LANGUAGE, VIOLENCE, AND THE MEDIA: NEWSPAPER FRAMING OF BOKO HARAM

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Abstract

Violence is almost always accompanied by language. When violence occurs it appears to rely on a discursive accompaniment that assigns meaning to it. This paper seeks out the connections between language and violence by examining how the media characterizes violent actions and in so doing influence perceptions and reactions to the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Language is seen here as an essential instrument by which societal awareness and morale can be constructed against acts of violence. As purveyors of words, the media in particular, has a social responsibility to contribute to national security through what it disseminates to the general public. The concept of violence, the metaphorical language that describes it as well as the potential embedded in language to bring about peace is the main focus here.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to answer two questions: What role do the print media play in carrying the message of Boko Haram? And could the media through its use of language be part of efforts to bring about peace and security? These are pertinent questions because the print media is a major source of information for the general public. It is central in constructing the concept of terrorism as the metaphors employed in its news reports structure the way people define the phenomenon. The media is therefore an important in framing the Boko Haram insurgency and as well as agenda setting by the way it influences public opinion.

Much research has been carried out into how the print media and violence interact with each other but how the same media can act to contain terrorist violence is a more recent line of

inquiry. In the light of increasing terrorist incidents around the world, it has become necessary to examine how the media deports itself with regards to the heinous acts committed by insurgents such as the Boko Haram, and indeed, to question whether or not the print media could join efforts to counter terrorist activities by employing the strongest tool at its disposal, that is, language which plays an important role in shaping power relations in society (Wodak and Meyer, 2001). To a considerable degree, the media provides the means of not only attracting attention to the violent activities of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, but in many ways it is vital to their very survival. The following therefore examines how information about the activities of Boko Haram is disseminated by scrutinizing the metaphoric structure of media language in order to see how it frames our thinking and in a bid to highlight the potential of it has to help turn the tide against a group that has wreaked so much havoc in Nigeria.

THE VIOLENCE OF BOKO HARAM

Simply defined, violence is behavior that can be understood as the threat or use of force both material as well as psychological that results in deprivation, injury, or even death. Some definitions focus on the physical acts of violence while others stress the centrality of innocent or civilian targets especially when examining the effects of terrorist violence. In such instances, the scrutiny is usually focused on the political nature or the sub-state status of the terrorist actors. Whatever the case, one thing is certain and it is that terrorism is very much associated with acts of violence and the spread of fear. Thus, in order to highlight the necessity of combating it on all fronts, it is important to dwell in some detail on the impact the violence of Boko Haram has had on Nigerian society.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2013, globally, violence resulted in the deaths of about 1.28 million people which was an increase from the 1.13 million recorded in 1990. By 2018, the number of victims from various forms of violence including self-harm (suicide), interpersonal violence, and collective violence (war) rose to about 1.6 million. On closer examination, this significant increase appears to be caused mainly by conflicts between state authorities and sub-state actors in the form of insurgents. In recent times, the violence perpetrated by terrorists is becoming more prevalent in parts of the world where insurgent groups have risen up to confront established government authorities. Such confrontations have resulted

in the large scale displacement of people, a high death rate as well as a heightening sense of insecurity which have adversely affected both social functioning as well as the development of society.

Over the past three decades, these effects have become increasingly evident in Nigeria as a number of sub-state groups have risen to confront established government authority. The violence committed by groups such as MASSOB, MEND, and Boko Haram has led the Australian based Institute for Economics and Peace (2015-2018) to rank Nigeria as the third most terrorized country after Iraq and Afghanistan. However in its global terrorism index report, Boko Haram is documented to be the most deadly terrorist group that is directly responsible for the deaths of over 6000 people in 2015 alone. Similarly, in 2016, the influential Washington-based *Foreign Policy* magazine ranked the crisis caused by Boko Haram as number five out of ten most critical conflicts in the world. According to it, the sect wreaked havoc in the three of the countries that make up the Lake Chad Basin including Niger and Cameroon with the epicenter of the crisis in Nigeria (*Foreign Policy,* 2016*)*. By 2017*, Premium Times, Nigeria* revealed that the figure had risen to nearly one hundred deaths.

 In recent times, it took the combined efforts of the Nigerian military, the Civilian Task Force as well as international coalitions to wrest some control over the situation. By 2018, the land area of Boko Haram operations shrunk in size but the sect is still considered more deadly than the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) because of the ways it carries out its terrorist activities. The International Criminal Court (ICC) describes Boko Haram activities as crimes against humanity, especially in the light of its attacks on women and girls, especially school children such as the 19th February 2018 incident in which 133 girls were abducted from Government Girls' Science College in Dapchi, Yobe State. 107 of the girls were later released but five died while one, Leah Sharibu, remains in captivity. This was the second of such incidents after its infamous attack on a boarding school in Chibok when the group kidnapped 276 girls in 14 April 2014(*Daily Trust*, 14/4/15).

Initially, the group organized under the name "Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah wal Lidda'awatiwal Jihad" which is Arabic for "People Committed to the Removal of Innovation and to Jihad".

Tracing the emergence of Boko Haram, Cook (2011) and Guitta and Simcox (2014:6) write that Boko Haram "was created in 2002 by the Islamic cleric Mohammed Yusuf, though forms of it had existed under a variety of names since the late 1990s." The term Boko Haram literally means "Western education is forbidden" a metaphor in the Hausa language that is spoken by the majority of the people in the northern part of the country for all that it considers Western and not Islamic. While the sect condemns those elements of Western education and culture that it perceives to be anti-Islamic, it is also particularly opposed to the idea of secularism, democracy, and any institutions of state that perpetuate these ideas. Yusuf's central thesis was that Muslims owed obedience only to Allah. He insisted on describing any form of executive, legislative or judicial function derived from the constitution and not from Islamic Sharia legal system as unbelief. This claim led to "protracted and often acrimonious debate with the Izala in the run-up to the 2009 violence" (Muhammad, 2014:16). In July 2009, the group was crushed by security forces, its headquarters destroyed and Yusuf was killed while in police custody. But thereafter, the group resurfaced with a vengeance, beginning with targeted killing of traditional ward and village heads, security officials, prominent politicians and Islamic scholars that were opposed to the sect (Mohammed, 2014).

Over the years, as Boko Haram evolved, its principal aim became the establishment of Islamic rule in all its ramifications even though its views went against the grain for most Muslims. And in spite of repeated attempts by government security forces to suppress it, the group continued intense preaching, recruitment, and indoctrination of more members. In wave after wave, it has indiscriminately wreaked violence upon the Nigerian populace inflicting incalculable devastation on whole communities by unleashing suicide bombers, destroying property, and instilling a general deep sense of insecurity in the country. The threat they posed was palpable everywhere in homes, churches, mosques, schools, markets and at places of work. A researcher provides this panoramic view of Boko Haram activities:

> As the charred ruins of the June 16, 2011 Police Headquarters bombing and the August 26, 2011 bombing of the United Nations (UN House) in Nigeria, the bombing of St. Theresa's Catholic Church Madalla, Niger state and the emerging 'child' and female suicide bombers as well as multiple explosions in Adamawa, Borno, Kaduna and Yobe states claimed the lives of many…. one cardinal but salient message is reiterated by these ruins–no

individual, edifice nor (sic) nation is free from terrorist attack.
(Neiji, 2015).

Undoubtedly, the violence of Boko Haram has become a disturbing part of the Nigerian landscape. Feyyaz (2015) notes that even the two states of emergency declared by the government appeared to worsen the situation as more attacks, rapes, killings and abductions were carried out during those periods perhaps because members of the group had dispersed into the rural areas where security presence was less evident. Until recently, the Nigerian government seemed helpless in tackling the insurgency. But in 2017, the army finally laid siege to the Boko Haram stronghold in Sambisa forest and was then able to rescue twenty one of the Chibok school girls. From time to time, more of the girls as well hundreds of other people forcefully conscripted into the ranks of the insurgents have been freed by the Nigerian army. But from the continued attacks launched by the group against military bases as well as repeated raids on towns and villages, it seems that to all intents and purposes, the country is at war with Boko Haram.

This extended exposure to the threat and violence of Boko Haram has over the years created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, a sense being under siege by an unyielding force. This is exacerbated by the fact that by adopting guerilla-like tactics, Boko Haram appears able to elude the Nigerian army indefinitely. Certainly the terror tactics deployed by the group which include bloody assaults on villages and towns, bombings of public places of worship and of commerce, abductions and rape have succeeded in creating a general situation of insecurity. Thus it is important to see Boko Haram terrorist activities not only as a threat to national security but also as an attack on the psychological state of Nigerian society. On closer scrutiny, we find that acts of terrorism are to a large extent psychological in design, a strategy that is deliberately executed to induce fear. It is with this in mind that we need to examine further the role of the print media in breeding that fear among the general populace.

THE FRAMING OF TERRORISM

As a major source of information about the activities of Boko Haram, the print media frames what the general public sees, knows, and understands about the violence perpetrated by this insurgent group (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008). Consequently, some scholars assert that terrorism in fact relies on the media transmission of that threat to the general public. They similarly claim that terrorist violence is rarely random but rather planned with specific outcomes

in mind, a critical one being the desire to impose a psychological siege on the public in an effort to push the government into yielding to the demands of the insurgents. According to Schimid (1989), often the aim of terrorism is not so much the act of violence or the killing of a target, but rather, the dissemination of terror and uncertainty among a population through the newsworthiness of the violent of act. He asserts that without what Thatcher (cited in Wilkinson, 2000:175) terms the 'oxygen of publicity' that is provided by the media, it is possible that the terrorism of a group such as Boko Haram would have no outlet, and therefore, it could be argued, no utility.

This view is justified given that the print media is central to the understanding of what makes violence terrorism. How it projects incidents of terrorist violence directly informs the public's perception of a phenomenon that is often difficult to grasp. As Ganor (2005:231) also points out, terrorism provides the print media with highly emotional and gory news items of exploding bombs, daring raids and mass abductions. The more violent the act of terrorism, the more it is reported in language that is often lurid and horrific. Since this appears to help print media to sell its products, a "symbiotic" relationship develops that mutually benefits both the terrorists as well as the media. Indeed, in some instances, the media could accused of acting like 'accomplices' (Schmid, 1989:540), or in the words of Hoffman (2006:183), even as their "best friend" leading some researchers to adopt the view that acts terrorism do in fact carry a strong communicational element. However, while the media serves the purposes of the insurgents by thus providing them with the means of attracting attention to its activities, it leaves itself open to the accusation of being complicit in the perpetuation of terror by helping to spread fear to a far larger audience than the initial small group of immediate victim. Hoffman puts it succinctly:

> The modern news media, as the principal conduit of information about such acts, thus play a vital part in the terrorists' calculus. Indeed, without the media's coverage the act's impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victims of the attack rather reaching the wider "target audience" at whom the terrorist' violence is actually aimed. Only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorists gain the minimum potential leverage that they need to effect fundamental political change.(2006:174)

When the print media focuses attention on certain events and places them within a particular frame, it does so by highlighting specific aspects of reality so as to advance a specific "problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman, 1993:52). By emphasizing specific aspects of an issue while ignoring others, and importantly, by context building through the use of language, the media could influence perceptions and interpretation of issues. In particular, the metaphors print media chooses to employ and indeed, the very absence of them is important in the framing of terrorism. How the violence of terrorism is characterized by the media and how these characterizations are adopted by their audience usually results in the transference of "salience" from news media agenda to the public agenda (Kious and Wu, 2008). The implication being that the way the Nigerian public reacts or responds to the terror of Boko Haram is a largely dependent on the way it is represented in the language adopted in media reports.

ON METAPHORS AND VIOLENCE

A number of researchers are of the view that the way we think, what we experience and what we do is very much a matter of metaphor. While metaphors are often seen as mere rhetorical devices that are used to illustrate factual statements, scholars in the field of cognitive linguistics (Chilton and Lakoff, 1999:56; Charteris-Black, 2004:25) stress their importance for the human cognitive (to do with conscious intellectual thinking, reasoning, remembering) system. According to them the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical (5). They argue that metaphors structure the way people think as they enable humans to understand one conceptual domain of experience in terms of another by projecting knowledge about the first familiar domain onto the second more abstract one. Charteris-Black defines the metaphor as a linguistic representation that results from a shift in the use of a word or phrase from the context in which it is expected to occur to another context where it is not expected occur, thereby causing semantic tension' (2004:9,21). While Bates (2004), claims that metaphors do not simply substitute one term for another, but in fact create a strong perceptual link between two things.

For all, the metaphorical use of language links perception with understanding, memory and reasoning. Thus for example, metaphorical expressions like 'the story smells fishy', 'that is food for thought', 'that idea has been fermenting for weeks' and so on do not in fact refer to food

but are used to describe the more abstract aspect of the ideas they contain. Similarly, researchers maintain that metaphors play a crucial role in the discursive construction of terrorism. For instance when the choice of the word 'victims' to describe those impacted by acts of terrorism rather than alternatives such as 'targets' or even 'survivors' constructs a certain perception of the power of the insurgents in the minds of the reading public. In each of the aforementioned items, there is an abstract, more complex concept that is structured in the form of a metaphor. As Kennedy (2000: 209) points out the "metaphor is an essential part of the way we deal with novel and current events" because they have the ability to provoke the mind into making conceptual and cognitive associations between abstract, unfamiliar events or things (the tenor) and concrete, familiar ones (the vehicle). It contributes to the building and adaptation of knowledge and beliefs. Consequently, the violence of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram can be understood in all its guises if appropriate metaphors are used in reporting their activities (Hulsse and Spencer, 2008).

In understanding the metaphor not only as figurative expression but rather in the conceptual sense mentioned above, the central idea is that metaphors can map a source domain, such as ' war', onto a target domain, for example 'terrorism' and thereby make the target domain appear in a new light(Lakoff 1993:208). In this way the conceptual metaphor allows us apply what we know about one area of our experience 'source domain' to another area of our experience 'target domain' (Dulak 2005:3). However conceptual metaphors do not have to be explicitly visible in discourse as is the case for metaphorical expressions which represent the specific statements. The important potential that metaphors as concepts have is that they can be acted upon. As such, they define in significant part, what one takes as 'reality'. Similarly, the use of carefully chosen metaphors could alleviate some of the effects of terrorism in the Nigerian context especially the public feeling of terror that is created by the unpredictable nature of Boko Haram terrorist attacks.

METAPHORS IN NEWSPAPERS

The inferential construction of meaning that is the metaphor is therefore an important linguistic devise that could influence the public's perception of terrorism but it is also one that could serve as potent tool for countering the violence of Boko Haram. Both popular *The Sun* and the *Daily*

Mail newspapers in the United Kingdom exemplify how this can be accomplished. For *The Sun*, terrorism is clearly the attempt to subvert established authority and in writing about it appears to have chosen the side it wants to support. In its reporting of terrorism, *The Sun,* has adopted four basic conceptual metaphors that constitute terrorism as a war against the whole British people, as a crime that is uncouth, as an uncivilized evil that is 'vile and monstrous', and finally as a disease that should be isolated and quarantined.

 Of the four metaphors that *The Su*n employs in its reporting, that of terrorism as war supersedes. The general perception of the British public of terrorism as war is emphasized by metaphors that describe the confrontation between sub-state actors and constituted government authority as 'battles' or 'sieges'. Terrorists often are referred to as 'terror warlords' who have 'suicide units' which operate in a 'terror army' complete with 'lieutenants' and 'commanders', who are involved 'training', 'operations', and 'campaigns' from 'bases' within or outside the United Kingdom. These metaphorical frames ultimately guide public understanding and attitudes which result in widespread acceptance of government policies and decisions depend.

On the other hand, the stance of some widely read Nigerian newspapers such as *The Nation, Daily Trust, The Guardian, This Day, and Punch* is not so clearly delineated. While the Nigerian army approach the fight against Boko Haram as a war, proclaiming it "must-win fight,'' the language of news reports in the print media does not evince such assurance. Instead, it demonstrates a hesitancy in identifying terrorist activities of Boko Haram for what they are even while diligently reporting incidents of its violence. Rather than emphasize messages that could help curb the violence, print media often chooses to dwell in an inflammatory manner on the impact of attacks by the sect. The main focus appears to be on the physical acts of violence, the fear they engender, and on the gains made by Boko Haram rather than highlighting the effects on innocent civilian targets. Below are a few examples of the kind of reporting found in Nigerian newspapers:

> Boko Haram's deadliest massacre: 2000 feared dead in Nigeria
>
> Hundreds of bodies –too many to count –remain strewn tin the bush in Nigeria
> from an Islamic extremist attack that Amnesty International describe as the
> *deadliest massacre* in the *history* of Boko Haram (*Guardian*,9/1/2015).

In yet another newspaper, we find a lurid description of Boko Haram gaining the upper hand:

> Maiduguri-No fewer than six persons were killed, Tuesday evening , as Boko Hram insurgents opened fire on the convoy of Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State, who was on his way to a political rally at Gamboru-Ngala. The attack was said to have occurred as some armed Boko Haram insurgents in three gun trucks vehicles mounted with anti-aircraft guns and motor cycles laid ambush on the convoy at about 6pm, and divided the governor's long convoy into two, *raining bullets* on vehicles at the back of the convoy. *Scores* of people, mainly women, were also said to have been abducted by the insurgents during the attack (Vanguard News 13/2/2019).

Initially, in the early days of Boko Haram, print referred to members of the group as Islamists, a word fraught with negative connotations which at the same time hints at the reporter's bias:

> The *Islamists* have stepped up suicide bombings carried out by
> children in recent years. (The Nation, 4/10/2016)

> Female Boko Haram members are fighters. While men in the
> *Islamist* group dominate the leadership and training roles, women
> may outnumber them in other roles…. (The Nation 4/10/2016

Here, the word "Islamist" is employed as a source domain that conjures up images and attributes based on the acts of terror. The word has become a metaphor for barbaric extremists. But the use of such terms also establishes a direct link between the activities of terrorists with Islam in spite of the fact majority of Muslims in Nigeria do not support their cause. It is hardly surprising that the use of this pejorative label does not win the widespread support of Muslims that is needed against Boko Haram because many feel beset upon. Then there is the fact that the terrorist group does not refer to itself as "Islamists" but rather as Boko Haram a title that for Momoh ((Vanguar**d,** 30/3/2015) acts as metaphor in itself. There are similar numerous references to "jihadists" as in following:

> In the most audacious attack on November 18, IS-allied Boko Haram *jihadists*
> killed at least 43 soldiers when they overran a military base in Metele village near
> the border with Niger…. (Punch, 29/11/ 2018).

According Momoh, the group's frequent references to Islam notwithstanding, Islam is not the political weapon that it has been turned into, but rather that Boko Haram could be seen as revolutionary movement for justice. He elaborates that the western educational system bequeathed to Nigeria by the colonialists alienated large groups from their religious beliefs and when this is taken into consideration with the injustice, poverty, corruption, despair and the general frustration of a section of Nigerian society, Boko Haram could be seen as a metaphor of a revolt against the government's inability to ensure the security and welfare of its citizens.

However, the battle against terror is not only about aggression and physical force, but it is also undeniably a war of ideas and of words requiring counter narratives that could disrupt and defeat terrorist groups like Boko Haram (Halverson, Goodall and Coleman,2011:14; Beer,2008:653). Recently, there have been some references to the criminality of Boko Haram as seen in the use of the word "thugs":

> Nigerian soldiers' death toll rises in daring Boko Haram attack. Seventeen
> additional bodies of gallant Nigerian soldiers who lost their lives while preventing
> Boko Haram *thugs* from overrunning their base on Thursday evening have been
> recovered by a search and rescue team overseeing the aftermath of the attacks
> (Premium Times, 2/9/2018).

Similarly, Boko Haram hideouts are sometimes referred to as "dens" as in a den of thieves or the den of wild animals in an indirect reference to the bestiality of their actions. However, the danger of crime metaphors is that they allude to terrorist acts as something ordinary criminals would do and since crime happens from inside a community rather than outside of it, could influence the public into seeing the insurgents as part of society. It follows that such a view of Boko Haram would call for a judicial rather than a military response but such metaphors appear to merely skirt around the issue of what the group represents especially when the scale of the atrocities it perpetrates is taken into consideration. The choice of metaphors is necessarily important as it frames subsequent thinking along directions compatible with the metaphor by drawing attention to certain aspects. Therefore, if the media chooses to place emphasis on the political nature of

terrorist actions rather than their religious affiliations, the same will inform the views of the public. Noticeably, many of the newspapers demonstrate a preference for the relatively unfamiliar term "insurgents" as a metaphor for a rebel group engaged in fighting the government:

Boko Haram i*nsurgents* on Saturday carried-out coordinated attacks in different parts of North –East Nigeria, specifically targeting military locations. Military sources said at six soldiers and two Boko Haram *insurgents* lost their lives in one of the attacks. The *insurgents* carried out these attacks on the day Nigerians were supposed to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections (*Premium Times*, 6/3/2019).

But as Kuhar (2007) asserts, straight forward metaphors that will de-legitimize terrorist groups are what is required especially because news reports have the power to alter the course of events when resistance is strong. Hence, the need for effective metaphors that are unambiguous and that clearly define the line between them and us (Auwal, 2015).

The Nigerian army on the other hand is more prepared to call Boko Harm terrorists then the print media appears to be. Refuting frequent allegations of incompetence leveled against it by newspapers, the military recently responded with "*Boko Haram terrorists* are not better equipped than the *Nigerian* Army."(Punch, 4/5/2019). The army rarely deviates from its representation of the insurgents as terrorists. NAF spokesman, Air Commodore Ibikunle Daramola made this statement to the media:

A Nigerian Air Force (NAF) Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platform, which was deployed for confirmatory surveillance, observed the presence of the *terrorists* at the location and subsequently called for 2 Alpha jet aircrafts to attack the group of buildings. The attack aircrafts continued to engage the target area with bombs and rockets in several passes, mopping up the *terrorists* who survived the initial strikes. The NAF, operating in concert with surface forces, will sustain its efforts to completely destroy all remnants of the *terrorists* in the Northeast (Daily Post,12/4/2019).

As seen above, the army is unequivocal about what it labels Boko Haram and demonstrates a self- assured confidence in dealing with the threat the group poses unlike what is found in the press that appears to mock their efforts as in this headline in the Vanguard: "BOKO HARAM TERRORISTS ATTACK BORNO ARMY BASE" followed by the explanation:

> Vanguard gathered that the terrorists, who have renewed their onslaught on military formations in recent times, *had stormed* the 145 Brigade with a view to not only to capture the Army bases, but also to cart away arms and ammunition. Recall that just last two weeks, the terrorists were reported to have killed over 50 soldiers. The brazenness of the attack on a military base raises questions on the lack of equipment for the Nigeria's soldiers in the frontline- a recurring theme since the insurgency began in 2009.

And also the below

> BOKO Haram sacks two military bases in Baga as they battle for control of a strategic town on Lake Chad. Fighters in several vehicles stormed Baga, Borno State and engaged troops in intense fighting at MNJTF base which hosts units from Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The troops were overpowered and forced to withdraw (Punch 27/12/2018).

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When the *Daily Trust* newspaper which enjoys widespread circulation revealed the army's plan to launch a strategic attack on a stronghold of Boko Haram, the military rightly believed that such reporting undermined efforts to counter the Boko Haram:

> That such news afford terrorists prior notice of military action.jan 6 2019 Daily trust lead story 'Military prepares massive operation to retake Baga, others " the story detailed how military forces had concluded planes to deploy air and ground troops to retake Baga, a town in Northeast Borno state, from rampaging Boko Haram (Vanguard, 27/11,2018).

An indication of the trend adopted by the print media in Nigeria is ironically provided by the one its screaming headline: ARMY SLAMS MEDIA OVER BOKO HARAM "NEGATIVE" PUBLICATION (*Nigeria Pilot*, 5/10/2018):

The military condemnation of The Daily Trust(3/12/2018) of the report came about because of what the newspaper described as series of "raids" on military bases and that Boko Haram members captured six localities in northern Borno state including Baga, disputing military clams that the group was not in control of any territory in the region. The military issued a statement threatening to take action against what it terms inaccurate reports by "unscrupulous elements" in some sections of the media.

Newspapers need to strive harder to devise measures of self –restraint that are both appropriate and effective in the content they disseminate. Of course, too much state control of print media could also undermine public confidence in the veracity of media reports but task of overcoming the scourge of Boko Haram requires the contributions of those on the side innocent victims. It is therefore important for the print media to avoid being hijacked and manipulated by terrorists by adopting a clear stand.

Over the years, the relationship between the military and the print media has been an uneasy one. The *Premium Times* (6/1/2019) reported that backed by other security services, journalists were detained and the offices of the Daily Trust newspaper in Abuja and Maidugri, were sealed after the paper published a report detailing how the Nigerian military had assembled troops and equipment in preparation for a massive operation against Boko Haram. The subsequent reaction of other newspapers was to raise alarm over what they termed government's intolerance of a free press. However, the military reaction points to its belief that the print media does side with it on what is to all intents and purpose a war against Boko Haram.

In most armed conflict there comes a point when language is employed as a weapon. In the Nigerian context, the war metaphor could simplify the issue that it frames. While print media hesitates, the transference of the war metaphor to the target domain of 'terrorism' is one that the public would readily comprehend and accept. War is not a normal state of affairs; it demands unusual measures or policies that have to be implemented in order to stop the enemy from winning. By employing this metaphor, the problem of Boko Haram is at once made manageable as it is reduced to a question of defeating the enemy and winning the war. As Sarbin (2003: 150)

points out, the implication of adopting war metaphor is that "the problems engendered by terrorist acts can be solved through the deployment of military forces". The public already associates war with violence, insecurity, and the application of military force to achieve victory. Therefore, as war is an emergency situation, it demands that no sacrifice is too much. So, just as the troops are prepared to give their lives to ensure security, the least the Nigerian populace can do is to support their efforts without the reservations frequently expressed in the print media.

Furthermore, a definitive identification of the terrorists as enemy of the people and state of Nigeria could well form the basis for 'the formulation of policy and its eventual execution' (Beer and Landtsheer: 2004:7). Print the media has an important part to play in countering terrorism by framing the phenomena in a less fear provoking manner. Since language use has an inherent ability to redirect attention and reactions in situations of conflict, the deliberate choice of metaphors could help contain the violence of Boko Haram and win the support for government efforts to bring about improved security for lives and properties.

CONCLUSION

As Pratt (2012) observed, violence is almost always accompanied by language that assigns meaning to it expressing both the act of it as well as reactions to it. While in a democracy such as Nigeria, the full control of the media is neither possible nor desirable, nonetheless, it could be persuaded to frame terrorism in ways that aid the construction of the phenomenon in a manner that does not pander to the anarchic ambitions of insurgents. Instead of a narrative that exaggerates the capabilities of the insurgents, the print media could adopt a discourse that strips terrorist acts of their terror potential and in so doing unify the entire population against the perpetrators. It is suggested here that instead of straight news reporting that demonstrates a lack control of events, newspapers could do more than appear to gleefully celebrate Boko Haram victories.As mentioned earlier, in expressing both the act as well as reactions, it is language that gives the terrorism violence its social character and meaning. Therefore, to create a shift away from the present way of reacting to the atrocities committed by Boko Haram, the media needs to reexamine the metaphors it employs. This is especially pertinent in a situation such as found in Nigeria where Boko Haram appears to have successfully embedded itself in the psyche of society not only by its acts of violence but also through the messages it regularly puts out to the

Nigerian government and people. While the print media on its part could undertake never to publish any message from the terrorists, it could go a step further by actively engaging in the fight against, albeit it with the simple metaphor.

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