MAT JOURNALS

Social Media, Violent Extremism, Conflict and Terrorism in Nigeria

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Abstract
The increasing rate of violent extremism, conflict and terrorism has become a major challenge for many societies today. The fact that human lives and fundamental human rights are threatened by the growth of the phenomena which make the issue more complex and affront to peace. As records of destruction of lives and properties constantly appreciate, the popular narrative points at the adoption and use of social media as key contributory factors propelling violent extremism, conflict and terrorism. Since it has been established that terrorism, conflict and violent extremism are intertwined and cannot exist and thrive independently and that social media creates a firm platform for them to be firmly grounded globally. This paper explored the nexus between the concept of social media, violent extremism, conflict and terrorism highlighting the role of the mass media in the discourse. The paper traced historically how these terms have pose a threat globally to security with a closer look on the Nigerian sovereign entity in particular.
Keywords: communication, social media, terrorism, violent, Nigeria

INTRODUTION

The evolution of social media over the years has redefined communication and communication processes holistically basically for the fact that it has several features advantageous to content dissemination, uncluttered entrée to handlers, speed in respect of information sharing and flexible user interface. In spite of the countless advantages social has, a lot of concerns have been raised and tilted towards its usage and contribution to the growth of social vices such as terrorism, violent extremism and conflict across the globe. In Nigeria, it was observed that majority of virtual platforms handlers deviate from ideal use by spreading and propelling hate speech regardless of their diverse nature and at the detriment of peace and unity. Prior to now, numerous teenagers from Europe, U.S, Australia and Asia amalgamated terrorist association via what is popularly known as social media platforms recruitment. Due to the high growing terrorist presence on social media, it is believed that regulation to limit and remove harmful content has the potential to save lives. Since the 1990s, the U.N. has recognized the threat of terrorists using the Internet. However, regulation raises complicated questions as to how communication can be balanced and monitored in such a way that people with negative usage intentions can be restrained.

The concept of terrorism, violent extremism and conflict are most often interrelated mainly because they all affect human life and breed casualties. Society is a configuration of people with diverse culture, varied ideologies and beliefs. These attribute makes society prone to conflict. Thus, conflict is inevitable in every society as Marx puts it. Conflict is a term that encapsulates the other two concepts (terrorism and violence

extremism). In other words it is the fusion of several actions and concepts.

Conflict has been in existence from time immemorial at local, national and international level. Although debateable, historical records show that conflict simultaneously increases with societal development. Conflict therefore, maybe apparent as a result of cheating, struggle for class and status and beneficial goals and interests. The concept of conflict can be better understood when looked upon from the viewpoint of inter-group relations whether, as individuals or groups.

Extreme violent acts, another concept not too distant from conflict itself has been perpetrated mostly under the guise of religion – whether Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or other faith too numerous to be listed. A complex series of psychological, political, historical and theological factors combine to trigger such behaviour. Security threats occasioned by inter and intra-religious crises are not twenty-first century phenomena. For instance, the Crusades of the middle ages were an almost continuous series of military-religious expeditions made by European Christians in the hope of wresting the Holy Land from non-Christian Turks. For instance, between 1096 and nearly 1300, Crusaders, travelling in great armies, small bands or alone, journeyed into the Orient to wage war against the Moslems, who had become a serious threat to Christianity.

Also, the Thirty Year War (1618–1648) which was a series of wars principally fought in Central Europe and involving most of the countries of Europe was fought largely on religious grounds. Though some scholars have argued that the origins, causes and goals of the conflict were complex and varied, and cannot be tied down to a single factor, the war was principally fought between Protestants and

Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire. During these periods, several human lives were lost, cities, empires and nation-states were devastated while national economies and stability were crippled in no small ways [1].

The intensifying global transformations have led to the spread of religious extremism and jihadist movements. In the United States, there was the Al-Qaeda terror attack on the World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001and similar attacks in Britain, Spain and other parts of Europe within the same period. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram Islamic sect with known religious preferences and belief has occasioned national security crisis [2]. Terrorism is globally becoming a household word as there is no nation that is completely absolved from its effect [3]. It has become a frightening phenomenon and a concern for many governments and citizens around the world which draws our attention to the vulnerability of modern societies. According to Isabelle (2004) terrorist tactics have been in use for a very long time, but increasing use of sophisticated weaponry and the consequences in terms of increased potential for mass casualties have led scholars in the social and political sciences to place high priority on understanding the "causes" of terrorism. Terrorism is an insidious act common and conducted daily over decades and has been responsible for the physical and or structural violence experienced by many people in Nigeria (Udama, 2013). The terrorist's acts are spread all over the country, thus; kidnapping by the Niger Delta Militants, bomb attacks by members of the Boko Haram sect and cattle rustling in the north-western part of the country. These acts of terrorism have seriously caused untold hardship to the Nigerian populace. Iraq and Afghanistan are the world most terrorised countries according to the World Terrorism Report (2015) while Nigeria is

ranked third after the upsurge of Boko haram and militancy attacks in the Niger Delta region.

RATIONALE OF THE PAPER

This paper seeks to explore the nexus between the concept of Social media, terrorism, violence extremism and conflict, highlighting the role of the mass media in the discourse. The paper traced historically how these terms have pose a threat globally to security with a closer look on the Nigerian sovereign entity in particular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

1. To explain the concepts of Terrorism, violent extremism and conflict.
2. To examine the interrelatedness of the four concepts and their overall impact on the Nigerian society.
3. To examine the role of mass media in fighting terrorism, extremism and conflict.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

- *Terrorism:* an act of threat against nation interest of protecting lives and property. It is a term which refers to act of violence and threat against human life and properties.
- *Violent Extremism:* to this study, this refers to having fundamentalism on ideologies such as religion, traditional beliefs and ideology. Violent extremism also refers to act of perpetrating violence in the name of religion.
- *Conflict:* this refers to an act of disagreement over social, economic, political or cultural issues. Conflict can be constructive or destructive. In the context of this study conflict refers to the destructive aspect.
- *Mass Media:* these are channels or vehicles through which pieces of information are disseminated. They include among others radio, television, newspapers and magazines.

- *New Media:* in the context of this paper, it refers to new channels and platforms used as means of sending messages to large dispersed audience.

THE ORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To lay a theoretical background for this paper, discourse analysis has been selected. A discourse is understood as the fixation of meaning within a particular domain. A discourse is established as a totality in which each concept is fixed as a moment through its relations to other signs. This is done by demean of all other possible meanings that the concept could have had: that is, all other possible ways in which the concept could have been related to one another. Thus, a discourse is a reduction of possibilities. It is an attempt to stop the sliding of the concept or term in relation to one another and hence to create a unified system of meaning.

Laclau & Mouffe (1985) have constructed their theory by combining and modifying two major theoretical traditions, Marxism and structuralism. Marxism provides a starting point for thinking about the social, and structuralism provides a theory of meaning. The overall idea of discourse theory is that social phenomena are never finished or total. Meaning can never be ultimately fixed and this opens up the way for constant social struggles about definitions of society and identity, with resulting social effects. The creation of meaning as a social process is about the fixation of meaning. We constantly strive to fix the meaning of concept by placing them in particular relations to other actions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TERRORISM, CONFLICT AND EXTREMISM

Before the 9/11 terror attack of 2001 on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in New York, United States, the word terrorism was rarely used in discussions with little or

no attention attached to it though, several countries had suffered from its mess. *Rote-Armee-Fraktion* (RAF) or Red Army Faction had existed and operated from 1970 to 1998 in Germany with the aim of maintaining an armed resistance and proletarian revolution in West Germany. This they pursued with numerous bombings and assassinations [3] Another Spanish group called *Euskadi Ta Askatasuwa* (ETA) which has been in operation since 1969, the Irish Resistance Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland are examples of terror groups. However, Nawaju, (2013) [3] figured that several terrorist efforts were made to cause havoc on global peace and unity, example of such are: first attempt to blow down the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in 1993 in America, violent attack in Luxor, Egypt, blowing up of American Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, the 2001 attack on World Trade Centre by Al-Qaeda under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden.

Terrorism has signalled its arrival in Africa through the abyss and den of religious fundamentalism, regionalism, independence and territorial expansion. In Nigeria, for instance Boko Haram had caused distraught to Nigeria's peace and progress. The group had under its founder Mohammed Yusuf launched massive attacks in all aspect of Nigerian society in 2009. Some of their notable attacks launched on Abuja the nation's capital include, Police Headquarters, United Nation Headquarters. Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab effort registered Nigeria's name into the global record of terrorism by attempting to bomb a US airliner from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day. These cases were addition to other acts such as kidnapping, arm robbery, ethnic clashes, cattle rustling, and other forms of terrorist acts which have been in existence for long in Nigeria.

FACTORS AND CAUSES OF TERRORISM AND CONFLICT

The following are some of the factors considered responsible for conflict and terrorism.

1. ***Quest for Freedom:*** The quest for freedom has been a source of violence in many countries. History has it that some people due to issues of development, rich deposits of resources in their area, or being deprived of exercising their freedom resort to establishing violent groups to help them fight for their rights and freedom. Grothaus, (2014) argued that in the 20th century this was seen often times with regions or states attempting to gain independence from the Colonial masters. Example Hamas of Palestine and Chenchen Terrorist Organisation were established to fight for state freedom.

2. ***Religion:*** The most commonly held belief today is that terrorism is caused by religion. Though not the main cause for terrorism, religion play a significant role in driving some forms of it. This is cut across all religion be it Hindu, Islam, Christianity or Judaism. Example Jewish Zealots, Boko Haram sect, Mai-ta-tsine have perpetrated terrorist acts in the name of religion. Gopin (2002) questions why religion is a source of peace and at the same time a source of violence. Emerson & Smith, (2001) identified that religion could have both a positive and a disruptive face. They maintain that religion can help to keep everything in place but can also turn the world upside down.

3. ***Desire for Change***: A lack of political inclusiveness in states or grievances against a certain political order may cause individuals to join or create terrorist groups. Most terrorists organisations often seek a political system either democratic or religious movements. Their political grievances

are not born from the desire to create a new state but to change the order within an existing one.

4. *Need for Territorial Expansion*: Some terrorist groups are established solely out of a desire to expand territory of power in order to gain more and wider area under their control. The main aim could be just to expand their territory of ruler-ship. A good instance is Alexander the Great, a person who conquered and ruled almost two-third of the world used his army with acts of terrorism in his conquest.

5. *Struggle for Identity:* Terrorist organisations like Fatah, Hamas and ISIS can be classified under this category. The need to create and draw attention underprops their activities. Hamas and Fatah struggled for long in order to gain recognition and identity at the United Nations as an established sovereign state. ISIS on its part is petrifying Iraq and Syria in a quest to establish a state with Islamic identity.

6. *Criminality:* This factor best describes the activities of terrorist group like Boko Haram, Niger Delta militants, cattle rustler, and kidnappers among other dangerous groups in Nigeria. Even though economic factor could be linked to their emergence their activities tend more to criminality on nation's property and lives of the people.

7. *Revenge*: In Nigeria there are conflicts which have taken a terror–like similitude because of the use of weapon and resultant casualties. For instance the Nigerian military have been severally accused of carrying out extra-judicial act on the populace in a terror form. Usually such is done to revenge attacks on their officers by unknown gunmen, for instance the 2013 incident in Baga town and Gwange Ward in Borno state that led to mass desertion of Maiduguri by the populace. Conflicts between tribes especially farmer-herders severally had led to terrorist act on people who are innocent in the pursuit of revenge.

Other factors identified by Grothaus (2014) responsible for terrorism in Nigeria are corruption, poverty, unemployment, religious extremism and illiteracy. The contemporary Nigerian society is engulfed by heinous acts of terrorism. As captured in this paper, terror acts have been committed by both the state and terrorist organizations. One of the major contentions in this paper is that contemporary terrorism in Nigeria is a product of bad governance and that encourage a culture of impunity. It is a product of prolong failure of the state to provide purposeful leadership and good governance to the people.

MASS MEDIA AND THE CONCEPTS OF TERRORISM, VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND CONFLICT

Media over history have played a pivotal role in many aspect of the society. Because of the power it wields, it has engineered very crucial issues in the world. The controversial issue is that the vocabulary of terrorism has gradually replaced anarchy and communism which was exploited accordingly by media and politicians. The difficulty in constructing definition to the concept of terrorism is that history provides too many precedents of organizations and their leaders branded as terrorist but who eventually evolved into respected government.

Worthy of note also is the old slogan that says "a terrorist to one state is another state's freedom fighter". This slogan has for a long time resulted into a lingering problem which has made the adoption of universally accepted definition of terrorism impossible. It assesses the validity of the cause when terrorism is an act. One can have a perfectly beautiful cause and yet if one commits terrorist acts,

it is terrorism regardless. As at now, there is no universally accepted definition of terrorism. In fact, none of the thirteen major multilateral conventions on terrorism defined terrorism. Thus, terrorism both as practiced and justified by terrorist themselves, is a tool used to achieve a specific outcome by using force or violence on one segment of society with the primary goal of causing fear in the larger society to make change in that society [4].

Globally, terrorist attacks have almost exclusively been led and executed by young men. This is not a new phenomenon; Nigerian form of terrorism does not differ in any way. With a ready pool of unemployed labour, exploitative politicians, radical clerics; population prone to violence and weakened national and community cohesions, offers competitive advantage for militant and terrorist organizations, criminal networks and evil political leaders alike in Nigeria. The media has also played a crucial role in spreading the ideology of terrorist groups and coverage of their activities; this has given them a publicity that attracts the young people. Hence this paper agrees with Adams, (2012) that chronic violence like Boko Haram insurrection and the Niger Delta militants were provoked and reproduced by diverse factors, many of them mutually interactive. These include new patterns of social inequality; disjunctive processes of democratisation; criminal networks and other adverse effects of globalization; and the perverse effects of the mass media [5].

However, Popoola (2012) argued that insurgence and conflict is the bread and butter of journalism. It provides ready-made material for media men to exploit. Media audiences are usually excited to read detailed stories on how events unfolded. In the process, media houses increase their profit margins. It is commonly claimed that terrorists and the media both benefit from high levels of media attention to terrorism (Hoffman, 2006). The core responsibility of the media is the surveillance function. On their part Hamid and Baba, (2014) observed that the media are expected to bring to the consciousness of the public impending dangers. This function places a demand on the media to cover, analyze and report significant developments within and outside a given society. They also noted that the Nigerian media are yet to effectively play the surveillance function of the media in their reportage of insurgency and conflict this led to the unabated insurgent activities in Nigeria. The Nigerian media have not done well in discharging their surveillance role, particularly in the Boko Haram crisis. In reporting daily occurrences, including the outbreak of conflicts, the media despite the ownership pattern are generally expected to display a real sense of objectivity. The advent of new media and the internet that allows for freedom of use and anonymity has opened a wide hole for the terrorist to market their ideology and indoctrinate people via online platforms. Many Nigerians especially the youth and children were used as immediate market for the sales of terrorist ideology and were indoctrinated to join terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS and Hizbullah through the internet. Example of such include; Umar Farouq Abdulmutallab who attempted to explode US-Airliner, three Nigerian youth who joined ISIS in 2015 among others posing a question to freedom of expression.

However, the later attaching terrorism to Islam in the aftermath of 9/11 is also a point of note in the role of media in defining terrorism. The perception that every Muslim is a terrorist has generated attack and counter-attack on the media by Muslims and the western media. In contrast, the Nigerian form of terrorism

has not call for such yet but a closer to criminality definition of terrorism by Nigerian media is at stake. Groups like Niger-Delta militants, cattle rustlers, vandals, Biafra movements and the deadly Boko haram have perpetrated violence against Nigerians and Nigerian state with various aims ranging from quest for freedom, economic desire, desire for change, struggle for identity and criminality.

TERRORISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA: A RECENT PHENOMENON

The wide adaption of Social media has created a virtual environment that has broken geographical boundaries by virtue of its strategy that brings likeminded people together irrespective of diversity. Social media are increasingly instrumental in the facilitation of countless activities across the globe. As terrorism keeps increasing and growing tremendously and rapidly in frequency and magnitude around the world, a lot of fingers are pointing at social media as a major instrument used by terrorist for achieving their aims and objectives. Statistics revealed by Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment **(TIDE)** database indicated that from 2008 to 2018, names grew from 540,000 to 1.6 million and that countless thousands of death across the world has been attributed to terrorist activities. A closed fetched example that illustrates the brutal impact of terrorism is the ongoing insurgency in the North East region of Nigeria where thousands have been killed and displaced by Boko Haram. There is however a strong connection between terrorism and technology because technology helps in the facilitation of terrorists activities by influencing new recruits, upraising the weighbridge of destruction, and increasing the likely vulnerable targets of terrorist (Wu, P. 2015). Of late, numerous terrorist groups have adapted the use of social media to recruit and proselytize for its wide reach, ability to connect individuals

around the world and immediate impact on users [6-8].

A typical example of the use of social media by terrorist for spreading their message is the recent beheading of a journalist by ISIS that went viral on numerous virtual platforms. In Nigeria it was observed that Boko Haram makes use of platforms such as YouTube in spreading their ideologies. About 90 % of terrorist activities are organized on the Internet and executed via social media. Myriads of terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda have moved their online presence to YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media outlets. With the feeling and strategy that one out of four people in the world at least use social media or one of the platforms which in turn broadens their horizon and capture lots of audiences for their activities. Terrorist adoption and usage of social media are mostly in tandem with the rationales for the adoption and usage by common and normal users. It is "user-friendly, reliable, free and in many countries if not all unregulated. Social media platforms have channels which are by far the most popular with their intended audience, it allows terrorist groups to be part of the mainstream."' When a terrorist account is shut down, the cost of establishing a new one is minimal. Furthermore, social networking allows terrorists to reach out to their target audiences and virtually 'knock on their doors'-in contrast to older models of websites in which terrorists had to wait for visitors to come to them.

An estimate by the U.S. State Department revealed that about 12,000 foreigners from fifty different countries travelled to Syria in order to partake in the ongoing Syria chaos championed by ISIS. Facebook is however used by terrorist as a gateway to extremist sites and other online radical content" it is seen as a connecting tissue to

other "media outlet for terrorist propaganda and extremist ideological messaging" and ultimately creates a technique for "sharing operational and tactical information. Twitter's instantaneous functionality also sanctions terrorists to interchange exigent communications. A report by the U.S. Army explained in clear terms concerns over the sinister role Twitter can play in the operative synchronisation of terrorists in the process planning attacks. YouTube being a video sharing forum, it facilitates the sharing and posting of propaganda videos which helps in the recruitment of new individuals. Finally, terrorists have used Instagram and Flickr to glorification of terrorist activities such as execution of hostages and other acts of brutality to mankind.48 however, in each of these cases, social media's plusses are often ill-treated to support terrorist in the advancement of their proscribed ambitions [9 & 10].

TERRORISM AND CONFLICT: POLICIES AND MEDIA EFFORT
In order to curb terrorism, fundamentalism, extremism and conflict which are inevitable, government at various levels have made serious effort to check the menace. The media has been used as an instrument to achieve the goal. To that effect several laws have been enacted. The former Inspector General of Police, Solomon Arase explained that the Nigeria laws on terrorism are essentially embodied in two enactments: the Terrorism Prevention Act (TPA) of 2011 and Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act 2013. The two laws are collectively referred to as Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 (as amended) or simply TPA 2011 (as amended). This was enacted, essentially, to prevent and deal with the wave of terrorism erupting in Nigeria. The alarming need to create Nigerian Anti-Terrorist Organisation is a policy issue toward curtailing terrorism in Nigeria.

Media as social institution has played a pivotal role in the discourse of conflict and terrorism ranging from coverage, moulding concepts of terrorism and extremism, name-calling and painting a picture of particular religion with colour of terrorism. Some scholars argued that the attention and coverage given to terrorism by the media had enabled the terrorist to exploit the mass media by selling their ideologies. In Nigeria the media cover terrorism and other criminal acts in a way that seems as promotion of the acts and ideologies. There are diverse media outfits in Nigeria ranging from international, national and local and each has interest and pattern of reporting issues. However, the conceptual ambiguity of terrorism is responsible for the failure of the media in fight against terrorism. Though the media cannot fight alone but it has played a role in determining terrorists, covering terror and reproduction of the meaning of terrorism.

CONCLUSION
The media have a role to play to ensure the realization of these ideals. The press as a major factor in this direction should take the issue of national security with utmost importance and fight to sustain Nigeria's corporate existence. The usage of social media is indeed a phenomenon that has come to stay, but it is also imperative to note that if left totally unchecked, it could do more harm than good to the country's peace. It has become more imperative now than ever to realize that no matter the prevalent differences in existence, our national interest should override all other considerations and interests. it is not over stressing to point out that issues highlighted in most Nigerian media are still made up of violent-robbery, ritual performances, rivalry, conflicts, sexual violence, organized crime, prostitution, murder, greed, avarice, impatience, jealousy, envy, pride, arrogance, infidelity, treachery, occultism, love and hatred. It is

the beliefs of this paper that various suggestions offered will enhance the removal of these inadequacies. It is clear that, there is symbiotic relationship between the state, police security and press in any democratic dispensation, and all of these institutions should endeavour to function within the limit of legal framework that bind the state together.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the issues raised in this paper, the following are the recommendations of the paper in curtailing terrorism and conflict management.

1. Although the media promote culture, development and excellence in the society; yet they pay little or no attention to the aftermaths of their news or programmes they disseminate to the society. There is the need for media professionals to make the issue of research on the effect of their messages. This will make them to consolidate on those aspects that would have positive effects on the society.

2. The tide of terrorism needs to be appropriately addressed to achieve a peaceful society. The fact that the act continues unabated but more dangerous in nature implies that the tactics need to be changed. A social approach is necessary since the act of terrorism is cause induced.

3. The mass media need to mobilize people to envisage the problems that impede the nation from development while promoting good governance and transparency as enshrined in the ideals of democracy hence reduce deprivation and fundamentalism.

4. Objectivity and fairness in dissemination of information is highly canvassed for. Objective reportage of such news should be done taking into consideration the overall implications on security. This will promote professionalism and reduce the present

lopsided practice of journalism in the country.

5. The need to enact policies that will ultimately address online digital challenges is imperative as it will improve virtual safety and encourage proper online habit amongst users.

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