American Foreign Policy Council (AFPC, 2013) contends that after the Nigerian police killed Mohammed Yusuf, the followers revolted and this sparked off the rebirth of the group who vowed to revenge the death of its founder/leader. The group whose days appeared seemingly numbered became even stronger and markedly more violent. They have kept spreading, targeting police stations, military and paramilitary formations, and carrying out prison breaks to free their members (Cook, 2011). The group also settled at the Mandara Mountains, but the military was able to fight and dislodge them from there with aerial

bombardments and ground operations (ibid). Still not giving up on its mission, in one of the tapes that widely circulated before his death, the late Mohammed Yusuf (cited in Mohammed, 2014, p.20) was quoted as saying that:

We are ready to debate any one on this creed. Western education is destructive. We didn't say knowledge is bad but that the unbelief inside it is more than its usefulness. I have English books in my possession which I read regularly. I didn't say English amounts to unbelief but the unbelief contained therein and the polytheism inside. In the process of becoming educated, you become a mushrik idolater. This is our only fear ... Destruction is destruction, whoever it comes from. Because it is the white man that brought it, does it amount to civilisation? Yes, our own is traditional, as you call it, but yours is shirkasiation.

Mohammed explains *shirkasiation* as an Arabic derivative (shirk) which means 'apostasy' or 'unbelief'. Although Boko Haram is widely believed to be based in Nigeria (GTI, 2014), recent attacks show that it has stretched its campaign to the neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Cameroun. Within a short time, the then 'tiny' Boko Haram group spread fast and established bases in Damaturu, the Yobe State capital and began to operate in 'Damboa, Bama, and Gwoza in neighbouring Borno State' (Mohammed, 2014; Onuoha, 2010). Since then, they have remained a strong challenge to the government.

According to Mohammed (2014), Boko Haram's "first open challenge to government authority... was by a tiny group of people who withdrew from the urban landscape of Maiduguri to rural Kanama in the Yunusari local government area of Yobe State in North-eastern Nigeria in December 2003" (p.12). Mohammed argues that the group chose Kanama as its base then due to its remoteness and defensibility features. At Kanama, Mohammed Yusuf "was neither an active physical participant nor a prominent figure" (ibid). However, he partnered others in luring and recruiting members. His role also included indoctrination of the recruits at Kanama. Mohammed (2014) describes Kanama as a place full of forests and ensconced between two rivers near the Nigeria-Niger border to facilitate the group's easy escape whenever they strike. In order to prevent military onslaught against them, Mohammed said that the group also dug trenches and used sand bags to block major entrances leading to their hideouts.

Boko Haram expanded its wide range of targets in 2011 when it claimed responsibility for two separate bombings at the National Police Force headquarters in Abuja in June and UN House in Abuja in August of the same year. The group also expanded its attacks to North-western states like Kano, where its major raid in 2012 claimed 200 lives. Although Boko Haram has

attacked neighbouring regions, it has remained a parochially North-eastern force unable to make its presence strongly felt in other places beyond North-eastern Nigeria. Using all available strategies to propagate its ideologies, Boko Haram seems to have capitalised and built strongly on the preceding and incessant religious crises in the Northern Nigeria (Chiluwa and Adegoke, 2012).

On a wider note, the group built on the age-long leadership problem often regarded as the bane of Nigeria's underdevelopment and social malady. The late Professor Chinua Achebe summarised Nigeria's problem in few words:

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigerian character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or air or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which are the hallmarks of true leadership (Achebe, 1984, p.1).

In addition, in view of the fact that successive administrations in Nigeria failed to curtail unemployment, militancy, corruption and other social vices, analysts believe that the insurgents capitalized on these leadership failures to woo its converts to turn against the Nigerian state. This appears to be the reason why the insurgents easily became wild (Ekwueme, 2011).

In related arguments, factors that gave birth to Boko Haram insurgency and nurtured it were mainly of two broad spectrums of internal and external forces. The internal factors include the socio-economic, ethno-religious, and deep-rooted political divides inherent in Nigeria. The external factors on the other hand are the escalating global Islamic jihadism, hence the group's link with international terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda, Al Shahab, and Islamic State. Another external factor as Alozieuwa (2012, p.1) argues is that the group emerged as "a grand strategy to achieve the predicted disintegration of Nigeria". Apart from these factors, Akinola and Tella (2013) have attributed the insurgency to the greed by some Nigerian elites who want to get back control of governance and resources. Although this factor has been under-examined, there is a need to consider Ottosen and Mudhai's (2009) perspective that "most conflicts in Africa are not only about resources but also about protagonists battling with each other over their points of view on the dispute" (p.247).

From the foregoing, it could be argued that after the formative years of the insurgent group, it has become increasingly violent, and has since carried out 'coordinated' and repeated attacks

at various locations, especially during symbolic events and iconic places such as the Independence day bombing (1<sup>st</sup> October, 2010), the Christmas day bombing (25<sup>th</sup> December 2011), the United Nations' headquarters bombing in Abuja (26<sup>th</sup> August, 2011), and the abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls which gave rise to the global media campaign #BringBackOurGirls (14<sup>th</sup> April 2014), to mention just a few. In all the attacks, the insurgents appeared to have targeted more schools, churches and Christians than they did to other institutions and groups.

The ravaging effects and radicalism of this group that aligns itself to Islamic teachings have probably left a dent on the mainstream Islam in Nigeria. This is because, what the mainstream Islam claims it teaches is peace, but the agenda of Boko Haram is anything but peace. This is contradicted by the inflammatory remarks credited to some Muslim leaders in Nigeria that arguably align to that of Boko Haram (Peters, 2014). With the increasing spate of violence against the 'infidels' (non-believers), the right to religion of most Nigerians is under threat. This is because the Section 38 (1) of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution as amended provided that: "every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom (either alone or in community with others, and in public or in private) to manifest and propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance".<sup>7</sup> Freedom of religion, argues de Montclos, (2014, p.2) is "a right to follow a rite, to preach, to express religious beliefs in public and, more generally, to be allowed to build a church, a mosque, or a temple". This freedom also extends to when to enter or leave, but to become a convert to Islam is to Boko Haram group, a bold and commendable step, but leaving Islam or cursing Islam and its principles is tantamount to death, or an invitation to death as an infidel.

### **1.5. Boko Haram: Understanding its ideology**

Scholars have different claims as to the ideologies of the Boko Haram insurgents. This confusion and the nature of domestic media coverage of the group call for investigation. For the purpose of emphasis, Adegbulu (2013, p.267) claims that "the ideology and philosophy of the movement can best be understood by explicating the two words – 'Boko' and 'Haram'

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<sup>7</sup> Section 38 (1) of Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 [http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter\\_4](http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter_4)

which mean ‘western’ and ‘forbidden’’. This extrapolates into the coinage ‘Western education is forbidden’. In other words, it means that anything that is not of Islamic values is evil.

Although the widely-known stance of Boko Haram is its stark rejection of the Western education, it embodies a broader critique of the workings of the Nigerian state, including the products of the Western education. This is why the group also targets Nigerian elites. In one of its periodic statements issued in 28 January 2012, Abu Qaqa, the then spokesperson of Boko Haram stated that "We have on several occasions explained the categories of people we attack and they include: government officials, government security agents, Christians and whoever collaborates in arresting or killing us even if he is a Muslim" (AFP, 2012). Beyond this seemingly superficial philosophical mission of the insurgents, *Tell* magazine expatiates that

The mission of the sect was to establish an Islamic state where ‘orthodox Islam’ is practiced. Orthodox Islam according to him (Mohammed Yusuf, leader of the group) frowns at Western education and working in the civil service because it is sinful. Hence, for their aim to be achieved, all institutions represented by government including security agencies like police, military and other uniformed personnel should be crushed (*Tell*, 10 August 2009, p.34).

In contrast, the insurgents have not been able to stick to their perceived mission. For instance, Adegbulu (2013) accuses the founder of the group of living a life of ‘subterfuge’. Adegbulu frowns at why “‘a school dropout in his 30s, who looked in every way western, except in ideology, lived in opulent splendour – having all the comfort and conveniences that western civilization could offer, could turn around to oppose and attack values he himself had not repudiated” (p.267). This is why Isa Yuguda (Ex-Governor of Bauchi State) explained in an interview with the *Tell* that:

...their leader is about 32-year-old, rides exotic cars including expensive jeeps, has his children in choice private schools receiving sound and quality education, has private lawyers and doctors who treat and attend to him, yet he has the powers to indoctrinate people (*Tell*, 10/08/2009, p.14).

Similarly, Onuoha (2010) argues that Yusuf, the late leader of the insurgents, lived a relatively affluent life even when many of his followers wallowed in abject poverty, and was fairly well educated in the Western context. This must have prompted Harmon (2014) to argue that some “‘aspects of Yusuf’s life contrast markedly with his ideological rejection of Western-style of education” (p.123). A man who enjoined his followers to anathematize Western values and

products but chose to enjoy same is no less a pervert or deceit. Thurston (2016, p.6) concludes that “the ideology espoused by Boko Haram’s leaders may not permeate the movement, whose internal structure and degree of cohesion is unclear”. The above reasons suggest that despite its seemingly ‘camouflaging’ mission, the group still values and uses products of Western civilization. In its ‘kaleidoscopic’ nature, the group’s initial mission to enforce Sharia rule in Nigeria has been extended to other emerging interests. The first priority of the group was to establish Sharia (Islamic rule) in the Northern part of Nigeria for a start, and throughout Nigeria subsequently (Peters, 2014, p.186). In another account, the group wants a separate Islamic state (Elden, 2014; Idowu, 2013).

Thus, as time progresses, its targets have become mainly Christians (churches) and social institutions such as schools, banks, markets, media houses to mention just a few. The group’s aversion to any Western influence is said to have been modelled after the Taliban whose core targets are educational institutions (START, 2014). In related accounts, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI, 2014) and Bederka (2014) see Boko Haram as Sunni Islamist fanatics, which seeks an end to secular system of government to enable the implementation of Sharia law in Nigeria. This portrays the insurgents as political terrorists. Similarly, the Nigerian Fact Sheet on Boko Haram (2014) states that “the immediate objective of Boko Haram is to establish strict Sharia law in Northern Nigeria, where the majority of the population is Muslim. Although the twelve Northern states have implemented Sharia governance, Boko Haram believes it is too lenient and violates Islam”. The argument is that although Sharia law operates fully in nine and partially in three of the 36 states of Nigeria (all in the North), Boko Haram wants a thorough implementation of Sharia in all parts of the country.

The Nigerian Fact Sheet on Boko Haram (2014) further states that the insurgents’ ideology is that “Muslims are required to wage *jihad* until all territory once under Muslim rule is returned”. It further reveals that “Boko Haram regards itself as the successor to Usman Dan Fodio who founded the Sokoto Caliphate, which ruled parts of Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon from 1804 until it was formally abolished by the British colonial administration in 1904”. This assumption has however met with some criticisms because the office of the Sultan of Sokoto Caliphate has been branded by the insurgents as *un-Islamic* after the group accused it of taking sides with the Nigerian government which they (Boko Haram insurgents) consider as a ‘common enemy’.

Boko Haram continued its attacks in the way that further widened the divide between Muslims and Christians on one hand and the North and South on the other hand. Furthermore, the Boko Haram attacks have deepened the ethnic and religious divide that accounts for many crises in Nigeria. At different times, Boko Haram issued ultimatums to all Christians living in the north to leave or face death (Anyadike, 2013).



*Figure 2: Some fleeing Christians from the North. Picture credit: The Sun, 2014*

In the past, warnings such as these triggered mass exodus of not only Christians, but also non-Hausas living in the Northern part of Nigeria.

### **1.6. Ethnicity and Nigerian media**

Nigeria has multiple ethnicities, but only three are called major ethnic groups. The main ethnic groups are Hausa-Fulani of the far North, predominantly Muslims; Igbo of the Southeast, predominantly Christians; and the Yoruba of the South-West, predominantly Christians. These three ethnicities represent 71% of the entire Nigerian population (Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Abu Dhabi, n.d). This figure was not independently verified as such segmentation was not available in the National Populations Commission's website. Nigerians have ethnic markers and distinctive accents that easily tell their ethnic origins.

With just a short civilian interlude, Nigeria was under military dictatorship from 1966-1999. In Nigeria, ethnic loyalty takes precedence over national loyalty and identity. This explains why Campbell (2014, p.1) asserts that “Nigerian political life is based on patronage-clientage networks, and religious and ethnic loyalties supersede those to the nation”. The ethnic question

has remained central to most meaningful discourses of the Nigerian project. As Omotola (2010) warns, this trend may likely persist for many more years because of Nigeria's multi-complex pluralism and its effects on the country. In *Ethnic Identity, Political Integration, and National Development: The Igbo Diaspora in Nigeria*, Emeka Onwubu, quoted Chief Obafemi Awolowo (one of the foremost political figures Nigeria ever had) as saying that

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no 'Nigerians' in the same sense as there are 'English' or 'Welsh' or 'French'. The word 'Nigeria' is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not. It is a mistake to designate them 'tribes'. Each of them is a nation by itself ... There is as much difference between them as there is between Germans, English, Russians, and Turks... The fact that they have a common overlord does not destroy this fundamental difference. The languages differ... Their cultural backgrounds and social outlooks differ widely; and their indigenous political institutions have little in common (Awolowo, 1947 cited in Onwubu, 1975, p.399).

This perspective appears to be supported by Davis and Kalu-Nwiyu (2001, p.1) that “when Nigeria achieved independence from Great Britain in October 1960, like most other countries decolonized in Africa, it was a nation in name only. It existed as a political and legal entity, not as an effective and emotive identity”. The above perspectives indicate that Nigeria has since existed in complex structures that tend toward prioritising ethnicity ahead of countrywide interests. The media as a strong institution in Nigeria is also part of these complex structures. Whereas “in a developing society the media needs to be ever conscious not to truncate the process of national integration, cum the safety of lives and properties (Ojo and Adebayo, 2013, p.101)”, it would be too ambitious to tie Nigeria's unity to the media alone. Nonetheless, ethnic interest, in the real sense far outweighs national interest in Nigeria whether in the media or in the outside world.

Media and ethnicity are likened to “Siamese twins” in Nigeria (Ojo, 2013, p.430). It follows that some media organisations in Nigeria are established along ethnic lines and this perhaps is the reason why they find it difficult to disentangle themselves from the firm grips of ethnic cleavages and undertones. As a polarised country with many hard-to-define complexities that balkanise and shape its existence (Mustapha, 2005), Nigeria, it appears has not been able to manage its geographic complex components. The amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 by the British colonial administration has often been blamed for these



issues that cause the recurrent ethno-religious and socio-political crises in the country (Adebanwi, 2004).

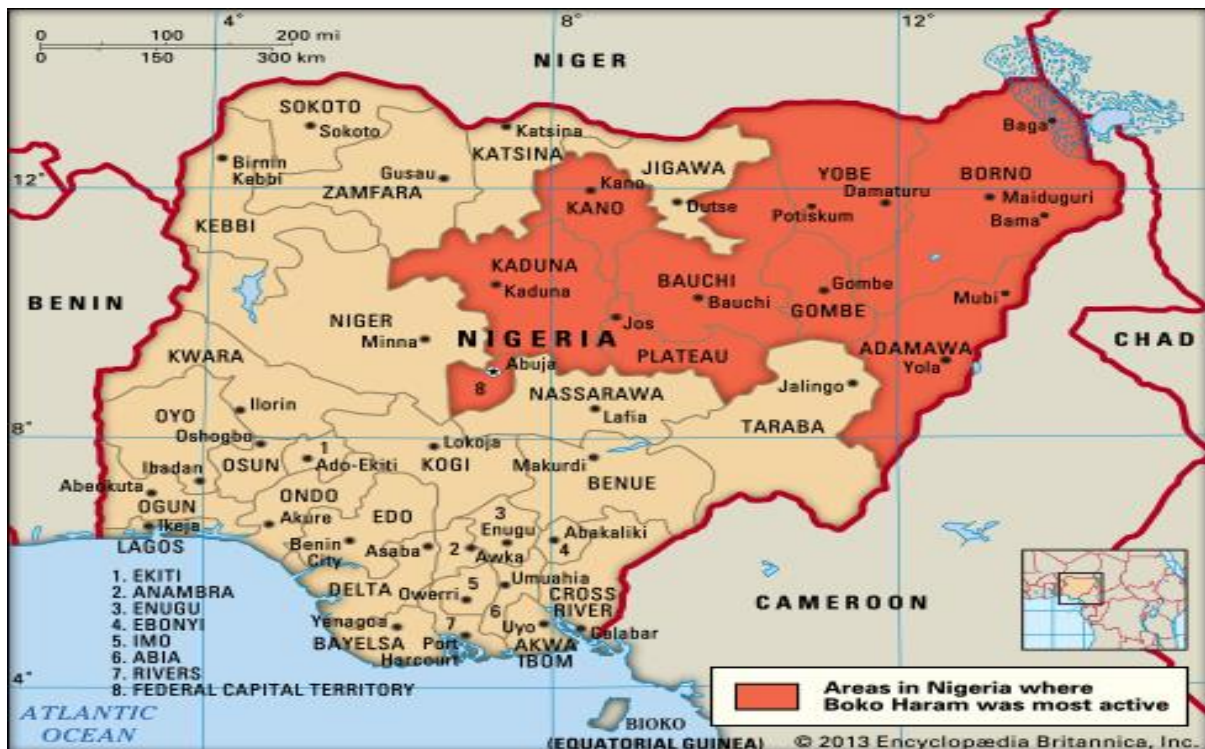


Figure 3: The states and major towns that Boko Haram has attacked. Source: Encyclopaedia Britannica.

History shows that the amalgamation of Nigeria was a tactical administrative-convenience strategy of the colonial administrators to balance the budget deficit of Northern Nigeria Protectorate from the surpluses of Southern Nigeria. For example, Jacob (2012, p.14) argues that “the history of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria is traced back to the colonial transgressions that forced the ethnic groups of the Northern and Southern provinces to become an entity called Nigeria in 1914”. Nigeria has 36 states plus Abuja the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). It also has six geopolitical zones. Although Nigeria has no fewer than 250 ethnic groups and languages, Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba are the major ones. It can be argued that a country with these diversities coupled with nearly 1000 different cultural backgrounds would find it difficult to co-habit without a clash of interest. This clash of interest was responsible for the Biafran war (1967-1970). Despite the national unity campaign that started in the 1970s through the establishment of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC)<sup>8</sup> among other schemes as a post-civil

<sup>8</sup> The NYSC scheme was created in May 1973 as part of the national cohesion strategy to reconstruct, reconcile and rebuild the country after the Nigerian Civil war that lasted between 1967-1970. It was established "with a view to the proper encouragement and development of common ties among the youths of Nigeria and the promotion of national unity". See <http://www.nysc.gov.ng/aboutscheme.html>

war peace strategy, there are still obvious traces of enmity, mistrust, bigotry and suspicion between groups. This study acknowledges, but does not analyse in detail, the role of journalism in these ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. The major message here is that partisan journalism has often exacerbated Nigeria's ethnic problems. The reporting of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has not been free from ethnic undertones as demonstrated in later chapters.

Notwithstanding, the media in Nigeria is either owned by the state or exists independently. Independent media outfits offer alternative views to terrorism coverage (Turk, 2004) as against those owned by the government which are placed under regular control and monitoring to reduce potential public sympathy for terrorists and fear for terrorism. Ideally, the media conveys the needs, aspirations and grievances of the people to the requisite authorities in order to effect the desired change. In so doing, argues Ojo (2007, p.73) the media thus makes up the major deficiency of indirect or representative democracy. In fact, the people-oriented media can even double as the day-to-day parliament of the people, and sometimes prove more effective than that established by the government (Ojo, 2013). However, such a media is expected to be independent of political, religious and ethnic influences.

Tracing the root of this ethnic-oriented media in Nigeria, Sunday (2008) notes that even the first newspaper in Nigeria established by a British missionary, Rev Henry Townsend in 1859 named *Iwe Irohin Fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yorùbá* (meaning, newspaper for the Egba People and the Yoruba) has evidence of ethnic tones in its name and mission. The eventual death of the newspaper was attributed to its deep involvement in Yoruba (one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria) politics as people from other ethnic backgrounds stopped patronising it. This incident shows to an extent that even from its pedagogic beginning, Nigerian media have been marred by ethnic interests (Agbaje, 1993; Ojo, 2013).

Suffice to say that the names and ethnic missions of early Nigerian newspapers clearly manifested in their titles. These titles and names show the states, ethnic groups or regions whose interest the papers were pursuing. For instance, the table 1 below shows the extent to which ethnicity reflects in the Nigerian mediascape. Only very few newspapers have titles that do not immediately depict their ethnic affiliation, although such interests are usually reflected in their content.

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Year of establishment</b>	<b>Ethnic Group or region of interest</b>
<i>Iwe Irohin</i>	1859	Egba people of Yoruba
<i>Lagos Times and Gold Coast Colony Advertiser</i>	1880	Yoruba and Ghanaians
<i>Lagos Observer</i>	1882	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>Lagos Standard</i>	1885	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>The Eagle and Lagos Critic</i>	1883	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>Lagos Echo</i>	1890	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>Lagos Weekly Record</i>	1980	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>Lagos Daily News</i>	1925	Lagos (Yoruba)
<i>Eastern Guardian</i>	--	Eastern Nigeria (Igbo)
<i>the Southern Nigeria Defender</i>	---	Southern Nigeria (Warri)
<i>Eastern Nigerian Outlook</i>	1960	Eastern Nigeria (Igbo)
<i>Jarida Nigeria Ta Arewa</i> (northern province news)	1980	Northern Nigeria (Hausa)

Table 1: Examples of newspaper titles and their ethnic/regional affiliation

To further worsen the ethnic-oriented media scenarios in Nigeria, political elites (some of whom own these media) use the media solely for advancing their selfish political interests. Information perceived to be inimical to an outlet's owners and ethnic interests are removed completely or doctored in favour of its financiers. This situation is still reflected in the ways that Boko Haram activities are reported by the domestic media as later chapters demonstrate. Commenting further on the post-independence Nigerian media regarding their ethnic inclinations, Olukotun (2008, p.13) notes that Nigerian media have fallen short of national expectation because instead of working for national interest and cohesion, they rather divide the public sphere along political, ethnic, regional, and religious lines. This aligns with the earlier claim that the Nigerian press has been established "along the lines of the fissures delineated in these inter-personal, inter-party, intra-party... schisms" (Agbaje, 1993 cited in Olukotun (2008, p.13). This division is recurrent even in the contemporary media organisations and still reflects on the ways news stories are framed and placed.

With the above overview notwithstanding, it cannot be argued that the Nigerian media never advocated for national cohesion. As a matter of fact, some of them at different times played important role in the Nigerian project. Nigeria won its independence without any bloodshed, and the media was the instrument in the hands of nationalists who used them in the fight for independence. Thus, as Adesoji (2010) admits,

As an important stakeholder in the process of nation-building in general and the entrenchment of democratic rule in particular, the Nigerian Press has remained a force to reckon with. Its resilience, obviously a product of its sustained struggle with colonialism and prolonged military rule, not only marked it out as

an important pillar of democracy, it also prepared it for the roles it is playing in the era of constitutional democracy (p.22).

Over all, the development of the Nigerian press has passed through three phases. The first was the missionary phase from 1859-1900 (e.g. *Iwe Irohin*); the nationalist phase from 1900- 1960 (e.g. *The Nigerian Chronicle*); and the post-independence phase from 1960 till date (e.g. *The Tribune, The Punch, The Sun, and Leadership*) (Falola, 2001). Apart from the nationalist newspapers of the pre-independence era, national building has, at best, been scarcely promoted in the media. Thus, the media ecology in Nigeria is saturated with hate campaign a situation that breeds, spreads and nurtures xenophobic nationalism, and ethnic violence among people who, despite their diverse origins had co-habited, albeit in conflicts for more than 100 years. In a multinational state like Nigeria, nationality has often remained a salient dimension of political contention, with much of the leaders, especially those seeking for national positions at the federal level preaching with a nationalist ideology and agenda. However, as soon as the election is won, promotion of ethnic interests takes its ‘priority’ place. For instance, President Buhari was accused of making his military administration “both more northern and more Islamic” Rudolph (2006, p.189). His civilian rule has also been marred by similar accusations.

### **1.7. Justification for focusing on newspapers for the study**

The emergence of social media has posed a stiff challenge to the mainstream media (Alejandro, 2010). This competition is nonetheless warranted. Social media has broken the monotony and overdependence on the mainstream media. People now have plethora of means to satisfy their information needs. Yet, when it comes to credibility and in-depth news coverage, mainstream media, especially newspapers have maintained higher ratings (Kovačič *et al.*, 2010). Newspaper has become a strong brand, even with the competition from the rival genres. Its focus on quality journalism and creation of original content gives it an edge over others. The access to this content has been made easier by the digital age. Unlike the print media (newspaper) news with more chances of verification, people are worried about the credibility of sources, reliability of information, and the difficulties in verifying facts from the new media (Chan *et al.*, 2006). Similarly, Swasy *et al.*, (2015) argue that by their nature, social media outlets do not compare with the mainstream media in terms of objectivity and credibility. Such concerns not only reaffirm the institutional authority of the mainstream media, but also give legitimacy to newspaper sources.

Against this backdrop, newspaper was chosen for this study because unlike the social media where there is no form of gatekeeping, conventional media (newspapers) pass through different gatekeepers to enhance quality of information. Whereas broadcast media and the internet report events live, newspapers provide a detailed or in-depth coverage of an event. To this effect, Wilby (2014, n.p) argues that “for all the cacophony of information that surrounds us, no medium now reliably performs the service of the early modern pamphlet, giving us narrative news with a beginning, a middle and an end”. The above reasons are why the study focused only on newspapers.

## **1.8. Brief background of the selected newspapers**

There has not been any official statistics indicating Nigerian newspapers’ readership and circulation rate. This is because the newspaper organisations “do not make such information available to the public” (Akingbulu and Bussiek, 2010, p.9). The circulation figures, when available, are inflated to attract advertisers, and do not capture the newspaper readership in the country (Akinfemisoye, 2015). This is excusable because more than one person can read a newspaper bought by one person. The three newspapers are independently owned and are among the top ten newspapers in Nigeria<sup>9</sup>.

### **1.8.1. Leadership**

*Leadership* newspaper is arguably one of the most popular newspapers in Nigeria with online and print versions. It prides itself as the “Nigeria’s most influential newspaper.” It has won many national awards including the ‘newspaper of the year 2009’ by the Nigeria Union of Journalists. In its website <http://leadership.ng>, the newspaper proclaims: "We shall stand up for good governance. We shall defend the interests of the Nigerian state even against its leaders and we shall raise our pen at all times in defence of what is right. These are the values by which we intend to be assessed”. In terms of ethnic alignment, *Leadership* is Hausa-oriented. By default, *Leadership* is politically affiliated to the All Progressives Congress (APC). Its founder, Nda-Isaiah is a core APC member and was one of the presidential aspirants under the platform in 2015.

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<sup>9</sup> *Leadership*, *The Punch* and *The Sun* represent popular and elite newspapers that are widely read in Nigeria. nigerianfinder.com reports that the three newspapers are among the top ten newspapers in Nigeria. See <http://nigerianfinder.com/nigerian-dailies-top-10-daily-newspapers-in-nigeria/>

### **1.8.2. *The Punch***

*The Punch* is the oldest of the three newspapers. It was founded in 1973 by two friends – James Aboderin and Sam Amuka. The duo pioneered the growth of the newspaper before parting ways. The newspaper is very popular in Nigeria with huge online and print editions on variety of issues. *The Punch* claims that it strives to promote and uphold the values of democracy and free enterprise through quality news dissemination. It prides itself as ‘the most widely read newspaper in Nigeria’. *The Punch* has a circulation rate of 80000 daily (See <https://answersafrica.com/top-10-nigerian-newspapers-most-read-online.html>). The newspaper is not openly associated with any particular political group. Although *The Punch* is a national newspaper, its content is pro-Yoruba.

### **1.8.3. *The Sun***

*The Sun* prides itself as the ‘voice of the nation’. *The Sun* commenced operations in 2003 with the publication of a weekly and on June 16, 2003, it went daily. The company has its corporate headquarters in Lagos with regional offices in Abuja, Enugu, Port Harcourt, Kaduna, Ibadan and Jos. It also has 42 other branches across Nigeria. In its website <http://sunnewsonline.com/about-us/>, the newspaper states that the vision of the newspaper is “to be a dominant media content provider and entertainment company in Nigeria and Africa through the pursuit of excellence in delivering innovative and quality media and entertainment products.” Its mission is “to practice journalism in the classical tradition of presenting the news and features in an exciting style, with impact, objectivity and appeal that generate returns to all stakeholders: the society, the investors and the practitioners”. Although widely read in the country, *The Sun* is pro-Igbo. There is no official circulation figure for the three newspapers for the reason earlier stated.

## **1.9. The Nigerian media ecology**

In their widely cited *Four Theories of the Press*, Siebert *et al.* (1956) insist that "the press takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates" (pp.1-2). That is to say that the media is expected to reflect the "basic beliefs and assumptions that the society holds". When viewed from the perspectives of the Western liberal tradition, this may include issues such as press freedom, rule of law, political constitutions, electoral system, party systems, and freedom of association. On the other hand, when viewed from the African perspective, this suggests prioritising those belief systems and cultural ties that aid national unity and identity. Nigeria operates a multi-party system. There are many ‘juicy’ laws for the

press and the media regarding how information is sourced and shared. In this section, the focus is on the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA).

In 2011, Nigerian media embraced the very first ‘practicable’ legislative infrastructure to boost freedom of the press following the signing into law of the Freedom of Information Bill (FoIB). This bill survived three administrations (12 years) without being passed. With its passage and presidential assent, it became law in 2011, and thus christened Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) with clearly specified objectives and provisions for both the people and the media. The delay in the passage of the bill was caused by the fear nursed by the political elites of being exposed by the media. The Senate also cited the infiltration of the media industry by quacks as the reason for the delay. Just like Ogola (2015a) argues about Kenya where the exponential growth of the media has led to the emergence of ‘gutter press’, the Nigerian mediascape is also inhabited by the ‘road side press’- “often funded by politicians to malign their adversaries, ruin reputations or settle scores” (pp. 95-6). Although these were some reasons for the protracted delay in the enactment of the FoIA, it appears the fear of facing public scrutiny especially by public office holders was the main reason for the delay. The law stemmed from the media’s rights and freedom in every democratic setting as guaranteed by Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People’s Right (ACHPR). Its core provisions are “1. Every individual shall have the right to receive information. 2. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law” (ACHPR, 1986).

The Nigerian government has a complicated relationship with the media. Thus, despite the ‘robust press and freedoms’ guaranteed under the law, Nigeria cannot boast of a truly open press that is independent of government’s influence. This explains why despite this law, Nigeria’s position in the press freedom index still plummets. Many journalists, in the process of newsgathering and dissemination may be manhandled, murdered, incarcerated, maimed, kidnapped and subjected to extra-judicial attacks in order to subdue and stifle their voices. While press freedom is provided for by the law, *Newsweek* cites the former US ambassador to Nigeria, John Campbell as saying that the media face retribution considered “episodic, unpredictable and very often arbitrary... In a general climate of lawlessness, if a newspaper



publishes something that a big man or some part of the government doesn't like, it's likely to have its offices ransacked by a mob”<sup>10</sup>.

In a similar manner, many media outfits have faced proscription, arson or bans from certain places as means of containing their ‘excesses’ or ‘calling them to order’. This was the case when on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2012, Boko Haram simultaneously bombed the Abuja offices of *ThisDay*, *The Sun*, and *The Moment* office in Kaduna, citing lack of ‘objectivity’ as the reason. From brutalising journalists to impounding copies and delivery vans, the Nigerian press of the post-FoIA era can only be fairly described as semi-independent. Evidence from the Media Rights Agenda as well as the interview from journalists in the later chapter of this study has demonstrated that the provisions of the FoIA have been violated in Nigeria. For instance, “Prison Official Assaults Journalists Covering High Court” MRA<sup>11</sup> (2016).

In the same vein, Nigerian President, Muhammadu Buhari on assuming office in May 2015, banned *AIT* (African Independent Television) from covering activities of his presidency because it ran a documentary perceived to be critical of his 2015 presidential campaign. Subsequently, all groups and politicians loyal to the President stopped placing adverts on the *AIT* (Daar Communication) media group. More recently is the effort of the present administration of Muhammadu Buhari directing the National Assembly to pass an Anti-Social Media Bill in order to ‘tame’ some people who use the platforms to attack his government and propagate ‘hate’. In the midst of all these worrying scenarios, some media outfits have remained as daring as ever, refusing to be deterred by the indiscriminate repressive laws of different administrations. Nevertheless, many of them have become “instruments of oppression, disunity, political vendetta, tools for coups promotions, frame ups, and frame down and baseless propaganda” (Akinfeleye, 2003, p.50 cited in Kur and Endwell, 2015). This also reflected in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The ACHPR and the FoIA should, in theory, enable Nigeria to compete favourably with countries that have the freest press across the globe. However, Nigerian press still grapples with constant gagging. Only a few journalists have taken a confrontational approach that challenges government’s interference.

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<sup>10</sup> Being a statement credited to John Campbell cited in “Nigeria's Free-Wheeling Media Fears Crackdown over Boko Haram Battle”. Accessed on 22/07/17 at: <http://www.newsweek.com/nigerias-free-wheeling-media-fears-crackdown-over-boko-haram-battle-259994>

<sup>11</sup> MRA- Media Rights Agenda is a non-governmental organisation with focus on freedom of expression, access to information and media development/persecutions. See <http://mediarightsagenda.net/web/prison-official-assaults-journalists-covering-high-court/>



As a social institution, Nigerian media has had challenges, which often put its editorial independence in question. For instance, Ojo and Adebayo (2013) argue that “any time ethno-religious conflict between and among ethnic groups occurs, the way and manner headlines are cast usually wear the toga of incitement. A media like this is indeed dangerous to the state” (p.101). This is why the role of the media as the society watchdog has come under intense criticism in Nigeria particularly. Ojo and Adebayo (2013) while enumerating the many ‘sins’ of the Nigerian media argue that “as watchdogs of the society the media seem not to have been able to effectively watch it. Whereas, if not properly managed, the mass media may eventually become an agent of destabilization rather than integration in a plural and deeply divided society like Nigeria” (p.98). It should be noted that after several democratic experiments, Nigeria is experiencing the longest surviving democracy in its history. By 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Nigeria should be 20 years under the ongoing democracy. This is a major milestone for Nigerians. If the trend of handing over power from one democratic administration to another continues, Nigeria would remain grateful to its media because despite the contemporary challenges in Africa, the media remains a strong component of its democratic survival (Demarest, 2017; Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997). On the other hand, if Nigerian democracy fails again today, the media may arguably share in the blame.

### **1.10. Nigeria internet penetration**

In 2016, over 86 million Nigerians were using internet (Internetlivestats.com, 2016). Although the internet penetration is 46.1% according to the Internetlivestats.com (2016), it could be observed that many Nigerians use internet. Mobile phones are commonly used to access the web. Most of the internet users are young, educated and urban-based. Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Nigeria. This has led to an exponential growth of citizen or ‘alternative’ journalism where many bloggers have emerged. While citizen journalism provides alternative narratives that challenge the then monopolistic tendencies of the mainstream media, the problem, as Ogola (2015b) argues is that citizen journalists lack discipline, and are radical in news approach with no discernible formal approach. In addition “It is also intentionally disruptive of known journalistic norms and practices” (p.68). Another concern that has remained difficult to address about the Internet and social media in Africa is “how to discern myth from reality” (Mudhai, 2004, p.315). These multimedia platforms have also provided terrorists with means of recruiting new members (Kenny, 2010). Terrorists’ use of the Internet

and social media is discussed in chapter two. Despite these shortcomings, Internet and the social media have gained wide acceptance in Nigeria. Although the Nigeria's internet penetration in 2016 was 46.1%, it has ranked number one in Africa and seventh in the world in terms of the number of internet users (see <http://www.internetlivestats.com/internet-users-by-country/>) for details.

### **1.11. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis has nine chapters. The first three chapters provide contextual background and theoretical underpinnings for the study. The introductory chapter gives an insight into the objectives of the study and justifications. It contextualises the origin of the Boko Haram insurgency and describes the Nigerian media environment. It further highlights the contributions of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of literature on the relationship between media and terrorism. It situates the study within the context of the emerging research tradition that challenges the arguments relating to the media's alleged role in publicising terrorism. While cautiously advocating for a rethink of the publicity of terrorism claims, the study argues that the demands for news and expectations of the public are heightened when terrorists attack. The chapter explains how terrorists hone their communication skills to reach their audiences. The review extends to how terrorists use social media and the Internet as well as the implications of this on the broader relationship between media and terrorism.

Chapter 3 focuses on the relevant theoretical foundation underpinning the study with a particular focus on framing theory. The aim is to provide a broader perspective on the coverage and interpretation of the Boko Haram insurgency or terrorism in Nigeria and beyond.

Chapter 4 explores the research philosophies and the methodological approach for this study. Using a mixed methods approach, this study offers an alternative methodological approach to the evaluation of media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The chapter also discusses the philosophical underpinnings that guided the study. It explains the research designs employed in data collection – content analysis, in-depth interview and questionnaire. It further explains the samples drawn for this study as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 are the empirical chapters of this study. Specifically, Chapter 5 assesses the narratives in the coverage of the insurgency via content analysis. It evaluates the dominant

news frames employed by the domestic media (*Leadership*, *The Punch*, and *The Sun*) in covering the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. The chapter compares episodic and thematic frames in the coverage. It measures frame indicators, establishing the dominance of political frame, religious frame, and ethnicity in the coverage.

While Chapter 5 evaluates the seven predetermined frames adopted for this study, Chapter 6 explores ten new meta-frames that emerged from the content analysis. It investigates the pattern of the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. This measure becomes necessary in order to understand the nature of the coverage and the extent to which stories about the Boko Haram insurgency received prominence in the newspapers. The chapter also examines the language as part of the effort to understand the nature of the coverage. It reveals that the language employed in the coverage of the insurgency was largely subjective.

Chapter 7 draws on interview data to critically examine the Nigerian journalists' views on the 'publicity' of terrorism, the variation in the coverage and the challenges that impinge on their professional conducts in the coverage of the insurgency. The chapter evaluates how the broader media environment or ecology – legal, political and culture (ethnicity) shaped the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria as well as how professional and institutional factors affected the coverage of the insurgency in Nigeria.

Chapter 8 offers a complementary approach to measuring the views of Nigerian journalists in the coverage of the insurgency. This chapter presents questionnaires to cross-verify the findings from the content analysis and the interviews. This instrument quantifies the views of Nigerian journalists, and adds to the triangulation process in this study. Findings from this chapter also shows consistencies with the findings in the other methods.

Chapter 9 critically discusses the findings. It offers concluding reflections of the major findings of the study. It highlights the contributions of the study while also acknowledging the limitations of the study. It also recommends areas that require further exploration.

## CHAPTER 2

### Media and Terrorism Symbiosis: Expanding the Debate

#### 2.0. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of literature on media and terrorism. It situates the study within the context of the emerging research tradition that challenges the publicity of terrorism. While cautiously advocating for a rethink of the publicity of terrorism claims, the study argues that the demands for news and expectations of the public are heightened when terrorists attack. This means that as a big news event, terrorism needs to be interpreted and analysed. In particular, the literature is examined in the light of criticism by a section of the public and/or scholars that journalists act unwittingly as terrorists' accomplices.

The discussions in this chapter are therefore divided into three major sections. The first section interrogates the 'publicity thesis' in the coverage of terrorism. The second section concentrates on the mediatisation of terrorists' events, emphasising terrorism as a symbolic act and why it is newsworthy. Terrorists' use of social media and the Internet is also examined to critically reflect on its implications for the broader relationship between the media and terrorism. The third section explores objectivity in terrorism coverage.

#### 2.1. Media coverage of terrorism: Interrogating the publicity thesis

Terrorism has been variedly interpreted. There is no consensus over the definition of terrorism (Nacos, 2007; Kampf, 2014). As Kushner (2003) contends, terrorism has as many definitions as its methods of execution. In whatever guise, terrorism operates under three clear factors of violence, target, and motive (VTM). This implies that terrorists are people who use violence on their targets (individuals, groups, government) for different purposes. In its origin, terrorism "usually meant violence carried out by a government or a ruling order, rather than, as later, the actions of anti-government rebels" (Jenkins, 2003, p.27). It is also seen as the "intentional creation of death and destruction to instil fear and feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, intimidation, demoralization, chaos, and helplessness among those targeted" (Fleischman and Wood, 2002, p.315). In most of the commentaries about terrorism, analysts seem to shy away from the role of the nation-state in 'promoting' terrorism. After all, terrorism does not occur 'in a vacuum,' neither is it an ahistorical occurrence. So, understanding terrorism and how it has evolved over the years is considered significant. This is in view of the fact that the term 'terrorism' is socially constructed. This is also because it takes a socially negotiated perceptions

and often subjective views from different actors – government, military, media, scholars, politicians and analysts to tag an issue as terrorism. That is why “contrary to the impression fostered by official incidence counts and media reports, terrorism is not a given in the real world but is instead an interpretation of events and their presumed causes ” (Turk, 2004, p.271-272).

The US law defines terrorism as “a premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents” (Section 2656f (d) of Title 22 of the United States Code). Although this definition is widely used in much media and terrorism research, the newer dimensions of terrorist attacks and the media coverage challenge its validity. On one hand, terrorism today cannot be confined only to a ‘politically motivated’ violence because religion, poverty, illiteracy and other factors have been suggested as motivations for some terrorists attacks (Esposito, 2015, Ali and Li, 2015; Voll, 2013; Feridun, 2014; Piazza, 2011). Contributing to this debate in relation to the Boko Haram insurgency, de Montclos argues that

Boko Haram is not simply the result of the socio-economic ills so often cited as the root causes of terrorism; the group highlights a number of deep-rooted problems that exist within Nigeria. It is correct that the north is generally poorer than the south with a majority of the economic infrastructure developed around Abuja and the southern port city of Lagos, but poor governance, corruption, ethno-religious conflict, and military human rights violations have all played a significant role in creating Boko Haram (de Montclos, 2014 cited in Andre, 2017).

I have always disagreed with those who attribute social ills in the North to poverty. Poverty is a Nigerian-wide problem. When weighed against the regions that control the nation’s resources, the North should arguably be less poor. For instance, after 57 years of Nigeria’s independence, Northerners have been the prime minister or presidents for 40 years and counting. The South has only been in power for 20 years including the circumstantial emergence of Goodluck Jonathan from the Southern minority who became president following the demise of his predecessor, Umaru Yar’Adua. Recall that Tafawa Balewa and Nnamdi Azikiwe formed a coalition government in 1963. While the former retained his Prime ministership, the latter became a ceremonial President. See the table below:

<b>Presidents/Prime Minister</b>	<b>Period in office</b>	<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Region</b>
Sir A.T. Balewa (Prime minister)	1 <sup>st</sup> Oct 1960 - Jan 15th 1966	6 years	North
Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe	1 <sup>st</sup> Oct 1963 –1 <sup>st</sup> Jan 1966	3 yeas	South
General J.T.U. Aguyi-Ironsi	Jan 15th 1966 – Jul 29th 1966	6 months	South
General Yakubu Gowon	1966 - 1975	9 years	North
General Murtala Mohammed	29th Jul 1975 - Feb 13, 1976	1 year	North
General Olusegun Obasanjo	1976 - 1979.	3 years	South
Alhaji Shehu Shagari	1st Oct. 1979 - 3rd Dec 1983	4 years	North
General Muhammadu Buhari	1983 - 1985	2 years	North
General Ibrahim Babangida	27 Aug 1985 - 26 Aug 1993	8 years	North
Chief Ernest Shonekan	26 Aug, 1993 – 17 Nov 1993	3 months	South
General Sani Abacha	Nov 1993 - 8th Jun, 1998	5 years	North
General Abdulsalam Abubakar	Jun 8, 1998 - May 29, 1999	1 year	North
Chief Olusegun Obasanjo	May 29,1999 - May 29, 2007	8 years	South
Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'adua	May 29, 2007 - May 5, 2010	3 years	North
Dr. Goodluck Jonathan	May 6, 2010 - May 29, 2015	5 years	South
Muhammadu Buhari	May 29, 2015 till Date	2 years till date	North
Total		<b>N (40+), S (20)</b>	

Table 2 showing how long both South and North have been in power since independence.

Thus, contrary to the perspective that the insurgency was prompted by poverty in the North, Ajala (2018) argues that the quest by political elites to attain or retain political positions is largely the reason for the insurgency. Nigerian politicians hijack any violence to make political gain. This means that “as long as political offices remain ‘business ventures’ used for political patronage, violent conflicts are likely to remain” (Ajala, 2018, p.124). Therefore, in a country where leaders care less about the wellbeing of the entire population, but their immediate families, states and tribes, the North should in reality be richer than other regions. On the other hand, the South has more natural resources, but the areas such as the South-East has been politically disadvantaged. Although being a president from a particular region does not translate to an improved standard of living of that region, it is fair to say that poverty in Nigeria is not a regional phenomenon, but a country-wide problem. However, if there is a correlation between natural resources or low level of education and terrorism, then the North would have more ‘excuses’ to give for the emergence of Boko Haram because the South is more educationally advantaged than the North. In addition, factors such as adequate funding, ‘regional location’, ‘tactics’ have also been linked to the longevity of the terrorists (see Blomberg, Gaibullov, and Sandler (2011).

Having said that, may I emphasise that the growing body of research in media and terrorism can be broadly segmented into three schools of thought, including the *publicists* (those arguing

that media helps terrorists to achieve publicity), the *non-publicists* (these scholars deemphasise publicity, arguing that media coverage of terrorism is non-negotiable), and the *neutrals* (scholars that neither argue from the *publicists* nor the *non-publicists* perspectives). This also speaks to the evolving nature of terrorism as witnessed in Nigeria and other parts of the world. In response to this trend, the media is left with the responsibility of deciding whether, in line with its editorial policies, the story is worth covering. In the coverage of terrorism such as the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, it is believed that the audience perception of terrorism is based on the interpretation and framing accorded to it by the media.

In covering terrorism, mass media, whether consciously or unconsciously, is accused of playing into the agenda of terrorists. Utilizing the dramatic force and immediacy of the modern media technologies, terrorists send their messages across (Perešin, 2007). Through these media, people witness attacks as they unfold. This is what makes terrorism news powerful with the potential to create an odd fixation in the audience (Der Derian, 2005). As Hoffman (2003) notes, terrorists want to “shock people everywhere...because it is their way of communicating with the people” (p.118). Similarly, Nacos (2003, 2007) argues that insurgents rely on attacks and subsequent news coverage as a strategy for communicating their grievances in order to effect policy changes. From Hoffman’s view, it can be argued that in the symmetrical relationship between the media and terrorists, the former also derives a kind of satisfaction from offering the public ‘breaking news’ while the latter receive increased attention.

At the centre of the argument is that, since terrorists find it difficult to gain attention through substantial means such as paid advertisement, they penetrate the media via the backdoor by inflicting attacks to boost their publicity. Thus, while the media is said to gain more patronage from the public, terrorists gain publicity (Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012; Keranen and Sanprie, 2008; Hoffman, 2003; Miller, 1982; Ross, 2007; Weinmann and Winn, 1994; Laqueur, 1977). Laqueur (1977) entirely hinged the success of every terrorist operation on the amount of publicity it receives. Similarly, Hoffman (2003) believes that reporting terror incidents facilitates the realisation of the goals of terrorists. Nacos (2000) also argues that paying attention to terrorism attacks gives terrorists credence and “without massive news coverage the terrorist act would resemble the proverbial tree falling in the forest: if no one learned of an incident, it would be as if it had not occurred” (p.175).

While some governments may compel the media to deemphasise publicity of terrorism (maybe because it glorifies terrorists or maybe because it affects intelligence-gathering), the public might want to know what happened and in a detailed manner. While negotiating this terrain about the public's right to know and pleasing the government, the editorial independence of the media may be tampered with. This aligns with the principles of *media censorship or statutory regulation* (one of the major policy options for media response to terrorism coverage), which assumes that given its enormous power (negative or positive), media content should be vetted to avoid any content that glorifies or amplifies the agenda of terrorists (Wilkinson, 1997). Scholars such as Brinson and Stohl (2012); Ross (2007); Picard (1981, 1986); Miller (1982) have raised the question of whether governments or the media should resist the temptation of media coverage or terrorist activities as a means of curtailing the excesses of terrorists or not.

The above researchers argue that minimising media publicity of terrorism acts could limit terrorists' exploitation of the media to cause public anxiety and reach out to their supporters. They argue that other 'odd' stories of magnitude can attract the attention of the media rather than terrorism attacks. Although this may sound plausible, the implication is that such measures stifle press freedom and silence the opposition (terrorists or journalists). This encourages the conventional media to adopt government narratives to frame terrorist activities (Kampf, 2014; Bennet, 2009; Entman, 2004). This contrasts with the suggestion that good journalism should report both 'official' and dissident voices (Robinson *et al.*, 2010; Entman, 2004; Schudson, 2002). When government tries to restrict the media from covering terrorism on the assumption that it publicizes it, such situation might breed media's over-reliance on official sources for their reports. By implication, when the media relies on official sources about stories on terrorism, there is a likelihood that such stories may be framed to favour the official sources.

Extending this argument, Klausen (2015) accuses the media of unwittingly or wittingly helping terrorists in achieving their goals, citing the 2001 Al Qaeda war in Afghanistan. Following the group's annihilation, there was a need to reconnect with its supporters and interest groups. According to Klausen (2015, p.3), the medium chosen for this purpose was *Al-Jazeera* through tapes sent by "messengers". Similarly, Klausen notes that "two months after the 2005 London Underground attacks, *Al-Jazeera* broadcast an Internet posting from Ayman al-Zawahiri taking responsibility, together with Mohammad Sidique Khan's suicide video. A year later, on the anniversary of the London attacks, *Al-Jazeera* released a second video featuring a second 7/7



bomber, Shehzad Tanweer. The novelty value of the Britons' delivery of the message guaranteed airtime for a while" (p.3). Although the above reason sounds logical, it does not seem strong enough for generalisation. For instance, positions of different studies are not very clear about the type of coverage that amounts to publicising terrorism. Also contributing to the debate is Spencer (2012, p.6) who notes that media provides the means of attracting attention and spreading of terrorists' agenda. The situation that portrays the media as terrorists' 'accomplices' (Schmid 1989, p.540).

Although the claims have been that media overreacts to terrorism incidents (see Nacos, 2000; Spencer, 2012; Irvin, 1992), there has not been a clear understanding of the amount of terrorism reports that can be regarded as overreaction or over coverage. While one may not totally debunk the publicity claim, the scholars cited above do not validate whether silence to terrorism activities irrespective of the magnitude is the best option to addressing terrorist attacks. In fact, no research seems to have drawn the implication of *silence* over terrorism matters. The studies do not specify which media (conventional or social; government-owned, private-owned or terrorists-owned) given that different media outlets approach terrorism coverage from different perspectives. On the other hand, since most media organisations cannot do without their audiences Vu (2014), it seems sensible to argue that the media is serving the audiences. Therefore, if the audiences no longer want terrorism news, the organisation may have to adjust to what appeals to its audiences. Using reader metrics, both the conventional and social media platforms consider the audiences in news and editorial selection.

As noted in Chapter 1, academic discourse on media and terrorism has increased since the 9/11 terrorist attack. However, many authors still conclude that media coverage of terrorism activities is the reason for their spread. Highlighting on the relationship between media and terrorism, Ekwueme and Obayi, (2012, p.1) argue that mass media and terrorism enjoy a 'symbiotic relationship' but terrorists have more need of the media than the media need them. This was considered in Margaret Thatcher's famous lamentation that "publicity is the oxygen of terrorism" (Vieira, 1991, p.73; Muller *et al.* 2003, p.65). In the same vein, Ireju, Mba-Nwigo and Ojo (2014) suggest that terrorism cannot survive without the media. Even with this claim, Wilkinson (1997, p.60) defends the media's 'valuable' contributions to war against terrorism, which "outweigh the disadvantages and risks and the undoubted damage caused by a small minority of irresponsible journalists and broadcasters." Wilkinson is concerned that media's role in terrorism coverage has been 'gravely underestimated'. This implies that as

much as analysts condemn the perceived ‘failings’ of media coverage of terrorism, it is also fair to commend the efforts of the media as an indispensable forum for discussing the general implication of terrorist attacks or threats.

Scholars like Miller *et al.*, (2008) argue that the news media cannot be cowed into shying away from reporting terrorist activities. This is because terrorists also run their own media platforms for propaganda and misinformation. Although terrorists’ owned media may not boast of as many audiences as the public or private media organisations, “they do serve vital functions of maintaining ideological militancy among members and sympathisers and spreading their ideas to other potentially sympathetic groups. It would be foolish to underestimate their importance as channels of propaganda, as a means of inspiring fervour and as a means of explaining fresh policies or tactics adopted by the leadership to the rank and file.” (Wilkinson, 1997, p.54). While the above explanation appears logical, it cannot be emphatically claimed without proper empirical investigation. This thesis, thus argues that hinging the survival of terrorism on media alone does not seem to have any empirical backing.

It is believed that some democratic nations threatened by terrorists have sought to deny direct media access to terrorists, especially the broadcast media. In this school of thought is the Margaret Thatcher’s ‘publicity is the oxygen of terrorism’ avowal. This was the case when Britain placed a ban on broadcasting the IRA/Sinn Fein voices in interviews with Ulster terrorists. The implication of applying this approach is that in the process of trying to save the media from being manipulated by terrorists, freedom of the press (a basic ingredient for the survival of democracy) is truncated while trying to punish a small group of people (Wilkinson, 1997). Extending this debate beyond publicity to other evolving spectrums of terrorism coverage has become necessary after the 9/11 incident that led to wider research in terrorism and media.

Although the nature of this study does not permit the recommendation of the ‘best practices’, there is a need to take a closer look at the ‘voluntary self-restraint’ or self-censorship policy used by some media organisations in the coverage of terrorism. Wilkinson (1997) argues that this approach is favoured by the ‘more responsible’ media organisations to check any manipulation and/or exploitation of the media by terrorist groups. This approach has been applied by CBS News for its staff to avoid playing into the hands of terrorists. For instance, in “Shekau claims victory in raid of Borno military bases” (*The Sun*, 2013, p.5), the media

inadvertently publicises and ‘celebrates’ Boko Haram’s looting of the armoury. Using a different headline e.g. (Shekau admits guilt for looting the armoury’ would send a different message to the larger public that terrorism is a guilt adventure. This is because criminals ‘admit guilt for’. Therefore, using ‘claims victory for’ is a term that is suitable for a ‘good’ deed. This process is an example of self-censorship.

Sometimes, discussions on the relationship between media and terrorism boil down to a bittersweet status. This was the case in Nigeria when media organisations and journalists were ‘deliberately’ targeted by the Boko Haram insurgents, killing Isah Zakari and Ben Akogwu, reporters with the *Nigerian Television Authority*, and the *Channels TV* respectively (Ekwueme and Obayi 2012). The above incident was followed by other attacks on the Nigerian media, a situation that marked a turning point in the coverage of the insurgency. For instance, it accentuated fears among journalists in the coverage of the insurgency. On the other hand, it made journalists less ambitious because they have to rely on foreign media and government sources for many of their stories. Elsewhere, the relationship between journalists and terrorists has often deteriorated. For instance, following the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, the then secretary general of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Aidan White reacted thus: “terrorism, by the United States and its international coalition has created a dangerous situation in which journalists have become victims as well as key actors in reporting events” (White, 2002, p.2). The above scenario therefore counters or reduces the generalisation of some scholars’ belief that sees the media as ‘terrorist accomplices’. It can therefore be argued that the relationship between the media and terrorists is not always romantic, but bittersweet.

### **2.1.2. Media coverage of terrorism: The boundary not defined and the need for interpretation**

Much has been said about the relationship between media and terrorism. Yet none of the research advocating for deemphasizing terrorism news in the media has defined what constitutes an acceptable boundary of coverage of terrorism news. Understanding this boundary will reduce speculations in media and terrorism discourse. Wilkinson (2011) admits that “it would be foolish to deny that modern technology, communications satellites and the rapid spread of television have had a marked effect in increasing the publicity potential of terrorism” (p.150). In the same line of thought is Louw (2003) who notes that the 9/11 event for instance was designed for publicity to reach three major audiences including, the American

people (to influence their views about US foreign policy); the al-Qaeda group and its loyalists (whose morale was meant to be boosted); and the Muslims in general because the attack would attract and radicalise them even more.

In view of its significance in media and terrorism research, Galily, Yarchi and Tamir (2015) described the 9/11 event as a ‘game changer’. This may have been as a result of the symbolic importance of America. Therefore, rather than dwell on the publicity of terrorism, attention should be shifting to how the media frame, interpret, and influence the dynamics of public opinions on terrorism issues (*see* Matthews, 2015; Richards, 2007; Zelizer and Allan, 2002; Norris, Kern and Just, 2003). As estimated by the National Counterterrorism Centre (NCTC, 2008) approximately 30 terrorist activities take place somewhere in the world every day. This figure may have however, been overtaken by the incessant waves of terrorist attacks fuelled by ISIS (in the Middle East and some parts of Africa) and other related groups across Africa and beyond.

Considering that ‘bad news is good news’ to the media, it does not fit well into the thinking that ignoring such news stories would offer any different gain to the public. Again, since media coverage of terrorism keeps people better informed of the styles of attack, it can be argued that people also get to know how to be cautious to avoid being victims. This may not be in the best interest of terrorists. Reporting just that terrorists attacked a place without an interpretation of the situation may leave many critical issues unaddressed. I argue that it would be a disservice to the public to which the media claims to serve if terrorism attacks (which prompt people to yearn for explanation and interpretation) are ignored. Therefore, without interpretation, it would be difficult to understand the deeper effects and causes or gravity of attacks and other issues relating to the attacks.

## **2.2. Boko Haram: A mediatised ‘scourge’?**

Globally, many violent attacks happen on a daily basis but they do not attract any sustained media attention as the ones dubbed ‘terrorism’. The term in itself is very problematic, and locates terror sentiments too concretely in the actions of a certain person, group or people. For instance, Cui and Rothenbuhler (2017) argue that “‘while death by non-terrorist gun violence is many times more common in the United States than death caused by terrorism, the fear of terrorism and the rating of it as a public opinion issue far outweigh gun violence—and this disparity increases following media coverage” (p.1). Also decrying the prevalence of other

violent killings that do not measure up to the coverage of ‘terrorism’ status, *The Guardian* reports that “the reality is that an American is at least twice as likely to be shot dead by a toddler than killed by a terrorist” (*The Guardian*, 08/02/2017). In Nigeria, coup d’états, ethno-religious crises, political violence, mob actions (street justice), ritual killings, and the outbreak of diseases have led to more deaths than terrorism, yet they do not attract as much attention as the Boko Haram terrorism.

All these suggest that terrorism enjoys a bigger attention in the media. To problematize this scenario, it should be emphasised that terrorist events and the attendant deaths, injuries or damages, are not in themselves the end, but the means to terrorism goals accentuated by media coverage. This idea aligns with terrorism’s intention to frighten and intimidate both the survivors and the audience. This is where the idea of mediatisation comes in. It is defined as ‘the strategic coercion of imperative media coverage of the attacks’ (Cui and Rothenbuhler, 2017, p.1). Moreover, mediatisation is seen as “the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to, or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic” (Hjarvard, 2008, p.113). Mediatisation represents a pragmatic shift in media and journalism research. Within the terrorism discourse, Stańco-Wawrzyńska (2017, p.329) argues that “mediatisation of terrorism is a process, in which terrorism yields its autonomy, becomes dependent on mass media in realisation of its basic and essential (central) functions and is permanently shaped by an interaction with media”.

Mediatisation as a concept also “denotes the processes through which core elements of a cultural or social activity (e.g. politics, religion, language) assume media form. As a consequence, the activity is to a greater or lesser degree performed through interaction with a medium, and the symbolic content and the structure of the social and cultural activities are influenced by media environments which they gradually become more dependent upon” (Hjarvard, 2007, p.3). The Boko Haram insurgency has been mediatised. The insurgency is part of a history of crises in Nigeria. The post-independence era is replete with repeated cases of inter-religious crises, pre and post-elections violence, military incursions, Niger-Delta militancy, civil war, ethnic crises and lately, the Boko Haram insurgency. However, the Boko Haram insurgency has had a more widespread and sustained media coverage at both local and international levels (Andre, 2017; Zenn and Pearson, 2014; Popoola, 2012). Andre (2017) explains that “Boko Haram has received a significant amount of western media attention since 2011, with many outlets giving it significant attention”.

The interconnectedness between terrorist groups and government's counterterrorism approach have granted terrorism global visibility through their mediatization. Apart from its often-incontestable large-scale damage to life and property, repeated visible presence of terrorism in the media has inevitable symbolic consequences, which may include the hunger to kill more for more media attention. In view of its widespread coverage, it has been argued that "Boko Haram has already evolved from a local threat into a regional one, and there are signs that some factions of the group have already abandoned Nigeria-oriented objectives in favour of transnational militant goals, and extended their networks from Nigeria to Sudan and as far as the United Kingdom" (NYT, 2012). This is even more so considering that the group pledged its loyalty to the Islamic State in 2015. The global media attention to the Boko Haram insurgency was heightened by the magnitude of the kidnapping of over 200 teenage schoolgirls from the Chibok town of Maiduguri in April 2014, (Weerantne, 2015).

### **2.3. Mediatizing the orchestrated message? Terrorism as a symbolic act**

Terrorists target iconic landmarks or national monuments. Terrorists, Farnen (1990) notes 'consciously target exotic' venues in their quest for relevance and attention which normal places could hardly achieve for them. For instance, after the 1993 truck bombing of the World Trade Centre financed by one Khaled Sheikh Mohammed, which claimed the lives of six persons, 9/11 attacks by al Qaeda also targeted the same iconic place. The 2017 Westminster attacks also portray terrorists' thirsts for iconic places. They also target significant ceremonies such as the 2010 Independence Day bombing in Abuja, Nigeria; the 2011 Christmas day bombing in Madala, Nigeria; the 2016 Christmas market attack in Germany, and the 2013 Boston Marathon attack. Some scholars have located modern terrorism within the symbolic communication theoretical framework (*see* Cui and Rothenbuhler, 2017; Weimann and Winn, 1994; Weimann, 2008). Symbolic communication theory sees terrorism as a symbolic act that can be analysed in form of the four basic communication components, of "(a) transmitter (the terrorist), (b) intended recipient (target), (c) message (bombing, ambush) and (d) feedback (reaction of target audience)" (Weimann, 2008, p.380). This suggests that terrorists adopt the same communication strategies available to media outlets to mediatise themselves and their agenda. Weimann (2008, 1994) also adopted the *theatre of terror* metaphor to depict the sophisticated way in which modern terrorism can be 'acted' like a play on a stage. This explains why perpetrators use terrorism as a communication strategy to reach multiple audiences. Similarly, Farnen (1990) also notes that terrorism is an orchestrated event that consciously

targets exotic locations, involving bizarre characters, and is politically relevant. Louw (2003, p.211) also adds that “those attacking the World Trade Centre deployed an understanding of terrorism as a ‘media event’, a grasp of how the US politics (and warfare) has been ‘mediatized’”.

Following their seemingly orchestrated message, Weimann (2008) also notes that some “terror units consist of at least four members: (a) the perpetrator, (b) a cameraman, (c) a soundman, and (d) a producer. Modern terrorists, it has been contended feed the media directly and indirectly, with their propaganda materials, often disguised as news items. They also monitor the coverage, examining closely the reporting of various media organizations” (pp.383-384). Weimann claims that the above is why the modern day terrorism has thrived and turned the media as a tool in their hands for use and abuse. Similarly, Dalei and Mishra (2009, p.6) argue that “today’s terroristic acts are ‘*Tria Juncta in Uno*’ requiring along with a perpetrator and a victim, the public, for who it is all carefully choreographed, to gain maximum attention. Grievance claims, self-display and propaganda all come together in a theatrical performance for an audience whose participation is solicited”. Dowling (1986, p.14) adds that terrorism has “a rhetoric genre” because “terrorists engage in recurrent rhetorical forms that force the media to provide the access without which terrorism could not fulfil its objectives”. Kushner (2003) explains that most terror acts are meant to instil fear and force a political or social change. However, it should be emphasised that without the media coverage of terrorism, people’s quest to know may be undermined.

Still on these complexities, terrorists themselves are growing with more strategies to outwit and manipulate the media. For instance, in his analysis of international terrorism, Jenkins (1975, p.4) concludes that “terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press. Taking and holding hostages increases the drama. The hostages themselves often mean nothing to the terrorists. This suggests that terrorism is aimed at the people watching, not at the actual victims. Terrorism is a theatre”. Like drama scripts, terrorism is acted on a stage (theatre) before the audiences. Many a time, Boko Haram has sent well ‘stage-managed’ videotapes with scripts as media men

would do<sup>12, 13, 14, 15, 16</sup>. Thus, scholars like Weimann (2008), Schmid (2006), and Jenkins (1975) support the view that media have been manipulated to the point of playing the scripts for the terrorists mainly unconsciously, as helpless audiences (some of whom die in the aftermath of the trauma) watch the execution of victims. However, unlike most scripts written and performed to entertain the people in the ‘normal’ theatre for instance, terrorists use persuasion and oratory techniques to confuse the audience by portraying the victim as what Schmid and de Graaf (1982, p.14) described as “the skin on a drum beaten to achieve a calculated impact on a wider audience”.

Further, Weimann (2008) explains that “modern terrorism can be understood in terms of the production requirements of theatrical engagements. Terrorists pay attention to script preparation, cast selection, sets, props, role playing, and minute-by-minute stage management. Just like compelling stage plays or ballet performances, the media orientation in terrorism requires full attention to detail in order to be effective” (2008, p.381). In view of the foregoing, there is a sense in which one could argue that Boko Haram’s recent attacks have proved how these terrorists mastered the act of script preparation and stage performance of their activities. A number of tapes that regularly circulate online show how terrorists record themselves when they want to execute their hostages, claim responsibility for an attack or issue a fresh threat as usually seen in the ‘eccentric character’ of the acclaimed leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau.

In the aftermath of the 1972 Munich Olympic Games terrorist attacks targeted at the Israeli athletes, one of the masterminds of the attack testified how they hone their communication skills in carrying out their assignments thus:

We recognized that sport is the modern religion of the Western world. We knew that the people in England and America would switch their television sets from

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<sup>12</sup> Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau Dismisses Nigerian Air-Force <http://saharareporters.com/videos/boko-haram-leader-abubakar-shekau-dismisses-nigerian-air-force>

<sup>13</sup> Chibok, Boko Haram releases new video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHON2cfg7G4>

<sup>14</sup> Boko Haram leader releases video on the abduction of Chibok girls [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrfWS\\_vL0D4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrfWS_vL0D4)

<sup>15</sup> Shekau denies any ceasefire with the Nigerian government [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y\\_UWzTYhrOk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y_UWzTYhrOk)

<sup>16</sup> A video showing Boko Haram commander appearing to interview one of the Chibok schoolgirls after making his own speech. See ‘Boko Haram Claims Many Chibok Girls married off, says some dead in Air strike’ <http://saharareporters.com/videos/boko-haram-claims-many-chibok-girls-married-says-some-dead-air-strikes>.



any program about the plight of the Palestinians if there was a sporting event on another channel. So, we decided to use their Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us. We offered up human sacrifices to your gods of sport and television. And they answered our prayers. From Munich onwards, nobody could ignore the Palestinians or their cause (Dobson and Paine, 1977, p.15). See also Galily, Yarchi and Tamir (2015) on *The Evolutionary Landscape of World Sporting Terror*.

A similar scenario was re-enacted at the Paris terrorists attack on November 13, 2015, where alleged ISIS terrorists simultaneously targeted *Stade de France* and six other locations during a high profile France-Germany football friendly that left 129 people dead with other spiralling effects. All these point to the sophistication that terrorism has witnessed over the years as it becomes clearer that the major targets of terrorists are symbolic places and events that can draw global attention.

Modern day terrorists have also taken on the organizational characteristics of small businesses which have made them more sophisticated (Surrete *et al*, 2009). Like small businesses, modern media-oriented terrorists explore “real time,” technology-driven broadcast opportunities to ‘market their wares’ to an unsuspecting audience. The aforementioned Paris attacks, one of which occurred midway into the live broadcast of the France Vs Germany friendly match is an example. The one at the *Stade de France* was captured live as the match was abruptly suspended, including the time the former President Francoise Hollande was guided to safety. Perhaps, this is why Martin (2006) concludes that a number of terrorist cells have strong outlets that promote their media relations. It is the view of Surrete *et al*, (2009) that, “generic benefits of media attention include the enhanced distribution of messages to multiple audiences, the suggestion of future potential targets, and the improved morale of supporters” (p.361).

Apart from the above ‘benefits’, Surrete *et al*, (2009) and Martin (2006) argue that reactions of the victims and forced shifts in public views towards the victims, governments and other public institutions are equally considered beneficial to terrorists. The above reasons Martin (2006) suggests, account for why media-oriented terrorists devise all available strategies and skills in manipulating news values. Surrete *et al*, (2009) also opine that media-oriented terrorists “propel dramatic news with emotional human-interest content to the forefront and grants coverage to those groups who successfully create dramatic telegenic events” (p.361). From the foregoing, one would argue that terrorists have sophisticated their approaches in terms of sending messages to the unsuspecting public. Some of these messaging approaches can

arguably rival the mass media. By targeting iconic places and symbolic events, terrorists tend to be getting wider media coverage that they may not necessarily get when they attack 'ordinary' places.

Having examined the relationship between the media (conventional) and terrorism, the next section critically reflects on terrorists' use of the internet and social media and its implications for the broader relationship between the media and terrorism. This is in consideration of the fact that terrorists also use social media for their activities as explained below.

#### **2.4. On its immediacy potency: Is social media a gift or a bait to terrorists?**

No discussion of terrorism and media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is complete without referring to social media and the Internet. These platforms are hailed and sometimes criticised for their 'immediacy and openness' (Mudhai, 2011). The 'immediacy' of these media and their 'shareable' nature argue Aslam (2010) and Bartlett and Miller (2013), pose dangers to the fight against terrorism, especially because these platforms have become ubiquitous and pervasive. With the social media, Klausen (2015) argues, "journalists, scholars, and militants communicate and follow each other" (p.2). It is very surprising that some news stories about terrorism are those generated from Twitter feeds of insurgents such as Boko Haram and the likes. These sources are often branded 'reliable'. However, by their nature, social media outlets do not seem to compare with the mainstream media in terms of objectivity and credibility (see Swasy *et al.*, 2015). A possible reason for this may be that social media is open for use by citizen journalists or netizens who may have no prior journalism training which advocates for 'objectivity' and strives to gate-keep.

A number of empirical research has emerged on the framing and slanting associated with the terrorist's use of social media (*see* Klausen, 2015; Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Krebs, 2002; Medina and Hepner, 2011). As Klausen (2015) argues for instance, "the focus in the terrorism literature on the theatre of terrorist spectacularly overshadows the reality that terrorists also use the Internet for the same reasons everybody else does; for organization and planning, proselytizing and entertainment, and to educate the believers" (p.2). It is believed that al Qaeda was the first terrorist group to use the internet (Jenkins, 2011). According to Jenkins, the group prides itself as a global movement and as such uses the World Wide Web to reach its perceived constituents, create terror among its foes and awaken the Muslim community. The growing interest in social media and terrorism research may not therefore be unconnected with the

popularity of the outlets, which are equally strong instruments in the hands of terrorists for propagating their messages. Hence, Nacos (2002) repeatedly used ‘mass mediated terrorism’ to explain how terrorists capitalise on the surge in communication technologies to achieve cheap popularity and send their messages across. See also Galily, Yarchi and Tamir (2015).

The emerging social media technologies may have strengthened the belief of the ‘publicity’ researchers because social media revolution has shaped the nature and speed of information dissemination to the people (Crawford and Gillespie, 2016). On the other hand, by its nature, social media has technically made the publicity criticism less convincing. This stems from the way social media is used by different people across the world. This makes social media message raw in most cases. Apart from its immediacy feature, the fact that social media content is hardly edited or censored means that the publicity scholars should look beyond the conventional media as the reason for the widespread of terrorism. Social media has therefore given voice to the hitherto unheard people (Darroch, 2010) and by extension the terrorists.

Loosely called ‘new’ media, “these platforms provide the means for the way in which the internet is increasingly being used” (Bartlett and Miller (2013, p.7). With these media, Aslam (2014) notes, “news is immediate and round-the-clock; the media choice is multiple ranging from the print to the cyber; and the audience is both local and global” (p.21). Still on the strengths, Conway (2003, p.272) adds that “every machine connected to the internet is potentially a printing press, a broadcasting station or place of assembly.” With these technologies, news has become more “entertaining, interactive and instantaneous” (Aslam, 2010, p.346). Klausen (2015, p.3) contends that “the Internet was a gift to terrorists on both scores”.

Similarly, Amble (2012, p.341) notes that social media “is growing at tremendously rapid rates in those parts of the world where the resonance of the *jihadist* narrative of Western subjugation of Muslims is greatest”. In his analysis of terrorists’ use of the media, especially the emerging communication technologies, Amble (2012) finds that terrorists’ use of the media reveals four major ways that the new media have most greatly enhanced their capabilities. These areas include ‘propaganda, recruitment, training, and operational command and control’ (p.342). Amble’s claim connotes that just as some sectarian groups use propaganda for various reasons, terrorists specifically use the Internet and social media propaganda as a tool for magnifying and attracting public attention to their cause and varied activities. This suggests that some

would-be terrorists take off or begin the process of radicalisation from the social media/ internet.

Reinforcing the above claim, Bartlett and Miller (2013) contend that extremists use social media “for a myriad of purposes, including the dissemination of propaganda, the recruitment of new members and the development of operational planning” (p.9). The social media outlets may serve as links to the extremists’ websites, in which case a click on the message redirects one to the main websites. This was the case in 2014 and 2015 when ISIS beheaded the US Army ranger Peter Kassig and other five Westerners – James Foley, David Cawthorne Haines, Alan Henning, and Steven Sotloff (*The Times*, 2014). These victims were executed at different times and locations, and the videos showing their executions were distributed online. Apparently, the executions were carried out to send strong message to the West. The exact number of viewers could not be ascertained because the videos were distributed by different online and conventional media platforms.

It should be emphasised that Bartlett and Miller (2013, p.7) noted that in “every month, 1.2 billion people now use internet sites, apps, blogs and forums to post, share and view content”. The above revelation by Bartlett and Miller may not reflect the current reality in the use of social media and internet because new users emerge every day and users have widely expanded to a near total ubiquitous level. As internet users keep expanding, the belief is that social media is a blessing in disguise for the insurgents as they seize the opportunities therein to make their propaganda easily and more widely accessible to the unsuspecting admirers. For instance, Brian Jenkins contends that

Al Qaeda’s communications are a distributed effort. Its websites fall into three categories: At the top are the official sites that carry messages of the leaders. Recognized jihadist figures discuss issues of strategy on a second tier. The third tier comprises the many chat-rooms and independent websites where followers verbally and visually embellish the official communications, fantasize about ambitious operations, boast, threaten, and exhort each other to action (Jenkins, 2011, p.1).

On the surging social media outlets used by terrorists, the United Kingdom’s Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (cited in Bartlett and Miller (2013, p.11), notes that Facebook, Twitter, weblogs represent the most frequently identified hosts of the referred materials. Even though the concern of this thesis is not on terrorists’ use of social media and the internet or

social media, discussing the relationship between the media and terrorism cannot be complete without reflecting on the ‘new’ media.

Therefore, there is a need to explore terrorists’ use of these technologies in reaching out to their unsuspecting publics because apart from the conventional media, social media channels are also available for use among terrorists. Like other terrorist groups, Boko Haram has resorted to using the Internet and social media to advance its agenda. Apart from using the platforms for propaganda, the platforms also serve as avenues for propagating fear to the publics. As of July 2018, there is no known conventional media outfits owned by the Boko Haram insurgents. All audio and video tapes emanating from the insurgents have always been obtained and distributed online via Twitter and YouTube. Jenkins (2011, p.1) has also noted that “‘despite the risks imposed by intense manhunts, its leaders communicate regularly with video and audio messages, which are posted on its websites and disseminated on the Internet’”.

Although terrorists’ use of social media has been widely stressed, it is not ‘beneficial’ to them at all times. Sometimes, through cyber-surveillance, those who are linked to extremists are traced and arrested or at least declared wanted. As Bartlett and Miller (2013, p.12) note, there is a “‘growing relevance for public disorder policing’” which keeps terrorists at loss. With the social media, terrorists’ attention is gradually shifting from the verbose websites to more concise media tools that enable them to send their messages across with less ambiguity. Based on the foregoing, this thesis argues that social media technologies have been double-edged swords for the terrorists. Despite serving as channels for publicity, crowd sourcing and recruitment, the internet and social media have rendered terrorists more vulnerable to intelligence gathering.

#### **2.4.1. Terrorists use of social media and the Internet: Between good and bad PR**

The social media technologies serve as public relations tool to many organisations including the terrorists. This is in consideration of public relations’ definition as a “‘planned...or managed...communication” (Hunt and Grunig, 1994, pp.5-6). It is the “‘management of communication between an organization and its publics” (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p. 6) using effective communication approach. This second definition is however ‘off tangent’ because in terrorist groups, the communication is targeted at the public in order to woo more members or register the reason for their campaign. As a public relations tool, terrorists may use the social

media as a strategic communication channel to ‘project’ their image and philosophy or justify their actions.

This thesis does not however argue that (abnormal) PR in terrorism is the same as the normal PR. The only similarity lies in their ‘strategic’ approaches to communication. As Rada (1985) contends, what ultimately separates normal and abnormal PR is “the social responsibility of the practitioner and the social utility of the end. Terrorism seeks legitimacy through self-definition, and not through the mandate of society” (p.26). Rada further queries thus, “Is not terrorism, after all, simply a public relations campaign, albeit sinister in intent? Terrorism aims, sometimes through violence but more often through coercion and fear, to influence opinions and behaviour of specific publics. Public relations, likewise, seeks to influence the opinions and behaviour of target groups but through information and persuasion as opposed to coercion” (Rada, 1985, p.26). The difference between the two lies mainly in the persuasion and force approaches to influence the public. Persuasion does not seem to work out for the abnormal PR, just as force does not work well for the normal PR.

According to Rothenberger (2012, p.9) “terrorists want to gain resonance in the public sphere of a certain state or they even desire to have their problems recognized by an international audience. The distributed messages mirror the group’s ideology as well as self-image”. It is this role that makes them to enjoy some qualities of real public relations. Klausen (2015, p.1) believes that “social media have played an essential role in the jihadists’ operational strategy in Syria and Iraq, and beyond”. In the same line of thought are Oh, Agrawal and Rao (2011, p.38) who argue that social media and live news broadcast ‘potentially aid’ terrorists’ in monitoring people or government’s response. They suggest that social media control becomes necessary when terrorists attack to prevent them from exploiting the media. This lends support to the call by Bartlett and Miller (2013) for policing the internet to ensure that agendas of terrorists and other social vices are curtailed.

## **2.5. Terrorism as breaking news: Between news selection criteria and terrorism coverage**

Terrorism fits ‘naturally’ into journalists’ criteria of newsworthiness. On a daily basis, journalists contend with many issues before even deciding which event to attend to or give coverage except for unexpected events. Selection of news story is not just decided by one person in most cases. It is in view of this that Schultz (2007) and O'sullivan, *et al.*, (1994) argue that selection of news story goes beyond ‘gut feeling’ that most journalists exhibit. It also

extends to deciding whether the story meets any of the news judgement criteria. A plethora of factors form the prerequisites for news selection as may be necessitated by the broader media ecology, personal judgement, editorial policies and other internal factors (De Vreese, 2005).

In selecting what makes a news story, it is believed that a story must have met one of these criteria outlined by Galtung and Ruge (1965). They include: frequency, unexpectedness, recency, continuity, power elite, showbiz, celebrities, negativity, significance, relevance, facticity and competition. Replicating these news criteria, Harcup and O'Neill (2001) cited in Hackett (2010, p.181) identified ten dominant features of stories considered newsworthy in the British press. They include power elite, entertainment, celebrity, surprise, magnitude or scope, bad news, good news (events), relevance (to the audience), follow-up (continuity), and the newspaper's own agenda. The newspaper agenda in this context represents the house style or the philosophy of the establishment. Although these news selection criteria were considered dominant in the British press, they also fit well into the Nigerian press. Some of the aforementioned criteria have more chances of selection depending on the media organisation. What comes first is probably determined by what appeals to the larger audience, the prevailing media landscape or ecology under which the media operates and its editorial policies.

The above news selection criteria, however, are not always the major determinants for news publication or broadcast. For instance, after selecting what to write or report, journalists have another task of fitting the selected stories into the available space and airtime. When a story is selected for print or broadcast, it is in most cases arranged in the order of importance or magnitude. In this case, the best takes the front page slot (as in magazines and newspapers), whereas in electronic media, such story is aired first as the top shot or main story (Blake, 2006). However, for reasons such as house styles and editorial policies, stories which form the top shots in a particular media outfit may be given last shots in another media platform because of the differences in styles and sense of judgement. The interests of the financiers or publishers are also implicitly considered in most cases. Other factors may include financial constraints and bureaucratic routines in the media establishment such as audience and deadline considerations (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

Another important news selection criterion is proximity. For instance, while apparently referring to the 'McLurg's Law', Bianca Britton once asked "if a bomb goes off in Syria, does it make a sound?". Britton quickly found a possible response offered in the wake of one of the

many explosions that rocked Somalia in recent times which al Shahab terrorists claimed responsibility. It reads: “Who gives a rat’s ass about what happens in Somalia or Iraq? It’s the Third World, bound to happen.” (Britton, 2013). ‘McLurg’s Law’ is named after a British news editor who once claimed that a single dead Briton was worth more than 5 dead French, 20 dead Egyptians, 500 dead Indians and 1000 dead Chinese (Britton, 2013). This, according to McLurg’s Law is however, in terms of news coverage. Sometimes, proximity is the utmost consideration in news selection criteria. However, when a serious news event happens in elite or powerful nations of the West, proximity is not necessarily the case. For instance, the *Stade de France*, Bataclan (France), Westminster and Manchester attacks (UK) reflected in the Nigerian media widely without considering proximity as the major news selection criterion. However, if for instance a suicide bomber hits a police checkpoint in Nigeria, it will not be reported as extensively as an attack on a police officer in the UK. When they report it, the news may be sketchy? Perhaps this happens because Nigeria is not as politically and economically influential as the UK.

It should be noted that geographical proximity was not the case when most news organisations including the ones in Nigeria made the news of the twin blasts at the World Trade Centre, USA the leading story for many weeks. Similarly, geographical proximity was not the case when Boko Haram kidnaped over 200 Chibok schoolgirls, an incident that was covered by different global media outfits such as *CNN*, *BBC*, *Aljazeera*, *ITV*, *Daily Mail*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde* to mention just a few. This suggests that proximity can be trumped by other news values such as power elite, significance or relevance and negativity (see Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Harcup and O’Neill, 2001).

### **2.5.1. Understanding terrorism newsworthiness: Why terrorism can be reported**

The question of whether terrorism qualifies as newsworthy has been widely acknowledged. It is newsworthy until tragedy, oddity and negativity become normal, and cease to be criteria for news selection. According to Farnen (1990) terrorism stories fit well into the demands of the news industry because they are different, dramatic, and violent, developing over a period of time. Similarly, Lee and Maslog (2005); Allen and Seaton (1999) suggest that terrorism is big news for the media and the public because its reporting is often as sensational as it is sexy, and devised to enhance circulations and ratings.



Apart from its qualification as a 'quintessential' news story (Cottle, 2006, p.76), typical of many conflicts, there are obviously other criteria that strengthen terrorism newsworthiness. For Nigerians, one could be the magnitude and ferocity of attacks and the novelty nature of the insurgency given that until the emergence of Boko Haram, other insurrections such as the Maitatsine rebellion and the Niger-Delta militancy were not designated as terrorism. In the past, Crelinsten (1987) and; Kelly and Mitchell (1981) had argued that terrorism was rarely presented in the news. However, most scholars such as Chermak and Gruenewald (2006); Schmid (2006); Nacos (2003a, 2003b); Delli, Carpini and Williams (1987), agree that terrorism of domestic and international pedigrees are significant news events. To this end, Nacos (2003b, p.31), affirms that "the contemporary news media, especially television, have customarily devoted huge chunks of their broadcast time and news columns to major and minor acts of political violence, supporting the media critics' argument that the mass media, as unwitting as they are, facilitate the media-centred terrorist scheme".

On the other hand, the generally accepted criterion for news as 'the unusual' gives additional advantage to the agenda of terrorists and somehow exonerates the media from the blame of the publicists' scholars. This must have stemmed from the media aphorism that "when a dog bites a man, it is not news, but when a man bites a dog, it is". Perhaps, this is why it is mainly the most gruesome, rare and deadly incidents, the victims involved that receive the greatest volume of reporting and (readership, listenership and viewership), a situation that motivates terrorists to resort to bloodier violence to satisfy the media's appetite for shocking or breaking news (Ockrent, 2006, p.75). It further explains why if it is not tragic or bloody, it is not news enough (Mueller, 2007, p.33).

Therefore, terrorism fits well into the determinants of newsworthiness proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965). It also fits into the newsworthiness framework proposed by Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) which has two components of 'constructs-deviance and social significance' underlying the traditional indicators of newsworthiness. These include novelty, social impact, conflict, importance, human interest and consequence. According to Zhang *et al.*, (2013), deviance has three dimensions, including "statistical, social change, and normative. Statistical deviance describes events that are literally different from the average, or that are considered odd or unusual, whereas normative deviance is associated with the breaking of a social system's laws or norms and social change deviance describes events that have the potential to change the status quo in some way" (p.451).

In this same manner, the dimensions of newsworthiness work side by side in shaping the realities. This does not however mean that people's social reality and objective reality are the same. Zhang *et al.* (2013) explain that people have the capacity to process available information about the world and draw their own different conclusions about it. In this case, conclusions are sometimes informed by personal judgement. In relation to this thesis, objective reality represents statistical data about Boko Haram attacks, mortality and morbidity (casualty). It also includes the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the economic, political, social and religious implications of the insurgency. When the audiences discover these statistical 'proofs', they use cognitive assessment to judge the events' newsworthiness. The more complex an event is, the more likely the audience will perceive it as newsworthy because as Shoemaker and Cohen (2006) argue, such events connect more with people's social realities.

Although considered newsworthy, terrorism, it appears, has been widely covered from a subjective point of view. For instance, Andre (2017) notes, "while the results from the archives of the major commercial media outlets (in Nigeria) show that Boko Haram features prominently in their news cycle, the stories are often limited in scope, conditional on information from the government and military". This shows that domestic media reactions in many terrorism attacks include the over-reliance on public officials, military and other security experts to interpret acts of terrorism. This practice arguably leaves some facts skewed in favour of the public officials. By extension, such action aides subjective reportage because it leaves little or no room for cross-verification of 'facts'. The next section focuses on objectivity in terrorism coverage.

## **2.6. Objectivity and balance in terrorism coverage: A critical reflection**

Although the media has often been accused as terrorists' accomplice as already pointed out, the (domestic) media have not even been spared by the Boko Haram insurgents because some reporters have already been murdered, and some media houses bombed for lack of 'objectivity' (Ekwueme and Obayi 2012, p.6). Perhaps, worried by a similar circumstance, Francois Lopez asks 'if publicity is the oxygen of terrorism, why do terrorists kill journalists?' (Lopez, 2016). This brings to bear the question of what objectivity means to terrorists. Conversely, objectivity in reporting terrorism, argue Dalei and Mishra (2009), can have more detrimental effects on the society. This view though controversial, downplays the principle of objectivity which media organisations are meant to uphold at all times.

Objectivity means many things to different people. Even Boko Haram wants objectivity. For instance, in one of its attacks on Nigerian journalists, the terrorists claimed that it was a call on the media to be 'objective' in reporting their activities (Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012). Lippmann (1992) is one of the scholars who believe that objectivity in news coverage should go beyond the traditional covering of 'both sides' of a story. In a bid to demystify the apparent social and political roots of the term, scholars such as (Taflinger 1996; Kempf, 2007) have used different avenues to demonstrate the shortcomings or deficiencies noticeable in the existing journalism style when measured against the ideals of objectivity. Others also put up further critiques of the existing epistemological foundations of objectivity in journalism (*see* Hackett, 2010; Hackett and Zhao, 1998). Therefore, when measured against sensationalism and wilful propaganda that characterise some media reportage, objectivity practice, argues Bagdikian (2000) is essential. Yet they also have predictable consequences that are highly problematic for informing public opinion, or incentivizing remedial action, in relation to different global crises.

Despite that some journalists claim to 'stay aloof' from the news, Ruggiero and Vos (2013) admit that reporting terrorism can be both complex and challenging because of the dangers involved and the struggle to overcome personal bias. Whereas terrorism is a big news event (Nacos, 2003a, 2003b), a lot of research on the relationship between mass media and terrorism largely ignored the impact of media portrayals of terrorist attacks on the audience. Yet this under-examined area is perhaps, a factor that arguably contributes to shaping people's interpretation of the acts of terrorism. This study is an attempt to bridge this gap for a deeper empirical understanding of the media and terrorism relationship beyond the purview of publicity.

As Taflinger (1996, n.p) acknowledges, objectivity can hardly be achieved because "as long as human beings gather and disseminate news and information, objectivity is an unrealizable dream". Earlier, Gieber (1964, p.173) argued that "news is what newspapermen make it". Again, Cohen and Young (1973, p.97) see news as a product "manufactured by journalists". Sharing this view is Berkowitz (1997), who suggests that only what a journalist records is subject to his/her vantage point, but the reality thus recorded is at best only partial. Tellingly, Ryan and Switzer (2009) argue that "news event or issue cannot be separated from its mediated image. While the media may reflect our world, the act of mediation itself is constitutive of the world that the media reflects. The journalist's voice is always present in any given news report,

and in this way the journalist represents the world of news to the news audience’’ (p.47). Ryan and Switzer (2009) insist that many journalists merely assume that they mirror or reflect the news and play no major part in relaying these realities to the target audiences. They further acknowledge that ‘‘as journalists we can never be benign or neutral observers, because there is no fixed meaning in the world we are writing about to re-present...as journalists we have essentially abandoned the largely unwritten standards that comprised the foundation of an objective approach to news reporting and writing’’ (Ryan and Switzer, 2009, p.47). This may not be unconnected with the way news is processed and filtered from the scene of an event to the media for audience consumption.

However, being balanced in reporting terrorism does not entirely mean being objective (Ersoy, 2010). As Galtung (2006, p.5) remarks, ‘‘objectivity alone, without balance is not helpful; the same holds for balance without objectivity’’. Balance on the other hand is a representation of the opinions of the parties involved in a news event. To some journalists, citing two sides of an event means balance. While this can be true in some instances, it is not so in other cases because sometimes a reporter can give unequal volume of airtime or space for different parties involved in an issue. Balance should therefore ensure equality in news treatment and focus. On the other hand, objectivity in journalism is a good professional practice that allows for transparency, logicity, coherence, and factuality in news reportage. As viewed from Galtung’s perspective, objectivity and balance work in *pari-passu*. Galtung views the concept of objectivity as truth-oriented kind of reporting. The ideal objectivity, Taflinger (1996) contends is ‘the detached and unprejudiced gathering and dissemination of news and information’. Again, Taflinger notes that in negotiating meaning which translates to objectivity or subjectivity, factors such as preconceptions, biases, cultural norms, mores, prejudices, level of education, peer influence and sentiments all influence the interpretation people give to issues. He adds that the basis for selecting events that constitute news is the ‘subjective criteria of the selector rather than objective criteria’. It is the construction of this reality that extrapolates into objectivity or otherwise of a report.

The above overview implies that it is difficult to be entirely objective in terrorism reportage. This is because some issues require dissections and thorough interpretations which might alter the principles of objectivity. Ryan and Switzer (2009) admit that ‘‘we do not argue that individuals can always control these feelings, for they cannot. But we do argue that an objective approach helps journalists and others produce more accurate, complete and impartial

representations of reality’’ p.47). While the US journalists identify with right wing or left wing ideologies of their respective media organisations, Nigerian journalists also do so, albeit in addition to building their ideologies around ethnicity, religion and other intricacies that influence journalism practice in the country. Elsewhere, Köcher (1986) explains that different political, historical, and legal contexts influence journalists’ perception of their roles in different countries. Köcher (1986) further explains that UK journalists are ‘bloodhounds’ hunting for news, whereas their German counterparts are ‘missionaries’ who support the editorial line using their commentary. In reporting critical issues in Nigeria, journalists seem to be more ‘patriotic’. This means that news about the ‘dissident voices’ is reported in the form of ‘us versus them’. This perspective confronts the so-called elusive ‘global best practices’ of objectivity and supports localization or provincialism of journalism ethics.

As its British counterparts demonstrated during the IRA campaign, Nigerian media can be operationalised as more *ethnic* than *ethical* because of the presence of sensational reports with ethnic undertones that characterise average national reports. The current waves of terrorism in Nigeria has affected journalism ethics as seen in some disjointed reports packaged for public consumption (Ojo, 2013). In the same vein, Ojo (2013) argues that there are obvious traces of ethnic tones and sentiments in northern-oriented and southern-oriented domestic media. In the ‘primordial’ view, argues Oberschall (2010) ‘‘ethnic attachments and identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity, like kinship sentiments’’ (p.982). While this may negate ethical standard in the global scene, it appears to support the same idea expounded in the ‘culturological’ approaches to news study (Schudson (1989, p.16). It explains that differences exist between journalistic practices across the world (see Hallin and Mancini, 2005; Mancini, 2000).

Conversely, during wars, journalists struggle to negotiate meaning out of a plethora of hurdles such as the need to show patriotism, personal judgement, national interest, censorship and propaganda. The aggregation of these factors unarguably affect objective coverage of events (Maslog, *et al.*, 2006). Be it a large scale conflict or internal wrangling, provided it qualifies as ‘extra-normal’ (Sreedharan, 2009, p.66), objectivity has come under intense misapplication from media practitioners who often rely too heavily on personal sentiment in determining story slants or in Nigerian parlance, ‘panel-beaten’ to fit into the philosophy of the establishment. In the same line of thought is Pedelty (1995, p.9) who believes that in trying to be objective, journalists often skew news by replicating views expressed by some dominant groups thinking

that they were ‘balanced’. To Sreedharan (2009), achieving objectivity in ‘normal news reportage’ is even complex not to talk of objectivity in conflict situations. In the interest of those who attach too much credibility to all media content, Ito *et al.* (1998) and Nelson (2006) warn journalists to be cautious considering that negative media message and interpretations carry so much ‘weight’ capable of inciting or misleading people.

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) provided a further proof that even what most journalists perceive as objective coverage can instigate more violence. Thus, the “three conventions of objective reporting, in particular, are predisposed towards war journalism. Their ‘natural drift’, as it were, is to lead us or leave us to view violent, reactive responses to conflict, and undervalue non-violent, developmental ones:

- A bias in favour of official sources.
- A bias in favour of event over process.
- A bias in favour of ‘dualism’ in reporting conflict” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005, p.209). This is where peace journalism is hinged.

*A bias in favour of official sources* shows that relying too much on official sources may lead to bias. This is because it ends up doing a normal PR to officials. Official sources ‘sell’ only the stories that exonerate friends and vilify perceived enemies to the press. In replicating *a bias in favour of event over process*, the ‘why’ aspect of the basic elements of news (the 5Ws and H) is shabbily treated. As McGoldrick (2006, p.4) notes, “most stories only deal superficially-if at all with the ‘why’. The important thing to note is that without exploring the underlying causes, violence can be left to appear, by default, as the only response that makes sense”. A situation like this perpetually makes war to remain opaque, because lack of objectivity built on ‘shallow or superficial’ coverage may leave crisis to fester.

Furthermore, *a bias in favour of ‘dualism’* when reporting occurs when the views of the conflicting parties are accommodated in the reportage. The reporter is not speaking for any party at the expense of another in this case. To achieve this, reporters often resort to the use of connecting phrases such as “on the other hand, in the end, only time will tell” (Kampfner, 2003). This may insulate journalists against biased tendencies. The principle of dualism supports a win-win situation whereby all parties feel a sense of recognition. Although the dualism paradigm is criticised for considering only two parties, and often ignoring the third party (if any), it is still very much better than the rest in terms of objectivity.

Therefore, considering what has been said about objectivity and its seemingly unattainability, it would make more sense to talk about it in the light of 'responsible' deviation or justification of certain degree of subjectivity in news coverage. This is in consideration of the fact that, "Objective ... coverage of terrorist attacks may also be detrimental to the interests of the nation instead of being beneficial (Dalei and Mishra (2009, p.6). In fact, as Weimann (2008, p.384) argues, "the pressure of terrorists on journalists takes many forms, from open and friendly hosting to direct threats, blackmailing and even killings of journalists". For instance, Isah Zakari of *NTA* and Ben Akogwu of *Channels* were the first victims of Boko Haram attacks on Nigerian journalists after the group complained of lack of objectivity of the domestic media (Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012).

From the above overview, one can argue that there is a near-impossibility of objectivity and balance in terrorism coverage. It can also be argued that what one party calls objectivity, may become subjectivity to the other party. Perhaps, the above reason is why objectivity is largely undermined in most terrorism coverage. Ekwueme and Obayi (2012) for instance, argue that reporting Boko Haram requires "patriotism, public and national interests" (p.5). These scholars believe that all 'responsible' media would condemn terrorism by balancing objectivity and patriotism. The priming and framing of the Boko Haram insurgency remains an issue of questionable reportage. Thus, considering that "terrorism in its forms remains a central concern for contemporary society" (Freedman and Thussu 2012, p.1), there is a need for carefulness for as Morano (2010) cautions, the way news is crafted "affects citizens' representations of reality". Therefore, if Ryan and Switzer's (2009) view is anything to go by, since there is no fixed meaning, objectivity seems illusive and there is a need to define an acceptable boundary of objectivity as a yardstick for measuring it to minimise its speculative tendencies. As it stands now, it appears there is no total objectivity even though many scholars continue to debate about this. Tellingly, since news stories require dissections, interpretation and framings based on individual differences, the issue of objectivity should be better addressed.

## **2.7. Conclusion**

This chapter explored the different perspectives in the examination of the relationship between media and terrorism. It critically reflected on the emerging scholarly interest in the nature of

the coverage of terrorism and away from the more ideological mooring of perspectives. While acknowledging the conflicting perspectives emerging from three groups of media and terrorism scholars (the *publicists*, the *non-publicists* and *the neutrals*), this study makes a case for extending the debate beyond publicity because the demands for news and the expectations of the public are heightened when terrorists attack. This means that as a big news event, terrorism needs to be interpreted and analysed. The chapter also reflected on how terrorists have developed sophisticated communication strategies to outwit and manipulate the media. It further examined the use of the Internet and social media among terrorists and its implications for the broader relationship between the media and terrorism. The chapter also discussed the principle of objectivity in terrorism reportage on the basis that terrorism requires interpretation when framed. It is an argument extended and much more critically examined in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Theorising Insurgency: Situating Framing in the Domestic Media Coverage of Boko Haram**

#### **3.0. Introduction**

The preceding chapter reviewed relevant literature on the relationship between media and terrorism. This chapter explores relevant theoretical underpinnings for this study with particular focus on the framing theory to provide a broader perspective on the coverage and interpretation of the Boko Haram insurgency or terrorism in Nigeria and beyond. Understanding different frames that the media employs in the selection, emphasis, exclusion and interpretation of terrorism will help in achieving the overall aim of this study.

To this effect, the rest of this chapter has five sections and subsections. The first section clarifies the ambiguities surrounding framing and its limitations. The second explores framing as a theoretical framework and how it underpins this study, while the third section addresses framing, agenda-setting and priming. Section four builds on the contents of the preceding sections to understand how a frame is perceived and interpreted. The final section aligns framing to the coverage of terrorism elsewhere and the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

#### **3.1. Framing: Exploring the ambiguity**

Framing has been a leading media studies approach for more than three decades. In view of its wide usage, scholars from divergent fields have applied the model for different research purposes (Ruigrok and van Attevelt, 2007). As an interdisciplinary concept, it has been widely used and sometimes wrongly applied in research. For instance, Kalvas *et al.*, (2011) argue that framing rather “describes how the complexity of issues that are difficult to understand can be reduced”. As Entman (1993, p.51) points out, its development as a full-fledged academic paradigm has suffered “scattered conceptualisation”. From a conventional approach, frames represent “words or phrases that set the parameters for what is valid, useful, relevant, or appropriate” (Malo, Ouellette, and Vucetic, 2014, p.5). The ambiguity in the concept even stems from “the meaning of the word, frame” (Umejei, 2013). According to Gamson *et al.*, (1992, p.385), there are two different English meanings of “frame as a picture and frame as a frame of a building, though most researchers refer to the latter sense of frame as an underlying structure”. This particular reason may have spurred Reese (2007, p.148) to call for “more

efforts toward cleaning up the framing paradigm, making it more theoretically respectable and coherent”. Notwithstanding, this ambiguity is where the weakness of the framing theory lies.

As it stands, framing is still ambiguous and its application or use among researchers has not been anything less ambiguous. This reason must have prompted Malo, Ouellette and Vucetic, (2014, p.5) to acknowledge the “definitional anarchy and a multiplicity of operationalisations of key concepts and conceptual relationships” in framing. In addition, D’Angelo (2002) contends that framing has no single paradigm, but a diverse application of the concept to different paradigms enriches it as a research concept. Reese (2007, p. 148) further describes it as a “provocative model that bridges parts of the field that need to be in touch with each other; quantitative and qualitative, empirical and interpretive, psychological and sociological, and academic and professional”. It is for this reason that Umejei (2013, p.5) notes that framing has been able to lump “disparate fields” together. These fields, however, differ in their “philosophical assumptions” (Reese, 2007, p.149). Framing is also a “bridging concept” between cognition and culture (Gamson *et al.*, 1992, p.384). Through framing, complex issues are simplified or even complicated as the case may be (Kalvas *et al.*, 2011).

As if the above discordant views about the ambiguity of framing are not enough, Entman (1993) qualifies it as a ‘fractured paradigm’. However, despite these ambiguities, D’Angelo (2002) concludes that the hard core of news framing research can be located in four empirical goals:

To identify thematic units called frames; to investigate the antecedent of conditions that produce frames; to examine how news frames activate and interact with an individual’s prior knowledge to affect interpretations, recall of information, decision making, and evaluations, and; to examine how news frames shape social-level processes such as public opinion and policy issues (p. 874).

Expanding this further, D’Angelo (2002, p.876) proposes three paradigms of framing research which include “cognitive, critical and constructionist paradigms”. Some scholars (see Rhee, 1997; Valkenburg *et al.*, 1999; Tewksbury *et al.*, 2000), align their works within the *cognitive paradigm*. The interest of this paradigm lies in detecting “thoughts that mirror propositions encoded in frames” (D’Angelo, 2002, p.786). Cognitive paradigm, D’Angelo (2002) further notes, helps to “create semantic associations within an individual’s schemata” (p.876). Earlier, Just, Crigler, and Neuman (1996, p.133) had observed that “frame is primarily cognitive in nature and contains information about the structure and general parameters of the object under

consideration..., the tone, is primarily affective and represents the emotions associated with the objects''. A cognitive frame is a mental structure which situates and connects events, people and groups into a meaningful narrative in which one makes sense of the social world (Snow *et al.* 1986 cited in Oberschall, 2000, p.989).

Other studies (Hackett and Zhao, 1994; Woo, 1996; Domke; 1996; Tucker, 1998; Gitlin, 1980; Entman and Rojecki, 1993, for example) locate their research within the *critical paradigm*. The claim here according to D'Angelo (2002, p.876) is that "frames are the outcome of news-gathering routines by which journalists convey information about issues and events from the perspective of values held by political and economic elites" (See also, Hackett, 1984; Becker 1984). These thoughts are recurrent in news coverage and they dominate event coverage. A typical example surfaces in the study by Martin and Oshagen (1997) which concludes that "news is a significant part of the structuration process as it works to frame the hegemonic social relations in which downsizing is inevitable and complicity is necessary for success" (Martin and Oshagen, 1997, p.690).

A similar study by Entman (1991) on the two dominant frames in the US news over the downing of KAL 007 by a Soviet fighter jet as well as the downing of an Iranian commercial plane by an American warship, suggest that "politically impressive majorities would come to congruent understandings" (p.8) that mirror the political interests of the US. Perhaps, this is why D'Angelo (2002) argues that "frames that paradigmatically dominate news are also believed to dominate audience" (p.876). This, by implication also suggests that people align their thought to the dominant frames in the news. Although this might be the case in the US and other parts of the world, it is not clear whether a similar situation resonates in Nigeria where the current study is investigating. This is because Nigeria has different cultural and political backgrounds that shape media coverage of issues in the country. Köcher (1986) argues that different legal, historical, and political contexts influence journalists' perception of their roles in different countries. This was also the idea embedded in Archetti's (2010) assertion that there is no universal journalistic culture applicable to all countries.

The difference between cognitive and critical paradigms can be located within the perspective that media outfits may embark on intentional *selection* or *omission* of 'vital' information in order to foster a 'single viewpoint supportive of the status quo' (D'Angelo, 2002, p.876). The cognitive paradigm perspectives according to D'Angelo shows that newsmen routinely create

meaningfully different frames about an issue within one or more stories. Although D'Angelo claims that cognitive frames support the status quo, there are instances when frames can oppose the status quo. This is the case in the US where media outfits such as CNN and NYT veer off to oppose government's rhetoric in order to foster alternative perspectives on different issues. The study did not indicate whether this varies over time or remains the same every time.

The third framing paradigm is the *constructionist* view. The assumption here according to D'Angelo (2002, p.877) is that "journalists are information processors who create 'interpretative packages' of the positions of politically invested 'sponsors' in order to both reflect and add to the 'issue culture' of the topic". The core perspective of the constructionist paradigm is that a given frame can retain dominance of coverage for a long time. The *constructionist* perspective is supported by a *paradigmatic image of co-optation*, which stipulates that a given frame can retain dominance of coverage over a long period of time D'Angelo (2002). Thus, unlike the critical paradigm, which builds on the image of dominance, through the *co-optation of image*, constructionists see frame as a 'tool kit' (Swidler, 1986). The above points make sense of the assumption that "paradigmatic images generate differences between constructionists and cognitivists about the principle mechanism of framing effects" (D'Angelo, 2002, p.878). This further shows that frames help people to construct reality. From the foregoing, it can be argued that although news framing has suffered from multiple interpretations, its applications within journalism research has been strengthened. Framing is therefore, the process whereby the media provides the audience with the story focus, influencing (wittingly or unwittingly) how what is reported can be interpreted.

In view of their interrelatedness, this study is combining the aforementioned framing perspectives to address the research objectives. The combination is to ensure that where one is not appropriate enough, the other two can address the deficit. Framing of an insurgency can therefore be operationalised on the basis of "cognitive, critical and constructionist paradigms". These paradigms, especially social constructivism are employed in this study to understand the impact of the media in making sense of the Boko Haram insurgency. In this sense, frames depict the media as the window to reality. Consequently, if the media portrays the Boko Haram news to reflect the failure of government, many people will derive their interpretation of the group's activities from that assumption. The appropriateness of framing to the present study is subsequently examined.

### **3.2. Framing as a theoretical framework**

This study is anchored on framing theory that combines elements of “cognitive, critical and constructionist paradigms” as already explained above. As a theoretical framework, framing theory has gained attention since the early 1990s (Ruigrok and van Attevelt, 2007). This theory, popularised by Erving Goffman in 1974 defines how the media are used to promote an issue through “selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration”, (Scheufele, 1999, p.103). Similarly, Entman (1993) argues that framing means giving “attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions, (p.55). More recently, Entman, (2004, p.5) extends framing to “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation”. In the same line of thought are Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p.5) who believe that “...editors and reporters make choices about what to report and how to report it”. Framing theory also shows how the media influences the perception of its content.

In the process of framing, media might decide to emphasise an issue just to draw more public attention to it. Iyengar (1991) describes it as “subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment” (p.11). According to Morano (2010, p.1), “a more subtle effect of the media is its ability to alter feelings through persuasion”. Similarly, Pratkanis and Aronson (1992) reveal that different studies claim that mass media uses persuasion technique to manipulate messages in order to woo audience into accepting the messages. Lee and Maslog (2005) also see news framing as “the process of organizing a news story, thematically, stylistically, and factually, to convey a specific story line” (p.313). The attitudes of reporters and their approaches also affect the way a story is presented. For instance, Schramm argues that “news exists in the minds of men. It is not an event; it is something perceived after the event... it is an attempt to reconstruct the essential framework of the event which is calculated to make the event meaningful to the reader” (1993, p.36). Before reporting in many instances, news production passes through a number of stages such as “observing, collating, writing, editing, and publishing” (Aslam, 2014, p.20). When these processes are harnessed, the end product becomes, in the words of Schramm (1993, p.36) “witness accounts, second hand accounts, tertiary comments and explanations and the reporter’s own knowledge and predispositions”. This might suggest that the media effect on the audience emanates from the way these stories are framed.

A similar scenario was earlier revealed in Lippmann (1922) which concluded that media has the power of creating a ‘pseudo-environment’ as well as planting ‘pictures inside people’s head’ (pp.25-31). The above arguments paint the picture of many perceptions and interpretations of framing. The arguments also entail how frames can be located through the distinctive stages of frame-building and frame-setting (de Vreese, 2002; 2005; D’Angelo, 2002; Scheufele, 2000). This theory claims that news contains more facts than the mere ‘who says what’. It helps people to understand these facts beyond the superficial level of storytelling.

**3.2.1. Frame-building:** This is a combination of factors which “influence the structural qualities of news frames” (de Vreese, 2005, p.52). Scheufele (2000) says of frame-building as “how issues are created and why some controversies or incipient issues come to command the attention and concern of decision makers, while others fail” (p.303). Studies such as Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Gans (1979) have tested extrinsic and intrinsic factors that influence news production and selection. These factors, argue Shoemaker and Reese (1996), appear internal and largely determine how journalists and their media outfits frame different issues. From their respective research, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Tuchman (1978) highlighted some factors that interfere with journalists’ ways of framing an issue. These include political and ideological orientations of journalists, social norms and values, interest group and organisational pressures.

In their studies which examined frame building, Kim *et al.* (2010) argue that internal and external factors of media organisations might explain how ‘responsibility’ is framed in a given way. These internal factors could be house style or editorial policy and news values or selection criteria. External factors such as the media ecology or the prevailing mediascape and political cum legal frameworks of a given society also influence frame building. Therefore, if the frame-building process takes the colouration of a continuous interaction between journalists and the media ecology, it is an indication that frame-building is caused by the prevailing scenario under which the media operates.

**3.2.2. Frame-setting:** According to de Vreese (2005, p.52) frame-setting occurs when there is an interaction “between media frames and individuals’ prior knowledge and predispositions. Frames in the news may affect learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events”. In frame-setting therefore, journalists have the chance to filter “*accounts of a social problem*” (Bruggemann, 2014, p.66, emphasis not mine). This is probably because what is reported by

journalists mirrors the reality but unarguably reflects the understanding and even distortion derived from their interpretations. Journalists’ interpretations (subjectivity) provide the audience with frame-settings, whereas a passive passage (objectivity) of views of sources brings about frame-sending (Bruggemann 2014). This is the reason why “the framing approach is a powerful tool to analyse journalistic practices” (Bruggemann, 2014, p.61).

In frame-setting, de Vreese (2005) argues that “the consequences of framing can be conceived on the individual and the societal levels. An individual level consequence may alter attitudes about an issue based on exposure to certain frames. On the societal level, frames may contribute to shaping social level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions”. This scenario was re-enacted during the 2015 general elections in Nigeria where *USA Today* reports that “millions of Nigerians turned out to cast their votes for president...but hundreds have also been scared away from polling stations by Boko Haram extremists” (*USA Today*, 28/03/15). Due to the incessant attacks of Boko Haram and propaganda videos threatening to disrupt the general elections in Nigeria, some voters boycotted the elections. In sum, frame-building defines how frames emerge, whereas frame-setting is the interplay between these frames and audience predispositions. The figure below further explains this.

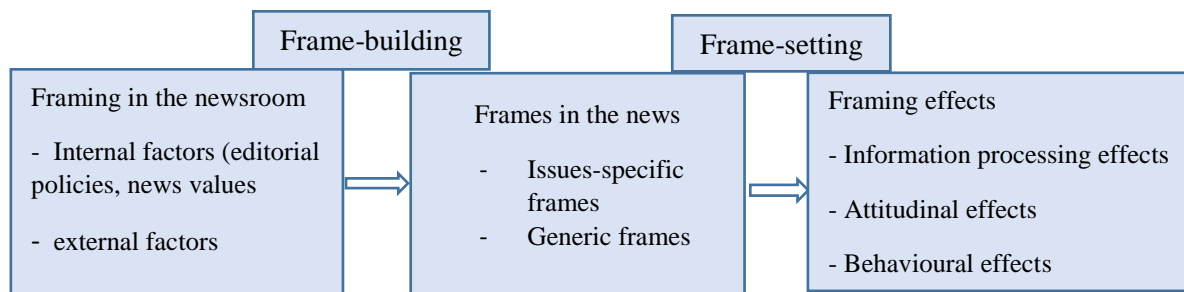


Figure 4: An integrated process model of framing (de Vreese, 2005, p.52)

### 3.3. Framing and agenda setting

The media set the agenda for public discourse. This is the basis of Cohen’s (1963) argument that even though the media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*. And it follows from this that the world looks different to different people” (p.13). This is another way of saying that although the media conditions people’s way of interpreting reality, it may not always succeed in conditioning different people to think alike at all times. As much as journalists set the agenda for public discourse, politicians and public opinions also influence agenda setting. For instance, reactions in many terrorism incidents show the media as over-relying on public officials,

military and other security experts to interpret acts of terrorism. According to McCombs and Shaw (1972), agenda setting espouses the belief that there is a strong connection between the emphasis that the media places on some issues – (for instance, based on the amount of coverage or placement of the story) coupled with the importance attached to these issues by the target audiences. By making sure that some issues are more salient in people’s mind (agenda setting), the media also shapes people’s considerations when making decisions. An integral aspect of the agenda-setting theory is that the media shapes how people understand media content.

In relation to this study, the Boko Haram insurgency has enjoyed a sustained media attention and consequently got people to talk about it. It is in the light of this argument that Domke *et al.* (1999) demonstrate that “news coverage influences the considerations that individuals draw on in thinking about ...issues” (p.590). It also aligns with varied interpretations on “racial cognitions” often activated by the media to arouse cognitions and political judgments (Domke *et al.* (1999). Elaborating further on the findings of Domke *et al.*, (1999), Morano (2010) notes that “those who read a frame advocating human and civil rights protection will be more in favour of having civil liberties and human rights protected by the government than those who do not read this frame” (p.4). The study argues therefore, that those in favour of human rights are more likely to read a frame promoting human rights.

In framing an issue therefore, the media may succeed in convincing the audience that something really happened depending on the angle of narrative or frames adopted. Arguing in the same line of thought are Chong (1996) and Nelson *et al.*, (1997) who contend that framing reinforces information stored in peoples’ memories provoking considerations that individuals weigh when thinking about issues. For instance, the view by Malachy (2013) that Northern Nigeria elites sponsored Boko Haram as a ‘grand’ plan to take back control of power was reinforced in “Buhari stage-managed Kaduna bombing – Dokubo Asari” (*The Sun*, 17/07/2014). In the said story, the leader of Niger-Delta Peoples Salvation Force (NDPSF), Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari accused Muhammadu Buhari (now the President of Nigeria) and notable Northern elites of stage-managing the bombing that targeted his convoy. Thus, “I know Buhari very well. Why did he use bulletproof car that day? He did not die. None of his aides died...I know that the same way Chibok was stage-managed was the same way they stage-managed it. Where did he get the bullet-proof car he used? Why did he use bullet-proof car that day when the bomb exploded and nothing happened to him?” (*The Sun*, 17/07/2014).



Chong (1996) also argues that frames form part of ‘specific interpretations of issues popularized through political discussion’. In a political scenario for instance, Chong argues that frames provide people with specific interpretations which become more popular when regularly discussed. They also become issues of reference and “easier to promote because the public is already predisposed to give priority to some dimensions over others” (Chong, 1996, p.222). In a more recent study, Ventura, Diegues, and de Matos, (2012) share the view that frame interpretation leads to frame validation. More details of how these frames work have been demonstrated in the empirical chapters where they were applied in the context of this study.

### ***3.3.1. Empirical evidence in framing and agenda setting***

Studies such as Devereaux (2013); Morano, (2010); Strömbäck and Dimitrova, (2006); Jasperson *et al.*, (2003); Norris, (2003); Fidas, 2008) show how the media uses different frames to achieve various purposes from the audiences. For instance, in their comparative study of *CNN* and *al Jazeera*’s media coverage of the Afghanistan war, Jasperson *et al.* (2003) revealed a wide difference in both media’s content and sources of information. Previously, Norris (1997) also sought to study framing routines in the U.S. TV network news. The study found that there were fluctuations in relation to the total number of foreign news that were analysed. A similar study by Archetti (2010, p.93) which examined press coverage after 9/11 found that “the framing of 9/11 and the war in Afghanistan in the news is much more fragmented than in the political statements”. It further shows that the coverage was characterised by incoherence and sometimes contradictory ideas. A possible explanation of this, Archetti suggests, is because “it is not the media as a conscious actor that frames issues. The media is rather more like a stage on which different sources speak”. Although the media serves as the stage on which these sources express their views, there is no denying the fact that the media promotes what people speak about. In addition, Archetti’s analysis indicates that there was no evidence of a global journalistic culture that applies to all cases. When this is the case, interpretation of issues varies accordingly. The study did not however specify whether it is the journalistic culture or political culture that has more influences on the editors and other gatekeepers.

In another earlier study by Gamson and Modigliani (1989), it was found that in the coverage of nuclear power issues between 1940s and 1980s, dominant news frames employed by media organisations varied over time. Similarly, Devereaux (2013) comparatively analysed the framing of terrorism in online news under the administrations of George Bush and Barack Obama. The major findings portray Obama as being more closely associated with a shift from

clash to dialogue than Bush. The study also found that there were changes to the media and terrorism relationship between the Bush and Obama eras. Although the study’s outcome reinforces other similar studies predicting that due to the rise of blog networks and blog search engines, framings of Iraq and terrorism would become more easily available, it did not present any rationale for generalisation on other studies outside the US.

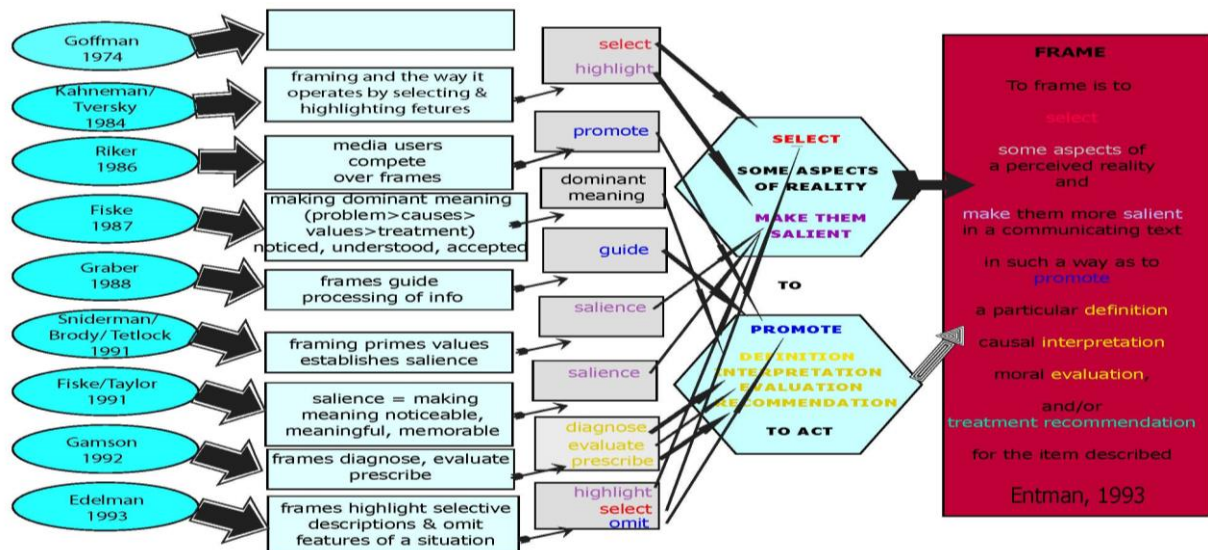


Figure 5: How frames work: Source: (Entman, 1993)

The above figure 5 shows the major proponents of framing and their contributions toward how frames work. Scholars such as (Bakker and Hellsten 2013; Scheufele, 1999; Hallahan, 1999) reinforced Entman’s claim that framing basically involves selection and salience. Although what media places salience on varies from time to time (Baumer et al, 2015; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989), there is still sense in arguing that frames enable the audiences to draw some inferences from media messages and make their own counter frames if the story is left open by cautiously applying words such ‘claim’, ‘allege’. For instance, ‘He alleges’, ‘government claims’, or ‘Boko Haram claims’ will give the audiences an opportunity to draw their own interpretation beyond what is reported because these differ from ‘this shows’ which may likely close the room for further interpretation. Using different frames, media provides *contextual cues* as mechanisms that shape how the audiences make decisions and draw inferences from them (Baumer et al, 2015; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). By employing the above frames in texts or verbal cues, the framing and priming of the Boko Haram insurgency can be explored. From the foregoing, this study adopts Entman’s (1993) definition that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating context ”

(p.52). The reason for this choice is because the research is interested in unravelling what is made more salient in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.

### **3.3.2. Framing and priming**

Another mechanism through which framing functions is priming (Hallahan (1999)). The assumption here is that knowledge is organized in human memory in form of cognitive structures or *schemas*, which affect the interpretation of situations and events (Valenzuela, 2009; Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). For example, during the 1991 Gulf War, some Western journalists alleged being misled by US forces to the point of giving up the professional objectivity they were meant to uphold (Keeble, 2010). Thus, “despite their ideals of professional objectivity and social responsibility” some war reporters may become “obsessed with the military jargon surrounding the sophisticated weaponry” (Aslam, 2014, p.19). This was perhaps the reason why “Iraqi civilians were reduced to ‘target’ and night air raids reported as ‘fireworks’ and massacre of Iraqi soldiers and civilians seen as ‘heroic victory’ (Aslam, 2010, p.336) during the Iraqi war. This presupposes that news is framed to achieve different meanings and purposes. Under this guise, media may frame issues (consciously or unconsciously) to favour one party at the expense of the other. Although this was the case in Iraq, the same has not been empirically substantiated in the Nigeria context. This study is an attempt to fill that gap. The foregoing shows framing as sharing certain features with other models of agenda-setting and priming as discussed subsequently.

Priming has been closely associated with agenda-setting. In the first instance, both are theories of media effects, and are grounded in “mnemonic models of information processing”, which according to Moy *et al.* (2016, p.5) “assume that individuals form attitudes on the strength of considerations that are most salient, and thus most accessible, when making decisions”. Priming functions as the offshoot of the media effects process started by the agenda-setting. Priming model describes how information relayed in the media is stored in human memory as nodes, with each of these nodes corresponding to a concept. Moy *et al.* (2016, p.5) explain that these nodes/concepts are connected to each other through “associative pathways, and the distance between nodes indicates how related they are”. Illustrating this, Moy *et al.* explain that “when a node is activated (for example, when the image of a smoking factory chimney activates “global warming”), this activation can spread to other related nodes (for example, “concern”). The activation of nodes increases how accessible they are in memory—they are “primed” for application to other stimuli” (2016, p.5). This means that the priming process

starts when information is received from the media to the activation of the pre-existing knowledge associated with the information in the mind of the audience. Through the above example therefore, priming process has two steps. While the first consists of the priming itself, the second explains its consequences. Priming and framing are also closely associated as demonstrated below:

### ***3.3.3. To trim or to thicken? Evaluating the trichotomy of framing, agenda-setting and priming***

As noted above, agenda-setting, priming and framing share some features in common. These three models are “rooted in the same theoretical premises” (Atata, 2014, p.22). As a matter of fact, Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007), argue in favour of condensing the trio into the agenda-setting rubric. In a similar stance, McCombs and Ghanem (2003, pp. 67-79) argue in favour of collapsing the concepts into one concept. Also contributing to this debate is Entman (2007) who suggests that the three concepts should be “integrated under the conceptual umbrella of bias to understand the media’s role in distributing power, revealing new dimensions and processes of critically *political* communication” (p.164).

The theoretical foundation of priming and agenda setting is traceable to psychological concept of cognitive processing of semantic information (Collins and Loftus, 1975; Tulving and Watkins, 1975). According to Tulving and Watkins (1975), when people develop ‘memory traces’ or what Collins and Loftus (1975) described as ‘activation tags’, situations are primed and made more retrievable in people’s memory. Expanding this, Collins and Loftus (1975, p. 409) argue that “when a concept is primed, activation tags are spread. ... When another concept is subsequently presented, it has to make contact with one of the tags left earlier and find an intersection”. The concept of activation tags therefore assumes that people are most likely going to make a judgement over an issue based on the information already stored in the memory. In other words, this correlates with what is known to the audience.

Drawing a distinction between these concepts, Johnson-Cartee (2005, p.25) clarifies that “while agenda setting and priming deal with how news may promote issue prioritization or increase issue accessibility, media framing research examines how news content influences and affects news consumers”. Like agenda-setting, priming is seen as a psychological phenomenon. As Atata (2014) contends, whenever the media emphasises an issue, people will remember that issue and subsequently use the same to evaluate new information. Therefore,

the belief is that since the media has emphasised these issues, they are bound to be stored in the memories of the audience, and thus, can be activated via a pre-existing information associated with the issue as earlier demonstrated.

To Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007, p.11) priming “occurs when news content suggests to news audiences that they ought to use specific issues as benchmarks for evaluating the performance of leaders and governments”. They argue that priming is an extension of the agenda-setting model. The basis of this argument emanates from the fact that by influencing what people attach importance to, (as in agenda-setting), the media also influences what concepts audiences use in making political judgments about actors and issues, (as in the priming model). It is on this basis that agenda-setting and priming are described as “accessibility-based models” (Atata, 2014, p.23), because the media uses them to emphasise particular issues and consequently make them more cognitively accessible to people. Both priming and agenda setting operate on the notion of ‘attitude accessibility’ (Scheufele, 2000). The media can increase the level of importance the audience attaches to an issue. In other words, the media increases the salience of issues or at least the ease with which these considerations can be retrieved from memory of the audiences. In contrast, framing works on the premise that subtle changes in the diction when describing an issue (e.g. terrorism) might alter how the audience can interpret the issue.

Framing differs from priming and agenda setting (accessibility-based models). It explains how what is reported influences the likely audience’s understanding of the issue. On this basis, Gamson and Modigliani (1987, p.143) see news frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events”. From the foregoing, one can argue that framing is a refined or second form of agenda setting which manifests when the media magnifies or amplifies certain aspects of an issue while deemphasising the rest. Although this largely relates to political situations, its application to forming or moulding opinion in a terrorism situation such as the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency seems appropriate. On the call by some scholars to condense the three models into one, this thesis argues that separating them would enhance more precision and clarity in their usage. In agenda setting, media places salience in people’s mind, whereas in priming, the media shapes people’s considerations when making decisions about the information people received. Framing on its own emanates from the way a story is presented to the audience. In this instance, the media

may decide to take a particular perspective from which the audience will draw their own interpretations of the story. That is how frame is built, set and interpreted.

### **3.4. Frame perception and interpretation**

In many instances, stories are framed from generic and issue-specific perspectives. Bruggemann (2014) for instance affirms that “studies of news framing often follow either the generic or the issue-specific frame conception” (p.64). Frames labelled issue-specific are those that are only relevant to some specific events or topics (de Vreese, 2012). Similarly, de Vreese (2005) clarifies that issue-specific frames vary in accordance with the topic of study and prevailing circumstances. He advises researchers to employ *a priori* categories, and to avoid speculations. Examples of issue-specific frames are terrorism, crime and other related issues. Generic frames on the other hand, can be seen as typical structures of issue-specific frames, and “they occur within many frames, which remain issue-specific as well as culturally and situationally dependent, nevertheless” (Baden (2010, p.25). Corroborating this, de Vreese (2012, 2002) argues that certain frames transcend thematic limitations, which suggests that they can be identified in relation to different issues such as politics, religion, and human interest) in the media which may sometimes differ over time depending on cultural contexts. To this effect, Bruggemann (2014, p.64) wants generic and issue-specific frames to be regarded as “complementary layers of framing rather than just alternative exclusive framing concepts”. This can also be explained from the thematic and episodic frames perspectives. The former emphasizes trending topics from a broader perspective, whereas the latter is hinged on the specific experience of an individual to illustrate issues.

Wouters (2015) contends that “thematic coverage places events into context, pays attention to trends, and presents general evidence. In contrast, episodic news treats events as particular cases in the form of event-oriented reports” (p.477). Only a small portion of the effect of thematic versus episodic framing results from perceptions of attribution of responsibility. Wouters (2015) found that not all episodic frames are equivalent. Therefore, as a process that promotes public sense-making Hartley (1996), the media frames help people to interpret the social realities or daily occurrences. Although the above studies succeeded in weighing the effects of thematic and episodic frames in their respective cases and contexts, it should be emphasized that no such research has measured the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in the Nigerian context.

### 3.5. Frame measurements

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) identified five frames namely *conflict*, *human interest*, *economic consequences*, *morality* and *responsibility* that occur commonly in the news. However, due to the fact that the original study measured a different subject (European Politics) the present study adopts these frames with the addition of two categories – *ethnicisation* and *politicisation* to comprehensively capture the Nigerian setting in relation to the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency as highlighted below:

- *Human interest frame*. Under this frame, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.95-96) explain, journalists give “a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem”. This frame also common in the news, is described as a “human impact” frame, (Neuman *et al.*1992). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), and Bennett (1995) argue that in line with the competitive nature of the news market, journalists and editors constantly negotiate how to come up with a product that captures and retains audience interest. Hence the human-interest frames which seek to “personalize”, ‘dramatize’ or “emotionalize” the news in the interest of the audience. Example, “Boko Haram displaced 600,000 in N’East – FG” (*The Punch*, 14/08/14, p.3; 19/08/14, p.9).
- *Economic consequences frame*. When applying this frame, issues relating to events being reported are approached from the perspective of their economic consequences on the individuals, organisations, society, state, region or country. The economic impact of a story enhances its newsworthiness (Neuman *et al.* 1992). Examples, “Insecurity: Stock Market loses N392bn in 4 months” (*Leadership*, 23/04/2014); “B’Haram war affecting economy – Jonathan” (*The Punch*, 24/06/14, p.3).
- *Religion/Morality frame*. According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.96), the morality frame “puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions”. They argue that “because of the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make reference to moral frames indirectly– through quotation or inference”. This frame contains moral lessons, and tends to be more prescriptive than analytical. Example, “Boko Haram has graduated from an affliction created by *religious fanatics* and trouble-makers to a bloody insurrection and a *jihad* against the country” (*The Sun*, 23/09/14).

- *Responsibility frame.* Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.96) explain that this frame “presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group”. They admit that responsibility frame in the news has not been measured ‘explicitly’. However, the media has often been accused of or credited with shaping public perception of issues. To this effect, Iyengar (1991) argued that when television news focuses on an issue or problem on individual basis (episodically) instead of a larger historical social context (thematically) people may be encouraged to offer personal interpretations to societal problems. Example, “Bad leadership fuelled insurgency in North East – Adamu Waziri” (*Leadership*, 12/11/2014).
- *Conflict frame* “emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.95). It draws from a disagreement or tension between two opposing sides. The Boko Haram insurgency as evidence in chapter five demonstrates, was occasionally presented as a war between the government and the jihadists. Earlier, Neuman *et al.* found evidence which portrays the media as drawing on a few central frames while reporting different issues. The study also further shows that conflict was the most prevalent in the handful of frames in the U.S. news identified (1992, pp.61–62). Examples of this frame include “Boko Haram is serious war – CAS” (*The Sun*, 14/06/14, p.6); “Declare total war on Boko Haram, northern govts tell Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 11/11/14, p.3).
- *Politicisation frame* is known when attacks by the insurgents are linked to politics. It is politicisation when such frames wear the toga and colouration of politics, especially from the point of view of the political divide. Boko Haram as widely alleged started as a socio-political group and gradually became a religious group. Political utterances from the then ruling and opposition parties reigned supreme in the build up to the 2015 general elections which ousted the ruling party. Example, “APC behind insurgency, PDP insists, claims Buhari’s utterances promote terrorism” (*The Sun* 23/12/14, p.3); “Bombing or not, 2015 elections must hold – Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 26/05/14, p.1).
- *Ethnicisation frame:* This frame is known from the Boko Haram stories framed from an ethnic perspective. History portrays Nigerian media and ethnicity as inexorably intertwined, and Ojo (2013, p.430) likened them to ‘Siamese twins’. Nigeria is a diverse country with no fewer than 250 ethnic groups and languages/dialects, and nearly a 1000



different major/minor cultural backgrounds. This predisposes it to clashes of interests and deprivations as claim and struggle for superiority lead to crises. Example of this frame is ‘Boko Haram: Come back home. MASSOB urges Igbo in north’ (*The Sun*, 27/05/2014).

### **3.6. Existing literature on framing the Boko Haram insurgency**

Terrorism, be it of domestic or international connection is receiving considerable media, academic, and political discourse. Extant literature on Boko Haram in particular has considerably assessed among other things, Nigerian Government’s war against Boko Haram (Anozie, 2016); Media response to Boko Haram assaults (Ekwueme and Obayi, 2012); discursive representation of Boko Haram in the newspapers (Osisanwo, 2016); condensational symbols in British press coverage of Boko Haram (Ette, 2016); terrorism in Nigeria, groups, activities, and politics (Oyeniya 2010); and Boko Haram as an Islamist challenge (Onuoha, 2010).

Ette (2016) examined the British press coverage of major acts of Boko Haram group to identify the ‘condensational symbols’ that journalists employed in contextualising their narratives about the insurgents. Her findings suggest that “symbolic terms that journalists used in their reports were not only easily identifiable but were specifically chosen to simplify a complex story for audiences that were perhaps uninformed about the group and its activities” (Ette, 2016, p.451). Ette observed that ethno-religious frame was employed in covering the Boko Haram insurgency. She argues that

What the ethno-religious frame alludes to is problematic because it diverts attention from more critical issues. Perceptive observers of Nigeria’s socio-political problems are aware that the Boko Haram phenomenon is indicative of the group’s success at mobilising people who feel marginalised and alienated due to extreme poverty and deprivation that pervade the northern part of Nigeria, their regional base (Ette, 2016, p.465).

This indicates a degree of attribution of responsibility. It is akin to that of Matthews (2015) which found “the second recurring frame identified in news discourse was for alleged plots to be portrayed as belonging to the predominantly Muslim communities in which counterterrorism operations took place” (p.276). Within the Nigerian context, the Boko Haram insurgency, as the media portrays it, can be located within the sociology of framing theory.

On the other hand, Osisanwo (2016, p.360) found that the way Boko Haram was portrayed in the newspapers “set the agenda by orientating their readers to negatively perceive the BH terrorism in Nigeria”. The importance of the present study is that it intervenes to close the gap of the insufficiency of studies examining the nature of coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency from a more holistic approach – including the linguistic and thematic perspectives. This is because insufficient linguistic and thematic studies on Boko Haram coverage can limit a clearer construction of meaning about the insurgency.

### **3.6.1 Framing the Boko Haram terrorism: Domestic media as the actors**

As noted above, in order to understand the nature of the media coverage of terrorism, analytical and theoretical frameworks that help in examining the relationship between media and terrorism are necessary. Terrorism by virtue of its situational interpretations is considered a big and important media event (Nacos, 2003a, 2003b; Delli Carpini and Williams, 1987). As earlier noted, media influences how people perceive reality through deliberate or undeliberate means. Supporting this, D’Angelo and Kuypers, (2010) argue that journalists cannot avoid framing because they need sources’ frames to make news. By so doing, they inevitably add or superimpose their own frames to those of their sources. This suggests that no matter how journalists try not to frame, they will always frame. In other words, framing can happen unconsciously. Everything that attracts media coverage can be framed to achieve a given meaning. This is in recognition of Scheufele’s (1999, p.103) definition of framing as a means of “selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration”.

Framing can be both positive and negative. Drawing copiously from their previous studies on ‘contextual cues’, Hallahan (1999); Kahneman and Tversky (1979) argue that the simple positive-versus-negative framing of a decision functions as a *cognitive heuristic* or rule-of-thumb which shapes audience’s decisions in situations of uncertainty or risk. “Negative reactance to losses or risks” Hallahan (1999) notes, is in consonance with other findings in impression formation, and as Hamilton and Zanna, (1972) suggest, negative information has more influence than the positive one. Similarly, Ito *et al.*, (1998) believe that negative information attracts more attention. Earlier in their research, Smith and Petty (1996) used the message framing and persuasion study to conclude that negative framing serves as a peripheral cue in processing messages.

Framing in the context of this research recognises ‘news as a social construct’ (Umejei, 2013; Tuchman, 1978). Framing contains both macro and micro level constructs (Scheufele, 1999). At macro level, it represents the way of presentation which reporters apply in making a story to resonate with existing underlying schemas among their target audience (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). On the micro level, framing refers to how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). Outside media and government rhetoric, framing is influenced by factors such as culture, which occurs “where events may be manipulated to achieve a narrative or iconic victory”; government, which is via “censorship and self-censorship that tends to prioritise elite or military interests”; real-world events; as well as public opinion (Norris *et al.*, 2003, pp. 292-298).

The benefit of framing lies in its potential to go beyond the surface of news coverage and expose some hidden assumptions (Tankard, 2001) and it “recognises the ability of a text to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate” (Tankard, 2001, p.96). This is why the dominant news frames depict a set of social meanings which enables the people to understand the “social relations within a particular social context” (Durham, 1998, p.102). Framing theory relates well to the context of the current study. As a major player in the coverage of the insurgency, the nature of domestic media frame of the Boko Haram activities would arguably determine audiences’ perception of the insurgents.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

This chapter explored framing as a theoretical framework and weighed its applicability to the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. I argued that framing happens frequently, and unconsciously in some instances. This suggests that no matter how journalists try not to frame, they will always frame. The tenets of framing theory and the other related models – agenda setting, and priming are consistent with the objectives of this study. In the chapter, I explained that the framing of an insurgency can be operationalised on the basis of “cognitive, critical and constructionist” paradigms. This informed the combination of these perspectives to ensure that where one is not appropriate enough, the rest can address the deficit.

The chapter also highlighted the five frames earlier employed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), namely conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility that occur commonly in the news. However, because the original study measured a different

subject under a different setting – *Framing European Politics*, the present study adopts these frames with two new categories – *ethnicisation* and *politicisation* to capture the Nigerian setting in relation to the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. These pre-determined frame categories will guide the content analytical aspect of this study. The next chapter shall explore the research methods and approaches as well as the philosophical assumptions that will guide this study.

## CHAPTER 4

### Methodology

#### 4.0. Introduction

This chapter discusses the philosophical approaches and methods used in the study. The chapter begins by reflecting on the research philosophies – epistemology, ontology, paradigms and research approach. To explore the relationship between the domestic media and the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, and the views shared by journalists in Nigeria about the insurgency, this study employs quantitative and qualitative (mixed) methods. As Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012, p.63) suggest, the use of mixed methods makes it easier to present ‘diversity of views’ as well as to provide ‘better (stronger) inferences’. Thus, this approach is considered suitable for this study so that deficiencies of applying only one method could be offset by the complementing methods. This chapter further discusses the research designs that make up the mixed methods. These include content analysis, questionnaire and in-depth interview, and the justification for their choice.

#### 4.1. Research philosophies

Understanding the philosophical underpinnings of a study helps to clarify its design (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). Some scholars (see Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Guba, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) have used various descriptions, classifications and categorisations to explain research philosophies – epistemology and ontology in relation to research methods. However, despite their somewhat overlapping positions, discrepancies still arise from the use of these philosophies as some researchers often disagree or fail to arrive at any acceptable definition. This has led to the definitional anarchy of these concepts. Consequently, the growing confusion emanating from this lack of consensus continues to be a source of worry especially for research students. To this end, Mkansi and Acheampong (2012) contend that due to the lack of common grounds on research philosophies, most researchers grapple with the problem of choosing the right research philosophy and approach, a situation that may affect the outcome of a research.

Similarly, Pring (2015, p.10) argues that such problems may stem from “‘the *meaning* of what is stated, of the *truth* of what is claimed, of the *verification* of the conclusions reached, of the *conceptualisation* of a problem and its solution, of the *objectivity* of enquiry and of the *knowability* of reality.’” (Emphasis in original). These philosophical puzzles are nonetheless

warranted because in research, there is no one particular way of doing things. There must be something to argue about. This is even more complex considering that there is hardly any universally acceptable truth. In the same vein, classifying research philosophies such as ontology and epistemology always reverberates with conflicting cases of applications and misapplications in conducting academic research as demonstrated subsequently.

#### **4.2. Ontological and epistemological considerations**

This study adopts an ontological perspective as one of its philosophical underpinnings. One of the ‘central debates’ in research philosophy revolves around ontology and epistemology. Ontological world view is associated with the social world and how people can make sense out of it. From the ontological perspective, the study is predicated on the premise that the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency has not been effectively explored in the Nigerian context. The Boko Haram insurgency exists as a ‘social world’ that can be constructed and interpreted based on the nature of its media coverage and personal experiences. The knowledge of the social world helps us to appreciate the complex connections of our private lives with others (individuals, groups that could be terrorists, government structures and national issues). It represents how we view ourselves and the complex structures that connect us with ‘others’. The social world does not exist outside of us. We carry it within through our reflections, actions and how we are influenced by it.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012) argue that the awareness of these research philosophies and the application of the right one at the right place can enhance not only the research quality, but also the creativity of the researcher. They consider ontology as the nature of reality and existence. The onus here centres on whether the social world can be researched using the patterns, ethos and principles of the natural sciences. On the other hand, ontological considerations emphasise the nature of social entities (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The central message of ontological perspective is concerned with the question of whether social entities should or can be regarded as objective that are alien to social actors, or whether they should be regarded as social constructions that are built up from the perceptions and actions of the actors.

Sometimes it takes a terrorist attack or natural and man-made disaster for people to realize how passionately embedded they are in this taken-for-granted social world. This explains why the social world works in different ways. For instance, before the 9/11 attacks, the global media reactions to terrorist attacks would have read like “This can’t happen in the States.”; “This

type of event is a common sight in Africa or the Middle East”. “I can’t imagine this is happening in the US or UK”. Yet, the 9/11 event changed that perception. It changed our world and how terrorism is interpreted. The event also showcased how integrally connected the US and the global community are. The recent Grenfell fire disaster and terrorist attacks in London and Manchester also serve as reminders to the deep connections between us and ‘others’ as exemplified by the trending media hashtags: #IStandWithGrenfellVictims #OneLoveLondon, #OneLoveManchester to mention only a few. Even in ‘ordinary’ Nigeria, the kidnap of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls also attracted a considerable global attention with the #BringBackOurGirls campaign from prominent persons, including Michelle Obama. The aftermath of the 9/11 event prompted the US to launch its highly publicized War on Terror (WoT), which has become a symbol of global war against terrorism. The WoT focuses on clamping down on those who disrupt ‘our’ world, in order to foster a peaceful world. This is how the social world works. It interrogates how we can make sense of the events happening around us and the global community.

This same description should also serve as a peripheral cue that makes us to consider how social structures or "structural" factors influence the social process and change. Pondering on this issue, Little (2014) asks “How do economic conditions, political institutions, social attitudes, and systems of race, class, and gender influence social outcomes?” In response to this question, I would argue that economic, political institutions, race, and gender affect social outcomes differently according to individual experiences. It is not the same for different people. It is evident that people frame their worlds and make choices within the social spaces that are sometimes independent of their wills or mental frameworks. In other words, what people hear or what dominates or permeates their environment also influences them. In this way, they may be operating within given political, social or economic boundaries that offer them opportunities and limitations. Informed by this understanding, the various issues surrounding the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency can be interpreted differently in the media. This makes it easier for the present study to adopt objective and subjective ontological positions.

Epistemology on its own is concerned with the question of what is or what should be regarded as an acceptable knowledge in a given field of study (Bryman and Bell, 2011, 2015). It has two dimensions – positivism and interpretivism. Thus, while interpretivism makes subjective meaning out of a social action, positivism draws meaning from the social world objectively. Based on the interpretivist epistemological stance, knowledge is influenced by values and

interpretations. By extension, social world is culturally defined and historically situated. This informs why whatever perception or interpretation people give to terrorism for instance, is informed by their cultural orientations or individual differences. In other words, even though terrorism attracts considerable global condemnation, the saying that “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” Daly (2008), makes it possible to argue that terrorism is not forbidden in certain cultural settings. To this end, compromises and agreements are therefore products of negotiations between the conflicting cultural orientations.

Bryman and Bell (2011) note that in the subjective-objective debate, interpretivism and constructivism are subjective, while positivism and objectivism form the objective dimension. In other words, the former asserts that “social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors”, while the latter asserts that “social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.21-22). The argument in favour of social construction of reality seems to have found more scholarly support. It is believed that both the people and the media are the actors constructing these realities and their views represent the parameter upon which the degree of reality could be measured. Proponents of research philosophies such as Bryman and Bell (2011), Saunders *et al.*, (2009), and Creswell (2008) often disagree in their interpretation of this paradigm ‘war’ (subjective and objective debate). However, it can still be argued that the perspectives offered by these scholars on epistemology and ontology are related on one hand and differ slightly on the other hand.

A cursory look at the work of Saunders *et al.*, (2009) shows that these research philosophies and research methodologies have overlapping evolutionary processes that are sometimes embedded in their categorisation and description. Thus, from the early major philosophical scholars (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Guba, 1990) to more recent philosophical scholars (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), the difference is quite obvious. For instance, Ritchie and Lewis’ (2003) views and classification of ontological and epistemological stances differ from that of Saunders *et al.*, (2009). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) have realism; materialism, critical realism, idealism and relativism as ontological perspectives; positivism and interpretivism as the genres of the epistemological perspective. On the other hand, Saunders *et al.* (2009) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) have positivism, realism, interpretism, and pragmatism as the ontological and epistemological perspectives.



These philosophies on their own are not entirely different. Put more succinctly, they share some common assumptions. However, whilst they share some critical assumptions, they present varied implications of those assumptions. Again, while all of them focus on the explanation of the methodological differences in research, they adopt different categorisations and classifications. With all these variations, researchers may be confused when trying to make their choice of the philosophies. Thus, these philosophies shape the assumptions researchers make even before the research is completed. In other words, “these assumptions will underpin your study strategy and the methods you choose as part of that strategy” (Saunders *et al.*, 2012 p.128). However, as Saunders *et al.*, opine, “the main influence is likely to be your particular view of what is an acceptable knowledge and process by which this is developed” (ibid).

In all these puzzles, the view shared by Johnson and Clark (2006) should be considered. They argue that instead of emphasising that our research should be philosophically informed, emphasis should rather shift to how well researchers are able to reflect upon the philosophical choices they have made and thus defend them in relation to the alternative research philosophies not adopted. As already indicated above, this study has elements of both epistemological and ontological philosophies. From the epistemological consideration, the study adopts ‘positivism’ and ‘interpretivism’. Specifically, epistemological understanding can be gained by analysing the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. On the other hand, due to the nature of the research questions, a positivist philosophical underpinning is also adopted to make informed assumptions and deductions where necessary. In addition, the study also draws from pragmatic knowledge claims. This is because it is suitable for a mixed methods research as explained below.

### **4.3. Pragmatism**

This study also aligns itself to pragmatism because the content analytical aspect of the study requires objectivity in its procedures, but in drawing conclusions, the findings require interpretation, which can be subjective. Basically, pragmatism is ideal for a mixed methods research. In the same vein, Cresswell (2014, p.11) notes that pragmatism opens the door to mixed methods, divergent worldviews, different assumptions, and different means of data collection and analysis. Pragmatism emphasizes the practical problem experienced by people, the research questions asked, as well as the consequences of such enquiry (Rossman and

Wilson, 1985). This philosophy was ‘relatively’ under-utilized at its embryonic stage, but it has been revived in recent times.

Pragmatism draws from different sides “including employing ‘what works’, using diverse approaches, and valuing both objective and subjective knowledge” (Creswell and Clark, 2011, p.43). Through pragmatic knowledge claim, truth is viewed as “what works at the time”. By ‘what works at the time’, it can be inferred that what is perceived as truth at a particular time may vary at another time. Similarly, pragmatic knowledge claim, argues Cherryholmes (1992) draws on the ideas of “what works”, using multi-approaches in order to objectively or subjectively make sense. It should be emphasised that pragmatism is not restricted to any particular system of philosophy and reality.

Pragmatism is traceable to American philosophers Charles Pierce, William James, and John Dewey of the early twentieth century (Gray, 2014; Cherryholmes, 1992). Dewey emphasised the need to “balance concrete and abstract on one hand, and reflection and observation on the other” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012, p.32). A pragmatic researcher is very sensitive to the social, political and historical context from which the inquiry begins. A pragmatic researcher also takes into consideration the ethics, morality, and issues of social justice throughout the research process and period (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatism applies mainly to mixed methods approach because investigators draw liberally from both quantitative and qualitative assumptions in the course of their research (Creswell, 2009). This also explains why the present study adopts pragmatism. According to Creswell (2003, p.12), “pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as to different forms of data collection and analysis” for the mixed methods researcher.

Pragmatism was widely reflected in the epic writings of Richard Rorty (1979, 1998 and 2007). Rorty claims that

If pragmatism is of any importance ...it is because accepting a pragmatist outlook would change the cultural ambience for the better. It would complete the process of secularization by letting us think of the desire for non-linguistic access to the real as hopeless as that for redemption through a beatific vision (Rorty, 2007, p.119).

The focus of Rorty’s pragmatic knowledge claim is on reconstructing the existing ways of thinking through conversations designed to enhance human lives and practices. Wheeldon (2015) notes that Rorty’s pragmatism, which is partly based on ‘ontological scepticism and

epistemological cynicism’, can be better summed with reference to the ironists. That is, scholars that have arbitrary recognition of historical conditions of their own thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs. The basis of this assumption is that terms, concepts, and methods alone have no intrinsic nature on which some universal external truth can be revealed. This situation is what analytic philosophy represents. According to Wheeldon (2015, p.398), analytic philosophy stems from the view that “there is a world ‘out there’” which “requires contesting knowledge to understand”.

From another perspective, Gray (2014) and Cresswell (2014) note that the basic focus of pragmatists does not probe whether a proposition fits a given ontology, rather it probes whether it suits a purpose with capability of creating action. Pragmatism is hailed for its ability to provide epistemological justifications for mixed method (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2009). Thus, using a multi-methods approach is not just ‘legitimate’ but necessary ‘in some cases’ (Gray, 2014). One advantage of this paradigm is that it offers an epistemological rationale and logic for mixing different approaches and methods (Onwuegbuzie, *et al.*, 2009; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007; Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2005).

Contributing to this debate are Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) who argued that by its nature, pragmatism best suits mixed methods research because it tends to free researchers to debate about truth and reality. The adoption of this philosophical underpinning for the present study becomes necessary in order to launch a critical investigation into the broader relationship between media and terrorism using the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria as a case study. From the view shared by these authors, it can be inferred that pragmatism is built on both subjective and objective knowledge claims. This means that pragmatism suits mixed methods approach. This is why mixed method approach (qualitative and quantitative) complement each other in order to address the problems of the study.

#### **4.4. Research approach/design (Mixed Methods)**

As already hinted above, this study employs a mixed methods approach to guide it. Mixed methods approach has multiple definitions from different authors based on their distinct fields and perceptions. These definitions are interrelated because they all advocate for the ‘combination of different techniques’ in a research. Before venturing into the definitions, may I stress that the popularity of mixed methods design has increased in recent times. For instance,

in 2007, Sage birthed the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, which exclusively publishes research on mixed methods (Bergman, 2008, p.1). This approach, Bergman contends, is adopted by researchers to ‘improve the marketability’ of their projects. The vast application of mixed methods approach by different scholars in recent times speaks to the evolving nature and the acceptability of this design. For instance, John Creswell who has written extensively on mixed methods research simply defines it as an “‘integration of qualitative and quantitative research and data in a research study”’ (Creswell, 2014, p.14). Earlier, Creswell *et al.*, (2003, p.212) note that the approach helps in “the collection or analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially... and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research”.

From another similar perspective, Greene (2007, p.20) sees mixed methods as an approach “... that actively invites us to participate in dialogue about multiple ways of seeing and hearing, multiple of ways making sense of the social world, and multiple standpoints on what is important and to be valued and cherished.” Taking the above definition from the perspective of ‘seeing and hearing’ suggests that there is a broader application of mixed methods beyond research purposes. From a broader perspective, Creswell and Clark (2007) explain that

...mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell and Clark, 2007, p.5).

According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007, p.123), it is “the type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration”. Throwing more light on this, they note that

Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a

powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007, p.129).

From the above overview which shows the evolving nature of mixed methods, one can argue that few elements still need to be incorporated into its definition to make it a more coherent approach. Since it is not field-specific, definitions of mixed methods from across disciplines should specify some sample topics that the approach is suitable for because it is not suitable for all topics. To this end, mixed methods can be broadly seen as a research approach that employs qualitative and quantitative designs in investigating the relationship between variables.

Also referred to as research design, a research approach serves as a link between philosophical assumptions and research methods (Creswell, 2009). Other research designs according to Creswell include qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative research is hinged on an interpretivist philosophical perspective to explore and understand the meanings individuals or groups of individuals attach to a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). Quantitative design on the other hand uses the positivist philosophical perspective in examining the relationship between variables. In using a mixed methods approach, the researcher bases his inquiry on the assumption that “collecting diverse types of data best provides an understanding of a research” (Cresswell, 2009). A mixed methods research draws from both quantitative and qualitative data to arrive at a conclusion. Scholars such as Collis and Hussey (2009) and Creswell (2009) note that mixed methods has an edge over other designs because it combines some elements of positivism and interpretivism to form a pragmatic knowledge claim that provides balance in a study in such a way that the limitations of one approach can be overcome by the strength of another.

According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008), these four terms: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods and techniques are likened to a trunk of a tree with four rings with each layer representing each of the four items. This can also be likened to the research onion of Saunders *et al.*, (2012) shown in figure 6 below:

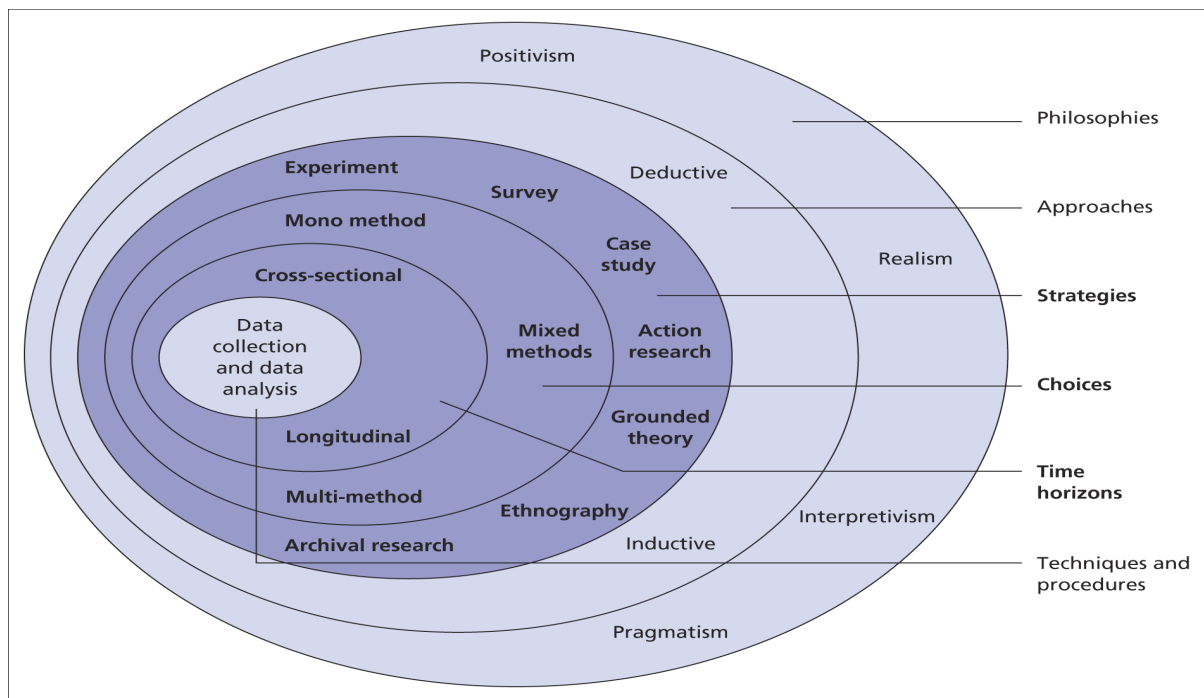


Figure 6: The research onion. Source: Saunders et al, (2012)

In the same vein, DeCuir-Gunby (2008) notes that the essence of mixed methods is to ensure balance in a study such that the weakness of one approach is strengthened by the other. Gaber and Gaber (2006) also identified five main purposes of mixed methods designs to include ‘triangulation (convergence), development, complementarity, expansion and initiation’ (p.165). In their view, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2012, p.63) posit that the use of mixed methods also makes it easier to present ‘diversity of views’ as well as provide ‘better (stronger) inferences’. More reasons why mixed methods approach was favoured ahead of others in this study are highlighted briefly:

- To ensure a comprehensive investigation of the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria from a diverse data sources (content analysis, interview and questionnaire).
- To extend the range of enquiry and debate about the relationship between media and terrorism.
- For a better understanding of the research problem through the convergence of numeric trends and specific details from quantitative and qualitative data respectively.

Apart from its strengths highlighted above, the weaknesses of mixed methods approach lie in its time-consuming nature. Furthermore, it demands vast knowledge for proper execution, as

well as the stressful nature of its data analysis (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Again, the chances of replication of mixed methods studies are very low (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012). This study is not concentrating on the negative aspects of the mixed methods approach. It should rather be viewed as an alternative research strategy representing different ends of a continuum (Creswell, 2009). It is the middle of this continuum that mixed methods research is located since it combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell, 2009). In the same line of thought is Hussey and Hussey (1997) who maintain that a mixed research approach fortifies research findings using triangulation. Buttressing this, Brewer and Hunter (1989), and Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) affirm that a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection in a study enriches the results in a way that one form of data collection cannot. This also enhances triangulation, which refers to the application of different research approaches, methods and techniques in one study to forestall any single method-induced potential bias and sterility. Although it has weaknesses, the above explanations show that using a mixed methods approach to study a phenomenon such as the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency is essential for enhancing the study's validity and complementarity.

Having adopted a mixed methods approach, this study uses a 'three-dimensional' strategy (content analysis, interview and questionnaire) to critically analyse the nature of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. This choice is not only spurred by its increasing popularity but because it fits into the objectives of the study which have elements of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### **4.4.1. Content analysis**

Content analysis is a research technique that allows for systematic and relatively objective description of manifest documents, spoken or visual communication, using a quantitative or qualitative approach in a replicable manner. This means that content analysis can be carried out on both print and broadcast media and the internet. Content analysis and textual analysis are often used interchangeably to mean the interpretation of the elements in texts. However, while the former has a narrower focus, the latter embodies many other methods of interpreting texts including content analysis. McKee (2003, p.2) explains that "when we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text". Similarly, Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000, p.225) argue that

communication researchers use textual analysis “to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message”. Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) classified the four major approaches of textual analysis to include rhetoric criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis and performance studies. Thus, if textual analyses is a tree, content analysis is one of its branches. Though they differ in purpose, all of them focus on the interpretation of the communication embedded in a text. Therefore, rather than employing textual analysis as a broader methodology, the focus is on the content analysis, a branch of textual analysis to reduce vagueness and enhance precision.

Content analysis was employed to evaluate the dominant news frames used by the domestic media and to understand the language or diction that the media employed in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The first three objectives of this study are addressed via content analysis. The definitions of content analysis have been broadened in recent time. Content analysis as Berelson (1952, p.18) originally puts it is “a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” Unfortunately, this long-known definition of content analysis offered by Berelson has met with criticisms for restricting itself to just quantitative approaches (Gunter, 2000) as cited in Matthews, 2010, p.70). On the other hand, Holsti (1969, p.14) defined content analysis as “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages”. The problem of this definition lies in its inability to be specific about the technique being quantitative, qualitative or both.

Bryman and Bell (2015, p.300) summarised content analysis as “an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories and in a systematic and replicable manner”. Again, Bryman and Bell’s definition restricts content analysis to the quantitative spectrum. To Neuendorf (2002, p.10), content analysis embodies “summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method”. Neuendorf notes further that this also extends to emphasising objectivity, inter-subjectivity, *a priori* design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing (p.10). Although plausible in their different perspectives, the above scholars seem to cage content analysis within the systematic and descriptive spectrums. Content analysis, argues Neuendorf (2002, p.10-11) is different from “other, more qualitative or interpretative message analyses”. In the same ‘systematic’ perspective is Bernard (2013, pp.536-537) who notes that “content



analysis is a set of methods for systematically analysing ... data and for testing hypotheses about texts, usually statistically”. Bernard’s definition is considered inappropriate for this study because it only sees content analysis from a quantitative or statistical point of view. It fails to acknowledge that content analysis can also be qualitative.

Content analysis is also criticised for only restricting itself to describing content instead of incorporating the influence of such content on the mass audience views of the social reality (*see* Krippendorff, 1980, and Gunter, 2000, p.56). Apart from the above areas of concerns, another criticism of content analysis stems from its claim of ‘objectivity’ as seen in the above definitions. While objectivity is not always ruled out, it might be safe to argue based on the ‘extent’ of objectivity. This means that even if there is a parameter for measuring objectivity, it seems safe to define the extent or degree (high or low) of such objectivity as seen in the definition I offered at the beginning of this section. This may save it from many criticisms. It is for this reason that Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p.166) argue that by their nature, content analysis is not entirely objective since researchers make subjective choices of what to analyse or categorise. Informed by the above criticisms, the definition of content analysis should extend to the interpretation of the subject matter as a basis for constructing meanings around it without compromising its qualitative and quantitative aspects. This does not however take away its systematic approach. By being systematic, content analysis lends itself to a more consistent approach that suppresses high degree of bias. This is to ensure that when another researcher applies the same approach on the same subject matter, using the same predetermined categories, the outcome would technically be the same.

Content analysis can be both qualitative and quantitative. Thus, while the quantitative content analysis is concerned with counting and measuring (Brennen, 2013, p.193), qualitative analysis focuses on the specific single cases. The former tends to be inductive, while the latter is mainly deductive (Mayring, 2010). The underlying similarity between two of them is that whether it is a qualitative or quantitative, content analysis is expected to be systematic and replicable. In addition to that, even when doing quantitative content analysis, researchers use qualitative strategies to buttress their points. This underscores the interconnectedness of the two.

Although selected for this study, content analysis is not without its shortcomings. The disadvantage lies in its labour-intensive nature (Bryman and Bell, 2015). To do a content

analysis takes a lot of time and it is believed to be more laborious than other methods. Coding is very difficult to do. To confront a challenge of that nature, Franzosi (1995) suggested that researchers may have to look out for the part of the article where the story is summarised. This, the author argued would save both time, cost and energy. As Bryman (2012, p.306) also pointed out that, “it is almost impossible to devise coding manuals that do not entail some interpretation on the part of coders”. This presupposes that coders may be finding it difficult to negotiate the terrain in overcoming personal bias or sentiments as a result of their daily experiences and exposures. Apart from this, another disadvantage is that of subjectivity which emanates from the researcher’s predetermined categories for measurement.

#### ***4.4.1.1. The criteria for sample selection, inclusion and exclusion***

The materials for the content analysis were drawn from three newspapers – *Leadership*, *The Punch* and *The Sun*). These three newspapers are privately owned. Although purposively selected, the choice of these newspapers reflects the varying characteristics of editorial policy, readership, and their ethnic orientations. In other words, the selection of these three newspapers reflects the tripartite structure of the Nigerian major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. The newspapers have vast network of correspondents/reporters in all states of the country. Although the newspapers are national in scope they also tend to be more oriented towards the ethnic affiliations of their owners. For instance, *Leadership* is Hausa-oriented, *The Punch* is Yoruba-oriented, while *The Sun* is Igbo-oriented. The selection criteria was based not only on the recognition of their popularity among Nigerians, but also because their readership extends beyond the country. By implication, these newspapers are among the leading national dailies in Nigeria that have published consistently since their founding (Okidu, 2013). In view of their popularity in Nigeria, these newspapers also have the potential to set the tone for national discourse on variety of issues, and this thesis considers the Boko Haram insurgency as one. These newspapers were more likely to include broader coverage of the Boko Haram activities. Apart from their print versions, these newspapers are also widely read online within and outside Nigeria. Apart from that, they were also chosen ahead of others because they present views from both popular and elite Nigerian publics with varied views from a fairly comprehensive representation of different political, geographical and ethnic divides in the country.

The study sample was drawn using two formats of continuous and constructed weeks. For the continuous weeks, seven consecutive days were given to major Boko Haram attacks such as the bombing of the United Nations' headquarters in Abuja (26<sup>th</sup> August, 2011); the Christmas day bombing in Madala (25<sup>th</sup> December 2011); the declaration of the state of emergency in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states (1<sup>st</sup> January, 2012); the Baga killing (21<sup>st</sup> April, 2013) and the abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls which gave rise to the global media campaign #BringBackOurGirls (14<sup>th</sup> April 2014). The continuous week format means that the coverage of each of these events were assessed for seven consecutive days after their occurrences. This approach was taken to ensure that these major events were not skipped in view of their magnitude and the potential to set the tone for the construction of reality on the insurgency among journalists and the public. The rest drew from constructed weeks, which randomly targeted the remaining days in the sample. Example, outside the weeks that featured in the consecutive weeks, the remaining months between 2011 and 2014 were included in the sample to ensure that each month that has no 'major' Boko Haram event was selected at least once. The study period is 2011-2014, which represents four years of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. It was in 2011 that Boko Haram insurgents started their large-scale bombings in Nigeria, whereas 2014 represents the year that Boko Haram raised its global profile following the abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls. The four-year coverage seemed appropriate enough to have enough data for the analysis. The coding units applied in the analysis include: phrases, sentences, lead (the first paragraph of a story usually containing the 5ws and h), paragraphs, headlines, news items, features, editorial, interviews, advertorial, pictures/cartoons showing the activities of Boko Haram.

The inclusion of the above items was necessitated because they contain the main issues on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. News for instance was deemed necessary because it contains most of the items on the coverage of the insurgency. While some appeared as soft news, others appeared as hard news. Like news stories, feature stories and analyses also appeared severally. Editorial was included because it represents the position of media outfits on the insurgency whereas interview was included to represent the voice of experts (pro-government, anti-government or neutral voices) in commenting about the insurgency. This becomes necessary because sometimes the voice of the people other than those in the government, media or the insurgents needs to be heard to facilitate balance in the analysis. On

the other hand, advertorial was included because it was mainly presented from the political perspective and deals directly with some of the thematic frames under investigation.

#### ***4.4.1.2. Inter-coder reliability (content analysis)***

This study engaged the services of two trained coders who were asked to read through the newspaper articles, and make their judgment based on yes/no format (see appendix 6) to understand the dominant themes, frames and language of the coverage. The coders compared notes on the textual elements and interpretation. This approach according to Matthews (2015) reduces bias. After sifting through the articles, ‘irrelevant’ ones were not included. Those that made just passing reference to the insurgency were not considered in the final sample. Through this procedure, we arrived at *n*641 articles for the analysis. This also enabled us to arrive at the inter-coder reliability of the study.

The validity of content analysis lies in its ability to incorporate more than one coder in marking up the text. This idea is to enhance the inter-coder or interrater reliability (Bernard, 2013). According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014), inter-coder reliability measures the equivalency or consistency component of a phenomenon by two or more observers. It is designed to assess the degree of agreement that can be reached or reproduced by different coders. To understand the level of reliability, level of agreement is measured. To understand the level of agreement, it is expected that the coding criteria used by one coder conform to another’s. According to Krippendorff (1980, pp.130-132), reliability in content analysis is expected to ensure stability, reproducibility and accuracy. According to Lombard *et al.*, (2004) there is no established standard for determining an acceptable level of reliability. Furthermore, to achieve an acceptable degree of reliability, this study followed the step offered by Holsti (1969) and it is applied for this study as shown below:

$$\text{Inter-coder Reliability} = 2M/N_1 + N_2$$

Where *M* = the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree and *N*<sub>1</sub> and *N*<sub>2</sub> are the total numbers of coding decisions by the coders. The above formula was adopted for this study. Thus, two coders were trained and the result of the inter-coder reliability is shown as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E
1	IRR Check	Rater1	Rater2		
2	Answer 1	1	1	1	
3	Answer 2	1	1	1	
4	Answer3	1	1	1	
5	Answer4	1	1	1	
6	Answer5	1	2	0	
7	Answer6	1	1	1	
8	Answer7	1	1	1	
9	Answer8	2	2	1	
10	Answer9	2	2	1	
11	Answer10	1	2	0	
12	Answer11	1	2	0	
13	Answer12	1	1	1	
14	Answer13	2	2	0	
15	Answer14	2	1	0	
16	Answer15	2	2	1	
17	Answer16	2	2	1	
18	Answer17	2	2	1	
19	Answer18	2	2	1	
20	Answer19	2	2	1	
21	Answer20	2	2	1	
22	Answer21	1	1	1	
23	Answer22	1	1	1	
24	Answer23	1	2	0	
25	Answer24	1	1	1	
26	Answer25	1	1	1	
27	Answer26	1	1	1	
28					
29		Match	20		
30		Total	26		
31		IRR	77%		

$$2 (20) /26 +26 = 76.9230769230769 \text{ or } 77\%$$

Table 3: The inter-coder reliability applied to the study

As seen in the above screenshot, this formula in relation to this study shows that in a sample of 26 units, the two coders agreed on 20 elements. This produced 77% level of agreement, an indication that the reliability of the coding is strong. Campbell *et al.* (2013) argue that there is no agreed “threshold for what constitutes a numerically satisfactory level of agreement among coders” (p.310). Similarly, Lombard *et al.* (2004) said that there is no level of agreement that is standard. Although Campbell *et al.* (2013) and Lombard *et al.* (2004) share similar perspective, Fahy (2001) asserts that an inter-coder reliability that ranges between 70% to 94% percent is within the “acceptable” and “exceptional” boundary. For this reason, the 77% level of inter-coder reliability attained in this study is accepted.

#### 4.4.2. Questionnaire

As explained above, questionnaire is one of the three instruments for data collection in this study. By way of definition, questionnaire is a tool for data collection used to elicit responses from the respondents on issues surrounding the research objectives. It is a set of research questions drafted to address the objectives of a study. Its questions are already predetermined with alternatives that limit respondents to choices they will make (as seen in closed-ended questions) or with the option that seeks their opinions verbatim (open-ended). According to

Ghuari and Gronhaug (2002) questionnaire is effective for generating opinions, attitudes, and descriptions as well as investigating the cause and effects relationships. In another perspective, questionnaire can be a means of generating data that cannot easily be generated via observation or that which are not in written or electronic form. In this thesis, questionnaire did not serve as the main source of data collection; it complemented the content analysis and interview sources.

#### ***4.4.2.1 Designing a questionnaire***

A vital aspect of any questionnaire method starts with its design. When a questionnaire is well-designed and well structured, it engages the respondents and encourages them to give honest and accurate responses. More importantly, a good questionnaire should produce evidence that can answer the research questions. The questionnaire for the present study is drafted to address some of the objectives of the study on the variation in the coverage, media ecology, and nature of coverage.

One of the first critical steps taken to address these objectives was to subject the questionnaire items to proper assessment from colleagues and team of supervisors and ethics committee whose feedback strengthened the instrument. The reason for subjecting the identified variables into proper and thorough examination was in respect of de Vaus' (2001) advice that questionnaires should be drafted in ways that forestall inherent ambiguity, implicit assumptions, and multiple meanings emanating from phrasing bias. To minimise cases of ambiguity and/or complexity in questionnaire design, Saunders *et al.* (2009) and Sekaran and Bougie (2009) advocate for the use of close-ended questions, which encourages respondents to reply easily as well as making the job of coding easier for researchers. Similarly, in order to achieve a high response rate, Hair *et al.* (2003) enjoin researchers to be mindful of the structure, sequence and the questionnaire length. To Howard and Sharp (1983), the longer the questionnaire, the more disenchanted respondents may likely become. For a high response rate also, Dillman (1978) admonished scholars to desist from asking sensitive questions to respondents whose reactions may lead to abandonment of questions halfway. Furthermore, to forestall low response rate, Jobber and O'Reilly (1996) suggested that researchers should offer incentives to respondents to win their attention. Although the above scholars stressed on the brevity of the questionnaire, they did not define the length in terms of page or word limit to put researchers in the know of what constitutes an acceptable length of a questionnaire. This thesis used a seventeen-item questionnaire addressing the research objectives.

Armed with the above information, the study also attached an *Informed consent form* to the questionnaire, defining the research purpose, the procedure, the risks and benefits as well as the rights of the respondents to withdraw at any point of the exercise if they so wish. Above all, the confidentiality of respondents' identities and responses was also clearly stated. The questionnaire was also subjected to face validity and pre-tested before the main study in order to detect ambiguous and sensitive questions that were subsequently edited to fit well into the research objectives.

Similarly, the questionnaire items were not only phrased to capture all the salient details of the research objectives, but also used easy-to-understand words to avoid any confusion arising from poor understanding of the research context as Gillham (2008) advised. The 17-item questionnaire consisted of two pages, and targeted 50 respondents (Nigerian journalists). Out of these 17 questions, 16 of them were close-ended, while only one question was open-ended. This measure was taken to ensure that the data collected would be easily subjected to quantitative analysis and enhance easy coding. The use of one open-ended question was a measure taken to elicit additional information from the respondents outside the restricted options. The closed-ended questions restrict respondents into making their choices from a list of options, whereas in open-ended questions respondents have the option to freely answer the questions using their own words (Hair *et al.*, 2007; Cooper and Schindler, 2001; Gillham, 2008). In addition, the questionnaire featured both dichotomous and multi-choice response systems. Dichotomous system is when two exclusive choices are available for the respondents to choose from. The rest of the questions were however, multi-choice with three or more options for respondents to choose from.

#### ***4.4.2.2. Administration of the questionnaire /Pre-test***

Prior to the main study, effort was made to get in touch with the few respondents some of who expressed their readiness to participate in the survey. Although the researcher purposively targeted 50 respondents (Nigerian journalists) from different media organisations, only 41 of them responded to the questionnaire. The sample size may not be representative enough, but questionnaire is not the main source of data for this study. Questionnaire is only complementing the main instruments – content analysis and interview. The journalists under the aegis of Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) were deemed necessary to be part of the exercise in view of their deep involvement in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The initial arrangement was to administer the questionnaire face-to-face, however, the restriction of

students from travelling to Nigeria for research purposes following its classification as one of the ‘high risks countries’ affected the original plan and warranted the use of an alternative approach. The alternative approach was to use both emailed questionnaire and online questionnaire to reach the respondents.

A pilot study was undertaken to test the validity, suitability or otherwise of the instrument. This involved sending an early version of the questionnaire to 10 respondents. This measure was meant to seek feedback on the clarity and appropriateness of the questions and questionnaire design, and to determine the average timeframe that was required to complete each of the questionnaires. After the pilot test, participants were requested to give feedback on the wordings and clarity of sentences and instructions in the questionnaire. Through their feedback on the difficulty or otherwise in understanding and responding to those questions, the strength of the instrument was validated. This also gave the researcher the foreknowledge of the length of time needed to respond to the questions. In addition, this measure provided good insight into how best to sequentially arrange and modify the questions because all relevant suggestions from the pilot respondents were reflected in the final draft.

#### ***4.4.2.3. Population and research sample planning (questionnaire)***

A crucial step in an academic research starts with the knowledge of what constitutes the study’s population (Neuman, 2010; Cresswell, 2013; Bryman, 2012). The population of study for the questionnaire was the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). Information available at the Union’s website puts the number of ‘NUJ compendium of members’ at 956 (see <http://nuj.org.ng/compendium.php>). This figure was true as of 30<sup>th</sup> January 2017, and it represents the working population for this study. Although this does not represent the entire Nigerian journalists, the number represents journalists under the aegis of NUJ that actively paid their annual dues and participated in the union’s annual general meeting.

Another critical step is the use of appropriate sampling techniques to draw a researchable sample size (Cresswell, 2013). There are two major sampling techniques – probability and non-probability sampling. The former hinges its sample selection criteria on some probabilistic mechanisms that give all members of the unit (population) equal chances of being selected (Cooper and Schindler, 2006). The latter on the other hand is based on the assumption that not all the members of the study ‘universe’ have the same chances of being selected. Non-probability sampling technique is also known as convenience sampling, and it is applicable in



a population where all the respondents cannot be determined (Babbie, 2004; Fricker, 2008). This study used convenience sampling because it targeted only Nigerian journalists under the aegis of NUJ who attended the meeting of its Central Working Committee.

#### ***4.4.3. In-depth interview and sampling procedure***

Interview was another method of data collection for this study. It falls under the qualitative approach. The use of interview in this study was borne out of Bower's (1973) suggestion that "the best way to find out what the people think about something is to ask them" (p.vi). The choice of this method was to enhance the triangulation process of this study, and pave the way for complementarity of results from different designs. Interviews are done in different styles and approaches. However, this study used the in-depth interview technique. Also called intensive interview (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014, p.142), in-depth interview provides the researcher with a detailed wealth of data. On the negative side, in-depth interview makes generalisation very difficult and an interviewer's bias may influence the outcome. Apart from that, it is difficult to code interview and thereby posing another difficulty for data analysis (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014). Although it has its shortcoming, this technique is reputed for its ability to use a small but detailed sample. The success of in-depth interview is hinged on the ability of the interviewer to establish good rapport with the interviewee. With such atmosphere, the researcher could probe into the research problems and gather relevant data more than he/she could have done without such a rapport.

Another advantage of in-depth interview is that it allows for lengthy engagement of the interviewer (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014). When conducted face-to-face, interviewer can read meaning into some non-verbal responses from the interviewee. Unfortunately, this study did not follow the face-to-face approach to the in-depth interview due to the travel ban placed on students travelling to Nigeria for research purposes. Nigeria was classified as one of the 'high-risk countries', not safe for students to visit for research. This prompted an *ex-situ* arrangement. Telephone interview was employed in this case. The obvious advantage of telephone-interview is that it accomplishes the process of data collection very quickly, and it is relatively cheap to execute (Gunter, 2012, p.243). However, the process may be prone to 'communication fidelity' or distortions because of the vagaries of weather or network fluctuations as I experienced during the exercise. Nevertheless, using these diverse approaches for data collection and analysis yielded a critical understanding of the research problem.

Overall, 12 journalists were initially targeted for the interview, but only nine were interviewed in the end. There is no consistency in interview sampling procedure. Given that there is no generally accepted number of interviewees that are representative enough, engaging fewer respondents enhances in-depth data generation. Although I had a set of predetermined questions for the interviewees, I was not entirely restricted to these questions because new relevant points raised by the interviewees were probed further. The selection of respondents was purposive but it took into cognisance, the complex structure of the Nigerian media ecology. Thus, participants were drawn from *Thisday*, *Vanguard*, *The Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *The Sun*, *Premium Times*, *Channels TV*, *NTA*, and *Radio Nigeria* to represent the varying characteristics of ethnicity, religion, genre and private/government media ownership in Nigeria. As the above information indicates, respondents were selected from the print, broadcast and online media outfits across the country.

#### **4.4.3.1. Validity and reliability (Interview)**

Measuring validity and reliability in qualitative research has drawn some scholarly attention among researchers. Validity and reliability are widely applicable to quantitative studies (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003). This has left the concepts with more controversies regarding their applicability in qualitative research. As one of the ways to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended that such a study must be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. These criteria demand that researchers should show high level of transparency and reflexivity. To ensure transparency, the researcher was open in setting the stages, designs and approaches for this research, which means that other researchers can apply it in different situation. See appendix 3 for the interview schedule.

#### **4.5. Ethical consideration**

Any research about terrorism may present some ethical issues (Fleischman and Wood, 2002). In line with this, I sought and obtained ethical approval from the University of Central Lancashire's Research Ethics Committee. In this study, journalists served as respondents for the interview and the questionnaire. The provisions of this ethical approval require that the identities of the respondents from the questionnaires and interviews are protected. It is for this reason that I assigned pseudonyms to the respondents. However, I allowed the designations of the interviewees to give context and show their official positions. Those who are news editors, feature editor, political editor; senior reporters, reporters, and correspondents were simply

identified as editor, reporter or journalist. This process has been applied to studies by Akinfemisoye (2015) and Mabweazara (2010) and it did not change the outcome of the research.

In addition, participants were asked to sign the *informed consent form* as a prerequisite for participating in the exercise. The form specified the purpose of the study, the procedure, confidentiality, and rights of the respondents. Sequel to this, respondents were given between two weeks (for the questionnaire) and one month (for the interview) to voluntarily withdraw their comments in case they changed their mind after participating. In the case of the interview, consent was also sought from the interviewees who gave their consent before recording commenced. It turned out that none of the participants withdrew their comments afterwards. Apart from these routinely defined steps, I also made sure that I adjusted to the situation when I sensed any sign of discomfort from my interviewees. For instance, I rephrased some questions that I thought were intrusive to the respondents or caused a discomfort to them.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This chapter has mapped out the research approach and research philosophies employed to guide this study. The chapter explored mixed methods approach and how it can be used to gain critical insight into the nature of the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Mixed methods approach enhances triangulation (convergence), and complementarity of findings. The designs embedded in the mixed methods for this study include content analysis, questionnaire (quantitative) and in-depth interview. These were all explained and their suitability for this study evaluated. The chapter also identified pragmatism as the main philosophical underpinning for this study. The reason for this is that pragmatism draws from different sides of “what works”, using diverse approaches, which could be objective or subjective knowledge claims. On the basis of the interpretivist epistemological stance, I argued that knowledge is influenced by values and interpretations. By extension, the social world is culturally defined and historically situated. This explains why people’s perception or interpretation of a phenomenon such as terrorism is informed by their cultural orientations or individual differences. For instance, while alcohol is forbidden in certain cultural settings, it is considered normal in others.

The next three chapters draw from the empirical procedures explained in this chapter to critically evaluate the nature of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Boko Haram Insurgency: Assessing the Dominant Frames**

#### **5.0. Introduction**

This chapter presents and analyses the content analysis data and attempts to interpret the implications of the results. The data are sourced from three newspapers and coded with the help of two coders who were trained on the rudiments of coding. The coding system yielded *n*641 items upon which this analysis is based. Some of the main Boko Haram incidents that reflected widely in the coverage are the kidnap of the Chibok schoolgirls, the UN House bombing, the Christmas day ‘mayhem’, and the ‘Baga Massacre’. These events provided significant moments in the coverage of the insurgency. The aim of the content analysis is to reveal/understand the dominant frames in the coverage of the insurgency. It evaluates the episodic and thematic frames employed in the coverage of the insurgency. To determine the dominant frames, the study employs five predetermined generic frames – economic consequences, human-interest, conflict, attribution of responsibility, and morality/religion. These were adopted from Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in addition to the two categories – politicisation and ethnicisation developed for this study. The analysis shows that politics, religion and ethnicity (PRE) were more thematised in the coverage.

#### **5.1. The selected newspapers**

For emphasis, three newspapers (*Leadership*, *The Punch* and *The Sun*) were selected for content analysis in this study. They are privately owned newspapers. This means that they are expected to exhibit a certain degree of editorial independence. The choice of these newspapers was also necessitated by the fact that independent media outfits offer alternative views on the coverage of terrorism (Turk, 2004) more than those owned by the Government which are sometimes placed under strict control and monitoring to reduce a potential public sympathy for terrorists and fear for terrorism. Other reasons for selecting these newspapers have already been explained in chapters one and four. The selected newspapers yielded a number of articles published as news, features, editorials and advertorials that were used for the analysis as the table below shows:

<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Period of coverage</b>	<b># of articles/items analysed</b>
<i>Leadership</i>	2011 - 2014	165 (25.7%)
<i>The Punch</i>	2011 - 2014	190 (29.7%)
<i>The Sun</i>	2011 - 2014	286 (44.6%)
<b>Total</b>	--	<b>641 (100%)</b>

Table 4 showing the number of items analysed from the three newspapers.

The above table shows the distribution of newspapers analysed and the number of articles that meet the selection criteria. The table indicates that 165 (25.7%) of the entire stories were published in the *Leadership* newspaper; 190 (29.7%) were published in *The Punch*; while *The Sun* newspaper has 286 (44.6%). This result is the outcome of the constructed and continuous weeks' approach employed in the sampling process. Some of the days within the selected weeks and months had no stories that matched the criteria. These figures do not mean that the newspapers did not carry more stories on the Boko Haram insurgency than the shown numbers, but they represent stories that appeared on the coverage within the selected days of the study period. To arrive at this figure, a 26-question template that deals with the frames was developed. The coding required *yes* or *no* from the coders (see the codebook for question-based variables in content analysis in appendix 6). Although one item may have more than one frame elements, coders assessed and agreed on the dominant theme in the article before deciding where to classify it.

## 5.2. Episodic versus thematic frames in the coverage

For the purpose of emphasis, the difference between thematic and episodic frames is that the former emphasizes an issue from a broader perspective, whereas the latter relies on specific experience of an individual to illustrate an issue. As noted in chapter three, episodic frames depict issues by providing “a specific example, case study, or event-oriented report” (Gross, 2008, p.171). For instance, in “Boko Haram: 2255 prisoners escape, 46 prison staff die”, *The Sun* presented the story from a thematic perspective by bringing previous cases or background information to the latest case of prison break. Thus,

Between July 27, 2009 when Boko Haram terrorists allegedly attacked Maiduguri prisons and freed 482 inmates and October 29, 2014 when another set of 366 inmates were also freed following the overrun of Mubi, the second largest town in Adamawa State, a total of 2,255 prison inmates have been freed from various prisons across the country in 14 different attacks (*The Sun*, 06/11/14).

As the above example shows, the story gives account of a related case scenario to explain the latest act of jailbreak by the Boko Haram insurgents. The story therefore gives a broader (thematic) insight to the latest Boko Haram attack. On the other hand, in the story, ‘‘End of road for Boko Haram chief sponsor’’, the reverse was the case because emphasis was only on the alleged sponsor of the insurgents. This provides an episodic perspective to the Boko Haram insurgency as the story below suggests:

Justice Saliu Saidu of the Federal High Court sitting in Lagos, yesterday sentenced a man described as financier of Boko Haram sect to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour... Efforts by journalists to get details of the allegations against the suspect were unsuccessful, as no one was willing to divulge the information. The suspect was arrested in Lagos on March 21 with explosives and other dangerous items while planning to attack the city (*The Sun*, 06/11/14).

These frames can be identified in relation to different issues in the media and sometimes differ over time and cultural contexts or editorial policies. Evidence from the three newspapers (*Leadership*, *The Punch* and *The Sun*) shows that not all Boko Haram stories were presented thematically. Some were more episodic than thematic which implies that the press controls an aspect of a story that it gives relevance to by choosing when to be detailed or specific.

The present study just like Wouters’ (2015, p.477) which concluded that ‘‘thematic coverage places events into context, pays attention to trends, and presents general evidence’’, found that while stories unfolded about the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls, the three newspapers at varying proportions presented follow-up stories, followed the trends, and captured reactions from national and international scenes in order to give thematic accounts of the incident. However, *Leadership* newspaper concentrated mainly on the plight of the Chibok girls’ than all others. The tabloid was specifically concerned with the welfare of the Chibok girls’ parents. Worthy of emphasis is the fact that *Leadership* newspaper opened what it termed ‘Chibok Diary’ displayed on the front page of its editions to keep records of the days that the Chibok schoolgirls have spent in Boko Haram’s captivity or any action or inaction taken on the Chibok girls’ abduction. See the figure 8 below where ‘Chibok Diary’ is highlighted in orange. The ‘Chibok Diary’ was particularly significant in the coverage. It highlighted the efforts or failures of the government in the rescue operation.



Figure 7: Leadership newspaper showing the daily record of the number of days Chibok Schoolgirls have spent in Boko Haram's captivity as highlighted in orange.

This portrays *Leadership* as being more episodic than thematic in the coverage. The implication of this approach is that people who want to ‘keep up’ with the plights of the schoolgirls’ parents would tend to look out for *Leadership*. This is in agreement with a study by Aarøe (2011), which investigated the influence of thematic and episodic news frames about an immigration act on emotions. The finding shows that episodic frames, which highlighted immigrants’ situation, had stronger potential of producing angst, compassion, and feelings of disgust, than thematic frames presenting statistical information on the immigration situation. Aarøe’s finding shows that when issues are framed using exemplars they have the capacity to increase people’s emotional responses. In relation to this study, it implies that constant use of exemplars (such as the Chibok schoolgirls) was applied by the media to remind the public of the loss and trauma caused by the Boko Haram insurgency.

Similarly, Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008) in their comparative analysis of frames employed in the coverage of terrorism in the US and UK newspapers observed that episodic frames are usually “event or case oriented and focus on hard news and concrete, isolated instances” (p.65). This differs from thematic frames which stem from “specific instances, but focus on providing context and background for the issue at hand” (p.65). Another example in this case is when the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency focused on one terrorism incident or on one terrorist while downplaying others. As manifested in the reports, for a long period (April 2014-December 2014), the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls and the botched killing

of the Boko Haram leader, Shekeau were the focuses of the domestic media in the coverage of the insurgency.

Frame	Newspaper			Total
	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Sun</i>	
	Period			
	2011 - 2014	2011 - 2014	2011- 2014	2011 -2014
Episodic frame	63 (38.2%)	68 (35.8%)	97 (33.9%)	228 (35.6%)
Thematic frame	102 (61.8%)	122 (64.2%)	189 (66.1%)	413 (64.4%)
Total (%)	100%	100%	100%	(100%)
<b>Total (Count)</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>641</b>

Table 5: Comparing the level of application of episodic and thematic frames in the coverage

The above table compares the thematic and episodic frames in the coverage. It shows that out of the entire 641 stories examined, thematic frames were more prevalent in the coverage with 413 articles representing 64.4% against 228 (35.6%) episodic frames. This shows that an overwhelming majority of the coverage of the insurgency was thematic. A further breakdown of the above table shows that *Leadership* has more episodic frames than the other two newspapers with 38.2%. *The Sun* and *The Leadership* have 33.9% and 35.8% episodic frames respectively. While the difference between the individual newspaper's use of episodic frame is not wide enough, the overall gap between episodic frame and thematic frame when all the newspapers are combined is significant enough at 35.6% and 64.4%. This finding disagrees with that of Matthews (2015, p.274) where episodic frame components were more pronounced in the popular UK tabloid press in reporting terror plots after the 9/11 attack. The U.K. press according to Papacharisi and Oliveira (2008, p.59) "covers events based on their inherent and accepted news values". While this is also true of the Nigerian press to an extent, it should be emphasised that parochial interests also play strong roles in the coverage of events in Nigeria.

A closer observation also shows that thematically reported Boko Haram stories have a near similar pattern of coverage from the three newspapers. The pattern followed a typical crime story format by including the characteristics of the suspects, the victims and the location of the attacks, and whether that place/victim was vulnerable or not. In addition, the reports also include the security and Government's response to the attacks. In the stories, journalists refer to the sources whether it was from an anonymous or not, official – government spokesperson (usually the media assistants to the President, the minister of interior or the minister for



information or the national security adviser (NDA); the military (usually the PRO or the Chief of Army Staff (COAF).

Although this result is not surprising, it has been able to reinforce arguments that newspaper stories tend to be more thematic than episodic (see Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000; Papacharisi and Oliveira, 2008). This finding is significant in one instance. It shows that newspaper stories are not always entirely thematic. In their study, Pfau *et al.*, (2004) found that attaching journalists to military units during wars provides the likelihood that they (journalists) will produce stories that are more personalized, based on the experiences of the troops and the units covered.

From the foregoing, this study demonstrates that the combination of episodic and thematic frames also brings about balance in the coverage of an insurgency. Thus, this finding aligns with that of Springer and Harwood (2015) which used mediational analysis and found that the “most effective message is the one that combines episodic and thematic features” (pp.239-240). Furthermore, they found that only a minimal portion of the effect of thematic versus episodic frames results in the perceptions attached to attribution of responsibility frames with further evidence that shows that all episodic frames are not equivalent. This is unlike Iyengar’s (1991) study which centred on the effect of attribution of responsibility frame. It must be stressed that the implication of a dominant thematic frame in the Boko Haram news is that more people tend to be aware of the details and efforts made in the fight against terrorism.

Thematic frames also bring about peripheral cues that revive the audience’s memory about related Boko Haram attacks and their historical antecedents. It was also observed that due to the thematic approach largely adopted in the coverage, activists campaigned for legislation to tackle such cases in the future. For instance, in 2011, following the recurrence of Boko Haram attacks, the Nigerian National Assembly passed the “Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011” bill, which was signed into law in the same year. The Act addresses issues of prevention, prohibition, combating of terrorism, as well as the financing of terrorism. As the Boko Haram attacks intensified, the Act was amended in 2013 as Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013 to provide “extra-territorial application of the Act and strengthening of terrorist financing offences; and for related matters”. The repeated media coverage of Boko Haram attacks triggered campaigns for more resources and allocation for victims and procurement of weapons to fight the insurgency.

On the opposite, when episodic frames become preponderant in the news, attention may be prone to distortion because reading interest could be waned especially when background information is lacking. Remarkably, that some stories were more episodic than thematic speaks to the repeated occurrences of the Boko Haram incidents. Perhaps, background information may be lacking in some reports because of the frequency of Boko Haram attacks. This means that the use of background information may not be in the best interest of the audiences who are presumed to have known or read about several Boko Haram stories.

### 5.3. Dominant generic frames

#### 5.3.1. Frame identification and measurement

Before delving deep into the breakdown, the table below provides a brief overview of the dominant frames and their samples identified in the study.

The dominant frames in the coverage of Boko Haram insurgency

Categories/indicators	Definition	Headline or phrase sample/scenario
<i>Dominant frames</i>		
Politics	This is the type of frame that attributes the Boko Haram insurgency to political tussle. The politicization frame is known when attacks by the insurgents are linked to politics or failure of governance. Boko Haram attacks were often trailed by blames and counter-blames from the ruling and opposition parties. It occurs when the media gives the Boko Haram insurgency a political angling in the coverage. Hence POLIF.	‘‘Buhari escapes death in blasts’, ‘I’m target of attacks, he says’’; ‘Kaduna blasts: APC Govs, Atiku blame Jonathan’, ‘...Say attack meant to kill Buhari’’; ‘‘APC behind insurgency, PDP insists, Claims Buhari’s utterances promote terrorism’’; ‘Bombing or not, 2015 elections must hold – Jonathan’
Religion	This frame occurs when issues of Boko Haram terrorists and their attacks are approached from a religious perspective or from Muslims versus Christians point of view. In this study, religion and morality frames are classified as religion for easy categorization. Hence RELIF.	‘‘Boko Haram wants to wipe out Christians – Catholic Bishop’’ ‘‘Boko Haram kills 48, burns churches near Chibok’’ ‘‘Boko Haram, product of religious ignorance – Aliyu; ‘‘Don’t mistake B’Haram members for Muslims – Islamic scholar’’; ‘‘Stop calling Boko Haram an Islamic sect – Group’’

Ethnicity	Ethnicity frame links the Boko Haram insurgency to ethnicity. As a country with repeated cases of ethnic clashes, when something is happening in one part of the country, it is viewed as an ethnic problem. Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country. The major ethnicities are Hausa/Fulani or North and Igbo, Yoruba or South. An issue such as the Boko Haram insurgency appears national in scope, but it has been framed from ethnic perspective. Hence ETHNIF.	‘Boko Haram: Come back home. MASSOB urges Igbo in north’; ‘Gidado, Danmusa, Balarabe Musa, Tsav, Lame, Sheik Bauchi, others insist FG has a hand in North’s woes’; ‘Boko Haram: We lost 200 people in Borno – <i>Igbo leaders</i> ’
Economic consequences	This type of frame links the Boko Haram narrative to either poverty, economic meltdown or as result of marginalization of a section of Nigeria. Economic consequences frame concentrates on the implication of an underperforming economy as the reason for the insurgency or what negative impact the insurgency will have on the country’s economy. Hence ECONF	‘Ebola, Boko Haram ‘ll reduce economic growth by 0.5% - Okonjo-Iweala’; ‘Insecurity: Stock Market loses N392bn in 4 months’; ‘Boko Haram: multi-billion naira irrigation project under threat’
Human interest	This frame is known when reporters invoke feelings of human sympathy in describing the plight of the victims or the attackers in a story. Hence HUMIF.	‘400,000 persons displaced by Boko Haram, says NEMA’; ‘Boko Haram displaced 600,000 in N’East – FG’; ‘We’re glad to be alive, but we live like beggars – Boko Haram victims in Abuja’.
Conflict	Conflict frame ‘emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest’ (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p.95). Hence CONFF.	‘Declare total war on Boko Haram, northern govts tell Jonathan’; ‘Boko Haram must be made to face the consequences of its actions, if Nigeria is to put an end to this insurgency’
Attribution of responsibility	Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.96) explain that this frame ‘presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group’. Hence RESPONF	‘Bad Leadership Fuelled Insurgency in North East – Adamu Waziri’; ‘Boko Haram masterminded by greedy elements – TETFUND boss’; ‘Poor joint border patrol aids insurgency’

Table 6: Predetermined frames, definitions and sample scenarios

### 5.3.2. Frame indicators

This study did not only concentrate on the domestic media framing of the Boko Haram insurgency but also considered other variables such as ascertaining how the broader media ecology affected the coverage of the insurgency. However, due to the fact that framing

addresses one of the key questions in this research, its repetition and broader exploration becomes even more important. To this end, this section addresses the identification and measurement of these frames. Admittedly, scholars are yet to arrive at a consensus about how to identify frames in news (de Vreese, 2005). This lack of consensus is the reason why most scholars draw from tentative (operational) working definitions. This is the reason why this thesis used predetermined frame indicators to analyse the coverage of the insurgency.

The approach for arriving at the indicators can be either inductive or deductive. The former refrains from analysing news items with *a priori* defined or established news frames in mind (see Neuman *et al.*, 1992; Gamson 1992) while the latter investigates frames that have been established or defined *a priori* to the investigation (see de Vreese, 2005; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). Put more succinctly, “an inductive approach involves analysing a news story with an open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames” (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, pp.94-95). On the other hand, a “deductive approach involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news” (ibid). In the course of analysing or investigating news stories, new frames that may have not been operationalised or preconceived before the analysis can crop up. This study combines both the deductive approach for the predetermined frames and inductive approach for the frames that emerged in the coverage as the analysis progressed (see section 6.5 for details).

Using a quantitative-deductive approach, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) extracted generic frames in ‘*Framing European Politics...*’. They identified five frames –*conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility* that occur commonly in the news. However, due to the fact that the original study measured a different subject (European Politics), the present study adopted these frames with the addition of two new frame indicators: *ethnicity* and *politics* to capture the Nigerian setting in relation to the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) study may differ from the present one, but it provides a seminal approach worthy of borrowing and modifying to suit the goals of this study. They used 20-question template to measure the generic frames in the coverage of European politics. However, as their questions do not completely represent all news content related to the Boko Haram insurgency, the questions were revised accordingly and increased to 26 in order to capture other categories that are relevant to this study. This was done using *yes* (1) and *no* (2) to depict the presence or absence of the frame element being

investigated. This is in view of the fact that in the deductive approach, as Entman (1993, p.53) argues, frames are identified via “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements”.

Admittedly, deductive approach, it should be emphasised, has its shortcomings because by deciding forehand on which frames or categories to study, it may be predisposed to some biased tendencies (Matthes and Kohring, 2008). In this study, trained coders balanced this using inter-coder reliability. Further justifications arise from Cappella and Jamieson (1997) who advocated for the application of concise *a priori* defined operationalisations of frames in content analytical studies. In line with the above provisions, the major frames measured in this study are seen in table and chart below:

Frames	Newspapers			Total/%
	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>The Punch</i>	<i>The Sun</i>	
Politicisation	29	56	79	164 (25.6)
Religion/Morality	15	42	81	138 (21.5)
Ethnicisation	08	41	58	107 (16.7)
Human interest	36	22	29	87 (13.6)
Conflict	14	17	25	56 (8.7)
Responsibility	13	26	09	48 (7.5)
Economic consequences	18	11	12	41 (6.4)
<b>Total (n)</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>641</b>

Table 7: Summary of the frames and the frequency at which they occurred.

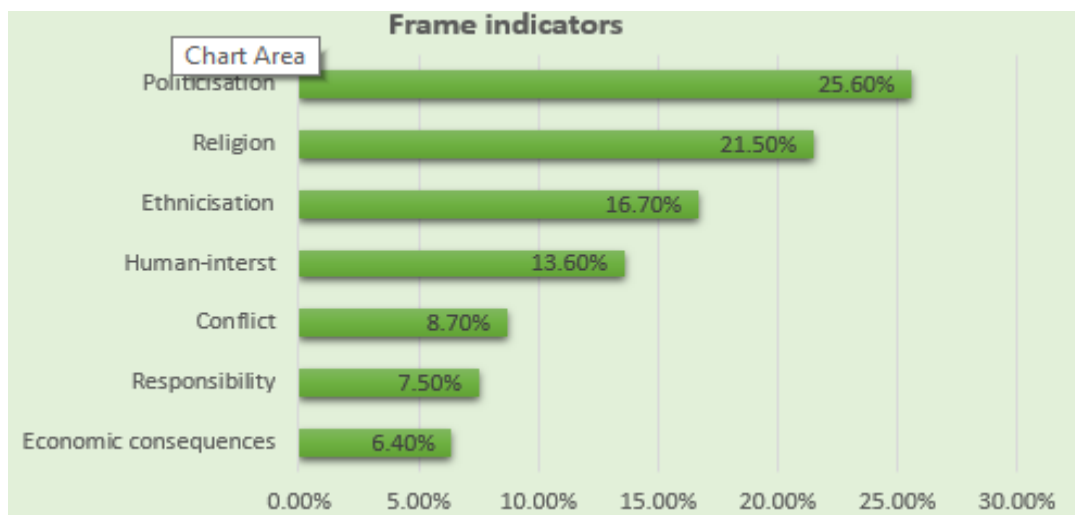


Figure 8: Frame measurement for understanding the dominant frames

The above table shows the summary of the frames and the frequency of their appearance in the coverage. It shows that out of n641, politicisation frame accounts for 25.6% (164); religion/morality frame account for 21.5% (138); ethnicisation frame constitutes 16.7% (107)

of the stories. On the other hand, Human-interest frame accounts for 13.6% (87); conflict frame has 8.7% (56) while responsibility and economic frames represent 7.5% (48) and 6.4% (41) respectively. When weighed against the seven predetermined frames analysed in this study, the three newspapers (*Leadership*, *The Punch* and *The Sun*) framed the Boko Haram insurgency, albeit at varying degrees, mainly from political, religious and ethnic (PRE) perspectives. See also Figure 10 below: These PRE frames became more preponderant and represent the dominant frames in the coverage of the insurgency. These three frames account for 63.8% of the sampled stories. Other frames such as human interest, conflict, responsibility and economic consequences were also widely reflected in the coverage, but not as much as the PRE frames. Consequently, the extent of the visibility of these three PRE frames was nearly identical. The chart below sheds more light on this. It shows the overall total of each frame and how the frames appear in each of the three newspapers.

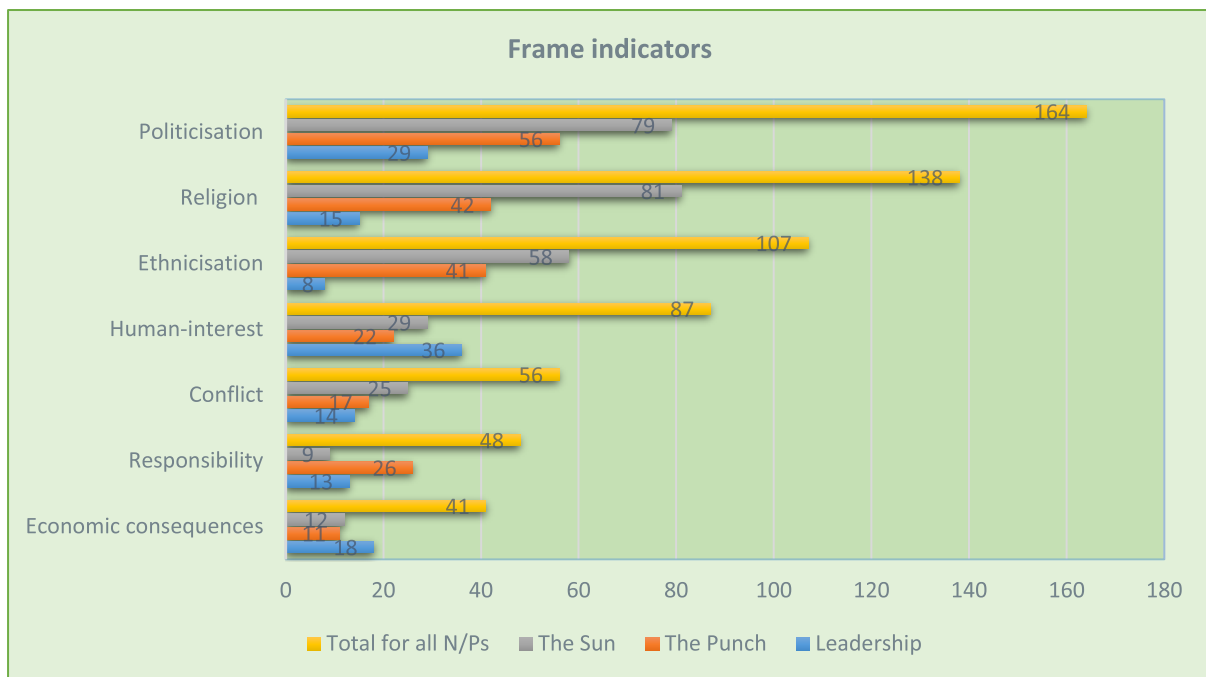


Figure 7: The overall total of each frame and how the frames appear in each of the three newspapers.

The above chart shows that areas of similarity and differences on the same incident abound in the framing. This implies that a frame that dominates news varies according to culture, country, context and media ecology. As earlier indicated, the three newspapers have a near-identical feature in reinforcing the notion of politics, religion and ethnicity (PRE) in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The frames are subsequently analysed as follows.

### 5.3.2.1 Politicisation frame element

The political aspirations and activities of PDP and APC, the then ruling and major opposition parties reflected widely in the coverage of the insurgency. This attests to why the Boko Haram attacks became more politically constructed. This also portrayed the Nigerian newspapers as being prone to political manipulation in the coverage of the insurgency. Politicians used the media to achieve their aims using the insurgency. As earlier observed by Tar and Zack-Williams,

A number of pervasive indicators are evident in Nigerian politics, with adverse implications for the conduct of 'elections' and democratic consolidation. First is the *politicisation of sectarian differences*, particularly by politicians who use it as a means to achieving and perpetuating power. A second feature is the *militarisation of the state and political culture*... A third pervasive feature which complements the above is the *privatisation of violence*, particularly the establishment of private and party militias by politicians as a means of protecting their loot from state plundering by demonstrating the power of the gun and intimidating rival politicians and members of the public. ...A fourth feature is the *personalisation of state apparatus* by those in power - often for personal gain and enforcing legitimacy (Tar and Zack-Williams, 2007, p.542).

These four indicators, particularly the *politicisation of sectarian differences* were also inherently reflected in the coverage of the insurgency as the analysis shows. Politicians in Nigeria employ different rhetorical approaches to achieve their political goals. Although the three newspapers claim editorial independence, their political alignment manifested in the coverage of the insurgency albeit at varying degrees. For instance, the founder of *The Sun*, Orji Uzo Kalu was the Governor of Abia State from 1999 – 2007 under PDP, an alias for the People's Democratic Party. On the other hand, Sam Nda-Isaiah, publisher of *Leadership* is an All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain. He was also an APC presidential aspirant in the 2015 elections in Nigeria. Sam Nda-Isaiah was critical of PDP's political manoeuvres that ushered in the nomination of late Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as the presidential candidate in 2007. This led to his arrest in the same year. *The Punch* is not openly associated with any political party. Its chairman, Chief Ajibola Ogunsola is not a known political figure in Nigeria. Although *The Punch* is, to an extent, not openly associated with any political party at least from the management perspectives, it cannot be claimed that the newspaper was not politically influenced in the coverage as my analysis has demonstrated.

The *politicisation* frame is noticed when attacks by the insurgents are reported and interpreted from political perspectives. When employing this frame, words and phrases that portray Boko Haram attacks as ploys to destabilize government and democratic process are inherent. It is

politicisation when such frames wear the toga and colouration of politics, especially from the point of view of the ruling and the opposition parties. Boko Haram as widely alleged started as political thugs and gradually degenerated into a jihadi religious group. Within the timeframe considered for this study, PDP was the ruling party. On the other hand, APC, the All Progressives Congress was the major opposition party that dethroned PDP after ruling for 16 consecutive years. Political utterances from the then ruling PDP and opposition APC parties reigned supreme in the build up to the 2015 general elections which ousted the ruling party.

Boko Haram attacks were largely trailed by counter accusations between the then ruling party and the opposition. It was observed that frames of politicisation manifested more in the 2014 and 2013 respectively which incidentally represent the penultimate years of the March 2015 general elections in Nigeria. Admittedly, politicisation frames manifested from the outset of the insurgency. However, there were more of such stories in 2014 (see the figure 11 below). Examples of politicised Boko Haram stories are “Buhari escapes death in blasts”, “I’m target of attacks, he says” (*The Sun*, 24/07/14). The next day the story was captioned, “Kaduna blasts: APC Govs, Atiku blame Jonathan” ‘...Say attack meant to kill Buhari” (*The Sun*, 25/07/14, p.5). On the counter accusation, *The Sun* writes, “APC behind insurgency, PDP insists, Claims Buhari’s utterances promote terrorism” (*The Sun* 23/12/14, p.3); “Bombing or not, 2015 elections must hold – Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 26/05/14, p.1). These stories portray the politics of insecurity that the insurgency was turned into ahead of the 2015 elections as issues relating to the insurgency became hot points for political campaigns for both the ruling and the opposition parties. See the chart below on the politicisation of the insurgency 2011-2014.

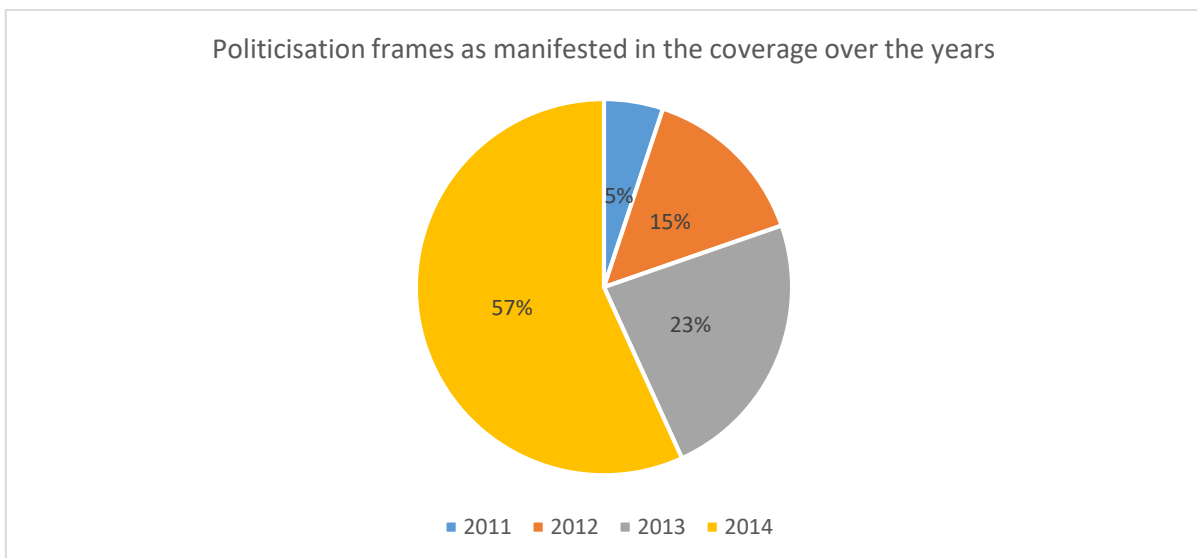


Figure 10: The chart showing the degree of politicisation frames from 2011-2014



As already indicated, politicisation frame appeared in reports about the Boko Haram attacks which deviated from the major subject matter to feature political thoughts and opinions. These reports were either meant to ridicule political opponents or advance a political ideology using the insurgency as a reference point. Some political analysts and elder statesmen such as Asari Dokubo, Edwin Clark, especially from the Southern part of Nigeria have argued that the insurgency has lingered because of the ‘the born-to-rule mentality’ of the Northern political elites who want to use the insurgency to ‘rubbish’ Jonathan’s administration and pave the way for a Northerner to emerge as the next president. For instance, ‘‘Boko Haram: plots against Jonathan’s re-election - Asari Dokubo’’ (*The Sun* 21/04/14, p.3). This story was promoted by *The Sun*, a pro-Jonathan newspaper.

As earlier mentioned for instance, in the build up to the 2015 general elections political tensions heightened as the then ruling party and the opposition traded words in what analysts severally described as ‘word war’. The ‘word war’ revolved around those people making political gains out of the insurgency. It also reflected on the ‘competence’, ‘incompetence’, ‘failure’ and ‘cluelessness’ in the handling of the insurgency. For instance, *The Sun* reports ‘‘PDP, APC renew war over terrorism’’ (*The Sun*, 23/04/14, p.3). In this story, the opposition accused the ruling party of being clueless about governance and fighting terrorism. The ruling party on the other hand accused the opposition party of sponsoring the terrorists to discredit them. These accusations and counteraccusations only intensified to heat the polity. This also invariably led to the increased coverage. The media was also taking side with political parties. For instance, in its editorial page also called ‘Our Stand’, *Leadership* attacked President Jonathan of ‘gross’ failure in handling the insurgency as depicted in its editorial titled ‘‘politics of the emergency rule’’. The paper argues thus,

It is a sad commentary that some of the most brutal attacks, including the murder of scores of school children in their dormitories, the killing of women in their homes and the abduction of over 200 plus schoolgirls in Chibok occurred under emergency rule. Under emergency rule, Boko Haram has grown from a band of bloodthirsty hounds to an organised force, taking down military helicopters, forcing our ill-motivated soldiers to flee to neighbouring countries, taking territories and even flying its flag in at least 14 local governments across the affected states ... He has failed. We have said it over and over again that the first place to declare a state of emergency is in the Presidential Villa, Aso Rock, where monumental corruption and the president’s gross incompetence are

draining this country of its fighting spirit, its prestige and its very lifeblood. (*Leadership*, 24/11/14).

As the above statement demonstrates, the politicking emanated from two streams; one from outside the media and another from the media. By helping the politicians to politicise the coverage, the media may have unknowingly played into the hands of terrorists, thereby buttressing the claims of the *publicists'* school of thought (see Perešin, 2007; Nacos, 2003, 2007). This is because as journalists try to play the scripts of their 'pay masters' (the publishers and the politicians who patronise their organisations via subventions and advertisement) they may be mistaken for terrorists' accomplices. An economic expert and one of the major social commentators on Nigerian affairs, Prof Pat Utomi also accused the media of politicising and exaggerating the Boko Haram attacks as well as responding slowly to some attacks thereby creating tensions in the masses. In the story, 'Nigerian media deepens B'Haram fears, says Utomi'' (*The Punch*, 14/07/14), the outspoken professor was quoted as saying that

Good journalism is inherently sceptical, and probing. Not enough of that is happening today and that has deepened cynicism about what is going on. The case of abduction of a generation of the daughters of the people of Chibok is a case in point... Far too much time was lost because the press was slow to hold a government that sees everything through the prism of the next elections and the games of its opponents, the trauma of parents and the value of human life to account (*The Punch*, 14/07/14).

As the above statement suggests, Nigerian media was enmeshed in the politics of the insurgency. This may not be intended, but it describes the dominant tone in the coverage of the insurgency from the commentators, the media, the military and the government. While this finding may not be surprising, it suggests that some Nigerian media outlets now openly align with some political parties, a practice that is more prevalent in the Western democracies. This suits the concept of 'media malaise'. The theory according to Schuck (2017) claims that because media in established democracies operates on the dictates of the prevailing market principles, democratic duties are often disregarded. For instance, this study has shown that the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency is fraught with cynicism and apathy arising from imbalance, propaganda, or half-truth.

The use of memes and politically-inspired advertorials and cartoons was also a common feature in the politicisation of the insurgency as the images below demonstrate:



Figure 11: Politically-inspired advertorials, memes and cartoons appearing to discredit Buhari of APC and Jonathan of PDP

In image ‘A’, Buhari’s head was superimposed into the body of the Boko Haram commander, while the image ‘B’ depicts the then opposition leader Muhammadu Buhari who latter emerged as the Nigerian president in 2015 as running for the presidency with the Boko Haram commander as his running mate. The images ‘C’, ‘D’ and ‘E’ portray the Boko Haram

insurgency as the metaphoric ‘cash cow’ through which the Jonathan’s presidency was generating steady income in preparation for the 2015 presidential election in Nigeria.

Another political accusation portrays the then ruling party (PDP) as hiding under the cover of fighting the insurgency to sap Nigeria of its resources and make political gains ahead of the 2015 general elections. For instance, ‘‘FG benefitting from Boko Haram insurgency – APC’’ (*The Punch*, 16/07/14, p.21). In this story, the opposition party capitalised on the handling of the insurgency by the presidency to make bold claims that the fight against the insurgency has persisted because the ruling party was profiting from the largesse of the insurgency. In a bid to feign innocence or exonerate herself of similar tactics, Dr Obiageri Ezekwesili of the #BringBackOurGirls (BBOG) group and stern APC supporter also cautioned that ‘‘terrorism shouldn’t be used to score cheap political points’’ (*The Sun*, 09/07/14, p.57). Although she sounded fair in her speech, earlier reports seem to have indicted her of ‘playing the APC’s scripts’ when she spearheaded what was considered as a ‘campaign of calumny’ against the Federal Government over the abducted Chibok girls rescue campaign. The foregoing examples point to the high level of politicisation of the insurgency.

Still on the politicisation of the insurgency, *The Punch* reports, ‘‘B’Haram: APC Govs shun Jonathan’s meeting’’ (*The Punch*, 18/04/14, p.2). By boycotting the meeting to discuss national security challenges, APC governors politicised the meeting and instead went to the media to galvanise support and staged a rally for the upcoming election where it promised to tackle the insurgency. In page nine of the same edition is another story, ‘‘Boko Haram: Buhari threatens to sue PDP’’ (ibid). Another evidence of politicisation of the insurgency is contained in a story where one of the outstanding figures of the ex-president Jonathan’s administration who doubled as the finance minister and coordinating minister for economy Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala was quoted as accusing politicians of ‘‘stoking insurgency’’ (*The Punch*, 29/04/14, p.9). Dr. Okono-Iweala maintained that Nigerian politicians were encouraging the Boko Haram insurgency to fester through their inciting and politicising comments.

The politicisation frame was again employed in the report ‘‘Politics of Boko Haram heightens ahead of 2015’’ (*The Punch*, 05/09/14). This was coming at the time when all political parties were using all political rhetoric to outwit opponents. Similarly, in the report, ‘‘Politicisation of Boko Haram insurgency’’ (*Leadership*, 11/09/14), the APC spokesman, Lai Mohammed was

quoted as saying that PDP was wrong for accusing it of sympathising with the Boko Haram insurgents. He explains that “this deliberate political misinformation and manipulation continue to flounder and fail spectacularly, not least because successive events prove these claims to be hollow, but also that it is our political opponents (PDP) who are playing a Boko Haram Poker Game”. The APC’s image-maker launches further attack on the then ruling PDP, accusing it of emboldening the Boko Haram group. Thus, “it was the PDP, from 2009 till date that transformed Boko Haram from a movement into an insurgent group, from a moderate Sunni group to a Salafist-Jihadi franchise, from a local group with localized (socio-economic and cultural change) agenda to an international violent Jihadist group” (*Leadership*, 11/09/14). The above statement was later corroborated in a follow-up story. In its editorial tagged “Again, Jonathan playing with fire” *Leadership* reports that

...some of the most brutal attacks, including the murder of scores of school children in their dormitories, the killing of women in their homes and the abduction of over 200 plus (sic) schoolgirls in Chibok occurred under emergency rule. Under emergency rule, Boko Haram has grown from a band of bloodthirsty hounds to an organised force, taking down military helicopters, forcing our ill-motivated soldiers to flee to neighbouring countries, taking territories and even flying its flag in at least 14 local governments across the affected states. Yet Jonathan, the commander-in-chief, was supposed to use the emergency powers to contain the insurgency. He has failed. (*Leadership*, 24/11/14).

Whether this was intended to politicise or not is not clear but the tone is totally partisan. In a verbatim statement credited to Lai Mohammed, the APC’s spokesman in a presentation at the House of Commons, London on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2014, APC ridiculed PDP. The statement was a response to an allegation that APC was sympathetic to Boko Haram and it is made up of predominantly Muslim North. He noted that PDP’s allegation is one that is

based on a faulty logic of presuming that the APC is a sectional (Northern), as opposed to a national political party, that the APC is made up predominantly of Muslims, that it is a Muslim/Islamic party; and therefore the APC must directly or indirectly support and sympathize with Boko Haram; and finally that Boko Haram is a Northern and Muslim plot to resist and challenge a Southerner-Christian Jonathan Presidency (*Leadership*, 11/09/14).

Apart from the #BringBackOurGirls campaign that brought a new impetus to the coverage and politicisation of the insurgency, the emergency rule declared in some states also contributed to this evidence. The APC in its usual way of shrugging off PDP’s ‘antics’, mounted strong opposition that reduced PDP to be on the defence while APC became the attacker. For instance, APC alleges that

The PDP is actively politicizing the declaration of emergency rule. For instance, the PDP government is ever quick to propose and declare emergency rule in areas controlled by opposition political parties, but not in PDP-controlled states even where the scale of violence, killings and destruction are similar. For example, despite incessant violence, killings, displacement and destruction in Taraba, Benue and Plateau (PDP controlled states), the PDP has been quick to discount the possibility of a full scale emergency rule, however it is quick to impose emergency rule in non-PDP states at the slightest episode of violence... Unfortunately but truly, the Nigerian government had bungled the fight against Boko Haram. The government's attempt to make political capital out of the insurgency has backfired (in "Politicisation of Boko Haram insurgency" (*Leadership*, 11/09/14).

Regarding the above, it was observed that PDP was not able to convincingly refute the claims. This suggests that the emergency rule declared in the APC-controlled states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe State – the three North-Eastern states worst hit by the insurgency was politically conceived, or so it was interpreted.

In another political tone, *The Sun* reports, "Boko Haram, plots against Jonathan's re-election - Asari Dokubo" (*The Sun* 21/04/14, p.3). This report credited to the kinsman of the then President Jonathan was a position held by some people that Boko Haram was invented or manufactured by 'some northern elements' to forestall any possible re-election of Jonathan who was aiming to be re-elected after one tenure. In another political frame, a clergyman, Bishop Hassan Kukah noted that the "war against Boko Haram (has been) politicised" (*The Punch*, 19/10/14, p.5). All these show the level of politicisation that smeared and or enhanced the coverage of the insurgency ahead of the 2015 general elections.

Furthermore, the politicisation frame is seen in the story "Insurgency is Jonathan's strategy for tenure elongation – Gaya" (*The Punch*, 28/11/14, p.27). In the report, Senator Kabiru Gaya, (APC, Kano-South) alleged that the "People's Democratic Party and the Federal Government are currently facing serious problems and they are employing means and ways to perpetuate the current leadership in power beyond 2015". This was coming barely four months before the 2015 general elections, and the insurgency was topical for its deep dominance in the manifestoes of both the ruling and opposition parties. Similarly, the reports "Boko Haram, a political instrument of government – Musa" (*The Punch*, 09/11/14, p.6); "APC blames Jonathan's re-election bid for rising insurgency" (*The Punch*, 20/11/14, p.12); and "B'Haram: APC accuses Jonathan of insincerity" (*The Punch*, 21/05/14, p. 71), all re-enact the politicking surrounding the insurgency and its coverage by the newspapers. Similarly, *Leadership* reports

that PDP government was using the insurgency to scheme for the 2015 general elections. In the report “2015 Elections and politics of insecurity” *Leadership’s* editorial explicitly argues that

The Boko Haram crisis and the Jonathan administration’s response to it must be seen in the context of the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. The status quo favours the PDP and President Jonathan. Why? Because the Boko Haram-affected areas and indeed the Northern region are opposition strongholds, hence the Administration is hoping – and perhaps secretly wishing that the Boko Haram crisis, the declaration of emergency rule and general atmosphere of insecurity in the North will lead to the cancellation of voting in some areas and limit voters’ turnout in general, a development which the PDP believes will minimize its electoral losses in the North and enhance the likelihood of a PDP victory (11/09/14).

The above examples indicate that the Nigerian newspapers employed strong political undertones in covering the insurgency. The political framing of the insurgency stemmed largely from two conflicting perspectives of APC and PDP whose positions influenced the packaging and direction of the stories about the insurgency. This was aided by gross ‘misinformation’ and propaganda that media, government and even the Boko Haram ‘sympathisers’ employed to influence people’s perception of the insurgency in relation to the 2015 elections as evidence from content analysis and interviews demonstrated.

Therefore, politically, Boko Haram has had some impacts on the Nigerian government. It formed the main campaign focus of PDP and APC before the 2015 general elections. It should also be emphasised that the presidential and National Assembly elections earlier scheduled for February 14, 2015 were postponed till March 30 of the same year to enable the Nigerian troop ‘push’ Boko Haram back. Apparently, this postponement was also considered a “cynical political ploy” (*Times*, 09/02/15) by the incumbent president who needed a time-out for readjustment. Ironically, despite the seemingly politically-inspired time-out, the oppositions won the election. Everyone did not welcome the outcome of the election. *Vanguard* captured this mood in its editorial. Thus, “whereas the military is engaged in a battle on the warfront, the political and psychological component of the engagement appears to be currying sympathy for these mindless killers because of those who seem to share their ideological slant and who once (and have again) found their way to the corridors of power in a polity of clashing socio-political and religious interests” (*Vanguard*, 28/06/2015). This banter was indirectly referring to the elected APC politicians. All these suggest that Boko Haram insurgency was framed to provide advancement and dethronement of political thoughts and ideologies.

The coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency was in tandem with the framing of terror developed after the 9/11 incident. This is because of its war-on-terror that has now become a symbol of global political frame. In Nigeria, it is nicknamed war against Boko Haram (WAB). This differs from the coverage of the Norwegian 22 July incident in which Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people. Although this incident claimed many lives, Norwegian media made effort to depoliticize the terror incident by portraying the attack as an act carried out by a ‘lone lunatic’ or ‘lone wolf’ without linking it to any politically motivated individual or group (see Falkheimer and Olsson, 2015). On the contrary, Nigerian media framed the Boko Haram insurgency largely from the Government and political perspectives with suggestions that blame the attacks on the politics of deprivation and usurpation. Through this means, Government appeared to have formed a siege against the truth as the respondents also affirmed in the interview. The implication of this is that half-truth is fed to the public in an effort to stay in control of information flow. This also means that the desperation to make political gain out of the Boko Haram attacks led to misinformation which by extension resulted in taking some critical issues regarding the insurgency for granted.

**5.3.2.2. Religion/Morality frame:** For emphasis, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.96) note that the morality frame “puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions”. They argue that “because of the professional norm of objectivity, journalists often make reference to moral frames indirectly—through quotation or inference”. This frame contains moral lessons, and it tends to be more prescriptive than analytical. The present study has its fair share of the religious frame in the coverage of the insurgency as can be seen shortly.

When weighed against each other, *Leadership* newspaper was more cautious in reporting about the religious angle of the insurgency than *The Punch* and *The Sun*. Although it is not clear why this was the case, it could be argued that this happened because the publisher is from the Muslim-dominated North. ‘Islamist group’ which was repeatedly used by other newspapers was largely limited in the *Leadership*. In describing the Boko Haram attacks, *Leadership* preferred to use ‘gunmen’ or ‘insurgents’ in place of words that suggest any link of the insurgents with Islam. Example “Gunmen abduct 100 SS3 female students” (*Leadership*, 16/04/14). This is unlike *The Sun* and *The Punch* that largely represented Boko Haram as an Islamist insurgent group with impressions that depict Islamism as a religion of extremism.



*Jihad*, a term for holy war, was also applied by the newspapers in framing the insurgency to suggest a strong link of the insurgency and Islam. For instance, *The Sun* had in one of its editorials noted that “Boko Haram has graduated from an affliction created by *religious fanatics* and trouble-makers to a bloody insurrection and a *jihad* against the country” (*The Sun*, 23/09/14). Other stories include: “Many Northern Muslims are sympathetic to Boko Haram” (*The Sun*, 08/11/14); “Confessions of Boko Haram fugitive: our agenda is to wipe out Christians” (*The Sun*, 10/08/13); “Boko Haram wants to wipe out Christians – Catholic Bishop” (*The Sun*, 14/11/2014); “Oritsejafor angry over Christians killings”, (*The Sun*, 06/11/14). Similarly, *The Punch* reports that “Boko Haram kills 48, burns churches near Chibok” (*The Punch*, 30/06/14, p.8). This brings Christians into focus as the main targets of the insurgents.

By referring to Boko Haram as an ‘Islamist group’, the theme of religion is manifested, and this lends more support to the claim that Islam birthed and/or nurtures terrorism (see Rahman, 2016). The framing of the insurgency as having a strong link with the Islamic religion has met with rebuttal notwithstanding. Some Islamic scholars have always taken to the media to dispute this ‘allegation’. For instance, a report from *The Punch* reads “Boko Haram was sponsored to smear Islam –Jingir” (*The Punch*, 12/05/14, p.13).

Another similar religious frame played in the report “Boko Haram, product of religious ignorance – Aliyu” (*The Punch*, 14/12/14). In this story, Aliyu’s statement concedes to the claim that Boko Haram is an Islamist insurgent group but only constitutes those who misconstrue the ‘true tenets’ of Islamic teachings. He clarified in the news story that only the “ignorant and misguided” Nigerians refer to Boko Haram as a Muslim group. This, perhaps was meant to confront the view that Boko Haram is Islamic hence the description ‘Islamist insurgents’ widely employed in the media when referring to the group. A more obvious religious frame was employed in the story “B’Haram forces Christians to become Muslims in N/East – Repts” (*The Punch*, 17/09/14, p.7). This story not only reinforced the claims by some Christians that the insurgents want to Islamise the country, but also widens the horizon of understanding the nature or the mission of the group.

In a related development, a religious frame was employed in the story “Boko Haram slaughters Christians, burns churches in Adamawa – Clerics” (*The Punch*, 12/11/14, p.10). The report credited to ‘Christian leaders’ in Adamawa explains thus:

We reject in strong terms insinuations from certain quarters that the insurgents are mere bunch of trigger-happy miscreants, whose intentions are to settle certain scores with the government, owing to the towering revelations of attacks mostly targeted at Christians (*The Punch*, 12/11/14, p.10).

The message was meant to clarify certain views that Boko Haram was only targeting government institutions. The message was therefore an outcry against the spate of attacks targeted at Christians who were minority in the North in order to entrench an Islamic (sharia) law. In a move to counter these claims, *Rahmat Islammiya* Association of Nigeria, an Islamic group begged the media and the public to “Stop calling Boko Haram an Islamic sect – Group” (*The Punch*, 26/05/14, p.6). As contained in the report, “The Association wishes to draw attention to some groups who use subterfuge in an attempt to smear Islam”. The argument was that as ‘a religion of peace’, the agendas of Boko Haram such as ‘violent killings’ and ‘kidnapping’ do not conform to that of Islam. Other stories that invoke religious frame are “Muslims petition CP over B’Haram scare by pastor” (*The Punch*, 30/05/14, p.5) and “B’Haram kills nine during church service” (*The Punch*, 03/06/14, p.2). From the foregoing, it has also been observed that the Christian/Muslim religion dichotomy reflected in the coverage of the insurgency.

Although religion may have influenced the Boko Haram insurgency, the local dynamics in the Northern Nigerian where it started should not be ignored. For instance, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment Thurston (2016) which are also inherent in other regions at varied proportions may have played a significant role in the emergence of the group. The implication of associating Boko Haram with an Islamic stooge will only deepen the Christian – Muslim dichotomy. This, as I argued, is as dangerous to the contextualization of the insurgency as it is to its decimation.

**5.3.2.3. *Ethnicisation frame:*** In the ‘primordial’ view, argues Oberschall (2010) “ethnic attachments and identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity, like kinship sentiments. They have an overpowering emotional and non-rational quality” (p.982). Arguing further about ethnic manipulation that occurs regularly in countries with bifurcated and polarised structures, Oberschall (2010, p.989) reveals that there is always a cognitive frame in perception of the components. A cognitive frame is a mental structure which situates and connects events, people and groups into a meaningful narrative in which the social world that one inhabits makes sense and can be communicated and shared with others (Snow *et al.* 1986 cited in Oberschall,

2010, p.989). When situated in the Nigerian context, ethnicity frame takes a considerably high slot because the ethnic group with larger population marginalises the less populated ones. The affected minorities within these communities may resort to violence as a means of achieving relevance and making their grievances known.

This frame is measured from the angle of Boko Haram stories that are framed to reflect ethnicity. History portrays Nigerian media and ethnicity as inexorably intertwined, and Ojo (2013, p.430) likened them to ‘Siamese twins’. Nigeria is a diverse country with no fewer than 250 ethnic groups and languages/dialects, and about 1000 different major/minor cultural backgrounds. While this diversity when harnessed gives Nigeria an edge over its contemporaries in the global scene, it appears that only the negative aspects of this diversity overwhelmingly dominate.

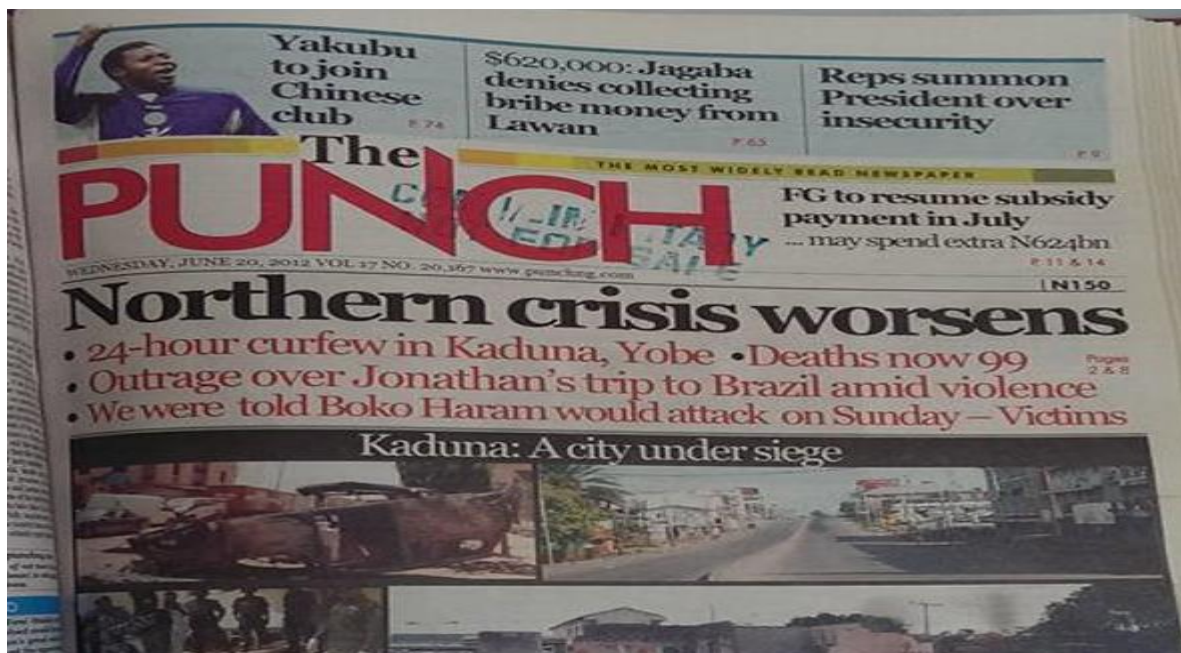


Figure 12: The Punch headline representing the Boko Haram insurgency as a Northern crisis

Ethnic loyalty takes precedence over national loyalty and identity in Nigeria. People tend to be more concerned about their immediate ethnicity than they would when it comes to national issues. Ethnic sentiment is not only conspicuously expressed in the Executive, Judiciary, and Legislature, but also in the media, which serves as the instrument for disseminating it. In measuring the ethnicisation frames therefore, terms such as North, South, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba were sought, and they yielded many results. For instance: ‘‘North-East Govs can end Boko Haram – Obasanjo’’ (*The Sun*, 12/12/14); ‘‘Boko Haram: Come back home. MASSOB urges Igbo in north’’; ‘‘Gidado, Danmusa, Balarabe Musa, Tsav, Lame, Sheik Bauchi, others insist

FG has a hand in North's woes'' (*The Sun*, 06/12/14); 'How come Northerners are in charge of security and the situation is getting worse – Ask former IGP, ors'' (*The Sun*, 17/10/14). By posing this question, the earlier popular view by a section of the North that ex-President Goodluck Jonathan (from the South) was using the insurgents to weaken the Northern structures became difficult to sustain. This allegation left a lot to think about in terms of who was backing the insurgents especially considering that Northerners occupied all key security positions in the country. Other stories with ethnic frames are: 'North's defence of Boko Haram shameful – Ahize'' (*The Sun*, 03/07/14); 'Boko Haram: We lost 200 people in Borno – Igbo leaders'' (*The Sun*, 01/12/14).

It can be argued that the construction of stories as reflected above deepens the North-South divide in an already bifurcated Nigerian state. Still enacting the ethnicisation frame, this report by *The Punch* 'Northern leaders urged to assist in B'Haram fight' has ethnic undertone thus:

My advice to the good leaders among them (Northerners) is that they should not keep quiet on this matter; they should report any suspect to the police and help the government fight Boko Haram to a standstill. In each community, they should monitor the activities of people in their environment. This is how we can help the government overcome the fight against insurgency (*The Punch*, 09/07/14, p.6).

The story was a response to allegations that some 'northern elements' were aiding and abetting the spread of the insurgency. Moreover, in another story, 'Fight Boko Haram, Ohaneze tells Igbo in North'' (*The Punch*, 07/09/14, p.4), the apex Igbo socio-cultural organisation, *Ohaneze Ndigbo*, rather want the Igbo population (the soft targets) in the North to be less diplomatic in confronting the insurgents. Thus,

They should not fight but if there is any attack on them by anybody whatsoever, they should strongly defend themselves because this is one Nigeria and nobody has the right to intimidate anybody (*The Punch*, 07/09/14, p.4).

The above insights provide strong evidence to the ethnic attachment in the framing of the insurgency. Whether the attacks were deliberately targeted at the Igbo people or that they happened by coincidence is not clear but they have always been interpreted as deliberate acts. In this context, some Igbos would be regarding the Boko Haram group as Northerners and not necessarily as the insurgents. Again, as I argued under religious frame, the propensity of reducing the insurgency to an ethnic problem will disrupt public understanding of the insurgency, and this risks widening the ethnic divide that has dwarfed the so-called 'giant of Africa' status Nigeria claims at the global stage.

**5.3.2.4. Human-Interest frame:** The human-interest frame also manifested in the coverage of the insurgency. Under this frame, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.95-96) explain, journalists give “a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem”. Human-interest frame is inherent when a story can engage the attention of the readers making them to sympathise or identify with the victims, situations or the prevailing circumstance. This frame, also common in the coverage is what Neuman *et al.*, (1992) described as a “human impact” frame. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Bennett (1995) argue that in line with the competitive nature of the news market, journalists and editors constantly negotiate how to come up with a product that captures and retains audience interest. Hence the human-interest frames are employed in the coverage to “personalize”, ‘dramatize’ or “emotionalize” the news, in the interest of the audience. In scanning for this frame, stories with human angles were particularly of interest, and they were expectedly categorised as human-interest frame.

Thus, after lamenting the ‘devastating’ effects of the insurgency on the populace, a coalition group was said to be working towards resolving the Boko Haram’s humanitarian crisis. Stories such as “400,000 persons displaced by Boko Haram, says NEMA”; “Boko Haram displaced 600,000 in N’East – FG” (*The Punch*, 14/08/14, p.3; 19/08/14, p.9) invoke human-interest and sympathy. Although the figures are inconsistent and contradictory between the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Federal Government, the stories are consistent with human-interest frames. A story such as “We’re glad to be alive, but we live like beggars – Boko Haram victims in Abuja” (*The Punch*, 06/12/14, p.42) invokes pitiable emotion and sympathy to the plights of the affected victims. This human angle story in the coverage of Boko Haram was probably meant to draw government and public attention to the situation of the displaced Boko Haram victims in Abuja. In *The Sun* (02/10/14, p.10), human-interest frame was also employed thematically in the story “Boko Haram: FG distributes relief materials to victims in Adamawa” (*The Sun*, 02/10/14). Although this story has some embedded political undertones, human-interest was more prominent because emphasis was on the palliative measure taken to cushion the effects of the insurgency on the victims at the internally displaced persons’ (IDP) camp in Adamawa. Similarly, the story “Life gets tougher in Maiduguri, as insurgents’ attacks persist” (*Leadership*, 06/04/14) invokes human-interest frame.

In the story ‘‘How sect members beheaded my husband – widow’’, the human-interest frame was also dominant. In the article, a widow recalled that

This month will make it five years since they killed my husband...my hero who stood gallantly for Jesus Christ. He was captured and taken to the leader of the sect then, Late Mohammed Yusuf. He was asked to receive Islam, he refused and he was instantly beheaded (*The Sun*, 14/06/14).

A story like this invokes a sense of pity to the victim and the bereaved and the readers may be emotionally touched when reading the story. From *The Sun* comes another report ‘‘strangers in their own land: pitiable tales of Nigerians forced out of their homesteads by Boko Haram’’ (*The Sun*, 03/12/14, p. 25). The lines that illuminate the human-interest frame in the article are:

...the insurgency in the North-East of Nigeria has left in its trail ugly stories of death, destruction, displacement and separation of children from parents and husbands from wives. The hardest hit are children whose parents had either been killed, separated from them or died during delivery. Out of the over 6000 children displaced, just a minute number have both parents alive. The remaining have been forced to embark on journeys to unknown destination with nobody pointing the way for them. They are living but without a future, destiny or any place or parents of their own (*The Sun*, 03/12/14, p. 25).

An invocation of the human-interest frame is also seen in the story ‘‘Displaced Boko Haram victims eat grass to survive’’ (*The Punch*, 27/10/14, p.17), where a priest recounted the ordeal of some victims thus:

A good number of those trapped around the Cameroonian borders are gradually finding their way into Maiduguri. Counting their ordeals, some will tell you how they fed on grass and insects. A group from Pulka community alone buried over 80 children, who took ill in the bush and died (*The Punch*, 27/10/14, p.17).

Another human-interest angle is reflected in ‘‘Boko Haram: Children die of hunger in Borno’’ (*The Punch*, 14/06/14, p.10) where the Senator representing Borno South, Mohammed Ali Ndume was quoted as saying that:

Four communities have been totally wiped out by the insurgents who are still around the areas. Most men have had to flee into the caves with the women preparing food to take to them but since the area has run out of food there is hunger both on the land and in the caves. It is painful that we have food in Maiduguri that we have planned to take to them, but since the place is a no go area, our people are dying of hunger and starvation (*The Punch*, 14/06/14, p.10).

The above examples arguably conjure feelings of human interest and a deep sense of pity on the lives of victims that have been badly affected by the Boko Haram insurgency.

**5.3.2.5. Conflict frame:** This frame according to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.95) “emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest”. The Boko Haram insurgency was occasionally portrayed as a conflict between ‘us and them’, Government and rebels, Christians and Muslims, and Boko Haram and ‘infidels’. On the conflict frame, *Leadership* captured elements of the coverage which show the Boko Haram insurgency as a conflict between the Government and the insurgents, Boko Haram versus civilisation (Islam versus government), and Boko Haram versus the infidels. See below in the story ‘Boko Haram gives conditions for ceasefire’.

We want to reiterate that we are warriors who are carrying out Jihad (religious war) in Nigeria and our struggle is based on the traditions of the holy prophet. We will never accept any system of government apart from the one stipulated by Islam because that is the only way that the Muslims can be liberated. We do not believe in any system of government, be it traditional or orthodox, except the Islamic system which is why we will keep on fighting against democracy, capitalism, socialism and whatever. We will not allow the Nigerian Constitution to replace the laws that have been enshrined in the Holy Qur’an, we will not allow adulterated conventional education (Boko) to replace Islamic teachings. We will not respect the Nigerian government because it is illegal. We will continue to fight its military and the police because they are not protecting Islam. We do not believe in the Nigerian judicial system and we will fight anyone who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities (*Leadership*, 25/04/2011, citing a statement by Boko Haram).

In the example above, words such as ‘warrior’ and ‘fight(ing)’ are familiar terms used in conflict situations. Therefore, in calling for a ceasefire, the Boko Haram insurgency is portrayed as a conflict that should not be allowed to fester. In a rare interview with one of the Boko Haram commanders, *The Punch* cites him as saying: “when this *crisis* began I made a move to the authorities advising that the arrest of Boko Haram members would not bring an end to the *crisis*. I suggested that the government should stop the arrest and release those already arrested...” (*The Punch*, 21/09/2011). This further indicates the use of conflict frame in the coverage.





Figure 13: One of the conflict frames in *The Punch* newspaper

In the above figure, the story “FG, Boko Haram to sign ceasefire deal” (*The Punch*, 09/07/13), presents the Nigerian Government and the Boko Haram insurgents as conflicting, warring parties who were ready to sign a peace deal to end the imbroglio posed by the insurgency.

Similarly, some conflict frames were noticeable in the story “Declare total war on Boko Haram, northern govts tell Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 11/11/14, p.3). In this story, the 19 Northern states governors see the insurgency as a conflict between the state and the non-state actors. In other words, they see the insurgency through the ‘us versus them’ lens. By urging President Jonathan to declare a ‘total war’ against the insurgents, Nigeria is depicted as fighting against Boko Haram. Similarly, in “PDP, APC renew war over terrorism” (*The Sun*, 23/04/14, p.3), conflict frame also manifested. This shows how the insurgency has led to an exchange of words inherent in a conflict situation between two political rivals.



Figure 14: *The Sun's* headline depicting Boko Haram in conflict frame



The above screenshot shows the insurgency as a conflict hence the move to broker a peace deal as a way of ending further ‘carnage’. In the report, Nigerian Government and Boko Haram gave conditions for ending the ‘conflict’. Similarly, in *The Sun*’s editorial titled ‘‘All-Out war on Boko Haram’’ (*The Sun*, 23/09/14, p.19), the conflict frame was re-enacted. The tone in the editorial represents the Boko Haram insurgency as a war between the Government and its enemies, calling for a collective effort in order to defeat the ‘common enemy’. The editorial urges the Federal Government to face the insurgency with might rather than fight it gently as captured in the lines ‘‘Boko Haram must be made to face the consequences of its actions, if Nigeria is to put an end to this insurgency’’ (*The Sun*, 23/09/14, p.19).

Also depicting the conflict frame is the story ‘‘Boko Haram is serious war – CAS’’ (*The Sun*, 14/06/14, p.6). In this story, the then Chief of Army Staff, Adesola Amosu acknowledged that the Boko Haram insurgency was a war between Nigeria and ‘the common enemy’. Another story that demonstrates the conflict frame is ‘‘War over Chibok girls: Campaigners are APC members – Audu Ogbe, It’s not true – Ezekwesili’’ (*The Sun*, 17/10/14, p.3). In this story, the Boko Haram insurgency was portrayed as a war between PDP and APC. As represented in the story, an APC chieftain Audu Ogbe admitted that the #BringBackOurGirls campaigners were not necessarily sympathisers of the abducted girls, rather they were members of APC who hijacked the campaign to ‘fight’ the PDP led presidency. This observation could be likened to that of Patterson (1993) which found that political elites reduce complex substantive political debate to an exceedingly oversimplified conflict. The Boko Haram insurgency is indeed a complex issue that has been undermined in political debate as a conflict between warring parties.

**5.3.2.6. Responsibility frame:** Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, p.96) explain that this frame ‘‘presents an issue or problem in such a way as to attribute responsibility for its cause or solution to either the government or to an individual or group’’. The attribution of responsibility frame is depicted by stories that trace the insurgency to a factor, a system, an individual or group of individuals. In this study, some stories fit well into this frame. For instance, ‘‘Bad leadership fuelled insurgency in North East – Adamu Waziri’’ (*Leadership*, 12/11/2014). This story credited to Adamu Waziri, the former minister of Police Affairs points accusing fingers at the leadership failure of successive administrations in Nigeria as the reason for the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency. The blame game here represents the attribution of responsibility with all the actors trying hard to exonerate themselves.

Another evidence of an attribution of responsibility manifested in “APC behind insurgency, PDP insists, claims Buhari’s utterances promote terrorism” (*The Sun* December, 2014). Although this story has elements of politicisation, it shows that the attribution of responsibility was more dominant hence its categorisation into this frame. This is because the emphasis was more on what factors that led to the insurgency. Still on the attribution of responsibility, *Leadership* runs a report, “Okupe to Atiku: You’re one of those who caused insurgency” (*Leadership*, 05/11/14). In this story, the former Senior Special assistant to President Jonathan, Dr Doyin Okupe was quoted as accusing the former vice president of the previous administration Atiku Abubakar of being one of the figures whose comments led to the 2011 post-election violence that aided the resurgence of the Boko Haram insurgency.

In “Unemployment, poverty responsible for terrorism in north – Sanusi” (*The Punch*, 16/01/13), the responsibility frame was also dominant. In this news story, the erstwhile governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi claimed that the Boko Haram insurgency was an offshoot of unemployment and poverty in the North. While not debunking this claim, it should be noted that the level of poverty and unemployment are not unique to the North because other parts of the country also suffer from the same problems.

Still on the attribution of responsibility, another report: “Boko Haram masterminded by greedy elements – TETFUND boss” (*The Punch*, 15/07/14, p.43) shows another dimension to the causative factors fingered in the insurgency. The story has it that some greedy people in the country were fuelling the insurgency. On the contrary, in another story “Igbo Leaders trace B’Haram to introduction of Sharia” (*The Punch*, 21/05/14, p.70), the cause of the insurgency was attributed to the introduction of Sharia rule in some states of the North. Other factors attributed to the cause or survival of the insurgency are manifest in the stories: “Poor joint border patrol aids insurgency” (*The Punch*, 15/11/14, p.9); “Hatred causes insurgency” (*The Punch*, 22/12/14, p.8).

From the foregoing, the responsibility frame is split between causative factors and survivability of the group. The bottom line is that many issues were attributed to the cause of the insurgency. Majority of the issues blamed for the insurgency remain opinionated and therefore cannot be independently verified. While the above factors could trigger an uprising, the fact that these statements were coming from the opposition politicians makes it difficult to substantiate. This is because some utterances were made based on assumptions without any substantiation. In

addition, poverty, unemployment and leadership failure often cited as the factors that birthed the insurgency are countrywide and not exclusively the Northern problems.

### 5.3.2.7. *Economic frames*

When applying this frame, issues relating to event being reported are approached from the perspective of their economic consequences on the individuals, organisations, society, state, region or country. The economic impact of a story as already indicated in chapter two is one of the criteria for measuring the newsworthiness of a story (Neuman *et al.*, 1992). On this spectrum, Boko Haram insurgency was also associated with the poor nature of the economy. Background stories linked the emergence of the group to the level of economic downturn and unemployment (see “Unemployment, poverty responsible for terrorism in North – Sanusi”, *The Punch*, 16/01/13). As the consequences of the insurgency widened, its effects on the gross domestic product (GDP) became a great concern especially as the struggle for the actualization of the ‘Vision 20: 2020’ or ‘NV20: 2020’<sup>17</sup> seemed to have been scuttled. The then minister for finance and coordinating minister for economy, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala predicted that 0.5% reduction in the national economic growth was imminent due to the Ebola outbreak and the Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, “Ebola, Boko Haram’ll reduce economic growth by 0.5% - Okonjo-Iweala” (*The Punch*, 13/09/14, p.54). The same story was headlined in the *Leadership* as “Nigeria’s 2014 Economic Growth Forecast to reduce by 0.5% - Okonjo-Iweala”. These indicate that the insurgency had negative impacts on the Nigerian economy.

From the *Leadership* came the report “Northern leaders meet in US, bemoan underdevelopment in North” (*Leadership*, 29/07/13). Still on the economic woes associated with the insurgency, the *Leadership* reports: “Insecurity: Stock Market loses N392bn in 4 months” (*Leadership*, 23/04/2014). Another economic consequences frame was invoked in the report by the *Leadership* newspaper with the headline “Botched ceasefire: revisiting Jonathan’s \$1Billion loan request?” (*Leadership*, 23/10/2014). This report highlights the

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<sup>17</sup> “The NV20:2020 economic transformation blueprint is a long term plan for stimulating Nigeria’s economic growth and launching the country onto a path of sustained and rapid socio-economic development. The blueprint articulates Nigeria’s economic growth and development strategies, for the eleven-year period between 2009 and 2020, and will be implemented using a series of medium term national development plans” <http://www.nationalplanning.gov.ng/images/docs/NationalPlans/nigeria-vision-20-20-20.pdf>

economic consequences of the insurgency and the efforts made by the Government ameliorate the effects of the insurgency on the country.



Figure 15: A cartoon depicting the effect of the Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian economy

Still on the economic consequences frame, the representation of the economic downturns in the news stories shows that focus was not only on politics, religion or ethnicity. For instance, as seen in the report “Poultry farmers blame B’Haram for drop in sales” (*The Punch*, 15/05/14, p.2), the affected poultry farmers lamented the economic loss they suffered due to the insurgency. As a way of containing the insurgency, the presidency had proposed to borrow \$1bn to procure military hardware to fight the insurgents. Thus, “Before Jonathan borrows \$1BN to fight B’Haram” (*The Punch*, 21/07/14, p.26). When this proposal was made known to the National Assembly, it raised many questions in the country. While some members of the ruling PDP welcomed the idea that Government cannot fight terrorism with an ‘empty treasury’, members of the opposition party dismissed the idea as a means of ‘siphoning’ public fund.

Other economic frames employed in the coverage are reflected in the headlines: “I lost 3,000 books to Boko Haram – Othman” (*The Punch*, 01/10/14, p.80); “Yola power firm loses N150M monthly to insurgency” (*The Punch*, 27/11/14, p.34); “Boko Haram: multi-billion naira irrigation project under threat” (*The Punch*, 10/08/14, p.6). On the contrasting note however, are two reports “B’Haram war affecting economy – Jonathan” (*The Punch*, 24/06/14, p.3) and “B’Haram attacks’ll not reduce economic growth – Okonjo-Iweala” (*The Punch*, 26/05/14, p.33). In the former, ex-President Jonathan acknowledged that the insurgency was affecting the economy negatively, whereas in the latter, ex-Finance minister and coordinating minister for economy, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala rather said otherwise even though

she later admitted that Ebola and Boko Haram reduced economic growth by 5%. The implication of this finding is that it draws attention to the other impacts of the insurgency on the national economy.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This chapter has shed some light on the nature of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. The chapter focused on analysing the frames that have dominated the coverage of the insurgency. Analysis shows that episodic frames had near identical differences for the individual newspapers. However, when combined, thematic frames were more prevalent in the coverage than episodic frames. This is an indication that the coverage was in-depth. When weighed against the seven frames adopted and developed for this study, evidence from the three analysed newspapers indicates that the coverage was dominated by three frames: politicisation, religion and ethnicisation (PRE). As a result, this thesis argues that the dominance of PRE frames in the domestic media coverage of the insurgency is capable of undermining the coverage of other structural factors such as inequality, poverty, bad leadership that may have led to the emergence of the insurgent group. The next chapter draws from this chapter to examine the language of the coverage and the sub-thematic frames that emerged from the analysis.

## CHAPTER 6

### **Boko Haram Insurgency: Assessing the Variation and Multiplicity of Narratives**

#### **6.0. Introduction**

This chapter extends the debates raised in the previous chapter. It presents and analyses the content analysis data. Specifically, the chapter investigates the pattern of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency over the four-year study period (2011-2014). The nature of the coverage is also examined here. As part of an attempt to understand the nature of coverage of the insurgency, the chapter critically assesses the language employed in doing this. This also extends to closely evaluating how the newspapers give prominence to the Boko Haram stories. The chapter also explores additional pools of sub-thematic frames. Unlike the seven predetermined (deductive) frames analysed in chapter five, new set of (inductive) frames emerged from the analysis. These themes provide fresh and distinct perspectives to the study.

#### **6.1. Coverage comparison and variations**

This study affirms that there is no global journalistic culture that pervades all countries. Even within Nigeria, different media organisations have varied journalistic cultures. In line with Archetti's (2010) finding which indicates that there was no evidence of a global journalistic culture that applies to all cases, the present study also observed that the journalistic culture of the three newspapers (*Leadership*, *The Punch*, and *The Sun*) differed. *The Punch*'s journalistic culture when measured against the other two newspapers appears less critical of the government in reporting the insurgency. On the other hand, *The Sun* which prides itself as the 'voice of the nation' has an edge over the other two in interpretative journalism even though it was supportive of the government in many instances. The *Leadership* was more daring and largely presented political views that were critical of the Government than the other newspapers. Put together, the journalistic cultures exhibited by the newspapers may not be unconnected with their political alignments as earlier demonstrated in chapter five.

The three newspapers employed different angles to their coverage of some similar Boko Haram incidents. Common among the newspapers is that front page stories differed from the editorial positions on the same incident. In its editorial of September 23, 2014 captioned "All-out war on Boko Haram", *The Sun* was brutal in its choice of words in the editorial. The front-page positions were largely neutral following from a straight news format unlike the editorial. For

instance, the third paragraph of the above editorial reads: “we totally agree with the Senate President. Boko Haram has graduated from an affliction created by religious fanatics and trouble-makers who needed to be checked by the police, to a bloody insurrection and a jihad against the country that requires the full weight of the Nigerian military to surmount”. It further adds that “Boko Haram must be made to face the consequences of its actions, if Nigeria is to put an end to this insurgency” (*The Sun*, 23/09/14). On the other hand, while editorial positions from the newspapers call for brutal confrontation of the Boko Haram savagery, some elites from Northern Nigeria see the insurgency as an act carried by ‘our misguided brothers’ who should be treated diplomatically. Thus, “Boko Haram: FG amnesty offer not sign of weakness” (*The Sun*, 15/06/13). In this news story, the position is that the Federal Government should grant amnesty to the insurgents in order to end the group’s ‘bloody campaign’.

As noted above, the three newspapers presented contradicting viewpoints (CVs) but the editorials were more coherent in framing the insurgency. This led to a variation in the coverage of the insurgency. The variation could be interpreted in terms of how the media responded to the insurgency from its early stage – 2011 to the latter stage – 2014. Thus, when the attacks started newly, the domestic media reported the insurgency as an act carried out by those who were disadvantaged in the Nigerian governance. In the later stage of the insurgency, the media became participants in the government’s war against Boko Haram (WAB). In so doing, the media legitimised the WAB rhetoric and immersed itself in the fight against terrorism. By legitimising the WAB, the media became more interested in the coverage of the insurgency in response to the spate of attacks carried out by the insurgents.

The study also found that the locally-sourced stories mainly from the Military/Government spokespersons were more prevalent in the newspapers. Alternative viewpoints were generally underreported. This implies that there were limited sources that would challenge the position of Government officials in the coverage of the insurgency. It was found, though not surprising that the number of Boko Haram stories increased significantly in 2014, especially after the kidnap of the Chibok schoolgirls. The pattern in the coverage can be further expatiated under the frequency of coverage of the insurgency as the table below shows.

<b>Totals for the frequency in yearly coverage and %</b>				
<b>Years</b>	<b>Leadership (%)</b>	<b>The Punch (%)</b>	<b>The Sun (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
2011 (for the three N/Ps)	20 (24.1%)	23 (27.7%)	40 (48.2%)	<b>83 (12.9%)</b>
2012 (for the three N/Ps)	26 (22.8%)	34 (29.8%)	54 (47.4%)	<b>114 (17.8%)</b>
2013 (for the three N/Ps)	42 (25.3%)	51 (30.7%)	73 (43.9%)	<b>166 (25.9%)</b>
2014 (for the three N/Ps)	77 (27.7%)	82 (29.5%)	119 (42.8%)	<b>278 (43.4%)</b>
<b>Entire Sample Count (%)</b>	<b>165 (25.7%)</b>	<b>190 (29.6%)</b>	<b>286 (44.6%)</b>	<b>n641</b>

Table 8: The frequency in the coverage for the three newspapers

The above table shows the frequency in the coverage of the insurgency by the three newspapers over the four-year period (2011-2014). When broken down into different years, it shows that in all, *Leadership* newspaper had a total of 165 (25.7%) of the entire articles. In 2011, *Leadership* newspaper reported a total of 20 (24.1%) stories; in 2012, it reported 26 (22.8%) stories; in 2013, it reported 42 (25.3%); whereas in 2014 it reported 77 (27.7%). This shows a regular increase in the volume of stories as the years went by. On the other hand, *The Punch* had a total of 190 stories representing (29.6%) of the entire stories. A further breakdown shows that in 2011, *The Punch* reported 23 (27.7%) incidents of Boko Haram; in 2012, it reported 34 (29.8%); in 2013, it was 51 (30.7%); whereas in 2014 it rose to 82 (29.5%). In a similar progression format, *The Sun* had 40 (48.2%) in 2011; then in 2012, it had 54 (47.4%); in 2013, it had 73 (43.7%) whereas in 2014, it had an overwhelming 119 (42.8%) of the stories. This shows a systematic increase in the volume of reportage about the insurgency. Evidently, there are some of the selected days in the coverage that had no story that matched with the criteria for selection.

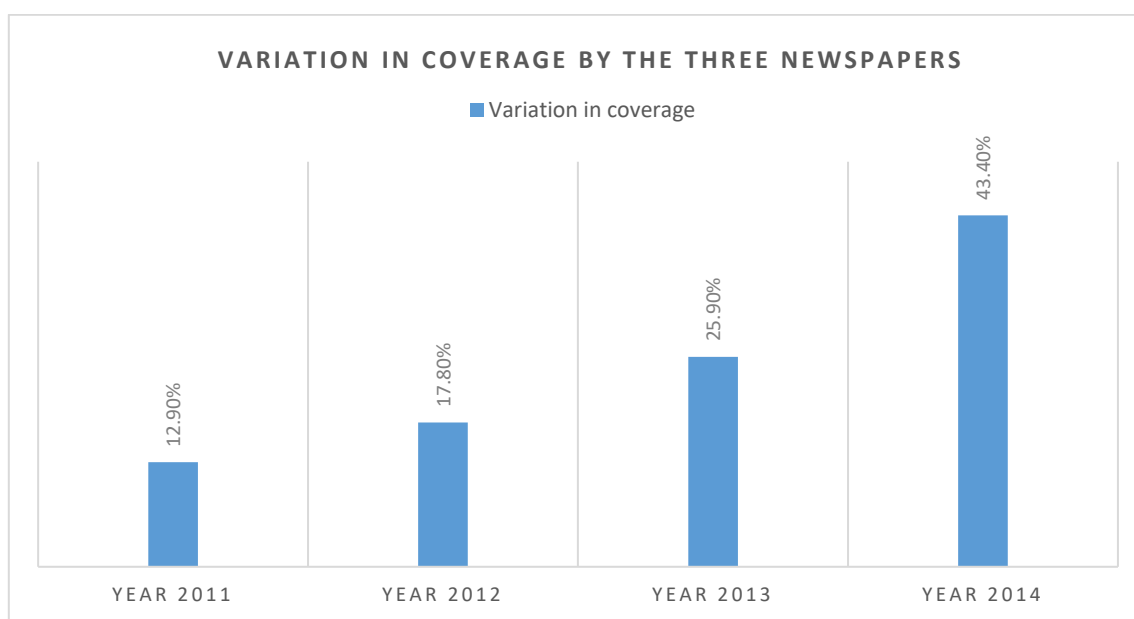


Figure 16: The variation in the pattern of coverage by the three newspapers



The above chart also resonates with the same progression in the nature of coverage in a clearer picture. It shows the variation in the pattern of coverage over the different years stretching from 2011 to 2014. The increase is both in the volume of article and depth of story. It further shows that *The Sun* newspaper, which is not Northern-oriented showed greater interest in the coverage of the insurgency. The level of coverage is also seen to have been sustained over the years. For instance, when combined in 2011, the three newspapers had a total of 83 (12.9%) out of *n*641; in 2012, the three newspapers increased to 114 (17.8%); in 2013, they increased further to 166 (25.9%), and in 2014 they soared to 278 (43.4%). This particularly shows a steady progression. The possible reason for this increase in the number of coverage may be connected with the spate of Boko Haram attacks which started in 2011 as an occasional phenomenon and gradually became a daily occurrence especially in 2014 when the Boko Haram insurgency became more pronounced after the abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls. The significant increase in the coverage attests to the attention the insurgent group had received during their attacks.

## **6.2. Nature of coverage**

The nature of coverage as applicable to this research asks the questions: How were the Boko Haram stories covered? What did the stories look or read like? What was the tonality like? Who controlled the narratives? One of the ways to think about media coverage of terrorism is what scholars such as Irving Goffman, Robert Entman, and Holli Semetko and Patti Valkenburg call ‘news framing’. Framing addresses the ways of categorising the content of media coverage. Goffman (1974, p.21) argues that “a primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful,” adding that “each primary framework allows its user to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms.” The media coverage of terrorism has gone through distinct stages in the past three decades. For instance, the media tends to cover stories about terrorism as either breaking news, misdeed, government failure, power tussle, or religious extremism. However, since the 9/11 event, political usurpation, and a war against Western values have emerged as common themes with familiar narratives for interpreting terrorism. These narratives are typical of the way in which many post-9/11 terrorist attacks have been covered in the mainstream media. In Nigeria, a country that is battling a clearly defined era of terrorism for the first time, the aforementioned approaches have been combined at varying levels.

The three newspapers that were analysed for this study share one common characteristic; they are all privately owned. However, analysis demonstrates that this private ownership did not translate to editorial independence in covering some aspects of the insurgency. By their private ownership structure, the degree of commercialisation is expectedly high. By extension, this causes subtle control of the media organisations by politicians who use the media to advance their ambitions. This easily renders the newspapers vulnerable to manipulation, especially in making the Boko Haram attacks to appear political. The fact that these newspapers, one way or the other, are also affiliated to political parties and ethnicities even makes it difficult to free them from being weapons of political vendetta in reporting the Boko Haram insurgency. Although these newspapers claim editorial independence that ensure balanced reportage, the result of this study suggests otherwise; that these newspapers were influenced by prominent groups, individuals and forces that shaped whatever stand they took in the coverage though this varied from time to time. This is consistent with Omenuga *et al.*, (2013) which established that evidence of editorial slanting abounds in the media coverage of critical national issue such as the Boko Haram insurgency. The foregoing discussion demonstrates that the Nigerian media lacks true editorial independence good enough to foster a balanced reportage.

The findings further show that even though *The Sun* newspaper is not northern-oriented (in terms of location, ownership and ideological spectrums), it showed greater interests in the coverage of the insurgency than the other newspapers. *The Sun* and *The Punch* newspapers presented the stories as a national issue and not as a ‘Northern problem’ in most cases as manifested in the choice of words and story direction of most of the articles reviewed. While *The Sun* and *The Punch* newspapers were more assertive (e.g.s. “Boko Haram slaughters Christians, burns churches in Adamawa ” (*The Punch*, 12/11/14, p.10); “Again Boko Haram massacre 40 students in Yobe” (*The Sun*, 30/09/2013), the tone exhibited by the *Leadership* newspaper was more reserved. *Leadership* appeared more reticent, though this varied from one incident to another. For instance, “Gunmen kill monarch, brother in Bauchi” (*Leadership*, 04/08/2014). Also, in “More bloodshed in Borno: Gunmen kill 42 in Jakana village” (*Leadership*, 05/03/2014), Boko Haram is thus substituted with ‘gunmen’. From the above examples, it could be emphasized that *The Sun* and *The Punch* explicitly referred to the Boko Haram insurgents while *Leadership* was more implicit in referring to the Boko Haram attacks. Whether this was deliberate or not remains unclear, but it speaks to the nature of the coverage of the insurgency. This is not to say that *Leadership* newspaper did not call Boko Haram by its name, but it appears to be more circumspect in its headlines. The tone can therefore be said to

vary from time to time and from reporter to reporter. The table below also sheds more light on the nature of coverage of the insurgency.

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Positive %</b>	<b>Negative %</b>	<b>Fairly Balanced %</b>	<b>Total item</b>	<b>Tota l %</b>
<i>Leadership</i>	2011	06 (24.0%)	14 (56.0%)	05 (20.0%)	25	100.0%
	2012	04 (12.1%)	21 (63.6%)	08 (24.2%)	33	100.0%
	2013	15 (36.5%)	18 (43.9%)	08 (19.5%)	41	100.0%
	2014	09 (13.6%)	40 (60.6%)	17 (25.8%)	66	100.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>34 (20.6%)</b>	<b>93 (56.4%)</b>	<b>38 (23.0%)</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>The Punch</i>	2011	03 (13.6%)	13 (59.1%)	06 (27.3%)	22	100.0%
	2012	14 (36.8%)	21 (55.3%)	03 (07.9%)	38	100.0%
	2013	07 (14.0%)	34 (68.0%)	09 (18.0%)	50	100.0%
	2014	10 (12.5%)	51 (63.8%)	19 (23.8%)	80	100.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>34 (17.9%)</b>	<b>119(62.6%)</b>	<b>37 (19.5%)</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<i>The Sun</i>	2011	11 (28.2%)	25 (64.1%)	03 (07.7%)	39	100.0%
	2012	22 (37.9%)	21 (36.2%)	15 (25.9%)	58	100.0%
	2013	15 (20.8%)	34 (47.2%)	23 (31.9%)	72	100.0%
	2014	16 (13.7%)	82 (70.1%)	19 (16.2%)	<b>117</b>	100.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64 (22.5%)</b>	<b>162 (56.6%)</b>	<b>60 (20.9%)</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>132 (20.6%)</b>	<b>374(58.3%)</b>	<b>135 (21.1%)</b>		<b>100.0%</b>

Table 9: The nature of coverage, change over time and the differences between newspapers

As these results indicate, the three newspapers were more condemnatory of the insurgent group and more supportive of the Government. This was heralded by the pro-government rhetoric of war against Boko Haram (WAB), an anti-terrorism approach modelled after the post 9/11 war-on-terror. As the insurgency intensified, the tonality varied from time to time, lacking consistency and regularly employing ‘condensational symbols’, which according to Ette (2016, p.453), are “embedded in the news frames that journalists use to present their narratives”. Thus, unlike Kellner (1992) which suggested that war coverage could be uncritical and often patriotic, the same does not resonate in the present study. Admittedly, the *Leadership* can be located within the ‘critical’ spectrum, while the rest of the newspapers showed a certain degree of critical and patriotic coverage.

The variations in the coverage of the insurgency may also be explained by whether or not there is any hesitation by the government to label an act as terrorism. Boko Haram was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organisation in November 2013 by the United States. When an attack is not labelled as terrorism, its media coverage can be minimal. As Persson (2004) argues, if an attack is framed as a crime or violence, it will attract less coverage than when it is labelled a terrorist

attack. This factor also played a role in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency. The nature of the coverage can also be seen in the charts below:

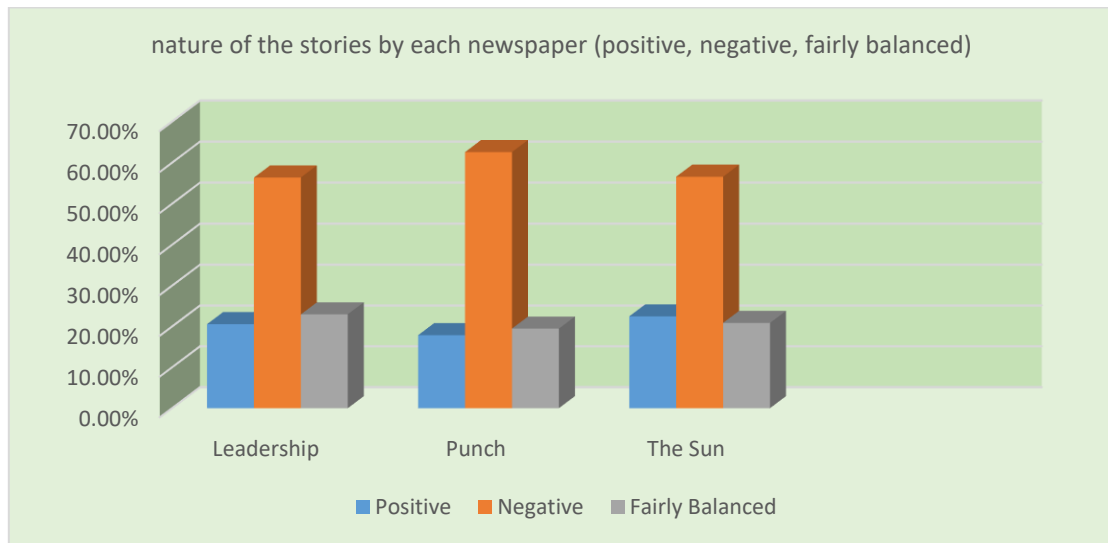


Figure 17: The nature of the stories that reflected in the coverage

This is further compressed/combined for the three newspapers as seen in the chart below:

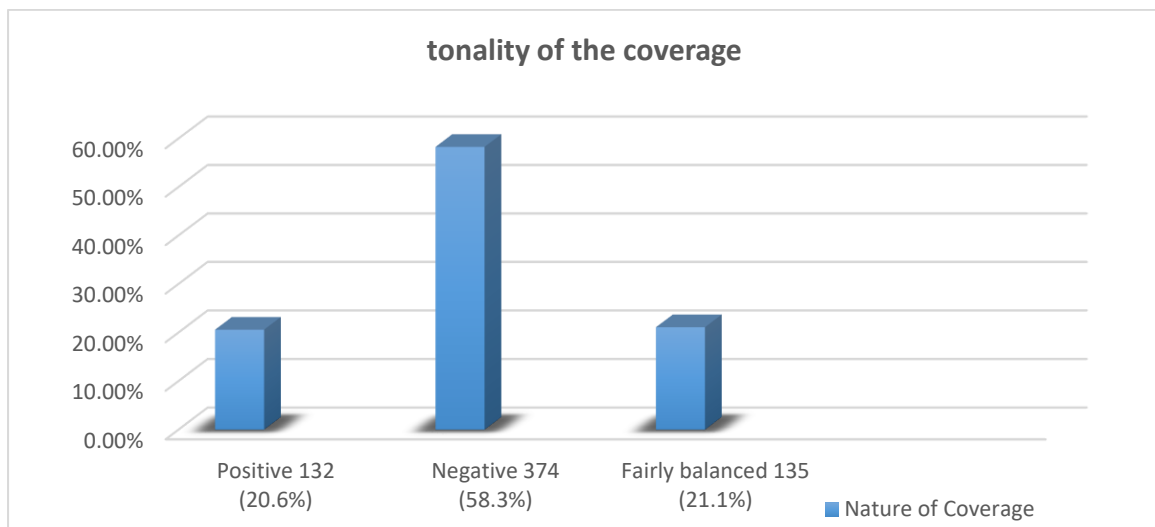


Figure 18: The tonality of the three newspapers combined

In order to understand the nature of coverage of the insurgency, the analysis was extended to the tone of the coverage. The above charts show the nature or tonality of the three newspapers when combined in the nature of their stories. This was measured against three variables of positive, negative and fairly balanced. To arrive at a negative story, coders looked out for assertions that are cynical, dismissive, gloomy, pessimistic, bleak and subjective. Example, “Our stand: This State has failed” (*Leadership*, 17/04/14). The positive ones are stories that

are pro-people, especially from the humanitarian perspective. They are stories highlighting the efforts of government to end the Boko Haram insurgency. For instance, “‘Army moves to check Boko Haram’” (*The Sun*, 18/12/14). The neutral ones have neither a clear indication of positivity or negativity in the tone. Example, “‘Soyinka seeks non-partisan approach to B’Haram war’” (*The Punch*, 15/04/14, p.7). As seen from the above table and charts, out of the *n*641 items that were sifted for analysis, 132 (20.6%) were considered to be positive in reporting the Boko Haram insurgency; an overwhelming 374 (58.3%) were negative; whereas the remaining 135 (21.1%) were fairly balanced in the coverage of the insurgency. By implication, the majority of the items analysed were negatively inclined to the coverage of the insurgency. This would potentially affect the objective reportage of the insurgency.

### **6.3. Condemning ‘the enemy’: Assessing the language of the coverage**

As demonstrated above, the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency attracted considerable negative frames even before the Chibok case. As part of the negative descriptions, the Federal Government’s response to the insurgency also included propaganda machinery to galvanise support from the public to respond and condemn terrorism by supporting government efforts. While this may not be surprising, it appears to have compounded the problem as facts, fictions, misinformation and disinformation were mixed up in reporting the ‘war against Boko Haram’ insurgency. This was also evident in the way that some editions of the newspapers could not separate news from views. For instance, “‘Chibok girls not missing’” (*The Sun*, 12/05/14) is an opinion expressed by Dokubo-Asari, but it was presented as news. The inability of the media to separate views from the news could mislead the public into thinking that the opinions from the sources represent the official position of the papers. It should be emphasised that propaganda is not always about manipulation and control of opinions by presenting issues out of context because even relatively accurate information can be proportionately or subtly applied to change public perceptions, lead men to action or sharpen their focus and belief system (Anozie, 2016; Ellul, 1973). While this was the case in the Government’s approach to the insurgency, Boko Haram was strongly applying persuasion and force at varying proportions in their propaganda techniques. The insurgents had, in various media platforms persuaded the *Muslim Umar* to wage wars against the ‘infidels’. The use of force and threat was meant to impose their belief system on the masses, military and Government to do as they (BH) said or risk attacks. See for instance,

...From now, killing, slaughtering, destruction and bombing will be our religious duty anywhere we invade...We have made sure the floor of this hall is turned red with blood, and this is how it is going to be in all future attacks and arrests of infidels...We therefore call on our brothers to wage war against enemies of Islam anywhere. We shall not spare anyone that ignores this message. ...Allah has given us victory! (Excerpt from Boko Haram message obtained by *The Muslim Issue*<sup>18</sup>, 22/12/14).

Although the domestic media differed in their narrative techniques, they shared a degree of commonality in some instances. For instance, the newspapers employed certain lexis more frequently used by the law enforcement agencies in describing the activities of the insurgents. Such jargons include ‘kingpin, terror suspect, terrorist gang, terror cell, raid, massacre, capture, reprisal, crackdown, operation, dusk to dawn curfew’ to describe some of the Boko Haram activities. These words were used to warn or describe an attack on Boko Haram or the military. As expected, the threats associated with these warnings or words could lead to psychological warfare about the threat within and the dangers ahead. This is in view of the argument that “when a message is emitted it is not only what is *said* that has a significance but also the *way* it is said, and what is *not said but could be said*” (emphasis not mine) (Heck, 1987, p.124). This is also what framing entails.

Naming and labelling were also used to describe the Boko Haram insurgents or their activities. The three newspapers under review employed strong negative labelling while referring to the Boko Haram insurgents or their activities. Words like ‘bloody’, ‘daredevil’, ‘deadly’, ‘jihadist’, ‘vicious’, ‘ferocious’, ‘blood-thirsty’, ‘dreadful’, ‘barbarous’, ‘deadliest’, ‘indiscriminate’, ‘opportunistic’, ‘chaotic,’ ‘barbaric’, ‘heinous’, ‘savage’, ‘virulent’, ‘atrocious’, ‘monstrous’, ‘heartless’, and ‘callous’ were commonly used in describing the insurgents’ activities. Through naming or labelling, Boko Haram, became widely known as ‘terrorists and insurgents’, and ‘misguided extremists’ as against ‘religious fanatics’ and ‘militants’ that they were called in the early days of their ‘bloody’ campaign. Some of these themes also manifested severally to connect the Boko Haram insurgency to Islam. These words are also familiar vocabularies employed by the Western media when reporting terrorism.

Although, it is not clear how words such as the above invectives, vituperations and condemnations of the Boko Haram’s activities influenced public perception of the insurgents,

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<sup>18</sup> Boko Haram Massacre ‘infidels’. <https://themuuslimissue.wordpress.com/2014/12/22/boko-haram-massacre-civilian-infidels-from-now-killing-slaughtering-destruction-and-bombing-will-be-our-religious-duty-anywhere-we-invade/>

Atatah (2014, p.30) contends that people's perception of issues is affected by the framing associated with them. On the other hand, framing the Boko Haram insurgency aligns to Stuart Hall's *negotiated code* because "majority audiences probably understand quite adequately what has been dominantly defined and professionally signified" (Hall, 1987, p.137). Hall further notes that "the dominant definitions, however, are hegemonic precisely because they represent definitions of situations and events which are 'in dominance', (*global*). Dominant definitions connect events, implicitly or explicitly, to grand totalizations, to the great syntagmatic views-of-the-world: they take 'large views' of issues: they relate events to the "national interest" or to the level of geopolitics, even if they make these connections in truncated, inverted or mystified ways" (p.137). Although this study did not include public perception of the coverage of the insurgency, it can be argued that the nature of the media portrayal of the insurgents would inform the public's perception of the group.

The language employed by these newspapers under review can also be located within the strong and semi-strong spectrums. *The Sun* has more stocks of strong invectives than the other two newspapers. For instance, the headlines are always strong enough and often exaggerated as can be seen in the following: "Devil on the loose" (*The Sun*, 02/12/14, p.1). The tone and depiction, the positioning of this story coupled with the choice of words easily draw attention to the audience. The same approach resonates with the story in *The Sun* which reads "48 students killed in cruel terror attack" (*The Sun*, 11/11/14, p.1). Furthermore, in the following headlines: "Boko Harassment: Insurgents declare Gwoza Islamic republic" (*The Sun*, 25/08/14, p.1); "Bloody Sunday: Boko Haram strikes again, kills 45 in Borno" (*The Sun* 24/11/14, p.1); "Yobe killings barbaric, wicked – Jonathan" (*The Punch*, 08/07/13, fp,8) "Bloody procession: 26 killed as suicide bomber infiltrates Muslim celebration in Yobe" (*The Sun*, 04/11/14, pp.42 & 14); "Bloody ceasefire: military kills 28 Boko Haram members in renewed onslaught" (*The Sun*, 21/10/14, p.1). The use of these words especially as banner headlines also conjures fears and this further suggests emphasis and strong description and prominence attached to the coverage of the insurgency. "Jos of blood", and "Blood on the plateau" (*The Sun*, 24/05/14, pp. 8-13) are also headlines that bring more clarity to the choice of words by *The Sun* newspaper. By employing these weighty adjectives in describing the Boko Haram insurgency, the media appears to be sensationalising the insurgency.

One noticeable frame also applied in the coverage of the insurgency is gender. The newspapers particularly emphasised the Boko Haram attacks involving women. Analysis shows that in the stories where girls or women were involved in the Boko Haram activities, their gender was

disproportionately highlighted. Women's involvement in terrorism is arguably misinterpreted in the media. This may be attributed to gender stereotypes. Thus, females participating in the Boko Haram insurgency were framed to complicate the traditional notions of femininity which appears to suggest that women should not do what men do. This widens the social construction of the male/female dichotomy. Whenever the female Boko Haram members were involved in attacks, the framing was gendered. For instance, "Military arrests three female Boko Haram suspects" (*The Punch*, 05/07/14, p.6); "Female bombers and implications on Boko Haram insurgency" (*The Punch*, 13/08/14, p.26); "B'Haram: Aliyu laments use of female bombers" (*The Punch*, 12/11/14, p.12). Citing a statement from the army in the above story, *The Punch* reports that "...members of the public are kindly requested to be more vigilant, security conscious and report any suspicious persons or those whose daughters or female wards are missing or have not been seen recently". This became the case because it was alleged that some parents were 'donating' their female children to Boko Haram for suicide missions.

Similarly, in the reports "2 female bombers, 4 others die in Maiduguri" (*The Sun*, 02/12/14); "Female bombers wreak havoc, 34 killed, 54 wounded" (*The Sun*, 26/11/14); "Female bomber hits Bauchi, over 20 feared killed" (*The Sun*, 08/11/14); "Female suicide bomber blows self, soldier to death in Gombe" (*The Sun*, 09/06/14), the gender of the perpetrators was highlighted. Recall that none of the other attacks involving male suspects read 'male Boko Haram...' These stories were framed from gendered perspectives with lines that portray females' involvement in terrorism as a taboo and a change of operational strategy. Yet research has shown that women's involvement in terrorism is gradually becoming a movement out of the "private sphere to the front line" (Brunner, 2005, p.30. see also O'Rourke, 2009).

#### **6.4. Understanding the prominence of Boko Haram stories and frequency of attacks in the newspapers**

Since 2011, Boko Haram has remained topical news within Nigeria and beyond. As noted in the chapter two of this study, due to the fact that terrorism, in many instances, has become a stage-managed and a pre-planned event meant to attract viewers or more audiences, it has been interpreted by different people based on what frames that dominate in the media. For reasons worthy of emphasis, terrorism by its nature is treated as a newsworthy event and the prominence attached to it is increasingly obvious. From the content analysis of the newspapers, there is an evidence of selective and intensive coverage of some Boko Haram attacks. It is



particularly worthy of emphasis that the 2014 incident of the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls was very recurrent in the coverage and thus became the symbol of the devastation caused by the insurgency. This incident became prominent in the coverage because of the regularity and gravity of the attack. In line with this, Semetko *et al.*, (1991) had noted that one of the ways to understand the importance or prominence attached to a story is through the proportion of coverage devoted to it.

Apart from the proportion of coverage, news placement and positioning are also factors used in measuring the prominence of an issue. Boko Haram stories appeared prominently as banner headlines and this attests to the importance attached to it. Front page or back page stories are of immense importance in prominence rating because these are where the audiences tend to look for the top stories before making a decision to read through the inside pages for details. As Lieb (2015) argues, if no serious headline appears on the vantage pages, it means that readership may likely not be wide. News prominence is also measured from the word count (Chermak and Gruenewald, 2006). In this study, stories with up to 800 words and above were considered in-depth while ‘fillers’ and other stories below that figure were not considered in-depth. As evidence from chapter five shows, most of the stories were thematically covered in the three newspapers, an evidence that the Boko Haram stories received in-depth coverage. It was observed that the stories that involved many casualties were, as expected, highly favoured in the coverage unlike the ones that involved fewer casualties. This prompted an uneven distribution of the coverage of the insurgency. The ones involving deaths were valued over scare or minor or averted attacks. Some stories were also favoured to appear more prominently because of the people involved in the attacks. See the figure below for instance.



Figure 19: The Sun's headline showing the prominence given to personalities in the Boko Haram coverage

The personalities involved in an attack also determine the prominence in the coverage. For instance, when the then opposition leader, General Muhammad Buhari was involved in one of the attacks, the story was covered over a long period. Again, when the attacks involved the abduction of three highly placed emirs in the North – Alhaji Idrissa Timta (of Gwoza), Alhaji Abdullahi Ibn Muhammed Askirama II and Alhaji Abdullahi Ibn Ismaila Mamza II (all of Askira) and subsequently killed Alhaji Idrissa Timta (of Gwoza) it was widely and repeatedly reported. While prominence is already established as news value, it should be emphasised that paying unequal attention to the victims of the insurgency would leave the less prominent persons underreported in the coverage and this implies that the bigger picture on the effects of the insurgency may not be known to the public and the international community.

Furthermore, the location or region of the attack was also seen as a driving force in the prominence attached to the coverage of Boko Haram. This was observed in the way some stories of the attack were placed. There were instances of multiple attacks by the insurgents, but only the ones that happened in some ‘important’ places received more attention. For instance, attacks in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, on military or paramilitary bases, churches, and mosques attracted more coverage than the ones that happened elsewhere.



Figure 20: Story placement of two separate Boko Haram incidents.

As the above figure shows, Boko Haram incident in Abuja and Enugu received different degrees of prominence. This shows that prominence is also attached to places of the event. The possible explanation of this is that some places are more symbolic and strategic than others. As I argued above, the tendency of prioritising only the symbolic places in the coverage is capable



economy and foreign policy of the country, Boko Haram insurgents characteristically diverted the attention of the media while the conference lasted. Throughout the three-month's exercise, Boko Haram intensified its attacks. Worthy of emphasis is that it was within the three months of the exercise that the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls that sparked global outrage and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign, happened. The national park in Abuja was also bombed within the time leaving a lot of people “dead and perpetually maimed” (*The Punch*, 20/04/14). Thus, through multiple attacks, especially the coordinated abduction of over 200 schoolgirls, Boko Haram shifted media and people's attention from other national issues. This was why only two issues from the conference made it as the banner headlines for the three months that the exercise lasted as earlier observed by Nwafor and Ogbodo (2016). See the table below for other details.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>% of reported Boko Haram incidents</b>
<b><i>Outcome</i></b>		
Completed	113	54.6
Botched	57	27.5
Suspected	22	10.6
Suspect arrested	15	7.2
<b><i>Region</i></b>		
North central	32	15.5
North East	163	78.7
North west	07	3.4
East/South/West	05	2.4
<b><i>Strategy</i></b>		
Bombing	134	64.7
Abduction	17	8.2
Gunshot	50	24.1
Unknown	06	2.9
<b><i>Casualty</i></b>		
Death	175	84.5
No death	32	15.4
Unknown	09	4.3
<b><i>Time of attack</i></b>		
Early morning	78	37.7
Night	63	30.4
Day	55	26.6
Unknown	11	5.3
<b><i>Target</i></b>		
Church/mosque	88	42.5
School/homes/villages	52	25.1
Bank/market/shop	29	14.0
Military barracks/security posts	22	10.6
Others	16	7.7
<b><i>Perpetrators (gender, age)</i></b>		
Male terrorist/suspect	158	76.3
Female terrorist/suspect	24	11.6
Almajiri/children	03	1.4
Unknown	22	10.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 10: The frequency of attacks that reflected in the coverage

The above table measured the outcome, region, strategy, casualty, time of attack, target(s) and perpetrators that reflected in the coverage of the insurgency. The *outcome* of the Boko Haram attacks indicates that 113 (54.6%) were completed, 57 (27.5%) were botched, 22 (10.6%) were suspected to be carried out by Boko Haram, whereas 15 (7.2%) showed that suspects were arrested. In terms of *region* of the attack, North Central has 32 (15.5%), North East recorded 163 (78.7%), North West recorded 7 (3.4%) whereas the whole of East, South and West recorded only 05 (2.4%) in the reported incidents<sup>19</sup>. The table also indicates that Boko Haram employed several strategies in attacking the targets. Thus, 134 (64.7%) used bombing, 17 (8.2%) was by abduction, 50 (24.1%) was by gunshots, whereas 6 (2.9%) had no known or reported strategy. In terms of casualty figure, the table indicates that 175 (84.5%) involved death, 32 (15.4%) involved zero death, 09 (4.3%) showed no sign of casualty.

Another measured variable was the time of attack. It shows that 78 (37.7%) were said to have occurred in the early morning, 63 (30.4%) occurred in the night, only 55 (26.6%) occurred during the day; whereas 11 (5.3%) represents attacks whose time of occurrence was not known or stated in the reports. Concerning the target of the attacks, the table shows that 88 (42.5%) targeted either the church or the mosque, 52 (25.1%) targeted either a school or educational institutions and facilities, 29 (14.0%) targeted either a bank, market or shop, 22 (10.6%) occurred either at the military or other security checkpoints, whereas 16 (7.7%) happened in other places not categorised. Effort was also stretched to identifying the gender of perpetrators as well as if there were minors. Thus, 158 (76.3%) represents incidents presumably carried out by male perpetrators, 24 (11.6%) were identified as female perpetrators, 3 (1.4%) were either Almajiri or destitute children, whereas 22 (10.6%) of the incidents were carried out by the unknown perpetrators.

As can be observed from the above table, majority of the Boko Haram attacks were completed, bombing was the main strategy employed by the terrorists while churches and mosques represent the most frequently targeted locations by the insurgents. This is significant because it provides an empirical evidence that counters the popular view<sup>20</sup> that Boko Haram only targets

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<sup>19</sup> Nigeria has six geopolitical zones, three apiece from the North and South. The Boko Haram attacks have largely concentrated on the North East. For more on the Nigeria's geopolitical zones, see the link below: <https://oldnaija.com/2016/03/17/the-six-geopolitical-zones-in-nigeria-with-their-states/>

<sup>20</sup> Scholars such as Malachy (2013) have argued that Boko Haram serves two distinct purposes – as a tool for political gains in the Northern Nigeria, and as a Muslim agenda to Islamise the country.

Christians and Western civilisation. For instance, Malachy (2013) has argued that Boko Haram serves two distinct purposes – as a tool for political gains for the Northern Nigeria, and as a Muslim agenda to Islamise the country. The fact that the insurgents also attacks Muslims and mosques creates a counter narrative to the mission and ideology of the group.

### **6.5. Sub-themes under the thematic frames**

The coding of items reviewed for this study revealed ten new pools of sub-themes (frames) under the thematic frames. These themes were recurrent in the coverage and provided depth, background and follow-ups to the series of attacks by the insurgents as demonstrated below:

**6.5.1. Theme of threat/fear and alertness:** Some stories appeared to create nervousness, panic and alertness among the public. For example: ‘‘B’Haram writes army, threatens to attack Maiduguri Barracks’’ (*The Punch*, 21/03/14, p.13). In this story, the aim, it could be argued, was to engage the military and civilians in a psychological warfare. The mind game has proved to be an instrument used by both sides (the military/government and Boko Haram) to create a fearful atmosphere regarding the insurgency. Threat and fear are big factors in the calculus of terrorists, and as Gadarian (2010) argues, fear alone can kill faster than most terrorism attacks. Thus, from the main story,

Investigations revealed that security had been beefed up in the Maimalari Barracks which has the Headquarters of the 7th Infantry Division of the Artillery Corps, the Ordinance, the Signal and other crucial units of the Army in Maiduguri. It was gathered that while security agents saw the letter as a ploy to instil fear into security operatives, all efforts were being made to ward off any attack on the foremost military formation in the North-East (*The Punch*, 21/03/14, p.13).

A similar scenario that appears to create an atmosphere of fear in the coverage is embedded in the story ‘‘Fear in Plateau over Boko Haram threat’’ (*The Punch*, 30/04/14, p.4). Boko Haram terrorists seemed to be living up to the cardinal objective of terrorism aimed at the ‘‘intentional creation of death and destruction to instil fear and feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, intimidation, demoralization, chaos, and helplessness among those targeted’’ (Fleischman and Wood, 2002, p.315). This is why the media is often accused of unknowingly playing into their hands, thereby paving the way for mass panicking through their reportage.



Other stories such as “Boko Haram wants to attack Chibok again – resident” (*The Punch*, 04/05/14, p.25); “B’Haram: Border town residents threaten to relocate to Cameroon” (*The Punch*, 12/05/14, p.8); “Boko Haram writes school, plots fresh abductions” (*The Punch*, 18/05/14, p.2); “Boko Haram threatening Nigeria’s unity, Navy warns” (*The Punch*, 21/05/14, p.14); “Boko Haram: Panic in Abuja over increasing attacks” (*The Punch*, 05/07/14, p.7); “Boko Haram leader, Shekau threatens to kill emir of Kano in new video” (*The Sun*, 18/12/14, p.15); “Boko Haram may use nun regalia for attacks” (*The Punch*, 24/08/14, p.7); “B’Haram terrorists may disguise as church members – cleric” (*The Punch*, 27/12/14, p.9); “Boko Haram: I fear for 2015 election – Ndume” (*The Sun*, 14/11/14, p.36); “Police shut Abuja markets over Boko Haram threat” (*The Punch*, 11/06/14, p.2); and “Boko Haram plans to attack 50 towns in Borno” (*The Punch*, 26/06/14, p.6), all invoke feelings of fear, especially among the public. Perhaps that was why another report “Boko Haram to Chibok: Expect us again” (*The Punch*, 17/06/14, p.2) was something more disturbing. In this report, an anonymous officer explained that “Everyone in the LGA believes that the sect cannot be pocketed by security men. The letter has further worsened their fear”. For the purpose of emphasis, Chibok is the very location where the abduction of over 200 schoolgirls took place. Therefore, by writing to the villagers to expect them (BH) again would definitely heighten the already fearful atmosphere for the people that were yet to presumably recover from the shock of the Chibok schoolgirls’ abduction.

Another scenario of fear was replicated in the stories: “Christmas: Military bans movement in Borno over Boko Haram threat” (*The Sun*, 23/12/14); “B’Haram: Military beefs up security at NAF base” (*The Punch*, 28/03/14, p.13). Although this story does not contain direct fear-triggering message on the military or the masses, it is interlaced with the tone of alertness to forestall any likelihood of Boko Haram attack. A story of this nature also holds potential of scaring the insurgents because they would be afraid of being ambushed. Thus, just like the findings of Deflem and McDonough (2015); Hughes and Stoddart (2012); Fosse and Fosse (2009); and Lerner *et al.* (2003), which suggest an increased fear in Americans after the 9/11 attack, the present study echoes the same belief that by overt or covert means, the domestic media frames of the insurgency may have accentuated fears among the public.

When reported as the above, it justifies the position of some media critics who accuse it of unknowingly playing into the hands of terrorists. Thus, it can be argued that Boko Haram terrorists were living up to the major objective of terrorism, which according to Fleischman

and Wood (2002, p.315) involves the “intentional creation of death and destruction to instil fear and feelings of uncertainty, vulnerability, intimidation, demoralization, chaos, and helplessness among those targeted”. People construct social meanings from news reports by associating leading words with certain problems and issues. The politics of fear has transformed terrorism, and as Giroux (2003, 5) contends, “the rhetoric of terrorism is important because it operates on many registers to both address and inflict human misery”. One possible implication of fear and threat is that more people will tend to be afraid that another attack could be imminent, and this would potentially affect people’s social engagements. The fear of terrorism also reflects the feelings of danger and threat that may be exploited for political decision-making.

**6.5.2. Theme of incompetence:** The theme of incompetence emanates from such stories that seem to expose the unfitness of the military and other special forces drafted to fight against the insurgents. For instance, stories such as “Boko Haram attacks police station, army base, kills 40 soldiers, policemen” (*The Punch*, 28/05/14, p.8); “Shekau claims victory in raid of Borno military bases” (*The Sun*, 13/12/13, p.5); “Boko Haram: Police run to military for help” (*The Punch*, 24/08/14, p.2); “Boko Haram: 480 Nigerian soldiers flee to Cameroon” (*The Punch*, 27/08/14, p.2); and “Boko Haram looting our armoury – DHQ” (*The Punch*, 30/09/14, p.14) appear to arouse feelings of unpreparedness and incompetence of the Nigerian security organisations in fighting the insurgency. Nigerian military has often claimed to have decimated the insurgents yet they (BH) have continued to attack their targets unabated. This will arguably lead to an image problem for Nigeria in the global stage. The interviewees (see details in chapter seven) have argued that the Nigerian Government’s claim that Boko Haram has been decimated was only a measure to protect its reputation. Thus, “...I take it to mean that Government is just protecting its image and trying to change the perception of Nigerians about the fight against Boko Haram. Government is doing this just to change people’s psyche and perception” (interview with Amadi of *Vanguard*). The audacity and ferocity displayed by the Boko Haram insurgents in most of their attacks only serve to remind the public of their vulnerability since the insurgents had severally overrun the military.

President Jonathan was also represented as incompetent in the newspapers, especially in the *Leadership*. For instance, in its editorial, “Our Stand: This state has failed”, the paper reports that



The Jonathan regime has demonstrated a frightening incompetence in the handling of the state's affairs. It is now beyond doubt that the regime is incapable of protecting the people. This government cannot even protect Nigerians from the next attack or even the following day's attacks. Before the latest kidnap of school girls in Chibok, nobody seemed to have been looking for or even as much as discussing those kidnapped earlier. All Nigerians now live in extreme fear. When a state has failed, it should not be left to be propped up by failed leaders and failed politicians. But nothing is unstoppable. This trajectory can still be reversed before it is too late (*Leadership*, 17/04/2014).

The above view by *Leadership* may sound as a critical assessment of the Jonathan's regime in handling the insurgency, but it is embedded with political thoughts that appears to call on the electorate to vote for its (*Leadership's*) preferred presidential candidate hence the words, 'nothing is unstoppable. This trajectory can still be reversed before it is too late'. As I have earlier argued in chapter five, the newspaper is politically aligned to APC which was the main opposition party in the 2015 general election. Thus, its open association with the party makes it difficult to differentiate its role as a Fourth Estate and its role as a tool for political vendetta.

The 'incompetence' in handling the insurgency has also caught the attention of the international community. For instance, the Nigerian Government/military has faced criticism over its 'disastrous' crackdown on the suspected Boko Haram members. Amnesty International documented a pattern of arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention of 'babies and young children' some of who die in military custody, death of men in military detention, and mass arrests and illegal detention. In its June 2015 report, Amnesty International reported that Nigerian military, often with the support of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members, arbitrarily arrested no fewer than 20,000 people since 2011. Majority of the arrests were targeted at young men even those as young as nine. The vast majority of the arrests appeared to be entirely arbitrary because the military often relied on 'dubious' 'informants' who get paid for any information leading to any arrests. In a documentary evidence, Amnesty International explains that "an army that is supposed to be protecting its citizens has been committing appalling atrocities on a massive scale against its own people". This featured video clips showing the military 'impunity' against civilians and Boko Haram suspect (see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=51&v=poL1GBpKBY8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=51&v=poL1GBpKBY8)).

## Nigeria: Senior members of military must be investigated for war crimes – new report

03 Jun 2015, 11:02am



Amnesty spokespeople, AV, and full report available on request

- **Horrific war crimes committed by Nigeria’s military including 8,000 people murdered, starved, suffocated and tortured to death**
- **Senior military commanders, named by Amnesty International, must be investigated in relation to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity**

Figure 22: The victims of extra-judicial killings and war crimes allegedly committed by the Nigerian troops. Source: Amnesty International <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/nigeria-senior-members-military-must-be-investigated-war-crimes-new-report>

Condemning a similar scenario, Sloan (2014, n.d). argues that “The efficiency of the state’s strategy, which has included extrajudicial executions, mass imprisonments and indiscriminate targeting of any young Muslim Nigerian who might fit the profile of a Boko Haram member, has been questioned” — and the “war on terror” has also been used to target the country’s journalists”. Although stories of human right abuse and alleged war crimes attracted global media attention, Nigerian media appeared to have shied away from investigating the allegations. This is why none of the reports indicting the Nigerian army made the main news in the analysed newspapers. Although this could aid the military in information warfare, it has the potential to mislead the publics in whose interest Government claims to fight terrorism.

**6.5.3. Theme of conspiracy/deceit/sabotage:** One other theme that is also reflected in the coverage is that of conspiracy or deceit. Conspiracy occurs when military or government and even the public connive with others to sabotage the fight against the insurgency. Leading the conspiracy perspective is the belief that the Boko Haram insurgency was a Northern Nigeria’s ploy to recapture power from the South after the circumstantial emergence of a Southern minority president for the first time in Nigeria’s history. Evidence of this also reflected varyingly in the interview and questionnaire. For instance, it was repeatedly alleged at one point that the insurgency had lingered because the military and some service chiefs ‘wanted’ it to continue in order to continue to eat from the largesse of the war. That prompted the outcry

“Military aiding Boko Haram – ACF” (*The Punch*, 03/05/14, p.9), where the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), the Pan-Hausa socio-political organisation accused the military of sabotaging ‘genuine efforts’ of the government to end the insurgency. This allegation was corroborated in *Vanguard’s* report that “some influential Nigerians appear to have lent support to the terrorists on one hand, some officers and men of the Nigerian military are aiding the operations of the terrorists in this war...which have both wittingly and unwittingly allowed the terrorists to gain ground and have become somewhat difficult to defeat” (*Vanguard*, 28/06/15).

As the insurgency raged, budgeting and security votes increased. Unfortunately, recent developments have shown that the money meant for the welfare of the military (those at the war front) and displaced persons was diverted into private pockets by some highly placed politicians and senior military officers. For instance, *VOA* cited the Amnesty International as saying that much of the money meant for fighting the insurgency has “disappeared through kickbacks, payments to "ghost soldiers" who don't exist, or via no-bid contracts resulting in inflated spending that benefits politically-connected contractors” (*VOA*, 19/05/17). Similarly, *BBC* (3/05/16) reports that “Nigeria officials stole \$15bn’ from anti-Boko Haram fight”<sup>21</sup>.

Further, ACF decried the ease with which Boko Haram has succeeded in most of their attacks. Thus, “it is strongly believed that without the support and cooperation from within the military and security circles, the insurgents would not have been succeeding so easily in their dastardly acts” (*The Punch*, 03/05/14, p.9). The view expressed here suggests that the military was infiltrated by saboteurs that leak useful operational and combatant information to the insurgents. Another case of the conspiracy theme surfaced in the story “Boko Haram: Group links Northern elders with schoolgirls’ kidnap” (*The Punch*, 29/04/14, p.9). This story blamed the kidnap of the schoolgirls to the Northern elders’ conspiracy. Thus, a pro-Jonathan’s (ex-President), Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari argued that:

The disappearance of the girls is part of the Northern elders’ agenda to embarrass and distract the Goodluck Jonathan government. ...They deliberately took the girls away to create an impression of insecurity and paint the picture that nobody is safe in the country, whereas they are the architects of these self-inflicting wounds aimed at distracting the government (*The Punch*, 29/04/14, p.9).

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<sup>21</sup> For details of the reports about the misappropriation of fund meant for the ant-Boko Haram fight, see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-36192390>; and <https://www.voanews.com/a/corruption-nigeria-military-boko-haram-report/3862196.html>.

Although this claim has not been validated, it brings conspiracy and deceit into focus especially considering that some Northern elites have made provocative statements that appear to suggest their support for Boko Haram. In another report “Boko Haram using weapons stolen from Nigerian army” (*The Punch*, 02/07/14, p.9), the theme of conspiracy can be seen from the allegation that some Boko Haram sympathisers within the military ‘deliberately’ leave their weapons and run away at the sight of the Boko Haram insurgents, leaving the latter with weapons. In “Army officer sells arms to Boko Haram”, News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that an officer whose identity was not made known was undergoing secret trial for “selling 21 anti-aircraft guns assigned to his artillery brigade to Boko Haram”<sup>22</sup> This has further led to accusations and counter accusations about who is sponsoring, conspiring or conniving with Boko Haram. This was also evident in the report credited to Chief Dick Harry, the President of the South-South Consolidated Forum (SSCF) as seen below:

On the issue of the on-going faceless insurgency, called Boko Haram, it is not out of place to say that the insurgents are being sponsored by some highly placed, desperate and ambitious politicians from the North who felt that the Presidency is their birth right. They do this just to discredit the efforts of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, their evil plans have failed and will continue to fail. The northern leaders and elders forum need to tell the world the truth and rise to the occasion to put an end to this national genocide against innocent Nigerian citizens. (In “S’South forum accuses northern elite of sponsoring B’Haram, *The Punch*, 19/11/14, p.12).

Cases of mutiny were also reported by the newspapers where some soldiers ‘vowed’ to abscond from fighting the insurgents either due to lack of motivation or to avoid being killed. This was the case in the story “40 soldiers vow not to fight B’Haram – Report” (*The Punch*, 20/08/14, p.12). Again, in the story “Saboteurs hindering war against terrorism- Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 13/12/14, p.57), the ex-President Jonathan revealed that some persons were sabotaging his administration’s efforts in the fight against the insurgency.

Through these counteraccusations, the contextualisation of the insurgency has become more problematized as the public makes effort to discern between facts and fictions claims surrounding the insurgency. Many people are allegedly benefitting from the largesse of the WAB, rather than mitigating it. The alleged connivance of some forces with the insurgents to perpetuate the war portends that the insurgency will only lead to more casualties as it lingers, while the ‘saboteurs’ make more financial gains from their alleged ‘conspiracy’.

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<sup>22</sup> Read full story at <http://www.nan.ng/news/army-officer-sells-arms-to-boko-haram/>

**6.5.4. Theme of vulnerability:** Some stories appear to reveal how vulnerable people were because of lack of proper protection from the security agencies. This lack of protection brings out the vulnerability of the people to the insurgents. For instance, “B’Haram better armed than soldiers – Borno Gov” (*The Punch*, 18/02/14, p.2). In this report, the Governor of Borno State (the state with the highest number of Boko Haram attacks) emphasised how vulnerable the people were due to the assumption that the terrorists were better armed than the Nigerian military. The governor was quoted as saying:

...Boko Haram members are better armed and better motivated than our own troops. Anybody who is following events in this country can attest to the fact that they have a very smooth sail overrunning communities, killing people...Given the present state of affairs, it is absolutely impossible for us to defeat Boko Haram (*The Punch*, 18/02/14, p.2).

The theme of vulnerability further reverberates in the report “Poor joint border patrol aids insurgency” (*The Punch*, 15/11/14, p.9). The story blames the porous Nigerian border systems for the increasing cases of attacks by Boko Haram and its recruits coming in from Nigeria’s neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Niger Republic and Chad. The argument has been that Boko Haram recruits local and foreign fighters to aid their fight against the Nigerian state, and they can only penetrate the country via these porous borders.

This study argues that people are more likely to feel less vulnerable when dealing with events that they can control. The aftermath of the Boko Haram insurgency as the above stories suggest would lead to a high degree of vulnerability and psychological sequelae of terrorist attacks. The vulnerability of the inhabitants of the Northeast where the insurgency is prevalent will likely lead to the health condition called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This is because as Tochigi *et al.* (2002) argues, PTSD is one of the most common effects of terrorism.

**6.5.5. Theme of hope:** The theme of hope manifests in stories where the military makes bold efforts or statements reassuring the public of their safety. This is inherent in some reports such as “Boko Haram: DHQ sends fresh 1,000 soldiers to Borno” (*The Punch*, 11/03/14, p. 4); “Boko Haram will not defeat us” (*The Punch*, 22/04/14, p.18). Similarly, hope is inherent in “Jonathan: Girls’ abduction, beginning of B’Haram’s end” (*The Punch*, 09/05/14); “Army getting new weapons to combat Boko Haram” (*The Punch*, 15/07/14, p.11); “B’Haram: Jonathan increases troops in N’East to 20,000” (*The Punch*, 11/10/14, p.6); “Troops dislodge B’Haram from Balmo forest, kill 20” (*The Punch*, 10/12/14, p.12). Of particular interest is the report “We won’t concede any state to Boko Haram – DHQ” reported by *The Punch* in which

the then Director of Defence Information, Maj. Gen. Chris Olukolade reiterated the readiness of the military to overcome the challenges of the insurgency thus:

The fact remains that we are not conceding any of the states to terrorists. We are committed to securing Nigeria as mandated by the constitution and no group will be allowed to raise any flag in any part of the country. If you see someone hiding a flag under his bed and you want me to confirm it here; that is not possible (*The Punch*, 22/07/14, p.18).

Another theme of hope was prominent in the reports “‘Terrorists won’t succeed in Nigeria – Jonathan” (*The Sun*, 02/10/14, p.8) where ex-president Jonathan assured the public of his administration’s readiness to defeat Boko Haram. In the report “‘End of Insurgency has started - Army spokesman” (*The Sun*, 12/12/14, p.14), the Nigerian army also assured the public that the end of the insurgency was near. This and others provided a degree of hope to the people in the fight against the insurgents. Study has shown that people who feel positive emotions such as hope and pride may exhibit particularly high levels of confidence (see Gross *et al.*, 2009). Although it is not clear the extent the theme of hope can change people’s perception of the WAB, it is expected that when there is any hope of ending the insurgency, it would offer some ideological alternatives and succour to the people.

**6.5.6. Theme of breakthrough against the insurgents:** While the emphasis has been on the devastation caused by the insurgents, there were cases where emphasis shifted to the military for making significant gains or breakthrough in fighting Boko Haram. The stories under this category were considered as ones under the breakthrough against the insurgents. Although the military had come under severe criticism for ‘failing to nip the insurgency in the bud’ (suffering heavy defeats in the media as a result), the following headlines reveal onslaughts against Boko Haram. For example, ‘Soldiers attack B’Haram camp, seize 700 vehicles’ (*The Punch*, 12/03/14, p. 7); “‘Army captures Boko Haram Armoury, kills 10” (*The Punch*, 16/03/14, p. 7); “‘486 Boko Haram suspects arrested in Abia” (*The Punch*, 17/06/14, p.2); “‘50 fleeing B’Haram members arrested” (*The Punch*, 24/09/14, p.13). Stories of this nature would arguably encourage both the military and the public as well as send strong signals to Boko Haram about the competence of the military in confronting the insurgency.

This was not exactly the case in the past. For instance, analysis shows that between 2011 and early 2013, the media underreported military actions against Boko Haram. However, in the latter part of 2013 and 2014 as the general election was approaching, stories about military

attacks against the insurgents received proportionate attention through repetition and wider coverage. The slanting echoed the WAB mantra. This must have benefitted some politicians ahead of the 2015 elections, but in the larger context, the significance of this finding is that the media also became an active player in the fight against the insurgency.

**6.5.7. Theme of despair/resignation:** Another theme that emerged from the coverage was that of despair or resignation. See the following stories, for instance: “Borno bows to Boko Haram” (*The Punch*, 01/03/14, p.47); “FG has lost B’Haram war – CNPP” (*The Punch*, 21/03/14, p.8); “Boko Haram holding Nigeria captive” (*The Punch*, 01/05/14, p.8); “Why Boko Haram may never end” (*The Punch*, 15/07/14, p.28). These stories conjure feelings of despair and hopelessness in the fight against Boko Haram. Similarly, despair and resignation are inherent in “Boko Haram kills 300, abducts 300 more girls” (*The Punch*, 07/05/14, p.7). This invokes feelings of resignation and despair capable of prompting a new thinking that the war was far from being won. Again, the story “Nigeria trapped between Boko Haram and Ebola virus” (*The Punch*, 04/08/14, p.30) further compounds the despair as people struggled to cope with the incessant attacks of the insurgents as well as the outbreak of the highly contagious Ebola virus. These stories may also play into the mind game that favours the insurgents. To this effect, I argue that when people feel despaired, the tendency that they would resign to fate becomes high. On the plus side, it would challenge the Government to restore public’s confidence.

**6.5.8. Theme of neglect/negligence:** Another sub-theme in the coverage was that of neglect/negligence. When the group started, Government underrated it until the group morphed into a global terrorist organisation to the point of being ranked ‘the deadliest’ ahead of IS (*NYT*, 18/11/15). It was widely reported that both the senior military officers and the government were not discharging their responsibilities very well regarding the fight against the insurgency. Example, “Soldiers fighting B’Haram not getting adequate welfare – Tambuwal” (*The Punch*, 14/03/14, p.2). Apparently worried by various complains about poor motivation of the soldier at the war front, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Aminu Tambuwal invoked the theme of neglect of the military in the fight against the insurgency. This story was reported when Tambuwal was still the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Consequently, “this has become a serious issue because soldiers are complaining that what is meant for them is not getting to them” (*The Punch*, 14/03/14, p.2).

The negligence was attributed to the Government officials and top military officials accused of profiting from the insurgency. This situation has resulted in mutiny at different times. As one of the 54 mutineers sentenced to death said in a statement, “I am a soldier and I am sentenced to death by the Nigerian Army, (be)cause we did not go to fight Boko Haram without equipment. We ask(ed) for weapon instead (they) gave (us) death sentence” (*Premium Times*, 27/12/2014). This has also attracted wide condemnation from the public. *Premium Times* further reports that “Many Nigerians have condemned their sentencing, arguing that the soldiers are being made scapegoats for the corruption that led to the diversion of funds allocated for military supplies and equipment” (ibid).

Similarly, in “Boko Haram: Borno elders decry soldiers’ poor welfare” (*The Punch*, 25/05/14, p.8), the neglect of the military, a negligence blamed on the poor welfare packages for the military by the presidency is the theme. The same also resonates with the report “Boko Haram: Soldiers complain of poor welfare, low morale” (*The Punch*, 08/03/14, p.4), and “B’Haram: FG blind, deaf and dumb, says Shettima” (*The Punch*, 16/05/14, p.7). To confront the negligence of the military, the elders want the Federal Government to live up to its responsibility by ensuring adequate provisions for the military in order to contain the insurgency. The foregoing supports the claim by APC that the PDP-led administration connived with the senior military officers to misappropriate the money meant for fighting the insurgency. It further suggests that the insurgency was undermined from its formation stage. If the threat of Boko Haram was handled effectively at its embryonic stage, perhaps, people’s level of confidence in Government would have risen, and this could have fostered a sense of pride in Government in the handling of the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency.

**6.5.9. Theme of caution:** Also inherent in the coverage is a theme of caution. Some of the stories were meant to caution the public, government or the military on how to handle the Boko Haram insurgency. While some advocated for caution against using force in the fight against the insurgents (eg: “Use of force can’t tame B’Haram” (*The Punch*, 04/03/2014, p.14), others explicitly advocated for total use of force in dealing with the group. The following stories expatiate on this theme more vividly: “Expert warns FG not to trust Boko Haram” (*The Punch*, 16/05/14, p.6); “Identify B’Haram leaders before negotiation – CNPP” (*The Punch*, 17/05/14, p. 6); “B’Haram: Activists urge caution on negotiation” (*The Punch*, 17/105/14, p.7). This became necessary in view of the fact that when people called for negotiation with the terrorists, some ‘fraudsters’ or ‘wannabe’ Boko Haram influencers emerged as the representatives of the



insurgents. This led to the question of ‘trust and true identity’ before any deal would be struck with the group. In view of this, sources in the stories urged the Federal Government to be cautious before making a deal with ‘fraudsters’. Another evidence of the theme of caution is in the story wherein the Northern Governors Forum urged the Nigerian military to intensify surveillance on the most affected states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa. This was a precautionary effort to forestall further Boko Haram attacks as exemplified by this story ‘‘B’Haram: Northern Govs ask military to increase surveillance’’ (*The Punch*, 20/05/14, p.8).

Although the theme of caution reflected variously in the coverage, it might have led Government into confusion as suggestions from different people filter into the narrative. When opinions are split between the use of force or diplomacy; negotiation and no negotiation, government would find itself perturbed as any decision taken may be interpreted negatively from the section of the public.

**6.5.10. Theme of Prescription:** While some stories appeared analytical by providing the reports as straight news stories, and as balanced as possible, others were prescriptive. For instance, ‘‘Soyinka seeks non-partisan approach to B’Haram war’’ (*The Punch*, 15/04/14, p.7). In this story, the 1986 Nobel Prize winner, Prof Wole Soyinka decried the politicisation of the insurgency and offered a nonpartisan approach instead. A nonpartisan approach would require collective efforts (irrespective of political divides) in tackling the insurgency as summed up in the following words ‘‘What is happening is not unique to Nigeria and I think there are histories we can learn from either to reject solutions there or play variations on them, but a truthful and objective analysis of them. This is not a partisan situation’’ (*The Punch*, 15/04/14, p.7).

In a more prescriptive approach, the stories such as ‘‘How to defeat Boko Haram’’ (*The Punch*, 24/08/14, p.24); ‘‘Boko Haram insurgency and way forward’’ (*The Punch*, 03/09/14, p.26); ‘‘towards curbing Boko Haram insurgency’’ (*The Punch*, 18/04/14, p.20); ‘‘Defeating Boko Haram, Nigeria’s responsibility – Britain’’ (*The Punch*, 02/11/14, p.8), all offered one or two ‘dosages’ of solutions to the Nigerian public, the military or the government on how to deal with the insurgency. In another report, *The Punch* portrays ‘‘Job creation as solution to insurgency’’ (*The Punch*, 03/09/14, p.26). Here, the newspaper takes on a prescriptive position offering solutions to curbing or ending the insurgency. This prescription on job creation fails to recognise other dynamics such as the quest for a caliphate, political and ethnic factors which have been fingered as the reasons for the insurgency. The view already held by a section of the

public and the media is that poverty and unemployment were responsible for the insurgency. See for instance, “Unemployment, poverty responsible for terrorism in north – Sanusi” (*The Punch*, 16/01/13). These economic factors have also been identified as issues that cause terrorism (see Ali and Li, 2015).

The foregoing reveals how different stakeholders prescribed the way to end the insurgency. However, such prescriptions have often been so superficial and hardly recognised the remote and immediate factors that birthed the insurgency. The plethora of suggestions from different commentators also implies that the concerned authorities will have many choices to contend with. By extension, these myriads of solutions will arguably confuse the Government and other actors in the fight against Boko Haram.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

This chapter has, through the analysis evaluated the pattern in the coverage of the insurgency. It found that the domestic media shared a level of commonality in framing the insurgency in some instances. The analysis revealed that at the early stage of the insurgency, the domestic media’s position was more detached but progressively became an active player. This is reflected in the language of the coverage of the insurgency with the adoption of a much more standardised and internationalised vocabulary relating to the coverage of terrorism.

The chapter has also shown that the newspapers gave prominence to the Boko Haram stories through strategic positioning. The prominence in the coverage would encourage the public to read more Boko Haram stories. The chapter also revealed pools of sub-thematic frames that reflected in the coverage. The themes added to our knowledge of how the insurgency was framed. Unlike the deductive frames that were originally predetermined for the study, these inductive frames naturally emerged from the analysis. The significance of this finding is that it expanded our understanding of nature of the media coverage of the insurgency beyond the predetermined frames. The next chapter will probe some issues arising from the previous chapters to evaluate the views of Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the insurgency as well as to determine how the broader media ecology shaped the coverage of the insurgency.

## CHAPTER 7

### “If Boko Haram kills 100 persons, tell the public that it only killed five”: Twisted tales and Government Interference in the Boko Haram Narratives

#### 7.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the Nigerian journalists’ perception of the coverage of the insurgency. It extends to how the broader media environment and other professional and institutional factors shaped the coverage of the insurgency. The chapter also examines the challenges that affected the coverage of the insurgency. The data presented and analysed in this chapter are sourced via telephone interviews. Nine journalists (reporters and editors) were interviewed between 15<sup>th</sup> January 2017- 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The respondents cited here are assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities as provided by the ethical approval secured for the study.

#### 7.1. Nigerian journalists’ views on the coverage of the insurgency

In selecting the journalists for the interview, factors such as the ethnicity of the respondents, religion and type of their media outfits (broadcast, print, and online) were taken into consideration. Respondents were asked to respond to the claim that ‘publicity is the oxygen of terrorism’, a statement attributed to the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Opinion was divided, but a majority of the respondents rejected the publicity thesis. For instance, one of the interviewees, Doris, an editor with *Thisday* newspaper argues that

The truth is that everybody claims that publicity is the oxygen of terrorism, but is it better to keep mum over a serious event like Boko Haram? Would it serve any good to the larger publics if these ferocious attacks are kept out of their knowledge? *E no make sense bro, just think am* (Nigerian Pidgin English for: *it does not make sense brother, just think about it*). ...There is nothing like promoting the agenda of terrorists... It’s about keeping the audience constantly informed which is our cardinal objective. We are serving the public not the terrorists, that’s one thing you should know. People deserve to know what is happening around them, don’t they? ...Not exactly the ‘oxygen of terrorism’. Media does its job. When people are being killed like goats, you can’t skip the coverage because you want to talk less of Boko Haram. ...One thing you should know is that Boko Haram also uses the social media: YouTube, Facebook, twitter bla...bla...bla... to communicate to the public. Even if the media (conventional) refuses to cover it, it is already there in the social media. Now that you have the social media you can’t blame it on the media (conventional).

This appears to dismiss the publicity claim as the public’s right to know is emphasised. The submission of Editor Doris is that an insurgent group that has its own media and frequently

uses the internet to disseminate information to the public would have not depended on the conventional media to reach out to the Nigerian public. This is akin to the operational strategy of the so-called Islamic State fighters who use multi-media platforms to communicate to its members and the public. This not only offers an alternative interpretation to the publicity frame, but also prompts a rethink of the publicity thesis.

Editor Abdul of *Daily Trust* said that Nigerian media should be acknowledged for the way they have been handling the coverage of the insurgency. He argues thus:

It is not easy to be fierce under any period of terrorist's occupation. We lost some professional colleagues to this savagery and we are not happy about that. We cannot be coerced into keeping quiet. ...Journalists should be appreciated for the daunting tasks they do in the face of all these attacks... Keeping the public regularly informed is non-negotiable and that is what we shall always do.

Abdul also emphasized that the “Nigerian media is trying” given that they lack the necessary resources unlike “the foreign media that can invest millions (of money) to get to the root of any story”. Another respondent, Tobi, a reporter with the *Premium Times* also commended the performance of Nigerian journalists in the coverage of the insurgency. His position is that

Nigerian journalists deserve commendations for their efforts in the Nigerian project not just the coverage of Boko Haram saga. They have done quite well. One thing you should know is that this our job is a very difficult one. Those who compare Nigerian journalists with their foreign counterparts should not forget that we are not as well equipped as they...we have our limitations, but we have done well...we still need to improve nevertheless. It wouldn't be difficult if we have all the needed modern technologies for newsgathering as they have in *CNN*, *BBC*, *Al Jazeera* etc. Regarding the publicity thing, yes, Boko Haram has received reasonable attention in the media but the media is only doing its job. As a journalist, you have to report what is happening no matter who is at the centre of the news.

This apparently ‘prescriptive approach’ was also challenged by another respondent who cautions that

Publicity should not be viewed in the negative sense. Take for instance, the role of a publicity officer is to inform members of an organisation about the developments therein. When he relates to the public, he performs a public relations role..., which means that he promotes and projects the image of his organisation. This is not the same as reporting terrorism because as a journalist you are not their publicity officer or spokesman. You only report what happened

without promoting the agenda of terrorists. I can't align myself to that opinion (interview with Elias, *NTA*<sup>23</sup> reporter).

In addition, a reporter with the *Radio Nigeria*, Ude expressed a related opinion when he hinted that:

We were told in journalism class that the heavier the incident, the better for us (reporters). When you are reporting major incidents, you feel on top of the world. You tell the public, I was there, I saw it and that's why I report it. It amounts to a factual error when something happened and you tell the public that something did not happen or you try to give them half of what really happened... But journalists should have the responsibility of not blowing issues out of proportion so that they don't degenerate into further crisis. We should always have this at the back of our mind. Nevertheless, we should be allowed to do the job the way it should be done. We have mandates as journalists to report things the way they are irrespective of who is involved... The issue is that people are entitled to their opinions. That may not represent the professional aspect of journalism practice.

Tobi, a reporter with the *Premium Times*, expressed a similar perspective. However, in the later part of his response, Tobi was more cautious in admitting that even though the publicity claim might be true, it happens unintentionally. Consequently,

I wouldn't dispute that completely, but I will be quick to remind those in this group (the publicity scholars) that the purpose is not to publicise terrorism. Although this seems to be the case, but it can never be intentional in any case... It is a very complicated situation... You didn't report it, people clamour to know; you report it people say you are glorifying terrorists. It is a very difficult thing.

Thus far, respondents have argued that journalists do not see their role as publicists for terrorists. Instead, they see it as part of their professional duty to inform the public about these cases. In a twist to the above line of narrative, James, *The Sun* journalist said that "At a point, especially within the period Boko Haram kidnapped Chibok girls, it's almost like we must have a Boko Haram story everyday adorning the front page". Although the journalist did not explicitly admit it, it is implicitly understandable from his revelation that some domestic media editors got to a point where they reserved spaces for Boko Haram stories before going to print because of the frequency and gravity of the attacks orchestrated by the group.

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<sup>23</sup> NTA, an alias for the National Television Authority, is the Federal Government owned television station with branches in all the 36 states of Nigeria and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

Governments are usually critical of the publicity of terrorism because a crucial component of counterterrorism is information warfare (Bilgen, 2012). Kaplan (2006, p.177) argues that news reports “possess important consequences for the conduct of government”. Although this claim might be true, a *Vanguard* reporter, Amadi in an interview warned that de-emphasising Boko Haram would not even be to the advantage of the Government. He argues that,

Blackening (sic) them (Boko Haram) out in the social or mainstream media will not even help the government on the other hand because they will not pick the necessary intelligence to fight them. I can tell you that based on some reports about Boko Haram, government also lies in wait to get some facts that will enable them to mobilise against Boko Haram.

The above argument by Amadi suggests that Government can exploit the terrorists’ use of the social and mainstream media to trace their whereabouts. This is because terrorists’ use of the media (particularly the social media) leaves them vulnerable to intelligence gathering. In relation to this, a reporter with the *Channels TV*, Amechi emphasised that

Boko Haram were leveraging on the social media. They created an online media. At a point, they were using YouTube to send video clips to some media organisations, but it came to a point that the Federal Government campaigned against giving them any type of attention because the media was reporting the activities of Boko Haram from the perspective of Boko Haram...that ‘we will do this, do that against the Nigeria government from the point of view of Boko Haram. So, the media was reporting it like this... And latter when the APC led administration was elected, the minister for information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed visited all the media organisations and campaigned on the need to report the issue of Boko Haram from government perspective. This means that the story changed from what Boko Haram was doing to how the military was able to roll it back.

The above argument underscores the Government’s desperation to control the spread of Boko Haram materials from circulating via the Internet. It also shows how the Nigerian Government wanted the media to focus on its own side of the narrative instead of getting any opposing views from the public or the insurgents. This is consistent with an earlier report that the Nigerian Government did not like the criticism from the press over its alleged inaction regarding the Boko Haram insurgency (Ifex, 2014). For instance, in June 2014, Nigerian military and police detained journalists, confiscated print publications of some leading newspapers – *The Nation*, *The Sun*, *Vanguard*, *Leadership*, *Daily Trust* and *The Punch* and intercepted distribution vans in an attempt to halt the circulation of ‘critical’ information. Condemning the seizures, which the military described as “routine security

actions”, Reporters Without Borders (2014) noted that “these actions obstruct the Nigerian public’s right to information” adding, “the army must accept criticism in the media without preventing their circulation”. Similarly, Ifex (2014) cites the President of the West African Journalists Association –Peter Quaqua, as saying that “Such clampdown on the media is simply unacceptable and does not help the government's fight against militants who are killing people indiscriminately, including innocent school children”. Quaqua added, “The media has already suffered Boko Haram attacks, the government cannot afford to be a perpetrator – we call for a ceasefire”. Following the crackdown and series of other pressures, the media adopted Government’s narratives in the coverage of the insurgency. Echoing the above view, *The Vanguard’s* Amadi alleged that the spokesman of the Presidency, Lai Mohammed approached different Nigerian media outfits to dissuade them from reporting the Boko Haram stories from any other perspective other than that of the Federal Government. Put more vividly,

...Given the efforts of the military, it was important to tell the story from the government’s point of view that by so doing, journalists would be encouraging the military to sustain the campaign and encouraging the people to change their psyche. At that point, the flow of information started coming from the military. When it was obvious that not all journalists were comfortable with this arrangement government chose some people that follow them when they visit some places where journalists can have access to Boko Haram stories. That is why most Nigerian journalists are not deeply involved in the coverage of Boko Haram. However, the military will come back with a story that they want to be told in the way that suits their operation (interview with *The Vanguard’s* Amadi).

Amadi further challenges the popular narrative from the Government and the military that Boko Haram has been ‘crushed’, as they want journalists to be reporting it. He argues that despite the claims by the Government, the insurgents still carry out many attacks. In his words,

If the government has defeated Boko Haram as they want us to believe, where are they (Boko Haram) launching attacks from till today? (Long pause). They said the military has combed the Sambisa forest. So where are the ones attacking the people coming from? Where are they coming from to launch the attack? I can tell you that we have witnessed more attacks since government claimed to have defeated Boko Haram than at any time in the past. So where are they coming from? I take it to mean that Government is just protecting its image and trying to change the perception of Nigerians about the fight against Boko Haram. Government is doing this just to change people’s psyche and perceptions (interview with the *Vanguard’s* Amadi).

The above respondent was furious about the way the coverage was being influenced by the Government and the military. Although respondents felt dissatisfied with this interference in

the coverage, they were unable to do anything to change the situation. In a similar submission, Amechi, a reporter with the *Channels TV* queried thus: “if you say that the military has been able to roll back Boko Haram to Sambisa how do we believe you because you are just telling us? This is the problem. It is because journalists are not involved until stories are ready to be told”. By implication, if journalists are only useful in disseminating ‘already-made’ stories from the military, it becomes even more difficult to prove the authenticity of the reports. This will also leave no room for verifying ‘facts’.

Thus far, as the views of the interviewees demonstrate, one can infer that by urging the journalists to de-emphasise the coverage of Boko Haram activities, the Government was only subtly pushing the media to adopt only its agenda in framing the insurgency. This not only weakens objective reportage, but also stifles freedom of the press. This is consistent with Kampf (2014); Bennet (2009); and Entman (2004), who argue that the conventional media may succumb to pressure by adopting Government narratives to frame terrorist activities even against the reality in the field.

## **7.2. “The level of activity determines the level of coverage”: Assessing the degree of variation in coverage of the insurgency (2011-2014)**

Just as content analysis demonstrated, the interviews also show that there were variations in the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency between 2011 and 2014. Respondents have argued that the coverage of the insurgency has changed over the years. For instance,

A lot has happened since 2011. We have lost counts of number of Boko Haram incidents. It’s difficult to count. Even as we are talking now they may be attacking innocent people somewhere in the North East. Boko Haram has risen from some mere thugs to a very sophisticated terrorists group in the world. ... reporting about Boko Haram has changed tremendously in accordance with the public’s demand. If you have followed the trends very well you will agree with me that Boko Haram attacks have increased from occasional to daily, and there’s no sign that it will stop anytime soon. Although the group went on break sometime ..., they have regrouped again and become more ferocious. In fact, many of our gallant soldiers have died in the hands of Boko Haram and the military can’t deny this. Only the few lucky ones are made known, others are never known. But they (military/government) keep telling us a different thing to cover up... I don’t want to sound hopeless, but Boko Haram has been underestimated (Interview with Sampika, *The Punch* journalist).



The above quote from *The Punch* journalist demonstrates how the coverage of the insurgency has increased in response to the frequency of attacks. *The Punch* journalist maintains that there was a variation in the level of coverage of the insurgency and the reason for that is that “the level of activity determines the level of coverage. When you have blasts, you would definitely expect an increase in the amount of coverage.” In a related submission, James, a reporter with *The Sun* sceptically said:

Forget about what they (government/military) tell you every day that Boko Haram has been crushed. That is one of the biggest scams of the present government. However, it is fair to say that many Boko Haram members have been killed in the latest military operations... Some of them have also surrendered, but the numbers (figures) are always exaggerated to reflect government’s will. The military has also suffered heavy casualty in recent Boko Haram reprisals, but they hardly admit this because the dead soldiers are unceremoniously and quietly buried, sometimes in a mass grave.

Something that can be extracted from the above argument is that Government employed propaganda and even though the domestic media organisations were aware of this, they played along. The media could not withstand the government’s pressures in the coverage of the insurgency and as such this “emphasizes the ways in which journalism continues to remain embedded within the broader public sphere, despite the media’s many protestations of political innocence, neutrality, and independence” (Kaplan, 2006, p.176). Richard Kaplan notes that “these political officials, these alternative public voices, such as the president, often possess their own mandate, their own legitimacy to provide authoritative public interpretations of important national events. They also know their own case might be helped by charging the press with distortion and bias. Consequently, they challenge, criticize, and seek to influence the media’s reports. In the end, no matter how the press strives to achieve “objectivity,” its pronouncements remain permanently entangled in the political bickering of the public sphere” (2006, p.177). In other words, Government might be winning the WAB (war against Boko Haram), but the extent to which this is true remains unclear because of the interference therein. Only one of the respondents presented a view that seems to be confronting the Government’s stance on the insurgency. A reporter with the *Channels TV*, Amechi explains that

We source our stories from different means. For instance, we have our reporters working at different beats across the country. We also have guys that monitor news from other sources and channels. On regular basis, we participate in press briefings from the presidency, the military, etc...Even when we get Boko Haram stories from secondary sources, we are always careful not to make bogus claim. In fact, you must credit the story to the source. We cite the source of the story so that in case of any falsehood, we shall have defence.

Amechi further said that protection of sources is “embedded in our (journalism) ethics. It is against the ethics of the profession to disclose your source who wished to be anonymous. Anonymity of the source should be treated with utmost caution. He gives you this information in confidence and under no circumstance should he be allowed to suffer for confiding in you.”. Amechi also emphasized that “Government often tries to dictate to us but we have remained defiant...We want to be people-oriented not Government-oriented because different administrations come and go but the people (audience) will always be there”.

A journalist with *The Punch*, Sampika also alleged in the interview that “some journalists have been coerced into naming their anonymous sources”. This was part of Government’s desperation to be in total control of the information flow in the coverage. The disagreement to disclose the sources led to a clampdown on the major newspapers by the military who felt the newspapers were going against their operation. Thus, in “Nigerian military goes berserk, blocks newspapers distribution in Abuja, Lagos”, *Premium Times* reports that on June 7, Nigerian military “continued its onslaught on newspapers by sealing off the popular major distribution depot in the Area 1 District of Abuja, from where all newspapers are distributed to agents and vendors across the Nigerian capital” (*Premium Times*, 07/06/14). This further shows the desperation of the Nigerian Government and the military to bend all stories to its favour.

### **7.3. Professional and institutional factors that influenced the coverage of the insurgency**

The interviews demonstrate that professional and institutional factors played significant roles in shaping the nature of coverage of the insurgency. Individual media outlets have house styles and editorial policies that define their *modus operandi* in the day-to-day newsgathering and dissemination processes. This perhaps informs why not all stories usually get published (Relly, *et al.* 2015; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Alejandro, 2010). The gatekeeping and news editing processes start more or less from the reporters in the field who use their discretion to decide what report is filed to the editors for consideration before the editor sifts or *panel-beats* (to borrow a Nigerian parlance) the stories to conform with the existing editorial policy. In the case of the Boko Haram attacks, one of the interviewees argues that such stories must not necessarily be balanced. The reason for this is captured in the voice of Editor Doris who asserts that “the general perception of the activities of the group (Boko Haram) is considered abnormal.” In fact, as Editor Doris further said “you can’t give them (Boko Haram) equal

platform of opinions with the innocent people they are bent on killing’’. This suggests that the media has assumed a more active role as one of the key players in handling the insurgency. While this might play into the Government’s agenda in handling the insurgency, the assertion suggests a bias in favour of Government and this negates the ethics of the journalism practice.

Regarding how news values affected the coverage, opinions of the respondents appear somewhat similar. For instance, Editor Abdul of *Daily Trust* said that

A story must have impact before it is considered for publication here. You don’t just accept anything as news. It has to be timely, impactful, and so on before you can make it public otherwise it is not for us. Our mission here is to feed the public with the latest news in town whether it has to do with Boko Haram or not.

When asked whether they fact-check all their stories regarding the Boko Haram insurgents before reporting, James, a senior reporter with *The Sun* affirms thus, ‘‘Of course we do. We certainly do. I don’t think there’s any report about the insurgent group that gets reported without verification’’. However, as I earlier mentioned, one of the respondents noted that Government officials and the military often prepare press statements and give to the media for publication and these stories are published without verification. When probed further on the conflicting number of casualties reported during every Boko Haram attack, James admitted that ‘‘there have been instances where report about the number of casualties and victims of Boko Haram attacks was at variance with the rest of the reports from the other media by a wide margin and this was consequently corrected’’. The tendency of having conflicting reports about the number of casualties affected by the Boko Haram attacks would result in inaccurate documentation of the impacts or losses caused by the insurgency.

In chapter five, evidence of how different newspapers presented contrasting figures as number of victims of a Boko Haram attack was highlighted. It was the case when some newspapers reported different things when Boko Haram abducted Chibok schoolgirls. For instance, *Leadership* reports, ‘‘Gunmen abduct 100 SS3 female students’’ (*Leadership*, 16/04/14). The interview was also extended to knowing whether journalists actively consider the impact of story such as that of Boko Haram on the public before reporting it. This is in view of the fact that terrorism is seen as the ‘‘intentional creation of death and destruction to instil fear and feelings of uncertainty...and helplessness among those targeted’’ (Fleischman and Wood, 2002, p.315). Sampika, a reporter with *The Punch* shifted the entire responsibility to the editors. He argues that ‘‘Editors have the final say as to the impact of the story on the public. Editors

weigh the story to know whether to use it as a cover...Reporters are not primarily concerned with the impact of the story on the public. It is the editor's job as the gatekeeper''.

By shifting the responsibility of checking the impact factor of a story to the editors, this journalist seems to undermine the conclusion of Shoemaker and Vos (2009) and Mellor (2008) that reporters in the field also play important roles in the gatekeeping process even though the editors always have the final decision. Apart from the media gatekeepers, Vu (2014) has rightly argued that audiences also play a significant role in the gatekeeping process because their preferences measured from the reader metrics and other feedback mechanisms help the editors in selecting stories to personalise audience preferences.

This study has shown that news values wield much influence in the coverage of terrorism. This is in view of the submission that "news has to be attractive, and sometimes very odd in order to woo people's attention" (Doris, *Thisday* editor, in an interview). This brings our attention to the concept of oddity in the Nigerian media context. The Galtung and Ruge's (1965) notion of oddity is something that 'surprises', whereas Harcup and O'Neill's (2001) perception of the term is the 'unexpected'. To an average Nigerian, killing of innocent persons does not conform to the national lifestyle (Obasola, 2015), but to say that Boko Haram killing spree is 'unexpected' seems to undermine the danger posed by the insurgents, who issue statements on regular basis of their next targets. Boko Haram insurgents kill and justify the killing of the people that they considered 'infidels'. That is, people who do not believe in their ideology or share same cause as they.

In addition, the notion of oddity as a news determinant in Nigerian context differs from that of Memarinia and Nasrollahi (2016). Conversely, given the frequency of Boko Haram attacks, it is hard to classify them within the cycle of "events which rarely occur or seem strange or incredible" (Memarinia and Nasrollahi, 2016, p.590). Boko Haram attacks are not rare anymore. They once were. Other news values include magnitude and proximity (Galtung and Ruge, 1965) and they all varyingly played roles in the coverage of the insurgency. The Boko Haram attacks often described as 'bloody, ferocious, and deadly' are of big magnitude, especially considering the number of victims, deaths and damages already recorded in the period under review. This factor was influential in the coverage of the insurgency.

### **7.3.1. The professional orientation of Nigerian journalists**

Professional orientation has been identified as one of the internal factors that influenced the coverage of the insurgency. In the processes leading to news production, it is assumed that journalists' professional orientations play a huge part in news selection (Donsbach, 2004). Journalists have different vocational backgrounds. While some journalists had initial journalism education, others only got an on-the-job special training. In some instances, their orientations, ego and educational backgrounds have different levels of application in the newsroom. Professional orientation requires that journalists should exhibit a high degree of objectivity by distancing themselves from the news. Although it has been held that objectivity is hard to put into practice because journalists often lack the ability to detach themselves completely from the news (Mellado and Humanes, 2015) and (Muñoz-Torres, 2012), it is still upheld as an important ethical requirement for journalism practice. Mellado and Humanes (2015, p.70) argue that “those who support objective journalism have adopted the idea that the facts speak for themselves and that journalists should not tinge the presentation of reality, in the form of news, with their opinions or value judgments.” To avoid this “ideological bias” (Fico *et al.*, 2006), is almost impossible probably because of the journalists' perception of what reality is or their prior knowledge of it. In the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency, some views and news were mixed up and journalism orientation could be responsible for this because not all the journalists in Nigeria trained as journalists in the first instance. In other words, it was not easy for the domestic media to separate facts from opinions in some of their reports.

The above situation was compounded by the desperation of the Government to dictate how the insurgency should be reported. Consequently, as it emerged from the interview with Ude, a senior reporter with the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria's (FRCN) or *Radio Nigeria*, there was a growing worry over successive Government's (Jonathan's and Buhari's) interference in the coverage of the insurgency. He said “...this is against the journalism orientation we were taught in the classroom. Our major problem is that government is trying to teach us how to do our job. They try to dissuade journalists from performing their official responsibility”. Government's interference in news coverage negates the principle of objectivity. Similarly, Sampika, one of the respondents from *The Punch* was quick to clarify that there is a wide discrepancy between what aspiring journalists are taught in the classroom and what obtains in the field. Sampika said that “the brown ‘envelope syndrome’ in Nigeria is pervasive. Young journalists are very susceptible to the manipulation of politicians...the fact that Nigerian journalists are not well-paid even compounded the problem”. The allegation of

bribery that journalists are exposed to has remained difficult to deal with in Nigeria. Elsewhere, Mudhai (2007, p.32) argues that “bribery allegations remain rumours as they are often extremely difficult to prove given that the ‘briber’ is often as guilty as the bribed or ‘bribee’”. In this context, the giver and the receiver of the bribe should share equal amount of guilt but this is hardly the case. From Sampika’s opinion, the quest for survival among many journalists in Nigeria, sometimes takes the place of ethical and professional practices expected of them. This view is consistent with that of Mukhtar and Gudjbawa (2016) that Nigerian journalists do not operate according to the stipulation of their professional requirements. This further lends credence to the near impossibility of objectivity in event coverage.

### ***7.3.2. Institutional factors in the coverage: Politics in focus***

Politics is classified as one of the external factors that shaped the coverage of Boko Haram activities. Politicisation has been widely linked to the coverage of the insurgency as analysis in the preceding chapter has demonstrated. Respondents largely corroborated this finding. While some of the respondents openly admitted the politicisation of the insurgency, others only cautiously admitted it. For instance, Editor Abdul of *Daily Trust* said that

Boko Haram is a national plague and anyone who politicises it does so at his own peril. But I must admit that some politicians have used Boko Haram as a cover to score cheap political points... All the campaign promises of 2015 general elections were anchored on the Boko Haram attacks and how to end the security chaos in the country. Of course, that is why APC won the elections, having proposed a robust strategy to end the insurgency. It was a period to forget in Nigeria... Politics is not ruled out of the coverage, but it is not always the case.

Similarly, Elias of the *NTA* cautiously puts it this way: “anyway, to be frank with you, I think it is practically impossible to separate politics from Boko Haram stories, but I will quickly reiterate that this is not always the case. The thing is that some politicians have swooped on Boko Haram saga to make political gains... I call them opportunists... There’s politics in the coverage no doubt, but this did not overshadow the coverage... Even Boko Haram wants to make a political statement through their attacks”. This appears to be the case when the Boko Haram commander, Abubakar Shekau severally asked the Nigerian government to stay away from its so-called ‘caliphate’ of Gwoza. In this context, caliphate represents the area or government under the Boko Haram commander. Thus, in a 52-minute video obtained by the Agence France-Presse, Shekau thanked Allah for ‘delivering’ “(the town of) Gwoza and made it part of the Islamic caliphate”. Another instance of politicisation of the insurgency was when

Jonathan and Buhari's men traded words and accused each other of sponsoring Boko Haram before the 2015 elections.

Also emphasising the politicisation of the Boko Haram insurgency is Ude, of *Radio Nigeria*, who chose to ask a rhetorical question "is there anything in Nigeria without politics? I can't think of one. ...everything in Nigeria is politicised. Think of anything that has no element of politics in Nigeria. Absolutely nothing (he pauses) I agree with you hoo-ha". This is Ude's response to my question on whether he thought that the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency was politicised. Sampika of *The Punch* corroborated Ude's position about the politicised coverage of the insurgency, clarifying that:

Even though Boko Haram started as a religious group, the North used it as means of criticising the government of the day as clueless, incapable, and incompetent. It provided an opportunity for the North to get political support. Hausas exploited the insurgency to make a case for political change...Some notable Northern politicians obviously led by President Buhari swore to make the country ungovernable if the North didn't get to power. So, there was a lot of dirty politics going on there.

This further echoes the earlier observation of Malachy (2013) that Boko Haram was a Northern agenda for regime change and Islamization of Nigeria. Explaining his position further, Sampika, of *The Punch*, who exonerated his media organisation from politicising the coverage added that

You would expect a lot of politics in the coverage. Some of the media organisations in Nigeria are owned by politicians. Those not directly owned may be funded by politicians, am not going to mention names. In some of the newspapers you will not see a story criticising the government irrespective of what they do. My organisation has no soft spot for politicians. Our publishers are not politicians and we have nothing to fear.

This sheds light on the reason why politicisation also emerged as a dominant frame in the coverage of the insurgency as seen in the preceding chapter. Offering another perspective is Tobi, a reporter with the *Premium Times* who affirmed that

I honestly don't like to discuss politics, but I wouldn't say that certain stories about Boko Haram are not politicised. Politics is only a small factor in the coverage. There's no great deal of politics in the coverage as far as I can recall... (pauses) at least from the media I represent. What cannot be denied is the fact that some politicians try to capitalise on the coverage of Boko Haram attack to advance their political arguments. This shouldn't be so, but here in Nigeria we have a lot of problems and our politicians are always on the look out for the

slightest opportunity to blackmail opponents...But politics is not at the heart of the coverage.

The above expression is another way of admitting the level of politicking that shaped the coverage of the insurgency. This is consistent with the finding in chapter five, where politicisation ranked ahead of other frames in order of dominance.

### ***7.3.3. The Freedom of Information Act (FoIA)***

The FoIA is one of the external factors that influenced the coverage of the insurgency. The FoIA became 'operational' in Nigeria in 2011. The act in its Section 2(1) unequivocally states that "Subject to the provisions of this Act but notwithstanding anything contained in any other act, law or regulation, every citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has a legally enforceable right to, and shall, on application be given access to any record under the control of a government or public institution." The act was, in theory, intended to enable the public to gain access to government or public institutions. This was however not the case in practice. A reporter with the *Channels TV*, Amechi said that "the laws are merely on papers not in any way realistic... things have always been like this even before the so-called FoIA was assented to by the former President Goodluck Jonathan". In other words, Amechi's view suggests that the law, which by its provisions should give journalists and the public more freedom to access information within the country, has no practical applications. This is akin to the view by Abone and Kur (2014), who identified "denial of information for security purposes, continued existence of other challenging laws – Official Secret Acts, Penal Code" as some of the factors that impinge on the smooth application of the act.

Similarly, another respondent, Ude argues that FoIA has not positively influenced the coverage of the insurgency. His criticism of the act emanates from institutional failures in Nigeria and the fact that the act fails to live up to its provisions. He argues thus:

I can say that the Freedom of Information Act is a toothless bulldog. It is one of those lofty but useless policies in Nigeria. You know in Nigeria, policies are designed with all good intentions, but they are never implemented. Some of the good policies just like the FoIA die at conception. We conceive the idea and people will begin to wallow in the euphoria of the policies thinking that they will change the way things are done but only to be disappointed in the end. If the FoIA is effective, why did a minister of information of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who was the architect of the FoIA tell journalists what to report about the Boko Haram and how to report it? If this is operational, they should have allowed journalists to operate with free hand (Interview with Ude, of *Radio Nigeria*).



This is even more interesting in view of the fact that Ude works for the Federal Government's media, *Radio Nigeria*. Lamenting further, Ude decried that

Ordinarily, when you go to ministries and parastatals for information they try to hide it. But the law provides that as a journalist you have the right to demand and access any recorded information held by the public sector. But what do we see today? When they show any readiness to give you any information they kill your interest with bureaucracy and flimsy excuses. They will be asking you to come today, come tomorrow until you lose interest in the information. So, the FoIA is no freedom anywhere. It is as good as the old period when the law was not in operation. The government has all the machinery to stop us from getting information through harassment, intimidation, and incarceration.

Expressing similar dissatisfaction with the applicability of the act, James, a reporter with *The Sun* described the act as 'too cumbersome'. He was worried that "most time, people don't have the time and patience or even the money required to access this information. This is because the law by its nature has made it very cumbersome to access the information... This also applies to the issues of Boko Haram activities". Taking a further dig at the FoIA, James revealed that because of the unpopularity of the act, "some journalists are not even aware of its provisions". All these imply that the FoIA did not affect the coverage of the insurgency positively. Although many of the interviewees argued that the act has not been effective, one of them differs in his opinion. Thus, "although not a lot has changed since the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act in 2011, the newsgathering and dissemination system has been largely overhauled" (Elias, a reporter with the *NTA*). The response of Elias may have been influenced by his pro-Government organisation.

Whereas an effective FoIA would allow for easy access to information about the exact number of casualties (injury or death) of soldiers and civilians, the amount of money spent and how it was spent in fighting the insurgency, information about prisoner swap and payment of ransom; an ineffective FoIA would conceal these facts. From the foregoing, it could be gathered that despite the divergent views on the applicability of the FoIA, it does not take away the fact that the law affected the coverage of the insurgency both in the positive and negative sense as greater number of respondents agreed. Other external factors that shaped the coverage are further examined.

### 7.3.5. External factors: Ethnicity and religion revisited

Ethnicity and religion in Nigeria are topical issues and they reflect variously in national life. For instance, part of the considerations for appointing or selecting anybody for a political position or any type of employment in Nigeria always requires providing one's ethnicity of origin or state of origin and religion. This leads to favouritism, preferential treatment or even the reverse as the case may be (see Osaghae and Suberu, 2005). Before the colonisation of Nigeria by Britain, what is today referred to as Nigeria was inhabited by people of many ethnic nationalities who governed themselves via kingship, age grade and other traditional institutions which instilled a certain level of internal democracy. These traditional institutions included the kingdoms – Opobos, Nri; the caliphate– Sokoto; and the empires – Benin, Oyo, Kanem Borno (Orji, 2001). After the merger of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 by the British Government, Nigeria, a country of over 180,000,000 occupying 923,770 square kilometres of landmass, and approximately 250 ethnic groups, has continued to grapple with ethnic and religious conflicts. These also led to the bloody civil war of 1967-1970 when the Igbos of the East seceded to establish a Biafran Republic in protest against the seemingly unending marginalisation and massacre of Igbo people (Christians) by the Hausas (Muslims) of the North (Orji, 2001). This three-year war and others left Nigeria battered and bruised to the point that Nigeria remains divided on the basis of religion and ethnic nationalism.

Thus, as it also reflected in chapter five, there is a strong evidence of some stories about the insurgency that were framed from ethnic and religious perspectives. These two factors have permeated national life in Nigeria. The interviewees have also concurred that the coverage of the insurgency was shaped by these factors. Editor Doris of *Thisday* laments that

Both religion and ethnicity are big issues in our country (Nigeria)...No pretence, we live in a polarised country where everything that happens is interpreted from the point of view of our ethnicities and religious differences. A lot of times you hear Muslim extremists or religious extremists when referring to Boko Haram. Although it remains to be proven, people believe that the Hausas support Boko Haram...these two factors are not ruled out as you can see. But be that as it may, not all of them do.

In other words, Editor Doris was certain that the two factors of religion and ethnicity affected the coverage of the insurgency. However, it has not been clearly established that Muslims and Hausa people are backers of the insurgency. Shedding further light on ethnicity and religion in relation to the coverage of the insurgency, another respondent notes that

Ethnicity and religious problems predate Boko Haram but they remain very closely connected. It is very hard to talk of any crisis or militancy in Nigeria without these factors. They are always there. You talk about Nigerian civil war of 1967, talk of the recurrent Biafra agitation, talk of the Niger-Delta militancy, and even more recently the Southern Kaduna pogrom where more than 800 Christians were butchered by suspected Fulani herdsmen, and many more... (Interview with a *Vanguard* reporter, Amadi).

While the above respondents linked religion and ethnicity in the coverage of the insurgency, Sampika of *The Punch* singled out religion as the major driving force in the coverage. He argues, “I can’t say that the coverage of Boko Haram is free from religious. If you refer to the early days of Boko Haram, you might understand that the group appeared to be rooting for Sharia rule in the North. But that is not the case now. When they started newly, Christians were their main targets, but you can see that they now attack mosques and fellow Muslims as well’’. Even with such evidence, the framing in the media still refer to Boko Haram with the attribute of an Islamist group.

In a similar viewpoint, Tobi, one of the respondents argues that,

At the root of all Nigerian problems is religion. Nigeria is one of the most religious countries in the world if not number one. Think of whatever problem in Nigeria, religion must be there. Just think of one. ... Even though we are a religious country, but we are not really at peace, media coverage apart...Boko Haram started as a religious group, but the government of the day (Jonathan’s) treated it with kid gloves. They should have found a way to control it at the formation stage (interview with Tobi, a reporter with *Premium Times*).

As the interviewee argues, it is hard to think of anything in Nigeria that is free from religious interpretation. Religion saturates many aspects of Nigerian life (private or public). This is why the elites that run Nigeria exploit religion for selfish reasons in the same way groups and individuals protesting against these elites draw on religion to advance their interests. From the above point of view, it is understandable that religion was influential in the coverage of the insurgency. The interviews demonstrated that religion and ethnicity influenced the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. These perspectives are consistent with the findings in chapter five.

#### 7.4. Addressing the challenges of the coverage

Interviewees identified some of the challenges that affected the coverage of the insurgency. Even with all the ‘legal backing’ of the FoIA, the lack of resources has been identified as constituting a ‘major setback’ in the coverage of the insurgency. For instance, one of the interviewees explains that

We have several challenges no doubt. Nigeria has not gotten to that level of using modern and more advanced newsgathering technologies. I can’t remember where any Nigerian media outfit has been using helicopters or drones for collecting footage about the events in the Sambisa<sup>24</sup> forest and other affected areas of the North East. We only get this footage from the military or from foreign news agencies. And on our own we can’t access these places because of the way the terrain has been laden with explosives and landmines (Amadi, a *Vanguard* reporter).

This issue of lack of requisite modern newsgathering equipment appears to be repeated by all the respondents. This issue has forced a lot of them to depend on foreign media organisations to source some of their stories. The implication of this is discussed extensively in chapter nine of this study. Apart from the lack of appropriate equipment to measure up to international standard, Nigerian journalists also grapple with other challenges. As Ude, of the *Radio Nigeria* pointed out in an interview,

I was there during the Ezilo/Ezza<sup>25</sup> crisis, but after risking my life to visit the war zone and report from the scene of the war, I received no encouragement, no appreciation. Instead, I received series of threatening text messages. Nobody even considered that I risked my life to bring the raw information to the public notice. I thank God am alive and I can’t go back there. The same thing would apply to my colleagues who are in the Boko-Haram-infested areas.

This (Ude’s) submission echoes that of MRA (2016) and Ojo and Adebayo (2013) about the poor treatment of Nigerian journalists. In addition to the lack of motivation for journalists in Nigeria, Ude also identified another challenge in the coverage of the insurgency. For instance,

Intimidation is number one enemy we have in the journalism profession. The moment you are intimidated, you begin to think about yourself and your family, your parents and friends who mean well for you. That is why many journalists will stay here (in their offices) and report what they think is happening at the

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<sup>24</sup> Sambisa Forest is said to be the major hideout of Boko Haram insurgents. It is located about 60 kilometres in the South-east of Maiduguri, the capital Borno State. See <http://thenationonlineng.net/sambisa-forest-of-a-thousand-myths/>

<sup>25</sup> The Ezza/Ezilo crisis has been an on-and-off inter-communal war that between the Ezza People of Ebonyi State and the Ezilo people over land which has led to many deaths and loss of property. Reconciliation effort is still ongoing <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/04/ezzaezillo-crisis-ebonyi-govt-begins-field-tracing-disputed-land/>

war zone. Traditionally, it should have been the other way round. You should go to the war zone and report the issue as it is as most foreign journalists in the developed countries do. Here journalists only borrow reports from somebody who tries to go there.

This attests to the claim that Nigerian journalists are still subjected to ill treatments by groups, individuals, government officials and law enforcement agents as the Media Rights Agenda has documented (see <http://www.mediarightsagenda.org/attacks.html>). Elsewhere, Cottle *et al.* (2016, p.1) report that ‘‘journalism is becoming a more dangerous profession. Reporters and editors are being targeted, murdered, and intimidated more regularly and in increasing numbers’’. Yet the journalists, especially in Nigeria lack protection and life insurance. This has led to armchair reporting of the insurgency. Some Nigerian journalists have resorted to sourcing some of the Boko Haram stories from the foreign media. In fact, as one of the journalists emphasised, the reason for relying on foreign media for Boko Haram stories is because

There is no funding to send reporters to Sambisa forest. While the foreign media organisations have life insurance for all their journalists, it is not so for their Nigerian counterparts...When you have life insurance, you can go all the way even with all the risks involved. An insured person can do anything including going to the life-threatening one to get a scoop (interview with Sampika, a reporter with *The Punch*).

Also emphasising the lack of insurance for the Nigerian journalists, a reporter with the *Radio Nigeria*, Ude further clarified that

In the past, some journalists would stake their lives to go to the war zones to report what is happening, but for some years now, you discover that some journalists thought it wise not to go to such areas. They discovered that they are not being appreciated for the little they have been doing. The issues that happened in Borno, Southern Kaduna and many more are swept under the carpet because no journalist wants to risk his life for fear of intimidation. In journalism, when an event occurs, you are supposed to follow it up but today what you only see or hear is the flash of the news and that is the end of the news. This tells you that there is a problem somewhere and as they say, until the rotten tooth is removed, the mouth must chew with caution.

This is not without implications; it pushes the journalists to rely even more on Government sources for most of their reports. In turn, Government will use the opportunity to influence the direction of the stories. This raises more concerns about objectivity on the coverage of the insurgency. Regarding the insurance for Nigerian journalists, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has been lobbying for a law that would give journalists life insurance from successive

administrations to no avail (see Okafor and Malizu, 2013). This is unlike many foreign media organisations that have strong insurance policies that cover journalists under their employ.

The situation has prompted Michael and Kayode (2014, p.16) to advocate that the Nigerian communication policy should urgently “stipulate some sanctions for such unscrupulous media owners who employ journalists and treat their welfare issues with levity. Similarly, due to the hazards associated with journalism practice in Nigeria, the policy document should stipulate among other things provision of life insurance cover for all journalists working in mass media organizations. Any media owner who cannot provide such should not even be allowed to open shop in the first place”. This position is consistent with that of NUJ which has fought for the Federal Government’s intervention instead of pushing media owners to make insurance provisions for their employees.

It should be emphasised that this lack of insurance and adequate protection for the journalists to cover issues such as terrorism in Nigeria is not without certain implications. For instance, in the yesteryears (late 1970s and early 1980s), Africa and other developing countries advocated for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) to foster a balanced information flow between the North and the West. Unfortunately, relying on the West and Europe for ‘home-grown’ stories negates the very problem NWICO sought to correct.

Another challenge experienced by the domestic media in the coverage of the insurgency is captured by James, *The Sun* journalist in his avowal that

We have a very debilitating problem...Some of those places you hear or read about are actually no-go-areas. These terrorists live in dangerous places that are not accessible to us ordinarily. Sometimes due to the nature of their operation, only few journalists can access their hideouts after military aerial bombardment. So you need heavy military involvement to visit those places, and this occurs once in a long while. It takes up to one month or more before journalists can do this.

As the above respondent said, journalists’ access to the areas ‘controlled’ by Boko was rare. This gap has been exploited by the military in communicating the insurgency. The inability of the journalists to access those areas means that they will rely on the military for the coverage of the insurgency. This was corroborated by *Channels TV’s* Amechi who argued that the Military make-up some stories of the insurgency before forwarding to the press and this reduces chances of fact checking. Amechi narrates that the Nigerian military mounted several

roadblocks and imposed a curfew on the heavily affected areas of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. These three states have seen more Boko Haram attacks than all others put together.

The views expressed by these journalists may not represent those of the entire Nigerian journalists, but they certainly serve as pointers to the nature of coverage of the insurgency. The fact that should be taken home is that journalists experienced difficulty in accessing the scenes of Boko Haram attacks due to lack of insurance, military prohibition and onslaught against the media. This difficulty prompted the local media's reliance on the military and Government sources and or foreign media outlets in the coverage of the insurgency.

## **7.5. Conclusion**

This chapter presented and analysed the interviews with nine Nigerian journalists. It has attempted to explore both the professional and institutional factors that shaped media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. These factors include politics, religion, ethnicity, the Freedom of Information Act, professional orientation and news values. Specifically, the chapter evaluated the views of Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the insurgency. It further assessed respondents' views on the degree of variation in coverage of the insurgency (2011-2014). To this effect, respondents agreed that the coverage of the insurgency has witnessed significant changes since it started. This corroborates earlier findings in chapter six. The chapter also evaluated professional and institutional factors that influenced the coverage of the insurgency. As the interviewees have demonstrated, ethnicity and religion influenced the coverage of Boko Haram. These perspectives are consistent with the findings in chapter five. That is, a majority of the respondents align their voices to the earlier finding embedded in the PRE frames.

By urging the media to de-emphasise the activities of Boko Haram, the Government was subtly pushing the media to adopt only its own line of narratives in framing the insurgency. This as I argued not only weakens objective reportage but also stifles freedom of the press. Evidence from the interviews discussed in this chapter has equally highlighted some of the contextual challenges that shaped and impinged on the coverage of the insurgency.

The next chapter will present and analyse the seventeen-item questionnaire in an attempt to validate the findings from the other instruments.

## CHAPTER 8

### Results from the Questionnaire

#### 8.0. Introduction

This study applied three instruments for data collection. They include content analysis, the use of interviews and questionnaires. The reason for this triangulation was to provide a better understanding of the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. Thus, a seventeen-item questionnaire was designed to probe some specific issues relating to the coverage of the insurgency (see appendix 5 for the full questionnaire). As a prerequisite for participating in the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they had reported about the Boko Haram insurgency before. Only those who answered yes proceeded to the rest of the questions. This process yielded 41 responses. The responses are analysed below:

##### 1. Change in the pattern of coverage

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	27	65.85
No	08	19.51
Uncertain	06	14.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 11: Changes in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency

The study was interested in finding out whether there was a change in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency since 2011 when the insurgents started large scale bombings in Nigeria. Thus, as table 11 shows, 27 (65.85%) respondents said that the pattern of coverage had changed since 2011; 08 (19.51%) said the pattern of coverage of the insurgency had *not* changed since 2011; whereas 06 (14.63%) were *not certain* as they could not say whether the pattern of coverage of the insurgency had changed since 2011.

##### 2. Factors responsible for the change

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Intensity of the attacks	13	48.14
Increased Boko Haram threat on the media	05	18.51
Political issues	09	33.33
None of the above	--	--
Others	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 12: The factors journalists say were responsible for the change in the pattern of coverage



In table 11 (48.14%) of the respondents attributed the change in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency to the *intensity of the attacks* of the insurgents; 05 (18.51%) said the change in the pattern of coverage was due to the *increased Boko Haram threats on the media*. The rest of the respondents 09 (33.33%) however attributed the change in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency to the *political issues* in Nigeria. *None* of the respondents had a different opinion regarding the cause of the change in the pattern of the coverage other than the listed factors above.

3. Respondents' perception of terrorism and the extent they agree or disagree that the Boko Haram story is negative but newsworthy.

Response	No of respondents	%
Strongly disagree	--	--
Disagree	--	--
Neutral	05	12.19
Agree	27	65.85
Strongly agree	09	21.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 13: Respondents' perception of terrorism and the extent they agree or disagree that Boko Haram story is negative but newsworthy

The above table 13 measures respondents' perception and level of agreement or otherwise of Boko Haram story as negative but newsworthy. It shows that the majority of the respondents representing 27 (65.85%) *agreed* that Boko Haram story is negative but newsworthy; 09 (21.95%) of them *strongly agreed* to that effect; 05 (12.19%) were *uncertain*. However, in contrast to the insinuation that the insurgents enjoy public sympathy as freedom fighters, none of the respondents *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* with the claim.

4. Respondents' rating of the claim that media publicises terrorism in the Nigerian media context.

Response	No of respondents	%
Strongly disagree	10	24.39
Disagree	03	07.32
Neutral	--	--
Agree	15	36.59
Strongly agree	13	31.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 14: Respondents' rating of the claim that media publicise terrorism in the Nigerian media context.

A popular view shared by some scholars is that media albeit inadvertently publicise terrorism. In table 14, this claim by some scholars was probed in relation to journalism practice in Nigeria and the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. 10 (24.39%) of the respondents *strongly*

*disagreed*; 03 (07.32%) *disagreed*; 15 (36.59%) *agreed*; 13 (31.70%) *strongly agreed*; whereas none of the respondents was uncertain that journalism practice has no effect on the coverage of the insurgency.

5. Respondents' impression of the effect that domestic media might have on people's perception of the Boko Haram insurgency.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Negative	07	17.07
Positive	21	51.22
No impression	13	31.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 15: Respondents' impression of the effect that domestic media may have on people's perception of the Boko Haram insurgency

In table 15, respondents' impression of the effect that the domestic media may have on people's perception of the Boko Haram insurgency was ascertained. It shows that 07 (17.07%) of the respondents have a *negative* impression about the effect that domestic media may have on the public's perception of the insurgency; 21 (51.22%) of them said they have a *positive* impression about the effect that domestic media may have on the public's perception of the insurgency. On the other hand, 13 (31.71%) of the respondents had *no* impression of the effect that domestic media may have on the public's perception of the insurgency.

6. Understanding fairness and balance in the coverage of the insurgency

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagreed	18	43.90
Disagreed	04	09.76
Neutral	11	26.83
Agreed	06	14.63
Strongly agreed	02	04.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 16: Respondents' ratings level of fairness and balance in the coverage of the insurgency

The table 16 measures the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency has been fair or balanced. This was meant to measure the level of objectivity in the coverage. 18 respondents representing (43.90%) *strongly disagreed*; 04 or (09.76%) *disagreed* to the claim; 11 or (26.83%) were rather *neutral*; and while 06 (14.63%) *agreed* to the claim; only 02 (04.88%) *strongly agreed* that the domestic media coverage of the insurgency has been fair (balanced) enough.

7. Whether respondents have shown sympathy to any of the parties (public, Government, Boko Haram) in the coverage of the insurgency.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>Government (%)</b>	<b>Boko Haram (%)</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	11 (26.83)	02 (4.88)	--	26.83
No	24 (58.54)	18 (43.90)	26 (63.42)	58.54
Can't say	06 (14.63)	21 (51.22)	15 (36.58)	14.63
<b>Total</b>	<b>41 (100.00)</b>	<b>41 (100.00)</b>	<b>41 (100.00)</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 17: Investigating whether respondents have shown sympathy to any of the parties (public, Government, Boko Haram) in the coverage of the insurgency

In table 17, the study sought to find out whether respondents had reported about the insurgency in a way that showed sympathy to either the public, government or Boko haram. This was also an attempt to assess the degree of objectivity that journalists exhibited in the coverage of the insurgency. To this end, 11 of the 41 respondents representing (26.83%) said that they had shown sympathy to the public in the way they presented the Boko Haram story; 24 (58.54%) of the respondents said that they had never reported any story of the insurgency in a way that showed sympathy to the public; whereas 06 (14.63%) of the respondents could not say whether they had shown sympathy to the public in reporting the insurgency. Regarding sympathy to the Government, 02 (4.88%) of the respondents said yes, 18 (43.90%) said no, while 21 (51.22%) could not say whether they had shown sympathy to the Government in their coverage of the insurgency. On the other hand, none of the respondents agreed to have reported the insurgency in a way that showed sympathy to Boko Haram, 26 (63.42%) said no, while 15 (36.58%) were undecided.

8. Frequency of respondents' consideration of the effect of Boko Haram story on the audience before reporting it.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Almost always	17	41.46
Sometimes	05	12.19
Once in a while	05	12.19
Rarely	14	34.15
Never	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 18: How often respondents consider the effects of Boko Haram story on the audience before reporting it

To understand how often that respondents considered the effects of a Boko Haram story on the audience before reporting it, 17 (41.46%) of the respondents said that they *almost always* actively pre-consider the effects that Boko Haram story would have on the audience before

making it public. On the other hand, 05(12.19%) said that this only happened *sometimes*. The same number of respondents 05 (12.19%) said that they only consider the effects of a Boko Haram story on the audience *once in a while* before reporting it; 14 (34.15%) said *rarely* whereas none of the respondents said *never* which means that the level of consideration of effects before reporting differs significantly.

9. Whether the Boko Haram attacks and threats on the media affected respondents' coverage of the insurgency.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	31	75.61
No	07	17.07
Can't say	03	07.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 19: Whether Boko Haram attacks and threats on the media affected respondents' reportage of the insurgency

Considering that Boko Haram has attacked some media organisations and journalists in Nigeria, respondents were asked how those attacks and threats affected their coverage of the insurgency between 2011 and 2014. 31 (75.61%) of the respondents said that Boko Haram attacks and threats on the media affected the way they package their stories and report about the insurgents; only 07 (17.07%) of them said *no*, whereas 03 (07.32%) *could not say* whether the attacks and threats on the media had affected their style of reporting about the insurgency.

10. Whether ethnicity, politics and religion influenced the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Strongly disagree	07	17.07
Disagree	04	09.76
Uncertain	11	26.83
Agree	03	07.32
Strongly agree	16	39.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 20: Respondents' rating of whether ethnicity, politics and religion influenced the media coverage of Boko Haram insurgency

In recognition of the fact that ethnicity, politics and religion were identified as the dominant frames in the coverage, table 20 sought to ascertain the extent that the respondents agreed or disagreed that these factors influenced the coverage of the insurgency, especially between 2011 and 2014. Thus, out of the 41 respondents, 07 (17.07%) *strongly disagreed* that the factors – ethnicity, politics, and religion have influenced the coverage of the insurgency; 04 (09.76%)

*disagreed* to this claim; 11 (26.83%) were uncertain. On the other hand, 03 (07.32%) and 16 (39.02%) of the respondents *agreed* and *strongly agreed* respectively to the claim that ethnicity, politics, and religion have influenced the coverage of the insurgency.

11. How the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act influenced respondents' coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Negatively	05	12.19
Positively	14	34.15
No influence	22	53.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 21: How the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act influenced respondents' coverage of Boko Haram insurgency

The study further attempted to understand whether the Nigerian legal regime influenced the coverage of the insurgency. The above table 21 sought to know how the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) which became operational in Nigeria since 2011 influenced the coverage. The table shows that 05 (12.19%) of the respondents believe that the provisions of the act influenced the coverage *negatively*; 14 (34.15%) said that the provisions of the act influenced the coverage *positively*; whereas majority of the respondents 22 (53.66%) were of the view that the provisions of FoIA have *no influence* in the coverage of the insurgency. This is consistent with the views expressed by a majority of the interviewees in the interview section that even though the FoIA became operational in 2011, it has not substantively helped journalists in accessing information particularly from government or public institutions.

12. News selection criteria that mainly determined respondents' choice of reporting Boko Haram

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Impact / time	17	41.46
Personality involved / location of incident	12	29.27
Magnitude/casualty figure	08	19.51
Others	04	09.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 22: The news selection criteria that largely determine respondents' choice of Boko Haram stories

In table 22, respondents were asked to name the news selection criteria that mainly determine their choice of reporting Boko Haram stories. After grouping their responses, the following selection criteria emerged. 17 (41.46%) said *impact or time*; 12 (29.27%) said either *personality*

involved in the story or the location of the incident; 08 (19.51%) attributed the major news selection criteria to either the *magnitude* of attacks or the *casualty figures* involved in the incident.

13. How editorial policy influenced respondents' reporting of the insurgency.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Negatively	--	--
Positively	29	70.73
No influence	12	29.27
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 23: How respondents' editorial policy influenced reportage of the insurgency

In order to ascertain how internal factors such as editorial policy and other house styles of the respondents' media outfits influenced the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency, table 23 measures this. It shows that none of the respondents thought that the house styles or editorial policies of their organisations had any *negative* influence in the coverage. On the other hand, 29 (70.73%) said that the editorial policy of their organisations influenced the coverage *positively*; whereas 12 (29.26%) said that their organisation's editorial policy or house style had *no influence* in the reporting of the insurgency.

14. Measuring the accuracy of sources

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Boko Haram	--	--
Military/presidency	09	21.95
Foreign media outfits	12	29.27
Eyewitnesses	20	48.78
Others	--	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 24: Respondents' pick on the sources considered most accurate regarding the insurgency

In table 24, emphasis shifted to what respondents considered the most accurate of all their sources. Apart from the options given to the respondents to choose from, they were also given the opportunity to indicate which other sources they trusted more outside the listed options. The result shows that none of the respondents trusted the *Boko Haram sources*; 09 (21.95%) of them said they trusted the accuracy of the *military/presidency sources*; 12 (29.27%) of the respondents said they trusted *foreign media outfits* to be more accurate sources; whereas 20 (48.78%) of the respondents said they always trusted *eyewitnesses* as the accurate sources.

15. Whether respondents had ever been to the scene of Boko Haram attacks before reporting it

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	03	07.32
No	38	92.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 25: Whether respondents had ever been to the scene of Boko Haram attacks before reporting them

In an attempt to further understand how respondents source their stories about the insurgency, they were asked to indicate whether they had actually visited any scene of Boko Haram attacks before reporting them. Surprisingly, only 03 (07.32%) said *yes*; whereas the majority 38 (92.68%) of the respondents said *no*.

16. Whether anyone censors what respondents report about Boko Haram.

<b>Response</b>	<b>No of respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	08	19.51
No	22	53.66
Can't say	11	26.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 26: Probing the level of censorship of Boko Haram stories

To ascertain respondents' freedom in handling the Boko Haram stories, they were asked whether their stories about the insurgents were censored before reporting. Only 08 (19.51%) of them said *yes*; 22 (53.66%) representing the majority said *no*; whereas 11 (26.83%) of them *could not say* whether they face censorship or not. This is consistent with the interviews where some interviewees said that there was still a great deal of external influence in the way they report sometimes.

## 8.1. Conclusion

This chapter has complemented the findings in the content analysis and interview chapters. Some key issues regarding the coverage of the insurgency were probed. Specifically, respondents identified the reasons for the changes in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency; rated the claim that media publicise terrorism in the Nigerian media context; admitted that they do not necessarily take into account the possible effects their reports might have on people's perception of the Boko Haram insurgency. Respondents also acknowledged that ethnicity, politics and religion influenced the media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. Finding

also shows that only 3 out of 41 respondents had actually reported from the spot of a Boko Haram attack – hence the reliance on second-hand information from government and foreign media sources. The chapter has also shown that the majority of the respondents said that the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act had no positive influence in the coverage of the insurgency. This finding corroborates the one in chapter seven where a majority of the interviewees argued that the act has not had any positive effect on the coverage of the insurgency. The next chapter focusses on the findings of the study and their implications.



## CHAPTER 9

### Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

#### 9.0. Introduction

This chapter offers interpretations of this study by aligning the findings from different phases in the various methods applied for the data collection. Before doing that, it is pertinent to emphasise that the essence of using a mixed methods approach in this study was to ensure that where one method seemed insufficient, the deficiencies therein could be offset by the alternative design(s). Specifically, this chapter offers critical reflections and discusses the implications of the study's empirical findings.

The chapter is segmented into sections to address the objectives of the study. First, it begins by reflecting on how the Government used the media to galvanise public support and its implications on the coverage of the insurgency. Second, it explains how the Nigerian media ecology shaped the coverage of the insurgency. Third, the chapter also discusses the media's adoption of Government's narratives in the coverage and its consequences. It further offers a critical reflection on the language of the coverage of the insurgency.

#### 9.1. Using the media for public support: Searching for the independent frames

In the course of analysing the newspapers and the views of the journalists (via interview and questionnaire), it was found that the media did not develop its own independent news frames in the coverage of the insurgency. From the onset, the media employed the attribution of responsibility frame, but when Government urged for a change of narrative, the media adopted a Government rhetoric to construct meanings around the insurgency. This process, expectedly rendered the media overwhelmingly passive and nonstrategic. When this is the case, the media is likened to "a conveyor belt faithfully transmitting" (Baum and Groeling, 2010, p.4). The nonstrategic and passiveness of the media was exploited by the Government in the larger context, to sway and influence the media and the larger publics. This aligns with Entman's (2004) view about Government's undue hegemonic dominance of the media space.

The Nigerian media has survived the coverage of different wars, militancy, and conflicts, but the Boko Haram insurgency has enjoyed more sustained media coverage than the rest. The tradition was/is that Government remained on top of news management. The Government would declare 'total war' on the insurgents in a propaganda fashion, and this served as an invite

to the military, the media and the public to participate in the war against insurgency. This was re-enacted in *The Sun*'s editorial titled "All-Out war on Boko Haram". The tone in the editorial represents the Boko Haram insurgency as the war between the Government and the 'aliens' calling for collective efforts from the people, the media and major stakeholder in order to defeat the 'enemy'. Thus, "Boko Haram must be made to face the consequences of its actions, if Nigeria is to put an end to this insurgency" (*The Sun*, 23/09/14, p.19).

By inviting the public to participate in the war against terrorists, morale became a significant component of military factor or propaganda. In the same vein, as Welch (2005) noted, "propaganda began to emerge as the principal instrument of control over public opinion and an essential weapon in the national arsenal" (p.x). The use of propaganda is not new in the reportage of terrorism, but in the case of the Nigerian media, the reviewed newspapers are all 'independently' owned, and thus, should presumably be free from the direct influence of the Government. More significantly is how this development has hugely altered the symbiosis between the media, the politicians and the military in shaping the coverage of the insurgency.



Figure 23: A picture showing people marching in support of the Nigerian military. Source: Defence Headquarters Nigeria Facebook page

It should be emphasised that propaganda is not always about manipulation and control of opinions by presenting issues out of context because even relatively accurate information can be proportionately or subtly applied to change public perceptions, lead them to action or sharpen their focus and belief system (Anozie, 2016; Ellul, 1973). The aim it appeared was to inoculate the younger generations against being brainwashed into extremism. While this was the case in the Government's approach to the insurgency, Boko Haram used persuasion and force at varying proportion in their own propaganda. See this excerpt below:

...From now, killing, slaughtering, destruction and bombing will be our religious duty anywhere we invade...We have made sure the floor of this hall is turned red with blood, and this is how it is going to be in all future attacks and arrests of infidels...We therefore call on our brothers to wage war against enemies of Islam anywhere. We shall not spare anyone that ignores this message. ...Allah has given us victory! (Excerpt from a Boko Haram message obtained by *The Muslim Issue*<sup>26</sup>, 22/12/14).

Thus, while the Government was busy seeking public support, Boko Haram was also seeking support from its sympathisers. The concept of public support as an integral part of war/terrorism has received attention from different backgrounds such as philosophy epitomised by Edmund Burke, and military represented by Carl von Clausewitz (see, Clausewitz, 1984). For instance, in *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke contends that “no war can be long carried on against the will of the people” (Burke, 1999, p.104). This presupposes that for Government to win the war against terror, the national will is vital. By using the media to woo the public, the representation of Boko Haram aligns with Clausewitz’s definition of war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will” (Clausewitz, 1984, p.75). It is also in view of this that George (1980) warned that in war time, putting public opinion into consideration is non-negotiable. A significant caveat to arguments of public opinion and its potential manipulation by the media and elites is not without prior biases. It serves as a propaganda approach meant to galvanise public support in order to whip the ‘common enemy’. As Simpson warns, “people are not a clean slate on which a strategic narrative can be imposed” (Simpson, 2013, p.219). Zaller also reminds us that “every opinion is a marriage of information and predisposition” (Zaller, 1992, p.6). Analysis has shown that some people held under the pretence of belonging to the Boko Haram group were executed without following the due process. Similarly, some ‘hardened’ and ‘convicted’ Boko Haram fighters have been secretly released by the prison authorities<sup>27</sup>. Yet the Government also seeks support from the public to end the insurgency.

The frames adopted for the coverage of the insurgency were politically-inspired. The coverage of the insurgency reveals a stultifying effect of a badly swayed domestic media that has been consistently manipulated by the Government. This was more so in the later stage of the insurgency (2014) which saw a much-politicised coverage also dictated by the Government

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<sup>26</sup> Boko Haram Massacre ‘infidels’. <https://themuuslimissue.wordpress.com/2014/12/22/boko-haram-massacre-civilian-infidels-from-now-killing-slaughtering-destruction-and-bombing-will-be-our-religious-duty-anywhere-we-invade/>

<sup>27</sup> Nigerian Government has been accused of secretly releasing convicted Boko Haram members. See details at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/09/world/africa/nigeria-chibok-boko-haram-girls.html?mcubz=0>

and the elites. The media lost its presumed independence because the Government was interested in telling the story from a particular angle.

Evidence from the interview also reveals how Government made desperate effort to dissuade the media from emphasising the Boko Haram insurgency. For instance, “...if the FoIA is effective, why did a minister of information of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who was the architect of the FoIB tell journalists what to report about Boko Haram and how to report it?” (Interview with Ude, of *Radio Nigeria*). The pressure from the Government succeeded in making the media an active participant in the war against Boko Haram. This is also consistent with Paul Wilkinson’s declaration that “as long as terrorists commit acts of violence, the mass media will continue to scramble to cover them (1997, p. 53). Although constantly influenced, the media provided a larger context to the insurgency.

## **9.2. How the media ecology shaped the coverage of the insurgency**

Issues considered as making up the Nigerian media ecology for this study include politics, religion, law and culture. Some of these components have received considerable attentions having appeared as the frame indicators. Under the cultural category, ethnicity is discussed as a subset. Some of them have appeared as dominant frames earlier discussed, but they are expanded here.

### **9.2.1. Religion, ethnicity, and legislation**

One of the objectives of this study was ‘to determine how the broader media environment or ecology – legal, political and culture shaped the domestic media coverage of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria’. Boko Haram’s ideology and politics far outweigh its hatred for Western influence. Its worldview melds with two expansive perspectives; for instance, from its operational techniques in Nigeria, Boko Haram remixes a religious ‘exclusivism’ principle that does not only disagree with other value systems, but also rejects any rival interpretations of Islam. The demands of this ‘exclusivism’ requires Muslims to choose between core Islamic principles and the perceived un-Islamic practices such as democracy, Western education (civilisation) and affiliation with non-Muslims. Under this principle, Boko Haram insurgents have assumed the position of arbiters who wield strong influence in deciding what is right and wrong for the ‘true Muslims’.

Trailing behind religious ‘exclusivism’ is the politics of ‘victimhood’. One of the many claims of Boko Haram from its periodic messages is that its action against the Nigerian state is a counterattack against the Government that pursues anti-Islamic ideologies. This is why Boko Haram often calls on all *Muslim Umar* to see any crackdown on them (BH) as an action against Islam, and all faithful must join hand to defeat the ‘common enemy’ (which in this instance is the Federal Government). This thesis argues that the fusion of ‘religious exclusivism’ and ‘politics of victimhood’ has birthed a new ideological framework where Boko Haram anchors its terrorism against the Nigerian state and the infidels. Boko Haram has consistently employed religious rhetoric in its attempt to justify its war against the Nigerian Government and the ‘infidels’. At the very least, such rhetoric has succeeded in providing a narrative that seeks to stimulate fears that moderate Muslims are giving in to the ‘common enemy’.

The narrative that the Boko Haram insurgents ‘played the scripts’ of Nigeria’s Northern region and political elites also emerged severally from the content analysis and interviews. Similarly, extant literature supports that claim. For instance, Malachy (2013) argues that “the hegemonic drive of the core Northern Muslims to control the political system, which is the instrument of capital accumulation and class formation in Nigeria – a drive perpetuated for about four decades out of five decades of Nigeria’s independence through military dictatorship, has been the cause of political instability in Nigeria. The entrance of civil rule from 1999 and power shift to the South led to the emergence of Boko-Haram” (p.95). Whereas this represents the popular view from the Christian-South, Leo Igwe of *Sahara Reporters* claims that “Boko Haram is a militant group with a religious agenda linked with other militant groups around the globe” (Leo Igwe in *Sahara Reporters*, 14/01/15).

Furthermore, the study has revealed that those who ‘installed’ Boko Haram did not foresee the extent to which the group would go. The interviewees also believe that the group was ‘invented’ temporally to wrestle power out of the South as well as to ‘install’ a Sharia system in the entire 19 states of the North. Thus, Sampika of *The Punch* affirms in the interview that “Even though Boko Haram started as a religious group, the North used it as means of criticising the government and regaining power”. Although the extent to which this was true remains shrouded in the conflicting perspectives embedded in the coverage, it could be argued that Boko Haram has been underestimated and its metamorphosis has been wrongly predicted by the ‘founders’.

Tellingly, while *The Sun* and *The Punch* used more direct words such as ‘islamist sect’, ‘radical Islamic extremists’<sup>28</sup>, *Leadership* predominantly used ‘Gunmen’ or ‘suspected gunmen’. Whether this was deliberate or done out of the organisation’s house style, sympathy, fear or caution remains unclear. The perceptions of the interviewees also point to the same direction. For example, Editor Doris of *Thisday* argues that “‘both religion and ethnicity are big issues in our country Nigeria... A lot of times you hear Muslim extremists or religious extremists when referring to Boko Haram. Although it remains to be proven, people believe that the Hausas support Boko Haram...these two factors are not ruled out as you can see. But be that as it may, not all of them do’”. Editor Doris was certain that religion and ethnicity shaped the coverage of the insurgency, while also acknowledging that it has not been fully established that Muslims and Hausa people are backers of the insurgency.

A similar perspective resurfaces in *The Sun*’s editorial (23/09/14) where the paper opines that “‘we totally agree with the Senate President. Boko Haram has graduated from an affliction created by religious fanatics and trouble-makers who needed to be checked by the police, to a bloody insurrection and a jihad against the country that requires the full weight of the Nigerian military to surmount’”. Of the same view is a *Vanguard* reporter, Amadi, who disclosed in an interview that even though “‘ethnicity and religious problems predate Boko Haram...they remain very closely connected’”. The majority of the interviewees offered perspectives that are consistent with the findings in the content analysis. Consequently, this thesis argues that the propensity of reducing the coverage of the insurgency to a series of stereotypes about religion, ethnicity, and politics has not been able to mitigate the insurgency; it has rather problematized its handling and contextualisation.

Also considered a media ecology in this study is legislation represented here as the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) which became ‘operational’ in 2011. Its ‘lofty’ provisions did not substantively help Nigerian journalists to access information regarding the insurgency with the supposed ease. A reporter with the *Channels TV*, Amechi said that “‘the laws are merely on papers not in any way realistic... things have always been like this even before the so-called FoIA’”. The questionnaire also demonstrates that the FoIA had no influence in the coverage of the insurgency. In other words, journalists noted that the law has no practical application. Analysis shows that government officials used bureaucracy to ‘kill’ their interest in sourcing stories about the military operation against the insurgency. Apparently worried by its non-

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<sup>28</sup> These words manifested severally to connect the Boko Haram insurgency to terrorism and Islam.

functionality, Ude of *Radio Nigeria* described the act as a “toothless bulldog”. With its ‘juicy’ content, information about the number of civilian and military casualties should not be hidden from the media and the public, but the reality contrasts with this.

From the foregoing, it seems fair to argue that the FoIA is not effective in Nigeria. Whereas a functional FoIA would enable access to information about the exact number of casualties (injury or death) of soldiers and civilians; the amount of money spent and how it was spent in fighting the insurgency; information about prisoner swap and payment of ransom; an ineffective FoIA would keep this information out of public and media knowledge. This also plays into the desperation of the Government to dictate the pace of information flow about the insurgency. The poor implementation of the act must have accounted for why the media adopted Government’s narratives and sourced stories of the insurgency from foreign media.

### **9.3. The Media’s adoption of Government and Foreign Media Narratives**

As demonstrated earlier, Nigerian media was unable to develop a frame that is independent of the Government’s in the coverage of the insurgency. This scenario has created what this thesis calls a FomGoM (Foreign media, Government and Military) sourcing trend where the domestic media relied on the foreign media, the Government and the Military to source the majority of their stories about the insurgency. This trend fostered the Government’s hegemonic dominance in information flow. By relying on the foreign media to ‘tell a local tale’, the insurgency is framed from a decontextualized perspective because the foreign media outfits have a limited knowledge of the local dynamics and contexts that birthed the insurgency.

The study also identified lack of insurance cover for Nigerian journalists as one of the major challenges of the coverage of the insurgency. This challenge, among others prompted the journalists to source their stories from the foreign media. Boko Haram has received a considerable amount of foreign/Western media attention especially from 2011 when the group became notorious for bombings and jail breakings. For instance, Andre (2017) reports that

...from March 2011 to March 2015, the *Wall Street Journal* had 377 articles that featured Nigeria and Boko Haram; *The New York Times* featured over 900 articles, *The Washington Post* over 300; *CNN* featured over 1600 stories that mentioned Boko Haram over the past few years; *Fox News* ran over 900 stories; *NPR* featured a little over 200 stories; while *MSNBC* presented 150 stories... The exposure is not limited to English language media, as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Le Monde*, and *El Mundo* all featured hundreds of stories in

German, French, and Spanish as well. As these outlets show, the Western media does not shy away from stories on African subjects, especially those instances of terrorism that are familiar and alluring to Western audiences (Andre, 2017, n.p).

On the contrary, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), which should have been the major source of news locally stays up to four months sometimes before reporting about the insurgency. When NAN reports one, it is only that which makes all military and Government approaches impeccable in handling the insurgency. The inadequacy of the locally 'sourced' stories would problematize the contextualisation of the insurgency. While it could be admitted that the domestic media 'extensively' covered the insurgency, many of the stories relied on government, military and foreign media outlets. This particularly negates the conclusion in the questionnaire that journalists tend to trust eyewitnesses than any alternative sources in the coverage of the insurgency.

The major concern here is that as Spencer (2005) and Eltringham (2004) have pointed out, the stereotype of reporting Africa as a continent of hatred and ethnic savagery by the foreign media has become so normalised. Thus, even though this issue has remained a convoluted debate, it draws more concern that by depending on these foreign outfits to frame local issues, the Nigerian media would inadvertently adopt their perspectives. The implication is that if the foreign media's account is inaccurate, by sourcing from the foreign media the domestic media might adopt an inaccurate perspective. Typical of most foreign media organisations, interest is only shown in issues within Africa when the condition has degenerated into chaos or raised heightened tension of humanitarian crisis (Seib, 2002). This was the case with the Boko Haram insurgency, which only became an issue of global media attention after it bombed the United Nations building in Abuja in 2011. In other words, issues in Nigeria hardly receive foreign media attention except when they are negative and have become so horrible that they cannot be ignored any longer. When the issue finally gets foreign media attention, the report follows from a distorted, shallow and sentimental perspective.

Recall that journalists also alleged that Government officials 'kill' their interest when sourcing for relevant information regarding the insurgency in contrast with the provisions of the FoIA. This was also the case when Government and the military insisted that none of the freed Chibok schoolgirls should be interviewed by the journalists. This development has fuelled the speculation that Chibok saga was a scam by the Northern elites to take over power at all costs. To this end, many questions that beg for answers regarding the management of information in



the Chibok saga include: If a Nigerian army captain and many other soldiers were killed two days back, how would it be that the same Boko Haram insurgents that killed them would release the schoolgirls after a swap deal? Furthermore, since Abubakar Shekau the acclaimed leader of the group was ‘fatally wounded’ and his deputy killed in an air strike, how will he, who is wounded, release his captives few days later? The Nigerian Government has previously said that the girls have either been killed or sold, and were no longer in Sambisa Forest. How did they manage to gather up to 82 at once? In addition, why are the parents of the ‘freed’ girls not allowed access to their daughters? People were also concerned about why the girls are usually released in May and October – months of major national events like Democracy Day and Independence Day? All these questions are indications that Government was shielding the press from digging up the truth. Consequently, Government was in charge of information and blocked all channels of information verification that would challenge its own. Until this practice changes, the public may remain with the (mis)information they have.

As part of the Nigerian Government’s most vexatious desperation to control the Boko Haram narratives, top Nigerian media outlets were reduced to propaganda tools. Analysis demonstrates that Government was urging the media to avoid ‘vitriolic’ incitements of the publics, and publicity of Boko Haram activities as a way of discrediting the insurgents. Similarly, as content analysis shows, by using phrases like “preserving our nascent democracy” and “avoid heating up the polity”, the Government subtly exerted control over the media. This was coming at a time the Government was concerned about a possible media slur against it. Although this is particularly not surprising, this finding is consistent with Romarheim (2015, p.8) that in the event of war on terrorism, “media frames tend to be directed by strategic narratives from elites, most of the time”. This was demonstrated when Government sent its ‘emissaries’ and ‘spin doctors’ to the top media houses in the country to persuade them to join the war against Boko Haram (WAB), an invitation that incidentally made the media an active player in the so-called WAB.

Previous research has documented Government’s meddling with the media and journalists in war, terrorism or conflict (see Bennett, 2003; Hiebert, 2003; Keeble, 1998; Lynch, 2003; Reese and Buckalew, 1995). For instance, in the analysis of British media coverage of the Iraqi wars of 1991 and 1998, Keeble (1998) revealed that the media was propagandising the wars through elite conspiracy as well as the ideology of adhering strictly to a set of routines, expectations, constraints, and myths of reporting. This was also obviously the case in Reese and Buckalew

(1995, p.41) in a study that measured the news framing of the Gulf War. This study revealed how “the interlocking and reinforcing triangle of government, news media and corporate needs works together to further a culture supportive of military adventures such as those in the Gulf”. Although these previous studies showed Government’s interference with the media in terrorism coverage, none of such studies has been on Nigeria and Boko Haram, which is why the finding that the coverage of Boko Haram was tainted by Government’s desperation to dictate the flow of information and narratives is significant within the Nigerian context.

As this study has shown, the domestic media modelled the ideological and political perspectives of the elites. Occasionally, the insurgency was presented as a set of oppositions representing the insurgents and the victims or the Government and Boko Haram. In its effort to interpret the insurgency, the domestic media (mis)represents the winners and losers of the insurgency. This predisposes the media to bias tendencies. Thus, by framing stories of conflict, winners and losers of an insurgency, journalists adopt an ideological perspective, which inadvertently dominates how a story could be interpreted and/or accepted by the audiences. This further plunges the notion of objectivity into a more problematic stance. For media texts to be strictly objective, White (1998, 2007) cautioned that they must be constructed in the way that eliminates any form of authorial input. This means that both the implicit and explicit subjective markers should be eliminated. Journalists negotiate the arguability of their utterances in a text depending either on the extra-vocalized information, (that is information from a source) or as a personal assertion.

In fact, as Seib noted, “perhaps more than in any other kind of coverage, war reporting tests journalists’ resolve to resist constraints imposed by those behind the news” (2002, p.95). Ironically, even though the journalists were aware of these constraints, they were unable to navigate through them unbiasedly. The pattern of coverage constructed a paradigm that typically fits into the mould of the Biblical catastrophes and the ethnicisation that comfort the audience with the impression that the Boko Haram insurgents are ‘mad people’ and ‘our enemy’ driven by their thirst for blood, power, bigotry, and ethnicity.

#### **9.4. Assessing the language of the coverage**

While there is a substantial body of work on the relationship between terrorism and the media (see Keranen and Sanprie, 2008; Hoffman, 2003; Miller, 1982; Hodges 2011; Ross, 2007;

Asogwa *et al.*, 2012), most of them have been non-linguistic in nature. To this end, this study adds what it considers an important dimension to understanding some of the dynamics of the broader relationship between media and terrorism. As already demonstrated, the coverage of the insurgency was laced with heavily laden words that employed stereotypical interpretation to the insurgency. In other words, the domestic media adopted a range of conventional positions consistent with stereotypes and negative portrayal of the insurgents. By implication, these positions have limited availability of objectivity. The approach adopted in the coverage of the insurgency predisposes the media to take a subjective perspective. As I earlier explained, evidence from the content analysis, interviews and questionnaires shows that the media sometimes relied on Government and foreign media to source their stories. Censorship and subtle control of the media through the non-functionality of the FoIA complicated the process for the domestic media.

Although Government, military and foreign media dominated the sources in the content analysis, many respondents indicated in the questionnaire that they consider sources from the eyewitnesses more authentic. Sources that were not of political, foreign media, Government and military origin were minimal in the coverage and this negates the recommendation by Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2009) that the media should use multiple sources in order to provide diverse viewpoints about the same issue in the society. When a journalist uses a quoted source, the information contained therein is represented either as truthful, valid or even problematic. In this instance, the differences between the use of *said* versus *show* versus *claim* in a sentence therefore become more than just a choice of verb because according to Jovanovic-Krstic (2008, p.164), these terms ‘affect dialogic positioning’.

The language of the coverage also indicated that some stories were written with words that suggest certainty and uncertainty. For instance, *show* as it was used in the coverage validates a proposition while *claim* represented uncertainty. Examples, “APC behind insurgency, PDP insists - *claims* Buhari’s utterances promote terrorism (*The Sun*, 23/10/2014), and “Experience *shows* that Boko Haram tactics is similar to what has happened in Chad - Col Inuwa Bama, - *says* Nigeria can overcome with right leadership” (*The Sun*, 14/10/14). It can be inferred from the above that when journalists use *claim*, or *said* they leave the audience with the choice of further interpretation of the said proposition or subject matter, whereas *show* closes the gap for any further construction of meaning from the audience. On the other hand, it was observed that different editions of the newspapers could not separate news from views, a situation that

lumped the interpretation of the insurgency from varied sources. This, I argue is capable of causing difficulty for the audiences while trying to make a meaning out of such reports.

As the content analysis indicated, the positioning of Boko Haram stories revealed some dominant themes. Stories begin usually by presenting the accepted Government narrative noticeable from the lead and developing through the body of the story where the voice of the Government's spokesperson is re-echoed, and a similar event is brought into focus. This was done by using some strategically placed evaluative and labelling language such as 'military assault', 'invasion', 'complete victory', 'crushing the enemy' 'heavy casualty', 'jihadist', 'vicious', and 'monstrous' against Boko Haram. These textual elements were conspicuously available in the newspapers, especially in the later period of the coverage. The three newspapers shared some commonalities in the use of negative descriptions against Boko Haram. Such words are common in Western media vocabulary. By employing weighty invectives or adjectives in describing the Boko Haram insurgency, the media inadvertently plays into the mind game of terrorists who position themselves to be feared by the public. Furthermore, through naming or labelling, Boko Haram became widely known as 'terrorists and insurgents', and 'misguided extremists' as against religious fanatics and militants that they were called in the early days of their campaign. As this study has revealed, the domestic media dominantly portrayed Boko Haram as 'bad' and 'enemy of the people'.

Also noticeable in the coverage of the insurgency is gendered undertone. Stories where girls, ladies, women were involved had special feministic undertone in their reportage. For instance, "Military arrests three female Boko Haram suspects" (*The Punch*, 05/07/14, p.6); "Female bombers and implications on Boko Haram insurgency" (*The Punch*, 13/08/14, p.26); "B'Haram: Aliyu laments use of female bombers" (*The Punch*, 12/11/14, p.12). These stories were framed from gender perspectives with lines that portray female involvement in terrorism as an outlaw. Meanwhile, there was no specific gender emphasis for the attacks involving men. Some female Boko Haram members have exploited the assumptions about the "innocent women". Through their 'innocence', female bombers have often evaded search and detection by the male dominated security forces. As the above stories demonstrate, female Boko Haram terrorists have reverted to wearing traditional or religious dresses such as burka and niqab at one time, and at other times using fictive pregnancy to conceal explosive devices. Through these strategies, female terrorists can exploit their presumed innocence.

## 9.5. Conclusion

For emphasis, this study pursued six objectives. They include:

- To evaluate the dominant news frames used by domestic media (*Leadership*, *The Punch*, and *The Sun*) in covering the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.
- To investigate the patterns of domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency over the four-year study period (2011-2014).
- To examine the nature of the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency including for example the language.
- To evaluate the views of Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency.
- To determine how the broader media environment or ecology – legal, political and culture shaped the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria; and
- To assess how professional, internal and institutional factors affected the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

Pursuant to these objectives, the study used a mixed methods approach comprising of interview, questionnaire and content analysis and came up with the findings highlighted below:

### 9.5.1. Summary and implications of the main findings

This study has offered both quantitative and qualitative contributions to an issue that has largely been approached from normative, prescriptive and anecdotal perspectives. In other words, the major strength of this study lies in its rich quantitative and qualitative empirical data that did not only help to provide empirical backup to extant literature and theories, but also improved the explanatory interface between this study and framing of terrorism. By adopting the frames (conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality and responsibility) earlier employed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) in addition to new categories – *ethnicisation* and *politicisation* developed for the study, this thesis assessed the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. No known studies have used all the aforementioned frame indicators plus interviews and questionnaires to study the media coverage of the insurgency. It is expected that this analytical study will generate more interest among scholars in examining the relationship between media and terrorism.

As the study revealed, there is a great deal of agreement between what was found in the content analysis and what the journalists said in the interviews and questionnaires. For instance, in the content analysis, interview and questionnaire chapters found that politics, religion and ethnicity were dominant in the coverage of the insurgency. On this note, I argued that the propensity of reducing the coverage of the insurgency to a series of stereotypes about religion, ethnicity, and politics has not been able to contain the insurgency, rather it has arguably escalated it. Within these frames, the analysis of the newspapers revealed ten pools of sub-thematic frames, which were discussed as meta-frames in chapter six. They include; theme of threat/fear and alertness, theme of incompetence, theme of conspiracy/deceit/sabotage, theme of vulnerability, theme of hope, theme of breakthrough against insurgents, theme of despair/resignation, theme of neglect/negligence, theme of caution, and theme of prescription. These frames provided larger context to the study without necessarily limiting itself to the seven predetermined frames.

Furthermore, by knitting together the multi-layered arguments in the coverage of the insurgency and the interviews, evidence of Government's hegemonic narrative and strategic influence of the media was also made manifest. In other words, this study found that the Government and the military exercised both subtle and direct control of the media. In conjunction with the military, Government ran its own information regime, limiting media access to areas under military operation and thus became the major source of information for media organisations. As the main source of information for most of the stories on Boko Haram, Government defined the narratives relating to the coverage of the insurgency. For example, it positioned Boko Haram as a common enemy of Nigeria and rallied for public and media supports. This by implication enlisted the media as a participant in the fight against the insurgency thus shaping its narratives on the coverage accordingly.

Considered in this context therefore, both the reviewed articles and the interviews represent a rhetoric of terrorism – one in which the message is constructed and construed by a value-laden language that has the specific goal of telling it from the Government's perspective. At the nascent stage of the insurgency, the coverage was all about the failed Nigerian state/system that could not provide for its citizens hence the 'revolution' by the aggrieved group. However, after the Government's narrative was 'institutionalised', the media started to blame the war on the insurgents.

Due to some of the aforementioned factors, journalists also resorted to sourcing their stories from the foreign media. Most of the stories from such source are often decontextualized and therefore only give a partial view of a situation and particularly conflict situations in Africa. Indeed gradually, one noted that the coverage of Boko Haram adopted the language of ‘international terrorism’ and now the institutionalised ‘war against terror’ narrative. The use of this ‘homogenous’ or ‘universal’ ‘war against terror’ suggests that the media approached the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency in a similar way that the terrorist groups in the Middle East and other parts of the world are covered without recognising the local dynamics that led to its emergence and operations.

The study also identified the challenges of reporting the complexity of Boko Haram stories. These range from issues such as limited resources to professional and institutional weaknesses. The lack of security for journalists involved in the reporting of these stories for example militate against the domestic media in the coverage of the insurgency. Media organisations and journalists are also underfunded and ill-equipped to cover most of the stories hence the reliance on the foreign media.

This study also considers significant the finding that the legal regime negatively affected the reporting of the insurgency. Note also that while there have been some progressive legislations such as the enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, the implementation remains poor. The difficulties in accessing information from government or and public institutions remain. Whereas in the Western world, the domestic media would set the narratives by promoting the stories upon which other international media organisations would adopt, in the case of Nigeria, the lack of security for journalists are factors that militate against the domestic media in the coverage of the insurgency. By implication, lack of a robust domestic media approach to dictate the narratives makes the foreign media organisations to assume the role which in turn decontextualizes the insurgency.

### **9.5.2. Contribution to practice**

Research on the relationship between media and terrorism has birthed another convoluted debate in media and journalism studies. Journalists have been on the receiving end of the punches thrown by critics on the rising cases of terrorism. Admittedly, media may inadvertently play into the agenda of terrorists, but due to the complexity of the relationship, media has not

been able to disentangle itself from the recurrent claims. It is for this reason that this study explored the relationship between media and terrorism to unveil its benefit to journalism practice and policy-making.

Media and terrorism enjoy a symbiotic relationship (see chapter two). While Government and some critics want the media to deemphasise the coverage of terrorism, this study provides evidence that deemphasising terrorism is not in the best interest of either the press or the public.

Publicising terrorism possesses strong potential to draw attention to plight of the victims. This was the case during the abduction of over 200 Chibok schoolgirls in April 2014, as well as during the Westminster terrorist attack on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017. It was the ‘publicity’ of the Chibok girls’ abduction that drew the attention of the United Nations and other international organisations and personalities such as Michele Obama and Malala Yousafzai who called for a concerted effort to end the insurrection. Similarly, the ‘publicity’ of the attack helped the *JustGiving* crowd funders to raise £736,133 for the family of the murdered PC Keith Palmer (see <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/Keith-palmer>). This could not have been possible if the attack was not publicised. In fact, as one of the respondents said in an interview, “Blacking (sic) them (Boko Haram) out in the social or mainstream media will not even help the government on the other hand because they will not pick the necessary intelligence to fight them. I can tell you that based on some reports about Boko Haram, government also lies in wait to get some facts that will enable them to mobilise against Boko Haram” (interview with Amadi, *Vanguard* reporter). This suggests that the coverage of terrorism provides some intelligence gathering opportunities to the government and law enforcement agents, useful in dealing with terrorism.

The study also revealed the numerous challenges facing Nigerian journalists in their coverage of the insurgency. These should prompt immediate action particularly relating to the welfare of journalists involved in covering conflict. For instance, respondents talked about the lack of life insurance cover for journalists hindering their coverage of the insurgency. As a consequence, they relied on Government, military or foreign media sources for most of their reports about the insurgency. This thesis will, hopefully, reignite the call for the improvement of the welfare of Nigerian journalists by, for example, encouraging media organisations to take life insurance for their employees.



## **9.6. Limitation and suggestions for further studies**

This study has some limitations hence the need for further studies as highlighted below:

The study's sample size of Boko Haram attacks between 2011-2014 is limited because of the constructed weeks and continuous weeks format adopted for sample selection. Although the sample enabled a critical understanding of the nature of coverage of the insurgency, the findings cannot be generalised. There is therefore, a need to examine a much bigger sample and to assess the coverage beyond 2014 given that Boko Haram has recorded more attacks since 2015. Therefore, extending the study further would help to establish consistency or otherwise in the pattern of coverage of the insurgency.

This study further suggests a similar study but of a comparative nature with foreign media to broaden the understanding of the nature of framing of the insurgency. This will further our understanding of the relationship between media and terrorism.

With automated coding, future researchers could analyse more articles or stories – not just only from newspapers but other media genres – television, radio, magazines, and weblogs over a longer timeframe. Such a study may provide data that could be generalised in understanding the domestic media coverage of insurgency in Nigeria.

Nigeria also has a number of vernacular media outlets, which also cover the Boko Haram insurgency. Future research can look into these outlets to see whether their approach is similar or different from that of the mainstream media.

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## Sultan Decries Blame Game As Boko Haram Kills 56 Fishermen In Baga

BY MIDAT JOSEPH, Kaduna;  
KAREEM HARUNA, Maiduguri;  
MUAAZU ELAZEHI, Katsina; BAYO  
OLADEJI, Abuja

Nasril Islam (JNI) and Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III, has told

the federal government to wake up to its fundamental and obligatory responsibility

of protecting the life and property of Nigerians. The Sultan urged the federal

government to act fast and stop wallowing in diatribe, as human lives are sacred and must be seen to be treated as

The president of the Jama'atu

APC Ticket: 'Atiku'll Win If Primaries Hold Today' > Page 8

→ CONTINUES ON PAGE 5



Chibok Diary DAY 224

Military In Full Control Of Chibok — Tsambido

> Page 2

### OUR STAND

## Again, Jonathan Playing With Fire

**P**resident Goodluck Jonathan is playing with fire. We said this before at the turn of one of the many scandals marking this government. We're compelled to say it again.

Jonathan says he wants the approval of the National Assembly to extend emergency rule in the North East for the fourth time. He might want that, but it's obvious he also has a sinister wish on his laundry list: To impose emergency rule on the National Assembly. From what happened on Thursday, the legislature is clearly the primary target of Jonathan's request for sweeping powers.

The police siege on the National Assembly on the orders of the president crossed the line. When the president requested the National Assembly to approve the extension of emergency rule in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States last week, the public thought there was perhaps some merit in it. Not that a miracle was expected. If emergency rule was what was required to tackle the savagery of Boko Haram, Jonathan has had emergency powers in the three states for over 18 months now.

It is a sad commentary that some of the most brutal attacks, including the murder of scores of school children in their dormitories, the killing of women in their homes and the abduction

of over 200 plus schoolgirls in Chibok occurred under emergency rule. Under emergency rule, Boko Haram has grown from a band of bloodthirsty hounds to an organised force, taking down military helicopters, forcing our ill-motivated soldiers to flee to neighbouring countries, taking territories and even flying its flag in at least 14 local governments across the affected states.

Yet Jonathan, the commander-in-chief, was supposed to use the emergency powers to contain the insurgency.

He has failed.

We have said it over and over again that the first place to declare a state of emergency is in the Presidential Villa, Aso Rock, where monumental corruption and the president's gross incompetence are draining this country of its fighting spirit, its prestige and its very lifeblood.

But so that the president will have no excuse on the day of reckoning, we thought it was just as well that the National Assembly should get a chance to debate the necessity or otherwise of extending the state of emergency for the fourth time.

Sadly, our worst fears have been

borne out. A debate was not what the president wanted. He wanted to lure Speaker Aminu Tambuwal into an ambush, impeach him and squeeze the National Assembly into his pocket once and for all.

Since the speaker flipped from the ruling Peoples Democratic Party to the All Progressives Congress, there has been no love lost between him and his former party, which insists that he cannot dump the party and remain speaker.

Really? So why did the PDP give him a jubilant welcome into its fold when he moved from the All Nigeria Peoples Party as the Deputy Minority Whip in the House of Representatives to the ruling party?

In any case, we believe that since the dispute is already before the court – including the propriety of stripping the speaker of his police aides – the parties involved should avoid any escalation.

But the desperadoes in Aso Rock would have none of that. In a show of shame last Thursday, they collected their own men and women into the chambers and attempted to press an impeachment. They locked out and teargassed Tambuwal and his supporters forcing them to scale the gate in a pre-emptive move to forestall the speaker's impeachment.

→ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



Man tortures son to death, buries corpse Pensioners shut Unity Bank over N4.3bn severance package Govt may extend emergency rule in Borno, others

Pages 4 & 5 P 34 P 8

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**We'll not support Jonathan in 2015**  
—Northern elders P 8

TUESDAY, JULY 9, 2013 VOL 17 NO. 20, 441 www.punchng.com N150

# FG, Boko Haram to sign ceasefire deal

• We've reached an understanding with sect —Turaki  
• Britain announces plan to ban Boko Haram Page 18



*An accident scene at Terminal Bus-Stop in the Lagos end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway... on Monday, Phelan, Super Bature.*

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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2013 VOL. 7 NO. 264

**Flood: Anambra gov escapes drowning** Page 11  
**Man caught having sex with donkey** Page 10

**We will kill your wives**  
... Boko Haram tells govt officials  
• Confirms arrest of spokesman, Abu Qaqa Page 13

**Budget impasse: N' Assembly leaders meet Jonathan** Page 4

**I won't fail Nigeria – Jonathan**

• We have decided from founding fathers' dreams – Mok  
• All Muslims call for value education  
• Already efforts to make country great, Fashola urges  
• Nigeria calls for mobilization  
Pages 5, 3 & 4

President Goodluck Jonathan, yesterday being assisted by Jonathan to cut the 53rd Independence Anniversary Cake at the Forecourt of the Presidential Villa, Abuja. (Photo: NTA)

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## Appendix 2: consent form (interview)

### Informed consent form for interview



School of Journalism, Media & Performance.  
University of Central Lancashire,  
Preston,  
PR1 2HE,  
United Kingdom  
29th December 2016.

Dear respondent,  
Sir,

#### Request to Participate in an Interview

I am Jude Nwakpoke OGBODO, a doctoral student of the School of Journalism, Media and Performance, University of Central Lancashire. I am conducting a research on the *Domestic Media Coverage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria*. A vital aspect of this study requires your (journalists and editors') views on the coverage of the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents.

I therefore, request your time to contribute to this project.

#### **Purpose**

This study is also aimed at assessing Nigerian journalists' perception of the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. Your views will help us to critically assess the challenges involved in the coverage of the insurgency.

#### **Procedure**

Only Nigerian journalists that have reported about the Boko Haram activities and are willing to participate can be interviewed in this exercise.

#### **Confidentiality**

You will not be identified by the public with the responses supplied because this exercise is confidential and respects people's confidentiality. Before the interview begins you would be asked for a permission to have it recorded. If not the interview will be suspended at that time. If you agree to be recorded, only your voice would be recorded and subsequently stored in a password-controlled University server which can only be accessed by me and my supervisory team solely for the purpose of this research. Your name will not be associated with the information you give. When the report of the result is made public, your name will not be there. The interview shall be transcribed using pseudonym. Your information and those of other Nigerian Journalists shall be used essentially for this study but your views shall be anonymised.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

There is no known risk associated with participating in this exercise. However, you can withdraw your participation at any point of the exercise if you want to. Also, if after reflecting on your responses during the interview and you feel that you no longer want to be involved in the exercise you will have up to two weeks after the interview to withdraw your consent/comment by contacting the researchers via phone or email as provided below. I will not access the data until two weeks after the interview. However, after two weeks you may not be able to withdraw your consent because analysis would have begun. This project may not benefit you directly, but the larger impact on the journalism practice in Nigeria and the academia is worth it because previous research has ignored journalists' views in the coverage of the insurgency as well as how the broader media ecology affects it.

#### **Rights**



Participation in this interview is not compulsory. If you need any further clarifications, contact the researcher via [jnoglobodo@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:jnoglobodo@uclan.ac.uk) . Phone: +447741379458. You may also reach my supervisor via: [googola@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:googola@uclan.ac.uk) or the ethics committee via [roffice@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:roffice@uclan.ac.uk) / [OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:OfficerForEthics@uclan.ac.uk) .

Some of the questions that shall be asked are:

1. Boko haram started its large scale bombing in 2011, how has the coverage changed in the first four years?
2. Nigeria started implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) in 2011, how do the provisions of the act affect your pattern of reporting the Boko Haram insurgency?
3. On several occasions, the Boko Haram insurgents attacked journalists and some media outfits, citing 'lack of objectivity' as their reason. How does attack on the media influence your reportage of Boko Haram insurgency, and how do you ensure objectivity in your coverage?
4. What challenges (if any) do you encounter when reporting Boko Haram activities?
5. Publicity is often regarded as the oxygen of terrorism. What is your view about this claim in relation to domestic media coverage of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria?
6. There are many conflicting accounts and figures that accompany every Boko Haram attack. How do you always arrive at your final reports?
7. How do you verify your stories about Boko Haram before reporting them?
8. How do you cope with external influence in covering Boko Haram insurgency?

Yours sincerely,  
Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo  
[jnoglobodo@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:jnoglobodo@uclan.ac.uk)  
*Researcher*  
+447741379458.

Dr George Otieno Ogola  
[googola@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:googola@uclan.ac.uk)  
*Director of Study*

### **Appendix 3: Interview schedule**

1. Do you like reporting about Boko Haram issue?
2. If so, why do you report about it?
3. Boko haram started its large scale bombing in 2011, how has the coverage changed in the first four years?
4. Nigeria started the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) in 2011, how do the provisions of the act affect your pattern of reporting the Boko Haram insurgency?
5. On several occasions, Boko Haram insurgents attacked journalists and some media outfits, citing 'lack of objectivity' as their reason. How does attack on the media influence your reportage of Boko Haram insurgency, and how do you ensure objectivity in your coverage?
6. What challenges (if any) do you encounter when reporting about the Boko Haram activities?
7. There are many conflicting accounts and figures that accompany every Boko Haram attack. How do you always arrive at your final reports?
8. How do you verify your stories about Boko Haram before reporting them?
9. How do you always source your stories about the Boko Haram insurgency?
10. What issues always dominate your reports about the Boko Haram activities?
11. Publicity is often regarded as the 'oxygen of terrorism'. What is your view about this claim in relation to the domestic media coverage of the Boko Haram?
12. How do you cope with external influence in covering the Boko Haram insurgency?
13. Do you subscribe to the view that Nigerian media report Boko Haram with ethnic and religious undertones?
14. Reporting Boko Haram seems to have been politicised in recent times. If you subscribe to this view, how does the politicisation affect the coverage?
15. How do the ethics of journalism and your professional orientation affect your style of Boko Haram coverage?
16. Would you say you always have a free hand to report what you think should be reported about the Boko Haram insurgency?
17. When you write a story such as the one that relates to the Boko Haram insurgency, do you actively consider the impact it will have on the audience?
18. What news selection criteria/criterion predominantly determine(s) your choice of reporting Boko Haram and why?
19. From a broader perspective, how would you assess Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?

## Appendix 4: Consent form (questionnaire)

### Informed Consent form for questionnaire



School of Journalism, Media & Performance.  
University of Central Lancashire,  
Preston,  
PR1 2HE,  
United Kingdom.  
20<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

---

Dear Respondent,

#### Request to participate in a questionnaire

I am Jude Nwakpoke OGBODO, a doctoral student of the above named University. I am conducting a research on the *Domestic Media Coverage of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria*. A vital aspect of this study requires your (journalists') views on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. I therefore, request for your brief time to respond to the questions below.

**Purpose:** This study is aimed at assessing the Nigerian journalists' perception of the coverage of Boko Haram insurgency. Your views will help us to understand the challenges involved in the coverage of the insurgency.

**Procedure:** Only Nigerian journalists that have reported about the Boko Haram activities will participate in this exercise.

**Confidentiality:** You will not be identified with the responses supplied because this exercise is confidential and respects people's confidentiality. Your name will not be associated with the information you give except if you so wish. Only numbers shall be assigned to each of the questionnaire. The linked list of respondents shall be safely secured and destroyed as soon as the data contained therein have been entered. When the report of the result is made public, your name will not be there. Your information and those of about 99 other Nigerian Journalists shall be relied in the analysis.

**Risks and Benefits:** Some of the questions may sound offensive to you. If so, please feel free to skip to the ones you are comfortable with. You can withdraw your participation at any point should you feel totally uncomfortable and unready to carry on. This project may not benefit you directly, but the larger impact on the journalism practice in Nigeria and the academia is worth it.

**Rights:** Participation on this research is not compulsory. If you need any further clarifications, contact the researcher via [jnogbodo@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:jnogbodo@uclan.ac.uk). Phone: +447741379458. You may also reach my supervisor via: [googola@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:googola@uclan.ac.uk)

**Respondent's agreement:** Having explained this research to me, I, ..... from (your organisation).....hereby voluntarily consent to participate in this exercise. I know that I can refuse to answer any question that I am not comfortable with and that I can withdraw from participating at any point of the research. I also know that I can contact the researcher or the supervisor for any clarifications.

Yours sincerely,

Jude Nwakpoke Ogbodo  
[jnogbodo@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:jnogbodo@uclan.ac.uk)  
Researcher  
+447741379458.

Dr George Otieno Ogola  
[googola@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:googola@uclan.ac.uk)  
Director of Study

## Appendix 5: Questionnaire for Nigerian journalists on the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency

Please click/check or comment as appropriate.

1. Have you ever reported about the Boko Haram insurgency since 2011?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

*(If no do not proceed to the rest of the questions)*
2. Has your pattern of coverage of the Boko Haram activities changed since 2011?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Can't say
3. If yes to question two, what was responsible for the change?
  - a. The intensity of attacks
  - b. Increased boko haram threats on the media
  - c. Political issues
  - d. None of the above
  - e. Other

*Specify*-----
4. In your perception, to what extent do you agree or disagree that the Boko Haram story is newsworthy?
  - a. Strongly disagreed
  - b. Disagreed
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Agreed
  - e. Strongly agreed
5. A popular view shared by some scholars is that media albeit, inadvertently publicise terrorism. How do you rate this claim in relation to journalism practice in Nigeria and the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency?
  - a. Strongly disagreed
  - b. Disagreed
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Agreed
  - e. Strongly agreed
6. What is your impression of the effect that domestic media may have on people's perception of the Boko Haram insurgency?
  - a. Negative
  - b. Positive
  - c. No impression
7. Would you say that the domestic media coverage of boko haram has been fair (balanced) enough?
  - a. Strongly disagreed
  - b. Disagreed
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Agreed
  - e. Strongly agreed

8. (i) Have you ever reported the Boko Haram insurgency in the way that showed sympathy to the public?
- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Can't say
- (ii) Have you ever reported boko haram insurgency in the way that showed sympathy to the government?
- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Can't say
- (iii) Have you ever reported the insurgency in the way that showed sympathy to Boko Haram?
- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Can't say
9. How often do you consider the effect of a Boko Haram story on the audience before reporting it?
- a. Almost always
- b. Sometimes
- c. Every once in a while
- d. Rarely
- e. Never
10. Considering that Boko Haram has attacked some media outfits and journalists in Nigeria, would you say these attacks and threats affect your reportage of the insurgency?
- a. yes
- b. No
- c. Can't say
11. It has been claimed that ethnicity, politics and religion have influenced the coverage of the Boko Haram insurgency. What is your position on this claim?
- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Disagree
- c. Uncertain
- d. Agree
- e. Strongly agree
12. The Freedom of Information Act became operational in Nigeria in 2011. How do the provisions of the Act influence your coverage of boko haram insurgency?
- a. Negatively
- b. Positively
- c. No influence
13. What news selection criteria/criterion mainly determine(s) your choice of reporting about boko haram?  
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14. How does editorial policy of your media organisation influence your reportage of Boko Haram?
- a. Negatively

- b. Positively
- c. No influence

15. When reporting about Boko Haram, which sources do you consider most accurate?

- a. Boko Haram
- b. Military/presidency
- c. Foreign media outfits
- d. Witnesses
- e. Other

*Specify*.....

16. Have you ever been to the scene of a boko haram attack before reporting your story?

- a. Yes
- b. No

17. Does anyone censor what you report about boko haram activities?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Can't say

## Appendix 6: Codebook for question-based variables in content analysis

Description of variables	code
<b>Newspaper name (NN)</b> Code the newspaper name accordingly	Leadership =1 The Punch =2 The Sun =3
Ethnic group of affiliation (EG)	Hausa =1 Igbo=2 Yoruba=3
Period of Analysis (PA)	2011=1 2012=2 2013=3 2014=4
Depth of story (item) (DS)	Less than one page= 1 One full page=2 More than one page=3
Story (item) position/prominence (SP)	Front page=1 Inside page=2 Back page=3
Type of story (item) (TS)	News/feature/article=1 Editorial/opinion/interview=2 Advertorial=3
Headline type (HT)	Banner headline=1 Decker=2 Rider=3
Dominant frame (DF)	Conflict =1 Religion=2 Economy=3 Human interest=4 Responsibility=5 Politics=6 Ethnicity=7
Tonality/direction of story	Negative=1 Neutral=2 Positive=3
Source of story (SS)	Government/military=1 Boko Haram=2 Witness=3 Hearsay=4 External (e.g. BBC, Amnesty Int'l, Cameroon)=5
The following variables (questions) 1-26 require (YES or NO) when coding, where Yes=1 and No=2, NB: <i>Item</i> here means any (article, feature, news, cartoon, editorial, or advertorial).	
1. Does the article suggest that government was not doing enough to contain the Boko Haram insurgency?	
2. Does the item suggest government/military victimization of the north?	
3. Does the item suggest that north was shifting the blame of Boko Haram insurgency on the federal government?	
4. Does the item suggest sympathy for the Boko Haram insurgents?	
5. Does the item suggest conspiracy against Jonathan's administration?	
6. Does the item praise government's efforts in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents?	
7. Does the item suggest vindication of the presidency/FG/army?	

8. Does the item use words that ignite feelings of fear?
9. Do(es) picture(s) used in the story conjure feelings of fear?
10. Does the item suggest religious war/religious sentiment or lack of morality?
11. Is the item prescriptive?
12. Is the item descriptive/analytical?
13. Is the item suggestive of financial loss and economic effects?
14. Does the item condemn one party?
15. Does the item sue for peace?
16. Does the item emphasize the sacredness of human life?
17. Does the item suggest a justification of the insurgents' activities?
18. Does the item invoke the north-south divide or ethnicity?
19. Does the item show government as 'clueless'?
20. Does the item emphasize causative factors?
21. Does the item suggest responsibility?
22. Does the item have political undertone?
23. Does the item exaggerate situations?
24. Does the item look deceptive?
25. Does the item suggest government's incapability?
26. Does the item show optimism in the fight against the insurgents?