

Terrorist networks in Nigeria: Media perspectives

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Abstract: Since the 2000s Nigeria has increasingly been confronted by a multi-faceted deadly terrorist onslaught on the country leading to the death of over 30, 000 Nigerians with Boko Haram continuing to dominate the terrorist landscape in Nigeria and the last five years expanding to neighbouring African countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger, thus prompting the formation of an African region-wide anti-terrorism military operation in 2015. This article examines the notion of terrorism, the history of terrorism in Nigeria, the different types of terrorist networks operating in Nigeria, the causes of terrorism, the role of the media in terrorism and recommendations for ending terrorism in Nigeria.

Keywords: terrorism, insurgency, media, Boko Haram, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Terrorism has been in existence since the very beginning of humanity. However, some authors (Burgess, 2015; Eastern Kentucky University, 2020; Statista.com, 2020) easily name the Maximilien Robespierre-led French revolution of 1794 as the beginning of terrorism in modern times. However, terrorism began more dominantly from the First World War in 1914 through the Second World War around 1942. However, the most dramatic form of terrorism can be traced to the US terroristic attacks on September 11, 2001 (Burgess, 2015; Eastern Kentucky University, 2020). Globally, between 1970 and 2019, there have been over 170,000 terrorist incidents globally leading to the deaths of over 300, 000 people as of 2019 (Statista.com, 2020).

According to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), the number of deaths from terrorism-related acts has decreased to 13,826 in 2019, a 15 per cent decrease from 2018 and the economic impact of global terrorism has also decreased by 25 per cent to the US \$16.4 billion in 2019 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020a).

Terrorists' acts in North America, Western Europe and Oceania have increased by as much as 250 per cent since 2014, the highest in 50 years (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020b). Globally, over 300, 000 people were killed between 2006 and 2019 alone (Statista.com, 2020) mainly by five terrorist organisations, namely Al-Qaida, Boko haram, the Taliban, Al-Shabaab and ISIL (Dudley, 2018). As of 2017, there were over 300 terrorist groups in the world.

ISIL global terrorist activities have moved since 2014 to sub-Saharan Africa with total deaths in the region rising by as much as 67%. Countries engaged in active conflicts make up 96% of all terrorism globally making conflict the most potent cause of terrorism. Nigeria is ranked the third terrorist country

in the Global Terrorism Index only after Afghanistan and Iraq. In Nigeria, more than 37, 500 have been killed by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups since 2001 (CFR, 2021).

While some authors (Aiyesimoju, 2015; Omega, 2015; Popoola, 2016) have researched extensively on the role of the media in promoting and curbing terrorism in Nigeria and establishing that the media can indeed impact the fight against terrorism positively or negatively, the authors have examined these mainly from the mainstream media (print and broadcast), this article, however, expands the discourse to the role of social media in the fight against terrorism in Nigeria. This article will thus begin by examining the notion of terrorism, types of terrorism, causes of terrorism, the different types of terrorist networks in Nigeria and how the media can promote and mitigate terrorism in Nigeria. This article concludes with recommendations for a successful deployment of the media in the fight against terrorism.

Deaths from terrorism by country, 2019

Ten countries accounted for 80 per cent of deaths from terrorism.

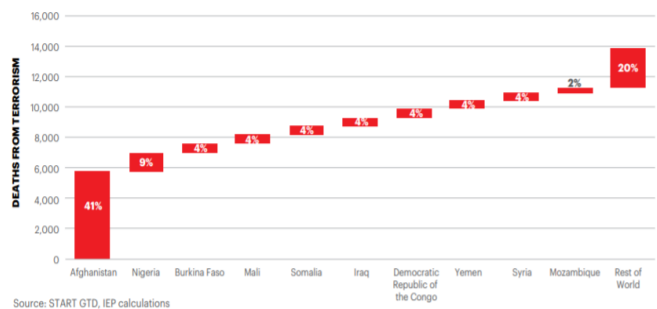


Figure 1: Top ten countries with the most deaths from terrorists' activities as of 2019.

Source: <https://visionofhumanity.org>

Notion of Terrorism

There is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. However, the English word "terrorism" originates from the French statement "regime de la terreur" (regime of terror) which prevailed in France between 1793 and 1794 under the regime of the French revolutionary leader, Maximilien Robespierre. Terrorism was the state's instrument of consolidating the power of the newly-installed revolutionary government and repelling 'subversive' elements (Burgess, 2015; Omede & Omede, 2015). Robespierre had used the term in 1794 arguing that "terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is, therefore, an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a

consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs" (Burgess, 2015; Omede & Omede, 2015).

Thus, the notion of terrorism is not recent. It is indeed as old as human existence itself as long as humans seek to consolidate power and repel opposition. Terrorism is always viewed from the perspective of the subjects involved. While for victims, terrorism is an evil instrument of force used by perpetrators to compel them to act against their will, perpetrators see it simply as a strategy meant to enforce change (Omede & Omede, 2015).

Even before the onset of World War I in Europe (1914-1918), there had been manifestations of state-sponsored terrorism. For example, several officials in the Serbian government and military supported trained and armed several Balkan groups, one of which was the 'Young Bosnians', responsible for the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on June 28 1914, in Sarajevo and thus setting the stage for the Bosnian war. Similarly, the IMRO (Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) was supported by the Bulgarian government against Yugoslavia and domestic rebels (Hoffman, 1988 cited in Burgess, 2015).

Around the period of World War II (1939-1945), individual non-state terrorist groups had begun to emerge. Across the Middle East, Asia and Africa, there were nationalist and anti-colonial groups that took it upon themselves to resist European colonialism, with many expatriates expelled and even killed using the guerrilla warfare strategy. Such groups in China and Indochina revolted against the Kuomintang regime and the French colonial government respectively. It was the same in Africa, where nationalist groups fought against the French rule in Algeria while groups resisted British rule in Kenya, Malaysia, Cyprus and Palestine. Other such groups that were later labelled terrorist groups include the Palestinian Liberation Organization (and its many affiliates), the Basque ETA, and the Provisional Irish Republican Army, the Red Army Faction (in what was then West Germany) and the Italian Red Brigades (Laqueur, 1999 cited in Burgess, 2015).

In the contemporary era, terrorism began conspicuously with the seizure and murder of 11 Israeli athletes by Palestinian Groups at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich-Germany. However, the most unique terrorist activity of the 21st century was the hijack of the jet airliners in the United States of America on September 11 2001, by al Qaeda which left about 3,000 Americans dead (Burgess, 2015).

Scholars have sought to offer definitions of the term "terrorism". Hornby (2000 cited in Omede & Omede, 2015) defines terrorism as "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or force a government to act." (p.121). Also, Trosper (2009 cited in Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2016) defines terrorism as "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof,

in furtherance of political or social objectives" whereas the United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological" (Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2016). For the African Union (AU), terrorism is "any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to any person, any member or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage" (Imhonopi & Ugochukwu, 2016).

Those who carry out terrorist acts are called terrorists. Terrorists typically use certain tactics to carry out their acts. However, the basic characteristics of terrorists include:

- i. Use of dangerous weapons.
- ii. Employment of political, religious or ethnic to whip up sentiments against their perceived enemies.
- iii. Resident in secretive environments and recruit like-minded people to join their cause.
- iv. Usually, fewer in number compared to the larger society they attack.
- v. Have a strong will and are ready to die for their course.
- vi. Seek financial and military supports from national and international loyalists.
- vii. Use force, coercion and intimidation to instil fears in people.
- viii. Employ suicide bombing, car bombing, rocket-propelled grenades, assassinations, abductions and kidnapping and hijacking to carry out their activities.
- ix. Their primary goals are usually the extermination of human lives and destruction of properties, particularly in public places such as public squares, market squares, shopping malls and markets, government buildings and installations, churches and mosques, schools, bridges, police stations, military barracks and installations as well as prisons to free inmates particularly their members that are incarcerated (Omede & Omede, 2015).

Types of Terrorism

There are generally seven types of terrorism:

1. *State terrorism:* This type of terrorism is one in which the state involves itself in carrying or actively supporting terrorist acts on a government, groups or even individuals.
2. *Dissent terrorism:* This consists of terrorist groups that have rebelled against their government.
3. *Religious terrorism:* This consists of terrorist groups that are motivated by religious ideologies.

4. *Criminal Terrorism:* These are terrorist groups who engage in terrorist acts to make profits. In other words, they commercialise terrorism.
5. *Ideological Terrorism:* This is terrorism in which the terrorists are motivated by political ideologies that support and promote their interests. Such beliefs justify their violent assertion of their interest.
6. *Gender-Selective Terrorism:* This kind of terrorism is aimed only at the men or women population of certain perceived enemy groups because of their gender. For example, terrorist acts can be directed at men if they are perceived as threats to the interests of the perpetrators or simply to prove to their perceived enemies their lethal power to conquer. Terrorist acts against women are usually for sexual satisfaction or to negotiate ransom and/or to coerce the enemy to submission.
7. *International Terrorism:* This occurs when terrorist acts cut across national boundaries. The targets of international terrorism are selected due to their value to the international community and their ability to draw attention to the demands of the perpetrators (Dawson et al., 2017; Eastern Kentucky University, 2020).

II. CAUSES OF TERRORISM

Many factors can cause terrorism out of which the six principal ones are discussed, below: psychological, ideological, strategic, economic, political and religious.

Psychological Causes

Many terrorists simply engage in terrorism to satisfy their psychological state of mind. This satisfaction may arise from the need to grab power or simply out of hatred for someone, a group, a social system or a state. This was the case of Auguste Vaillant who in 1893 bombed the French Chamber of Deputies because he hated the middle classes and wanted simply to destroy their sense of economic and social success (United States Institute of Peace, n.d).

Ideological Causes

Ideology is defined as “the beliefs, values, and/or principles by which a group identifies its particular aims and goals.” (United States Institute of Peace, n.d, p.10). Thus, ideology embraces a wide range of areas including but not limited to religious or political themes. For example, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) simply wanted to oust the United Kingdom from Ireland, the Sri Lanka Liberation Tigers of Tamal Eelam (LTTE) wanted to establish an independent state for the Tamals in Sri Lanka while the Bader Meinhoff in Germany, made up of middle-class adults, didn't like capitalism and wanted to destroy capitalist infrastructures in Germany.

Strategic Causes

Strategic causes of terrorism arise as a result of the failure of government at any level because strategic terrorism usually

occurs when terrorists fail to realise their aspirations with a government and are unable or prevented from entering into dialogue with the government. Consequently, the terrorists resort to violent reactions as a way to make their voices heard and to draw the government's attention to their demands. Terrorists undertake this approach when they estimate that it would lead to the realisation of their goals and interests. If they see no success, however, they employ more traditional means of opposition to draw the government's attention. Although strategic terrorism is mainly carried out by individuals and groups, it could also be executed by states, for example, when state-sponsored terrorist groups carry out terrorist acts for which the terrorist groups also have interests. In other words, if terrorists and states have similar strategic interests, they may jointly carry out terrorist activities. This was the case when Libya used terrorists to explode a bomb aboard Pan Am 103 flying from London to New York in 1988 in response to the U.S and British bombing of Libya (United States Institute of Peace, n.d).

Economic Causes

Many scholars agree that poverty causes terrorism. This is particularly so when people are deprived of basic human resources and opportunities thus creating the atmosphere for people to resort to terrorist acts to register their anger (Newman 2006). Poverty is not a stand-alone cause of terrorism. There are other ancillary or poverty-related factors that contribute in a significant way to poverty-causing terrorism including high population, unemployment rates, wide inequality, inflation, low educational levels (Mohammad 2005, Akhmat et al., 2013). When people are placed in difficult economic situations which force them to make choices, some are tempted by the lure of financial offerings made to them by terrorist groups and therefore opt to join such terrorist organisations and engage in terrorism. Poverty is a fertile ground for terrorism which can also be caused by natural disasters, in which case people have to resort to violent self-help.

Political Causes

In many instances, people resort to terrorist acts as a result of government repression measured majorly by variables such as social injustice (against individuals and groups), political rights (disenfranchisement to vote, denial of voting rights or opportunity to participate in the democratic process and civil liberties (human rights violation, racism, etc. (Berrebi and Ostwald 2011 cited in Butler, 2015). Weakened political systems are also breeding grounds for terrorism as very democratic states and very authoritarian states hardly experience terrorism. Instead, it is nations that are in transition to democracy that experience the most cases of terrorism (Abadie, 2004 cited in Butler, 2015). But many of these states would have low terrorism as long as the citizens feel a sense of belonging. The moment citizens feel their rights are not being respected, they may express their grievances and anger in terrorism.

Religion-based Causes

A major part of contemporary terrorism has found some base in religion. There has been an increase in religious-based motivation for terrorism (Martin 2010 cited in Butler, 2015; Egielewa & Okili, 2020; Adeniji & Egielewa, 2020). Religious terrorism relates basically to the motivation by the belief that an almighty power has sanctioned an action which the subjects are bound to execute including murdering people or destroy infrastructure even if they have their reservations (Martin 2010). The executors carry out such religious terrorist acts in the belief that their actions will be forgiven and in fact that they will be rewarded with blessings. Religious terrorism has been on the increase in recent times but Islamic terrorism has become the most frequently in the contemporary era (Martin 2010 cited in Butler, 2015).

III. HISTORY OF TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

Terrorism in Nigeria can be traced to the era of Isaac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw nationalist, who founded and led the Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF), an armed group that campaigned against the marginalization and subjugation of the Niger Delta people and their economic interests by the Nigerian state and pressed for greater Niger Delta autonomy, resource control and self-determination for the inhabitants of the Niger Delta (Okafor, 2011 cited in Imhonopi & Urim, 2016). Boro had a force of 150 militants who had trained in the art of using sophisticated weapons. Armed with such battle-ready force, Boro and his militants raided a police station on February 23, 1966, attacked an armoury and kidnapped some officers, including the officer in charge of the police station. As part of their strategy, they also blew up oil pipelines, engaged the police in a gunfight, and declared the Niger Delta an independent state. Shortly after, Boro and his men were arrested, tried in Portharcourt before Judge Phil Ebosie and found guilty (Okafor, 2011 cited in Imhonopi & Urim, 2016).

However, shortly before the Nigerian civil war in 1967, Boro and his men were granted amnesty and freed by the federal government led by General Yakubu Gowon. Thereafter, he was absorbed into the Nigerian army and commissioned a major. He fought on the side of the federal government but was killed in active service in 1968 at Ogu in River State. Later on another Niger Deltan, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa “established the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which advocated the rights of the Ogoni people by demanding increased autonomy, a fair share of the proceeds of oil extraction, and remediation of environmental damage to their lands.” (Imhonopi & Urim, 2016, p.24).

Although his strategy was non-violent persuasion because his activities drew global attention, he angered the government of the military dictator, General Sani Abacha who had him tried and hung on 10th November 1995 (Ogundiya, 2009). Ken Saro Wiwa’s death set the stage for the birth of several other militant groups who were distraught and angered by the avoidable death of Ken Saro Wiwa such as the O’dua

People’s Congress (OPC) in the Yoruba-speaking southwest, the Bakassi Boys and Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the Igbo-speaking southeast, the Arewa People’s Congress (APC) in the North. Although the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999 succeeded in reducing their influence, a new era of militancy was born in Nigeria. Particularly, “the Niger Delta groups became violent, attacking and bombing oil installations, kidnapping, hostage-taking and assault to press home their demands” and in protest of the “judicial murder” of their leader, Ken Saro Wiwa. These activities earned them the unpleasant appendage of “terrorists” which now pitched them against the Nigerian state. The birth of Boko Haram in 2002 marked a turning point in the history of terrorism in Nigeria because the group employed more violent, sophisticated and religious motivations to press home its demand (Omede & Omede, 2015; Imhonopi & Urim, 2016).

IV. TYPES OF TERRORIST NETWORKS IN NIGERIA

Several terrorist groups are operating in Nigeria. The major ones, however, include Boko Haram, Ansaru, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Kala Kato, Izala, Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) and Movement for the Islamic Revival (MIR).

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a terrorist group that was founded in 2002 by the late Islamist cleric, Mohammed

Yusuf, with the major aim of discouraging Muslims against the practice of western education and to create an Islamic state in Nigeria. The term "Boko Haram" literally means “western education is forbidden” in Hausa. Although the group has been existing since the 1990s, it didn’t, however, exhibit any terrorist posture at the time until 2002 (Guitta & Simcox, 2014). The members of Boko Haram come mainly from the Kanuri ethnic community that makes up 4% of the Nigerian population.

Boko Haram’s strategy is the killing and maiming of Christians and Muslims as well as attacking security personnel and facilities, bombing of churches, schools and banks, suicide attacks, kidnappings and robberies to finance its activities. The activities of Boko Haram have led to the death of over 30, 000 Nigerians as of December 2020 (Anadolu Agency, 2020; Gov.uk, n.d). In 2013 both UK and the US designated Boko Haram as a terrorist organisation and in 2014 the UN added Boko Haram to the al-Qaeda sanctions list. Presently, Boko Haram is led by its spiritual head, Abubakar Shekau, but it has a loose operating structure with several independent cells and having up to 300 training camps in Nigeria and neighbouring countries.

In terms of financial strength, Boko Haram is relatively catered for. Boko Haram recruits are given a €100 joining fee, €1000 military action earnings and €2000 weapons acquiring reward. Boko Haram has several recruiting cells in the Western world and this has paid off by the recruitment of

Europeans including a British-born man, Aminu Sadiq Ogwuche and a British-based Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (Guitta & Simcox, 2014). In 2015, Boko Haram announced its alliance with ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and called for members in Iraq and Syria to migrate and join the Nigerian affiliate (Gov.uk, n.d).

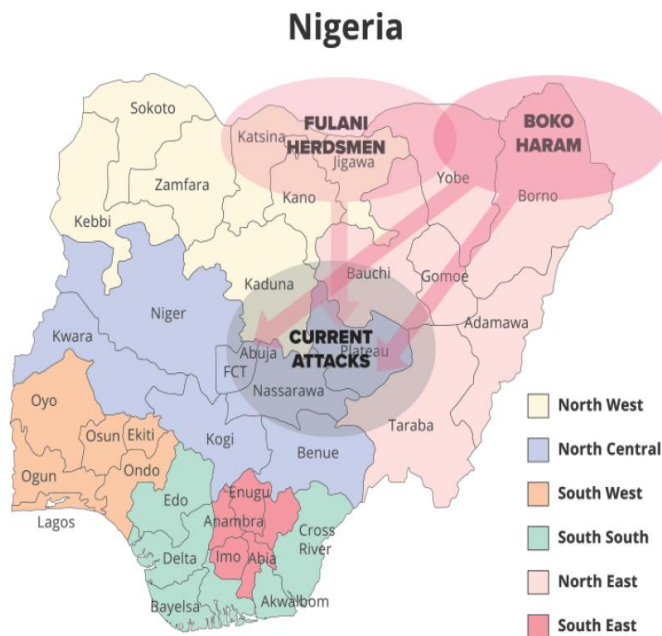


Figure 2: Areas of attack by Boko Haram as of

Source: <https://www.lausanne.org>

Since 2010, Boko Haram attacks have increased not just in frequency but also in magnitude focussing on police, military, and government targets, as well as Christian churches and schools and Muslim individuals who were critical of the group (Britannica, 2020). On Christmas Day, 25th December 2011, Boko Haram bombed the St. Theresa's Catholic Church, Madalla, Niger State, killing 43 people and injuring hundreds more (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Then in August 2011, Boko Haram carried out its first international high profile attack when a suicide bomber crashed a car into the [United Nations](#) building in [Abuja](#) and detonated an explosive, killing 23 people and injuring over 100 others. Next, the group attacked ThisDay newspaper offices in Abuja, the federal capital Territory in April 2012 where six people were killed and several others injured (BBC News, 2012). Similarly, two bomb blasts at an Abuja Bus park by Boko Haram suicide bombers killed 70 persons and injured several others (BBC News, 2014). In April 2014, the group kidnapped over 275 girls from a boarding school in Chibok in Borno state, Northeast Nigeria.

By 2015, the size of Nigerian Northeast territories controlled by Boko Haram can be equalled to the entire size of Belgium. Boko Haram in the peak of its strength in 2015 controlled not only territories in Nigeria but had also expanded its presence, influence and attacks to three other neighbouring countries to

Nigeria, namely: Mayo Tsanaga and Mayo Sava in Northern Cameroon, Nguimi in northern Niger and Ngouboua in Chad (Malefakis, 2019).

Ansaru

As indicated earlier, Boko Haram had many smaller loose cells. In 2011, Ansaru, led by the little-known Abu Ussamata al-Ansary, is a splinter group of Boko Haram which derives its name from its Arabic origin, thus "Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan" which means "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa" split from the main Boko Haram group. It, however, started full operation in 2012. The Ansaru group's split was a protest of the main Boko Haram strategy of attacking and killing Muslims and resisted the indiscriminate killing of civilians and focussed instead on security agents and their facilities.

In a video in 2012 announcing its formation, its leader, Mr al-Ansary said that one of the reasons for its split from Boko Haram was because Boko Haram was "inhuman to the Muslim ummah [nation]...Islam forbids the killing of innocent people, including non-Muslims (except) in self-defence or if they attack Muslims. This is our belief and we stand for it" (Chothia, 2013; Gov.uk, n.d), an indication that Ansaru is prepared to attack non-Muslims (Christians) if they perceive that the Christians oppose their goals or interests.

Ansaru, going by its description has been described as an Al-Qaeda franchise in Nigeria showing the closeness with Al-Qaeda. Similarly, despite the differences in the strategies with Boko Haram, Ansaru has a working relationship with Boko Haram and enjoys a synergy that concentrates on their common interests such as the kidnap of the French priest in Cameroon in November 2013. For funding, Ansaru gets money from ransom paid after kidnapping primarily Europeans.

The Ansaru group is attributed to be responsible for the kidnap and killing of a British-Italian hostage in 2012 in Sokoto (Northern Nigeria) and the kidnap of a 63 years old French citizen, Francis Colump, from the northern town of Rimi-Katsina (Northern Nigeria) as a protest for the French military operation in Mali. In recent times, Ansaru's activeness has declined partly because many of its commanders re-joined the main Boko Haram group, thus weakening the group's cohesion and also due to the French military onslaught in Mali which also contributed to weakening a major command base of the group. In 2013, both the UK and the US governments banned the group.

Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)

After Boko Haram pledged his allegiance to ISIS, Abu Musab al-Barnawi was appointed as the head of ISIS West Africa which later came to be known as Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in August 2016. This appointment did not go down well with Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau and this led to another split of Boko Haram such as the al-Barnawi

led ISWAP, Shekau clinched his position as the head of Boko Haram (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

Although their modus operandi in terms of style of attacks are similar, the major difference between both groups is that while Boko Haram retains its operational base in southern Borno State, including Boko Haram's historical territorial stronghold of the Sambisa Forest, ISWAP controls territory in the Lake Chad Basin area (Counter Extremism Project, 2011; Chothia, 2013).

As the military offensive in the Middle East intensified and ISIS lost territories, foreign fighters migrated to Nigeria and strengthened the ranks of Boko Haram and ISWAP. "According to a CNN report, approximately 1,500 foreign fighters have joined Boko Haram and around 3,500 have joined ISWAP increasing ISWAP fighters to about 5, 000" (Counter Extremism Project, 2011). In 2020, the United Nations Security Council blacklisted ISWAP as a terrorist organisation along with others like ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

Kala Kato

Kala Kato is an Islamic fundamentalist Quranist movement based in Nigeria and made up of members who base their beliefs exclusively on the Quran while rejecting any form of the religious authority of the Hadith (a series of books describing the words and actions of the Islamic prophet Muhammad) and label those who believe and follow the Hadith as "infidels" (unbelieving members of a religious group). "Kala Kato," means, "a mere man said it" justifying their position for rejecting religious leaders' teaching because they opine that such leaders merely interpreted their own opinions and beliefs and not what the Quran contains (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

Members of Kala Kato group support and preach militancy. Like Boko Haram, they reject western education and pressure parents to stop sending their children to western schools and send them instead to Quranic schools. Their positions have put them at odds with traditional Muslims who believe in the contents of both the Quran and the Hadith, causing tension among Muslims in Nigeria (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

Izala

The name "Izala" in Arabic is short for Jama'atul Izalatul Bid'ah Wa'ikhamatul Sunnah, meaning "society for the removal of innovation and reinstatement of tradition". Izala was founded in 1978 in the central city of Jos-Plateau state (Northern Nigeria) by a Salafist Sheikh Ismaila Idris with the main objective of establishing Islamic schools and mosques as avenues for recruiting followers and indoctrination. The movement traces its origin as far back as the 1960s to the era of Sheikh Abubakar Gummi, a prominent preacher and scholar influenced by the Saudi Islamic doctrine Wahhabism (a conservative Islamic creed centred in and emanating from

Saudi Arabia), which has also funded the body significantly (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN)

The Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) was founded in the 1980s by Nigerian extremist Malam Ibrahim al-Zakzaky with the main objective of creating an Iranian-style Islamic state in Nigeria. The IMN is said to be an "Iran proxy" in Nigeria and financed by Iran and has the Shiite ideology, that is the anti-American, anti-western, and anti-Israeli political views. In 2014 during the IMN's yearly Quds procession to commemorate IMN's solidarity with the Palestinian cause, several IMN members were killed in clashes with government forces. IMN has a similar recruitment process with Hezbollah that has been labelled by the US as a terrorist organisation and has training camps for recruits in Northern Nigeria.

El-Zakzaky and his wife, Zeehah, have been accused of aiding and abetting homicide, unlawful assembly and disruption of public peace (Africa News, 2021).

Since 2015, when the leader Malam al-Zakzaky has been in incarceration, its members have increasingly become violent and in 2019, during protests in Zaria, Kaduna state, the army extra-judicially killed 348 Shiite members which infuriated the members and led to more protests in Zaria and Abuja (Yusuf, 2021). As a result, the Nigerian Government designated the IMN as a terrorist organization and outlawed it (Counter Extremism Project, 2011; Tangaza, 2019).

Movement for the Islamic Revival (MIR)

The Movement for the Islamic Revival (MIR) in Arabic "Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah, Ja'amatu Tajidmul Islami", is a splinter group of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) that aims at the renewed commitment of Muslims to the fundamental principles of Islam and for the reconstruction of society according to the principles of the Quran and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad. The MIR was founded by a former follower, Abubakar Mujahid, in the late 1990s in Kano, Nigeria. MIR organises street protests and mass demonstrations to press home their demands. Both the IMN and the MIR are sympathetic to the cause of al-Qaeda (Counter Extremism Project, 2011).

V. MEDIA AND TERRORISM IN NIGERIA

The Media have always played a role in the development, structure, spread and decline of terrorism depending on the perspectives of the subjects globally and locally. This is particularly true because of the ubiquity of media in Nigeria through which Nigerians select and consume information. As of December 2020, there are about "103 TV stations, more than 40 newspapers of national distribution and 277 radio stations, 111.6 million internet users, 25 million smartphone users, 20 million Nigerians on Facebook, and 7 million Nigerians using Twitter" (UNODC, 2021), the available the variety of sources of information are ubiquitous. When properly deployed, media can contribute to nation-building

(Egielewa, 2019), but in the wrong hands, they can contribute to tearing a nation apart, particularly in the reporting and management of terrorism-related information in the following aspects: media reports on terrorism, terrorists use of media and government use of media for anti-terrorism information management.

(i) Media Reports on Terrorism

Journalists face tough ethical choices when it pertains to reporting on terrorism and terrorism-related activities. They make the hard choice of deciding what and what not to report, how to deal with their “sources”, how to ethically report on victims of terrorism and how to be safe in covering terrorism-related events. These choices by media personnel can have a profound impact not just on the local environment but even globally (UNODC, 2021). In reporting on terrorism, journalists are faced with the stark reality of Nigeria's Terrorism Prevention Act, which criminalizes “incitement to commit a terrorist act through the internet, or any electronic means or through the use of printed materials or the dissemination of terrorist information”. This kind of vague use of incitement can be used to implicate journalists who report on terrorism under the guise of spreading inciting information during the journalists’ legitimate discharge of their duties. The punishment for the violation of the Act is the death penalty.

On the one hand, journalists have the obligations to promote, encourage and disseminate the legitimate right to free speech but hate speech and incitement to war according to International Law are not “protected speech” (UNODC, 2021). Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorists have used online recruitment to hunt for potential members and such messages are distributed through both old and new media platforms. In this context, Nigerian journalists are concerned about how they are to protect the public and protect the rights of individuals while at the same time avoiding legal pitfalls.

Based on the surveillance function of the media, the media have to alert the public about impending dangers such as terrorism. This requires the media to cover, analyse and report on such terrorism-related developments in society (Wilson et al., 2019; UNODC, 2021). Hamid and Baba (2014 cited in Wilson et al., 2019) argue that the Nigerian media have not adequately reported on the Boko Haram insurgency without advancing reasons for their assertion. However, they opine that because the Boko Haram activities increased from about 2015, it was an indication that the media contributed to the upsurge.

(ii) Terrorists Use of Media

As a result of the power of their reach, convenience and affordability, terrorists use the media for the publicity of their activities, particularly social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to spread their messages and further their goal of reaching a large population (Slutzker, 2018; Hossain, 2018; PennState, n.d).

Terror groups prefer the use of the media especially social media because they are “cheap and accessible, facilitate quick, broad dissemination of messages, and allow for unfettered communication with an audience without the filter or “selectivity” of mainstream news outlets” (PennState, n.d). Social media afford terrorists the opportunity to recruit members and engage with their loyalists online as well as gather intelligence. Their preference for social media is because, unlike the mainstream media, where terrorists needed intermediaries to get their messages out, social media gave them not just unfettered access to the audience but also they could do it directly all by themselves without a middleman (Hossain, 2018; PennState, n.d). Al-Qaeda is the terrorist group that has fully exploited the advantages of the internet and even owning a website. Recently the Islamic State increased the use of the internet.

A study by Berger and Morgan (2015 cited in Hossain, 2018) shows that between September and December 2014 ISIS-related Twitter accounts numbered 46,000. Similarly, in December 2011, the Somalia-based terror group Al-Shabab used the Twitter account @HSMPress and tweeted frequently and amassing thousands of followers. In 2011, immediately after coordinated Christmas bombings in Madala, Nigeria, Boko Haram released a video statement on YouTube explaining the reason for the bombings and making their demands on the government (PennState, n.d).

Terrorist groups such as Boko Haram also use social media especially Facebook and Twitter to publicise their attacks and kidnappings. The kidnapping of 276 girls in 2014 in the town of Chibok was widely publicised via video statements on YouTube. With an increase in surveillance and the regular shut down of terrorist-related social media accounts by Tech giants, terrorists have now resorted to the use of private accounts to disseminate their messages (Slutzker, 2018; Rand Corporation, n.d).

Boko Haram terrorists particularly use social media to claim responsibility for their terrorist attacks which they execute by posting such attacks as video contents via YouTube usually “recorded with their well-known terrorist regalia and insignia: flags at the background, jihadists dressed in military camouflages, holding guns with their faces covered” (Malefakis, 2019, p.5). Boko Haram terrorists usually also showed captured soldiers, weapons or logistic vehicles and in some cases share live videos of their attacks on military bases, and destroyed military facilities. They also post videos which they use as bargaining chips either with the government or with families of kidnapped victims such as the case with the kidnapped Chibok girls. They also post videos explaining the reasons for their actions. They do this either to demonstrate their power and invincibility or to bargain for financial returns or simply to create fear in the populace. This is the reason why most of their videos are produced using major languages like Hausa, Arabic, English and Kanuri (Malefakis, 2019).

(iii) Government use of media for anti-terrorism information management

From the outset of the launch of Boko Haram, the Nigerian military under the aegis of the Joint Task Force (JTF) was established to counter the group's terrorist activities. Due to Boko Haram's expansion to other African countries, the JTF was also expanded to include military personnel of other neighbouring African countries and thus the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Niger, Benin, Chad, and Nigeria was born in 2015 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2020b). Both the JTF and the MNJTF soon realised that they needed to counter Boko Haram terrorists not just on the battlefield but also on the social media space. The military realised that they needed to monitor and counter the kinds of propaganda and misinformation that Boko Haram was churning out on social media if they were to be successful in their battle against terrorism (Malefakis, 2019).

The Nigerian military has both a Twitter Handle (@HQNigerianArmy) with about 1.2 million followers and a Facebook account (HQ Nigerian Army) with about 368, 000 followers as of January 31 2021. The Nigerian military designed a strategy to counter the terrorists' narratives about the battle so that they do not play the victims and win sympathy from consumers of their propaganda videos. Thus, the military, regularly released

pictures of insurgents killed and captured, triumphant overruns of insurgent bases, recovery of arms and ammunitions, rescue operations for women and children...These handles rarely share news about military losses or fatalities suffered in counter-insurgency operations...The handles present the Nigerian military and its apparatuses as 'on top of the insurgency even though the concrete insecurity situation in areas affected by Boko Haram belie these assertions (Malefakis, 2019).

The army issues press releases on their social media accounts to their followers such as the causality numbers on the side of the army. However, much of this information is often designated "classified" and thus do not give room for independent verification. The Nigerian government often re-echoes the army position of "consistently winning" the war but the reality on the ground often prove these positions untenable (Malefakis, 2019).

Soon the army realised that while they were trying to control the media narratives in favour of the government, there were confronted by the so-called "rogue soldiers" who used social media to release pictures and videos of the army losing the war and the shortage of weaponry and demotivation of soldiers due to lack of care by the army top hierarchy. This became a huge challenge for the military that it had to issue a statement warning its soldiers against such practice, thus

It is very unfortunate and unprofessional, for example, for service personnel to resort to social media to disclose

classified information or express grievances when the Nigerian Army has well-established channels for addressing complaints. It is equally saddening to find operational incidents and occurrences including gory pictures involving own personnel's and equipment being circulated on social media by troops to the embarrassment of the service and affected families (Maina, 2017 cited in Malefakis, 2019).

Use of media in Combating Terrorism in Nigeria

There are several ways the media can be used to fight terrorism, some of which are discussed below.

Reporting What and How?

Although some authors have argued about the insignificant role of the media in causing or contributing to terrorism (Gunter, Hoffman, Koppel cited in White, 2020), other scholars opine that the media have a significant role in contributing to terrorism in society (Eid, Ted Koppel cited in White, 2020). Eid (2013) argues that because the media are driven by profit, they give terrorists the media platform to propagate their terrorists' agenda and by so doing can lure potential recruits who get the needed information through the media. As Hoffman (cited in White, 2020) says, "with the help of the media—willingly or not—terrorism easily reaches a global audience" and Ted Koppel (cited in White, 2020), a US ABC host famous for terrorism-related reports, states that: "without television, terrorism becomes rather like the philosopher's hypothetical tree falling in the forest: no one hears it fall and therefore it has no reason for being". In other words, the argument is that "if terrorists do not receive media coverage, attacks will decrease" (White, 2020).

However, the causal relationship between media reports and terrorism has still not been definitively established. The thought of censorship of the media would be counterproductive. Instead, the media should re-examine their rules of engagement and find out if its reports do not encourage terrorism. The media may indeed promote terrorism by "sensationalising the dramatic acts of violence and destruction committed by terrorists (and) offering a platform to fulfil terrorists' purpose of spreading terror (White, 2020). Other ways in which the media can contribute to promoting terrorism include poor understanding of terrorism and how they work and therefore using their report to encourage rather than discourage terrorism, editorials that unnecessarily expose the strategies of governments and put that information at the disposal of terrorists who in turn use them to their advantage, lack of ability of media platforms such as the social media to prevent the use their platform for cheap publicity such as the upload videos of kidnapped victims on YouTube and insufficient reporting of citizens' condemnations of terrorism that discourages potential recruits (White, 2020).

Sustaining neutrality

In many cases of reporting terrorism, the journalists are at the crossroads between the terrorists and the government with each side seeking to gain the attention of the media to use them for their advantage. Both sides seek to influence and manipulate the media to publicise their views and versions of the issues at stake. Media professionals ought to continue to sustain their neutrality, otherwise, they fall at the risk of being at the centre of attack by the perceived “unpublicised partner”. The media must continue to promote professional ethics of neutrality at all times while ensuring that internal self-censorship helps keep journalists focus on the job to be done.

VI. FRAMING TERRORISM

In many instances, even journalists do not properly have appropriate definitions of the concept of terrorism and thus it is common to label whole ethnic groups (“Fulani terrorists” in Nigerian where Fulani is an ethnic group) or religion as terrorist-prone (“Muslim terrorists” or “Christian terrorists”). Framing is an extension of the agenda-setting theory of the media. Many media organisations simply use the stereotyped framing of terrorism such as their dressing, way of speaking, and places of residence to explain the story so that viewers tend to believe the reports because of the consistent use of those frames. Boko Haram terrorists, for example, have often been reported as Muslims and responsible for all terrorist acts whereas there have been other groups who have claimed responsibility for such attacks in Nigeria.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TERRORISM-FREE NIGERIA

Based on the foregoing, terrorism is a serious threat to any society including Nigeria. Nigeria is bedevilled by terrorist groups since 2009 and has lost several people to attacks by the groups. Boko Haram, in particular, has taken the centre stage amongst all the terrorist groups in Nigeria and has sustained its guerrilla war with the Nigerian forces. The media, as part of their social responsibility, contribute to society by promoting peace and security. The media, especially social media, can be used by terrorists to promote their activities unless the media stay alert to prevent being manipulated and used either by the terrorists or the government.

Thus, it is recommended as follows:

1. Government should be attentive to the grievances of terrorists and rule out injustice. Where injustice exists, it should take steps to address them.
2. The Nigerian Govt should employ other conflict resolution mechanisms in the fight against terrorism as wars do not often end terrorism. Dialogue does.
3. The Nigerian Government should examine other factors that create the atmosphere for terrorism to thrive such as religious fanaticism, poverty and illiteracy and confront them.
4. The media should avoid reporting that tends to give platforms to terrorists to publicise their “business”.

5. Media should avoid being used either by the terrorists or by the government to their advantage instead of the good of the entire Nigerian society

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