North/South Press: A Comparative Analysis Of The Framing Of Boko Haram Insurgency In The Nigerian Print Media

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Abstract: Nigerian news media is largely divided along ethnic, religious and political lines between the north and the south. Thus, quite often, bias is manifested while covering the issues related to one region by the other. This study, in comparative terms, examines how report on the activities of the insurgent group of Boko Haram in the north is framed. Two leading newspapers, Daily Trust from the north and The Guardian from the south, are selected. 194 units of news are analysed. Our results revealed that there is no significant variation of the frames used in the coverage. The study however found that southern press used more negative tone than the northern press in the said reportage. Furthermore, the southern press overtly associated the violent actions of Boko Haram with Islam whereas northern press presented the group as cross-purposes with the religious injunctions.

Keywords: Framing, Boko Haram, Northern/Southern Press, Newspapers.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The role news media plays regarding to terrorism attracts several scholarly views. (McQuail 1995, 486) observes that the complex interaction between terrorist and media stemmed out of the desire of terrorist motivated by political ends to indirectly use the media to achieve maximum publicity that create psychological effect on the non-combatants as means of sending massage to the prime target. (Alexander et al., 1972) argue that terrorist group has three aims to achieve for interaction with the media, and these included attention, recognition and legitimacy.

Curious enough, (Azeez 2009, 11) suggests that extensive press coverage of terrorism proved to provoke more undue attention to the terrorists and immeasurable fear (real or imaginary) in the minds of vulnerable innocent citizenry to the extent that the perpetrators may develop more tactics and terror attacks further and further again. It is also argued in the same line and supports that, news media is seen as motivator of terror acts, the more attention media gives to terrorism, and the more violence is repeated by other terrorists (Livingstone 1982, 63). It is therefore noted that extensive media coverage proliferate more criminals activity by the perpetrators to

showcase their expertise and reduce their opponent to nothing. Furthermore, this relationship between media and terrorism is explained that, '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' (Nacos 2000, 13).

Evidence to the contrary concludes that there is no clear empirical support for the popular assertion which emphasizes that media help the spread of terrorism (Alali and Eke 1991; Nelson and Scott 1992; Ross 2007). Ross (2007, 221) investigates the power and nuances of media's interaction with terrorists, their organizations and their sources and reveals that, the media may not encourage the spread of terrorism; he goes further and indicates that most researches disagree that the media can 'cause' terrorism.

Notwithstanding the different opinions, some scholars are of the view that media do not publicize terrorism with intention of escalating the terrorist activities, but rather, cling to the idea of professionalism that permits selection of stories based on news values that make story worthy of report. According to Bilgen (2012) and Miller (1982), terrorism has a number of aspects that makes it more appealing and news worthier than other events, as it has the elements of 'drama,

danger, blood, human tragedy, miracle stories, heroes, shocking footage, and action'. News media contents are naturally 'drawn to stories that suggest conflict and the potential of what is shocking and sensational' (Tuman 2010, 196). In line with this, however, media organizations prioritize reports on terrorism as it is clearly contains shocking and sensational. Azeez (2009) contends that mass media reports on terrorism is prompted from (Galtung and Ruge, 1965) seminal study that identifies twelve news criteria that determine what is worthy of reportage, what is not and why. Since terrorism qualifies such identified value system, news media cannot ignore the ideal ingredients of human interest stories. However, press organizations give terror activities undue publicity that may help violence activities (Azeez 2009).

Notwithstanding, another reason for the excessive news media coverage on terrorism is rapid emergence of electronic media and mega media outlets that resulted in a free market aimed at attracting mass audience with shocking, sensational infotainment which is popularly believed to keep audiences captivated and maximize profit (Nacos 2000). He further claims that news media efforts to secure large audience by concentrating on human interest angle is indirectly meant to generate economic benefits accruing from advertising revenue, in essence, both media and terrorists enjoy 'symbiotic relationship' – they feed off each other (Nacos 2000, 1).

Therefore, it is pertinent to note that, emphasis should not be solely on why news media publicize terrorism, but also, how the media covers such issues is an important factor to analyse as well. To understand the media's skilful portrayal of terrorists, one should explore the mediums that news media adopts in reporting terror. The news media generally uses agenda setting and framing to support or create enmity around an issue or a group by conferring status on certain issues and make them more salient than others to shift people's attitude and influence interpretation (Bilgen 2012). As a consequence, public see the world through the lens of media, most of their perceptions about the world issues are second-hand reality or even hyper-reality created by the media outlets in many unexampled ways. Hence, public's pictures of the world are shaped and refined in the way media organizations framed their stories. Whatever the reasons may be, this study analysed how news on Boko Haram is presented in Nigerian print media as a result of polarity between the southern Nigeria Christians dominated press and the northern Nigeria Muslims dominated press.

II. RESEARCH ISSUE AND APPROACH

Due to the ethnic, religious and sectional differences among the Nigerian press, the purpose of this study is to compare and analyse whether or not biases are manifested in either or both northern and southern newspaper coverage of Boko Haram activities. This study has carefully monitored news pages of two newspapers published in Nigeria. The reason for choosing news reports as item of the research material is adopted from Toker (2004, 3) who says that 'news are generally seen as an aspect of everyday life in a specific culture', but mostly portion of the media consumers in the society do not seem aware of the media content particularly

news from prism of framing. It is however expected that news stories are written and disseminated with considerable amount of bias and subjectivity that in subtlety infers the study.

For the purpose of this analytical study, two Nigerian daily publication newspapers were chosen for comparison. *The Guardian Newspaper* represents the southern Christian press because of its elitist and respectable status and wide readership as well, while *Daily Trust* newspaper represents the northern Muslim dominated press due to its position of wide circulation and reputable standing in the North. The study selected seven events as cases that attracted wide coverage by both national and international media organizations. These attacks are as follow:

- ✓ August, 26 2011 Abuja United Nations House bombing
- ✓ December, 25 2011 Madalla church bombing
- ✓ January, 20 2012 Kano multiple bomb blasts
- ✓ February, 7 2012 Kaduna Army Barrack suicide bombing
- ✓ April, 26 2012 Kaduna *Thisday* newspaper office bomb attack
- ✓ March 18 2013 Kano motor park bomb blast
- ✓ December, 2 2013 Maiduguri multiple Military Units bomb attacks

These events are selected due to their significance which resulted in extensive media reports. Such huge reportage gave more data for analysis than drawing data from particular time period where some selected dates may not have news reports published on the case study. To sum up the expectation of this study, the research assessed the Nigerian media milieu within a broad spectrum of religion, ethnicity and sectionalism and eventually provided invaluable input into the situation as the country attained over a century of consociation.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION AND HYPOTHESES

The study has one general research question and two hypotheses.

RQ 1: Does the use of frames differ greatly among the Nigerian print media?

H 1: Both Southern and Northern press negatively framed the activities of Boko Haram, but, the southern press employs more damaging tone and style in which its content is written and presented to the audience.

H 2: Southern press associates the activities of Boko Haram with Islamic teaching whereas northern press presents the group as cross-purposes with the spiritual teaching of Islam.

IV. NIGERIA AT A GLANCE

The territory of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is formed by the British colonialists, before their advent, there was no territorial boundary called Nigeria. Nigeria got independence on 1 October, 1960 from Britain. The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a federal constitutional republic comprising 36 states and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, located in the Gulf of Guinea on the Africa's Western Coast. Nigeria covers an area of almost 924 thousand square kilometers. The country shares territorial

boarders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroun in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast in the south lies on the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic Ocean (Sani 2014, 3). Nigeria is the second biggest economy after South Africa and the largest oil producer in Africa and ranked the six in OPEC. With a GDP of US$414 billion, the country is also blessed with both human and natural resources (Adebayo 2014).

According to Central Intelligence Agency (2014), Nigeria has an estimated population of more than 177 million and the dominant religious groups are Islam and Christianity. Eghosa and Rotimi (2005), noted the dearth of numerical representation of these major religions neither their exact geographical locations within the heterogynous Nigeria. Although, evidence against this claim, Central Intelligence Agency (2014) reveals that Islam represents 50% follows by Christianity with 40% then indigenous belief 10%. It is also quite agreed that northern part is dominated by Islam whereas south by Christianity (Mailafiya 2012). Meanwhile, it is worthy to appreciate that traditional religion has a fair degree of followership that often not represented in the national polity (Eghosa and Suberde 2005). English is an official language, but the major native languages included Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. There are about 250 ethnic groups that speak almost 400 dialects.

After the amalgamation of north and south protectorates in January, 1914, and the nation's independence in October, 1960, Nigeria had witnessed both civilian and military administrations. With the return to democracy in 1999, the political and socioeconomic developments have been undermined by rampant official corruption and maladministration. The effect of the corruption and maladministration increased the quick spread of ethnic and religious conflicts.

V. THE GROWTH OF BOKO HARAM

The famous name *Boko Haram* was originally derived from Hausa and Arabic words. In Hausa, *Boko* means illusion, at the time when colonialists introduced new system of education, the word was deliberately used to describe western education as something that seems to be education although it really not. At the passage of time, the word *Boko* mainly refers to *western education*. *Haram* on the one hand means forbidden. Thus, Boko Haram means *western education is forbidden*, although, this name was given to the group by Maiduguri residents as a fair reflection of the group's ideology. The formal name which the group approves to be called with is *Jama'atu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati Wal Jihad*, translates as *The Group committed to the propagation of the Prophet Muhammad's teaching and Jihad*. The group is often referred as the Taliban of Nigeria (Ekwueme and Akpan 2011), and widely speculated its link with the Al-Qaida network (Onuoha 2010).

Boko Haram was formed in 2001 by the Late Muhammad Yusuf in Yobe, a state in the Northeastern Nigeria. Yusuf was a secondary school dropout and he travelled to Chad and Niger Republics in quest for Islamic knowledge where he was said to have developed radical views against westernization

and modernization (Danjinbo and Abubakar 2007). The movement ideology constitute denying western culture and lifestyle and establishing norms and values exact as they were in the prophet's lifetime. It also objects secularism and attempts to resist it. In the year 2004, some tertiary students who have roots in Borno and Yobe States abandoned their studies and joined the group wishing to be martyred for their faith (Onuoha 2010, 55). The members significantly vary according to the social background. The overwhelming majority are apparently underprivileged which is quite similar to Maitatsine followers who were struck by poverty (Adesoji 2010, 100). The former Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria at Pan African Conference, Oxford University, stressed that, 'a lot of time when talking about problem of Africa whether it is ethnic issue or religious issue … bottom line is economics, is our people not having a way-out of poverty and not having a hope in the system' (Sunusi 2012).

The group attacks and kills people whom it considers detrimental to its ideology including political class and religious clerics and even their families. In the year 2009, the tension heightened that resulted in a brutal killing of the group leader Muhammad Yusuf on 30 July, 2009 by the Nigerian Police force after he was captured and handed over to them alive by the Nigerian army. Hundreds of others were killed during the massive crackdown (Sahara Reporters 2014). His execution by the police was viewed 'by many Nigerians among which lawyers, human rights activists and some Muslim scholars as extrajudicial execution' (Ibrahim 2009).

Notwithstanding, the killing of Muhammad Yusuf intensified the Boko Haram bloodsheds. Abubakar Shekau who was described as 'fearless, loner, a complex, paradoxical man, part intellectual, part gangster, quietest and perhaps the most radical among the group members including the late Yusuf' (BBC Africa 2014), became Yusuf's predecessor. Since he took over the affairs of Boko Haram, the group became more radical and launched more deadly attacks including the worst attack so far, the killing of at least 180 people in Kano, northern Nigeria's largest city. Shekau is the Nigerian most wanted person and on 21 June, 2012, Shekau was specially designated by the US Department of State as a global terrorist under Executive Order 13224 (Reward for Justice 2013), and declared him wanted and also placed $7 million bounty on his head or any vital information that may lead to his capture (The News 2014).

However, it is worthy to note the growing suspicions among Nigerians notably Muslims about the real identity and underpinning goals of the insurgence become discussable in every nook and cranny in the north. Most Muslims see it as predetermined plot to tarnish the image of Islam, transport turmoil to the religion and scuttle the peaceful atmosphere of the North (Ojibo 2013; Shehu 2014).

VI. FRAMING TERRORISM

Modern news media represent a powerful instrument during a conflict through agenda setting, priming and framing, using metaphors, language, subjects, and sources. Gitlin (1980) argues that mass media are the creators and distributors of ideology primarily through framing. Ryan (1991, 53) sees

framing as 'how news stories are made, i.e. how piece of information are selected and organized to produce stories that make sense to their audience'. It is argued that most of the time, news media content, the theme or topic is not what regarded as dangerous or inciting, but rather, a selection, emphasis, and tone of presentation (Gitlin 1980). A notable example was given by Entman (1991), on the differential framing in the US media of 2 comparable air disasters caused by the Soviet and US action respectively. He describes US media framing of the similar incidences consequence of military actions that resulted in the death of large numbers of civilians. Both the events were reported pretty different. The way these events were reported, in words, tone and problematizing, have constituted different frames to shape and influence public's interpretations of the events. This means that one event can be framed in several ways with a profound impact on events meaning where every version may represent different frame or in other words, each frame has a unique definition of the issue.

From general to the specific, Weimann and Brosius (1991) suggest that media framing can generate support for terrorism if the press framed terrorist organizations as 'brave,' 'just,' 'good,' or 'kind'. In a violence situation, news media is expected to disseminate information and facilitate greater understanding of the violence, providing audience with valuable contextual information and analysis (Pande 2010). When particular news frames used to dominate news coverage of terrorism, mass audience begin to shape their thinking and interpretations of event around these frames that may possibly limit and alter perceptions (Norris et al. 2003). The signification impact that news framing can have on a media consumer is largely depends on the amount of prior knowledge, direct personal experience and relative salience of the issue at stake (Moore 2002; Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

However, Powell (2011, 105), investigates the U. S. news media framing of Islam since September 11 attacks, he suggests that news media in the United States feed and contribute to orientalism. The study further reveals that the media content he investigated created unfounded hostility towards Muslims and on the one hand depicted the US as a good Christian nation. Considering the framing terrorism in the American news media after 9/11 attack, American mass media framed the attacks as 'war' against United States.

Eti (2012) examines news media framing of insurgency in the Niger Delta area by the three Nigerian newspapers (The Punch and Daily Champion – south; New Nigeria - north), she reveals that the coverage of crisis in Nigerian press is 'episodic' and gives prominence to 'conflict behavior' such as 'bombing of drilling platforms and oil pipelines, killing and maiming oil workers and state security operatives, and kidnapping and hostage taking'. The study also suggests that such framing of the conflict behavior in Nigerian news media is motivated by ethno-political factors, foreign policy implications and the height of drama of the situation.

To conclude this section on framing terrorism, the reviewed literature achieved scholastic consensus that framing terrorism is not in the interest of media audience but rather for the corporate and political elites who monopolize international news agencies, mass media and politics as well.

VII. REPORTING INSURGENCY IN NIGERIAN PRINT MEDIA

Several scholars suggest that Nigerian mass media have repeatedly biased and abused objectivity in their reportage of insurgencies (Ademola and Okeke 2011, 14; Oputa 2011, 67; Lawrence 2011; Rasaq and Mahmud 2012), the issue of perceive differences that dotted around the Nigerian media have manifested itself in coverage of insurgency. Alao et al. (2012) argues that there is an obvious difference in the analysis of media reports on Boko Haram in the Nigerian media milieu. The study reveals that southern based newspapers over publicize Boko Haram terror attacks, using overblown headlines and pictures on the front page and erroneously link Boko Haram activities with Islam whereas the northern based counterpart give adequate coverage to the insurgent group but use few pictures and barely bold head.

Taking into consideration of the role played by the Nigerian media in reporting violence with a specific reference to the coverage of Boko Haram as a result of the apparent polarization and ethnicization contrary to the ideals of professionalism, the journalistic ethics have been violated and eventually could endanger the fragility of the Nigerian social fabric. As a consequence, there is a strong need for journalist to play pivotal role in defusing the tension and enhance professional reputation by appreciating the perceived differences.

VIII. FRAMING THEORY

There has been growing concerned about how the news information is presented or 'framed' in news media. In this context Tuchman (1978), traced the origin of the concept of framing back to (Goffman 1974). Framing is increasingly regarded as a crucial theoretical approach in analyzing communication text (Brantner et al. 2012). This new paradigm of communication science summarizes its main aspect which involves 'selection' and 'salience'.

To frame is select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salience in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (Entman 1993, 52)

In accordance with this definition, frames are formed by four essentials included; define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies. It is obvious that portion of the communication text carry out these functions, using certain words and phrases, pictures and/or films and so on (McQuail 2005, 378). Entman (1993, 52) assets that not every sentence performs all the four functions but single sentence may accommodate one or more function, though; many sentences may carry none of them.

However, frames are being used in the communication text to highlight certain elements in order to influence the reception of the massage. Entman (1993, 53) stresses that 'frames highlights some bit of information about an item that is the subject of communication, thereby elevating them in salience'. This might be a deliberate action while coding media content to influence audiences' perception of a perceive

reality. Highlighting certain aspects of the text pave the way for audience to consider the items of crucial importance. Thus, proves the potentiality of frames to 'predispose the understanding, interpretation and evaluation of the framed information' (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Entman 1993; Scheufele 2005; Tverskey and Kahneman 1986).

IX. METHOD

The data collected for this research was gathered through quantitative content analysis of news stories on seven selected events covered by the chosen newspapers, namely, *The Guardian* and *Daily Trust*. Each event, three days newspapers copies were analysed in comparison starting from a day after the incidence since newspapers in Nigeria publish stories the next day. Thus, the samples of 42 newspaper copies were used for the analysis. About the general research question, the study adopted deductive approach. We built a grid containing four different frames included conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequences frame, morality frame and attribution of responsibility frame. We coded (a) all news stories on the front page and inside, and we also coded (b) all descriptive words and adjectives about the activities of Boko Haram, we furthermore coded (c) all words and adjectives capable of linking Boko Haram activities with spiritual teachings of Islam. This research considered a unit of news genre as a unit of analysis. A total of 194 samples were met the selection criteria for the framing analysis ($n = 118$) of the Daily Trust Newspaper and ($n = 76$) of The Guardian Newspaper. While analyzing results, the study employed the SPSS Chi-square test to give a clear measurement.

X. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Following are the data collected and the discussion of findings:

Research question: Does the use of frames differ greatly among the Nigerian print media?

The research question investigated whether there was significant variation in the use of frames among the southern and northern print media.

Frames	Daily Trust		The Guardian		Total	
	N	%	N	%	n	%
Conflict	34	28.8	29	38.2	63	32.5
Att. of Responsibility	27	22.9	20	26.3	47	24.2
Human Interest	32	27.1	21	27.6	53	27.3
Morality	25	21.2	6	7.9	31	16.0
Total	118	60.8	76	39.2	194	100

Table 1: Distribution of frames in the newspapers

Comparatively, the chi-square test suggests that there is no significant variation of the used of frames for the news coverage of Boko Haram among the Nigerian print media with ($X^2 = 6.583$ P<0.08).

The result shows that Daily Trust used 118 frames whereas The Guardian used 76 frames; totaling 194 frames

were employed by the both newspapers for the coverage of Boko Haram on the seven selected events. The most common frame in the news coverage by both Daily Trust and The Guardian was conflict frame with (28.8%) and (38.2%) respectively. Then followed by Human Interest frame with (27.1%) of Daily Trust and (27.6%) of The Guardian. It further reveals that Attribution of Responsibility frame appeared third in order of prevalence in both Daily Trust and The Guardian with (22.9%) and (26.3%) respectively. Morality frame was the least used frame by Daily Trust (21.2%) and The Guardian (7.9%).

Hypothesis 1: Both southern and northern press negatively framed the activities of Boko Haram, but, the southern press employs more damaging tone and style in which its content is written and presented to the audience.

Tone	Daily Trust		The Guardian		Total	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
Negative	88	74.6	70	92.1	158	81
Neutral	30	25.4	6	7.9	36	18.6
Total	118	60.8	76	39.2	194	100

Table 2: Distribution of tone used in the newspapers

The difference between negative and neutral positions of the news coverage of Boko Haram by Daily Trust and The Guardian is statistically significant ($X^2 = 9.398$ P<0.01), thus, we cannot reject the hypothesis. (74.6%) represented negative tone in which Daily Trust framed Boko Haram activities whereas The Guardian is represented with (91.1%) negative tone. Therefore, the result reveals that the southern press negatively framed Boko Haram activities more than the northern press. However, in the coverage of Boko Haram by the both newspapers, not even single unit of analysis is recorded as positive.

Hypothesis 2: Southern press associates the activities of Boko Haram with Islamic teachings whereas northern press presents the group as cross-purposes with the spiritual teachings of Islam.

Islam	Daily Trust		The Guardian		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Not Mention	116	98.3	59	77.6	175	90.2
Islamists	2	1.7	13	17.1	15	7.7
Extremists	0	0.0	4	5.3	4	2.1
Total	118	60.8	76	39.2	194	100

Table 3: Distribution of framing Boko Haram with Islam in the newspapers

The statistical analysis used to test this second hypothesis suggested an agreement with the hypothesis. The chi-square test shows significant difference between Daily Trust and The Guardian in the news coverage of Boko Haram as frame of reference for the Islam ($X^2 = 22.599$ P<0.10). The usage of the terms 'Islamists' and 'Extremists' in the coverage of Boko Haram by The Daily Trust represented (1.7%) and (0.0%) respectively whereas for The Guardian, (17.1%) and (5.3%) respectively. These terms are mostly used in the international media content framing Al-Qaeda and other fanatic groups which Muslim Community regarded as unfair to the Islam. Therefore, based on the seven selected events for the study, the presentation of Boko Haram as Islamist group and religious fanatic by southern press framed the activities of

Boko Haram with Islam which Boko Haram claimed representing.

XI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Having completely analyzed 194 units of news carried by the two selected newspapers (Daily Trust from the North and The Guardian from the South) on the coverage of seven selected events perpetrated by Boko Haram, first, the finding revealed that there was no significant variation by the both press on usage of frames. Second, the study suggested there is significant difference between Daily Trust and The Guardian position in negative framing of Boko Haram activities where the southern press employed more negative tone than its northern counterpart. Both newspapers have no positive position on the Boko Haram, of all the units of analysis, not even single unit scored positive tone. Last, it was clearly showed that southern press used far more 'Islamists' than Daily Trust in the coverage of Boko Haram activities on the seven selected event meant for the study whereas 'Extremists' was not used by the Daily Trust.

The empirical evidence here strengthens and supports the validity of *framing* as a good scientific theory.

XII. CONCLUSION

Framing terrorism in the Nigerian print media is associated with relative biases as it is all over the world. The study comparatively content analyzed news reports on the Boko Haram by the southern Nigeria Christian dominated press and northern Nigeria Muslim dominated press and found that press cultural bias manifested in the media content. The significant contribution made by this study that is not explored by previous study was whether there is variation of the usage of frames among the north and southern press or not.

XIII. RECOMMENDATION

Consequence of the research findings, it is recommended that the Nigerian print media should be firm discipline and hold to the social responsibility for carrying out its professional mandate despite ethno-political or religious differences. Professional interest should not be mortgage for whatever interest at any time particularly at critical times when the country's unity and social fabric are endangered. Ethnic, religious and political ties must not be given a chance to supersede competence and expertise.

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