

Press and Terrorism in Nigeria: A Discourse on Boko Haram

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Abstract

This paper is a political communication discourse on terrorism with specific reference to the emergence of the Boko Haram religious sect in Nigeria and the dangers it poses to press freedom in the country.

In spite of the provisions in Article 22 of the Nigerian 1999 constitution which provide for objective, truthful and comprehensive coverage of newsworthy activities in Nigeria, the activities of the Boko Haram sect have emerged as the greatest threat to press freedom in the country.

The article in question states that "the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people."

The killing of some journalists by the sect has, however, intimidated Nigerian journalists, who now tread cautiously to avoid being eliminated by the sect.

After an elaborate treatment of press and terrorism in colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, the paper recommends a thorough overhauling of all the security agencies in the country to prevent a return of Thomas Hobbes' state of nature in Nigeria.

Keywords: press, terrorism, Boko Haram, political communication, political recruitment, political socialization, interest articulation, interest aggregation.

I. Introduction

A major challenge facing journalism in Nigeria today is that of surviving the attacks of the Muslim fundamentalist religious sect, the Boko Haram. Nigeria operates a plural

media system in which both the public and privately owned media exist side-by-side. This arrangement enjoys the backing of the constitution. Article 39 (2) of the 1999 constitution states that "...every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions...." Although the Nigerian press has grown, the oppressive nature of the Nigerian state seems to be a major obstacle.

To date, the Nigerian press grapples with several anti-press laws enacted during the colonial administration. Rather than expunging such anti-press laws, post colonial governments in Nigeria enacted more laws obstructing the healthy growth and performance of the media. Examples of such laws are treated elsewhere in this paper. While relief seemed to be coming with the passage and signing into the law of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), terrorism arrived on the scene, and ever since the Nigerian press has been struggling to confront this problem. Since the sect unleashed their terrorist attack on the Nigerian state, a number of journalists have been killed while several others have been wounded.

The first time a terrorist act was made against the media in Nigeria was under the regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida when the founding editor-in-chief of *Newswatch* magazine, Mr. Dele Giwa, was assassinated by means of a letter bomb. Those who perpetrated the crime are yet to be apprehended by the government. The second time was during the administration of General Babangida and of the late General Sani Abacha under whose regime some media establishments which were regarded as being critical of government activities were either unilaterally closed down or set ablaze. Popoola (2003, p. 99) recalls that General Babangida gave the impression that he was press friendly, but at the same time he sanctioned Decree No.2 under which anybody whose conduct was perceived to be a threat could be detained without trial, subject to a review after three months. His regime went further and promulgated Decree No.4 of 1984 under which two journalists, Mr. Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor were jailed for publishing a true life story which the regime termed to be 'embarrassing'. About twelve media establishments perceived to be critical of the policies of the regime were closed down. They included:

Concord, Vanguard, Guardian, Champion, Newswatch, Punch, Sketch, Observer, Abuja Newday, and the Ogun State Broadcasting Corporation (OGBC) among others. Popoola (2003, p. 99) further notes that similar harsh treatment of journalists continued under the regime of Gen. General Sani Abacha. He cites an instance in which arsonists, believed to be state agents, set ablaze the premises of the *Guardian* newspapers while its publisher, Alex Ibru, narrowly escaped assassination by agents of the regime.

The above scenario could be regarded as the foundation of terrorism against the media in Nigeria. The incidents could also be regarded as terrorism against the media at the incubation stage. The stage we are now in Nigeria could be regarded as the stage of full-blown terrorism against the media.

II. Objective

Against this backdrop, the objective of this paper, therefore, is to reveal Boko Haram insurgence as a great threat to press freedom in Nigeria, while also calling on the government not to relent in its efforts of finding a solution to the problem.

III. Research Questions

The paper attempts to offer answers to the following research questions:

1. Does Boko Haram insurgence constitute a threat to press freedom in Nigeria?
2. Does Boko Haram constitute any threat to Nigeria's sovereignty?
3. In spite of the fact that the press has also fallen victim of terrorist attacks in Nigeria, does the media still have any role to play in salvaging the current insecurity situation in Nigeria?

IV. Methodology

The study relies on the case study approach. According to Yin [1994, quoted in Wimmer and Dominick, 2006, p. 136), "a case study is an empirical inquiry that uses multiple sources of evidence to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context." The method affords the researcher the ability to deal with a wide spectrum of evidence including documents and historical artifacts among others.

V. The Conceptual Framework

Press

The term "press" refers to the four major media of information dissemination, namely: newspapers, magazines, radio and television as well as other adjuncts such as press associations that gather and disseminate information for public consumption (Blake and Haroldsen, 1975, p. 41).

Terrorism

The international student's edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010, p. 1543) defines terrorism as "the use of violent action in order to achieve political aims or to force a government to act."

The defunct League of Nations (1937, quoted in Afowowe, 2011, p. 2) similarly described terrorism as "all criminal acts directed against a state and intended or calculated to create a state of terror in the minds of particular persons or a group of persons or the general public."

Terrorism has been part of the strange stories of mankind right from the first family in human history – Adam and Eve. The Holy Bible (KJV, Genesis 4: 6-8, 2003, p. 6) presents a story of how the first born of the family, Cain, murdered Abel, his brother, in cold blood as well as how God tried to prevent it. Ever since, this dastardly act has assumed a frightening dimension across the world, with various countries devising ways to curb it.

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a militant Islamic sect based in Northern Nigeria. It is otherwise known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad*, that is, "people committed to the

propagation of the Prophet Mohammed's teachings and jihad." The group was formed around 2002. Guided by the meaning of the name 'Boko Haram' (western education is sinful), some people view their mission as reformist in nature. According to Ekwueme (2011, p. 41):

"The group came into existence in the 1960s but only started to draw attention in 2002. Mohammed Yusuf became its leader in the same year. In 2004, it moved to Kanamma, Yobe state where it set up a base called 'Afghanistan' from where it attacked nearby police stations, killing police officers."

For strategic operational reasons, Yusuf extended the operations of the group to Maiduguri, Borno state, in 2009 where he attacked and killed several political and religious leaders or their families, especially, those who had openly condemned or criticized Boko Haram's activities. From that moment, the group stepped up their operations and by 2011 several government officials as well as security operatives were killed. They included the All Nigeria People Party (ANPP) governorship candidate in the 2011 gubernatorial elections, Alhaji Modu Fannami Gubio, the younger brother of the Sheu of Borno, Abba Anas Ibn El-Kanemi, and the younger brother of the then governor of state, Ali Modu Sheriff.

In the same year 2011, the group struck other targets in the north including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, where they bombed the police headquarters and the United Nation's office. When the group struck at Damaturu and Potiskum, Yobe state, on November 4th, the police confirmed the death of 65 people.

The devastating effect of the group's attack has thus forced several government ministries, parastatals, and corporate establishments to step up security measures in an attempt to protect lives and property. In the words of Ekwueme (2011, p. 42), "Boko Haram is fast becoming Nigeria's version of Muslim extremists operating with impunity elsewhere, maiming and killing those they consider as infidels. One has cause to be alarmed at this turn of events."

Ekwueme (2011, p. 42) also asserts that the group's teachings resemble that of the Afghanistan Taliban. "They believe that any teaching or education that does not conform to the tenets of Islam is sinful and should not be taught at all. They also believe that it was the influence of western education that is watering down Islamic teaching and weakening Islam itself."

Ekwueme (2011, p. 43) further claims that the group exploited the country's dysfunctional school system that is plagued with numerous strikes by teachers, widespread youth unemployment, and a high prevalence of illiteracy. It group also exploits the absence of an effective security system in the country.

"Taking advantage of these economic frustrations and corrupt leadership of the country, they were able to win many converts. Even highly educated and well-connected members of the society joined the sect, and because their teaching addressed the frustrations of the unemployed youths, some of them dropped out of school, left their homes and joined the group fully."

The Guardian newspaper's editorial of February 11, 2011 expressed a similar view. According to the newspaper:

"The Boko Haram is largely populated by young and often educated unemployed believers who are in circumstance restless and disenchanted with a life of idleness and hopelessness. They are therefore, a ready and willing audience for a preacher who, pooh-poohing western education as valueless in this life and in the life to come, calls on his followers to reject it" (p. 4).

VI. Literature Review

In the introductory section of the final report on the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, White Aidan, the General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, says, "the declaration of 'a war on

terrorism' by the United States and its international coalition has created a dangerous situation in which journalists have become victims as well as key actors in reporting events" (White, 2002, p. 2). This statement could equally be regarded as a summary of journalists' experiences across the world following the September 11 atrocity.

Several journalists have been assassinated in the course of carrying out their professional and statutory duties of reporting issues of public interest. In Nigeria, some scholars contended that the government was involved in the killing of the founding editor-in-chief of the *Newswatch* magazine, Mr. Dele Giwa. Udoakah (1998, quoted in Udoudo and Diriya, 2011, p. 65) argued that "there have been suspicions of government involvement in the killing of innocent citizens, one of whom was the famous journalist, Dele Giwa." Another journalist, Zakariya Isa, was the victim of the Boko Haram sect. The *Nigerian Compass* in its edition of October 25 quoted a statement by the sect signed by Abdul Qaga:

"We killed him because he was spying on us for Nigerian security agencies. He was not killed in error. It was carefully planned. He was not killed because he was a journalist but for giving vital information about our operations to security agencies which led to the arrest of many of our members" (2011, p.1).

Three months later, another Journalist, Enenche Akogwu of *Channels TV* was killed by members of Boko Haram in Kano. Akogwu was on an official assignment when he was murdered by the sect.

According to *Media Development* (1996, quoted in Owens-Ibie, 2002, p. 32), "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. However, a pertinent question that should be asked is how should reporters respond to a terrorist incident? What role should reporters play in covering such an incident? Should they merely introduce it through a direct lead, subject it to analysis, or interpret it with the help of

information from news sources? Questions could also be asked about the moral and social responsibilities of reporters in a world served by mass media.

While it is easy to offer answers to these questions, the fact remains that the answers could equally be difficult to come by as a result of the modus operandi of the Boko Haram sect. Unlike other organizations, Boko Haram is not registered. It has no corporate address; it has no visible structure. Even those who sign their press statements are not known in society. The press statements usually sent to the media bear no addresses. Nevertheless, the government sees the media men as unpatriotic and uncommitted to the national interest, peace and stability of the country. The belief of the government is that journalists' surveillance of society should be comprehensive and that they should, therefore, have information that could lead to the arrest of all the members of Boko Haram. This notion is apparently confirmed by the fact that almost every day there is news about activities of this sect in the press. Sometimes, it is as if they enjoy more publicity than the government. This scenario is a very perplexing situation. While Boko Haram is allegedly killing journalists for giving information to security agencies, government is accusing the media of not being patriotic.

VII. The Theoretical Framework

If members of the Boko Haram sect see western education as 'sinful' or the Islamic religion in Nigeria as polluted, whatever the motives behind the bombings, they could be handled through the opportunities provided by the structural functional analysis theory. The theory, according to Gauba (2007, p. 95) "originated in the sphere of social anthropology in the writings of Radcliffe-Brown and B. Malinowski."

Gaub (p. 95) further stressed that it was then developed in the field of sociology by Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and Marion Levy; following which Gabriel Almond and his associates developed it into a tool of political analysis. It should be recalled that Gabriel Almond and J.S. Coleman (1960) identified the following four characteristics of political systems:

- i. That all political systems have political structures.

- ii. That all political systems perform the same functions with differing frequencies and by different kinds of structures.
- iii. That all political structures are multi-functional.
- iv. That all political systems are 'mixed' systems in the cultural sense. In other words, they are based on or rooted in culture which is always a mixture of both the traditional and the modern.

In 1966, Almond and Powell took the theory to a higher level in *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach*. In this work, they contend that all systems, irrespective of their typologies, must carry out certain specified duties if they are to remain relevant or in working order.

The functional requirements of a system they put forward, which Gauba (2007, p. 96) described as a modification of David Easton's model of the political system, identified the input and output functions mentioned below. The input functions are:

- i. Interest articulation
- ii. Interest aggregation
- iii. Political communication

The output functions, on the other hand, include:

- i. Rule-making
- ii. Rule-application
- iii. Rule-adjudication

For a better understanding and appreciation of the relevance of the theory to the subject-matter of this study, each of the functions originally identified by Almond and Coleman which are relevant to this study will be briefly explained.

'Political Socialization' in the words of Hague and Harrop (2004, p. 100) "is the means by which political culture is transmitted across the generations." Through political socialization, the young acquire their attitudes and orientations toward politics. Besides

constituting a serious threat to Nigeria's sovereignty, and the security of lives and property, the greatest threat of the Boko Harm sect is against the future of Nigerian youths in the North who are being negatively socialized into believing that western education is not good for them. Here is a region where the government had to introduce policies to encourage children to go to school. An example is Nomadic Education. Again, very recently, the Federal Government approved the establishment of 400 schools for Nigeria's child beggars otherwise known as the *Almajiris*.

'Political Recruitment' concerns the way in which political parties recruit members for the performance of various roles expected of them as members of a political group in the system. Here, the activities of the Boko Haram have confirmed that this role could also be carried out by any organization. The rate at which they recruit suicide bombers who have been carrying out their terrorist acts in Nigeria is alarming.

'Interest Articulation' refers to the processes through which opinions of the people, including their attitudes, beliefs and preferences, are converted or processed as demands on the political system. While the Boko Haram sect seems to have articulated what they felt was in the interest of Northern Nigeria, they failed to process their so-called interest legitimately through any of the State House of Assemblies in the North or through the representatives of the region in the National Assembly.

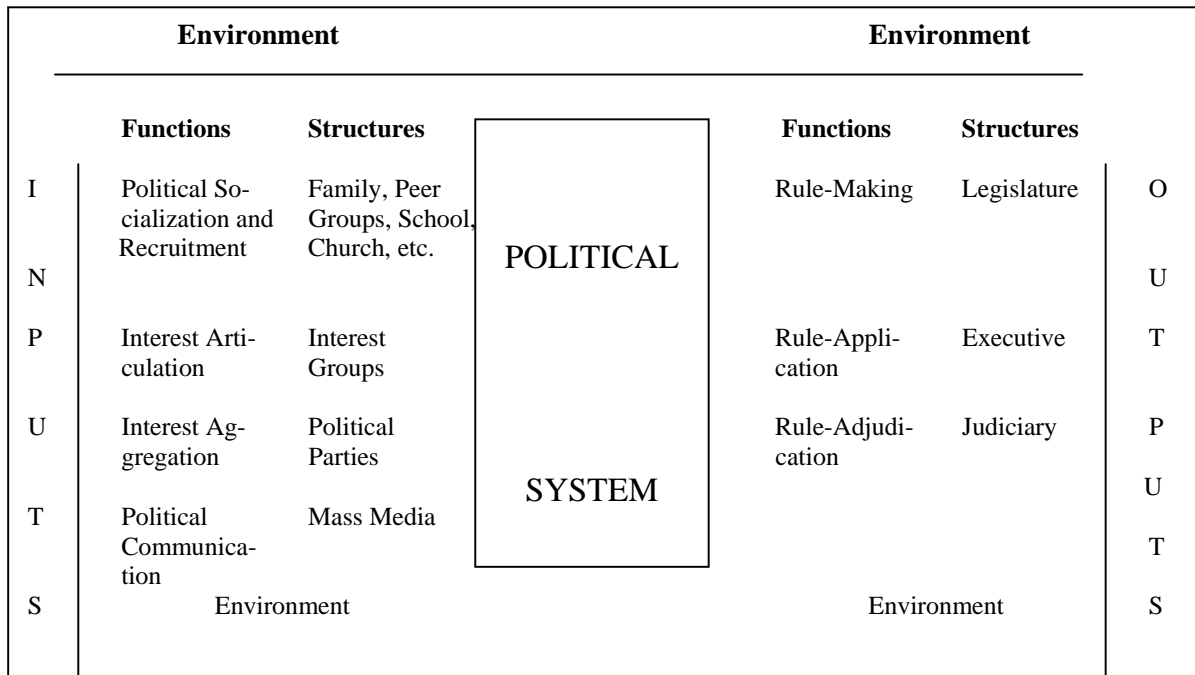
'Interest Aggregation' means the process through which divergent interests are collated and consequently processed into legitimate demands of a broad spectrum of the people in society. This function is mostly performed by political parties. Again, the activities of the Boko Haram have also shown that any other group could perform this function within the political system. It is, however, doubtful if the so-called interests they have aggregated actually represent that of the majority of the people living in Northern Nigeria.

'Political Communication' refers to any form of communication that has actual or political effects on the functioning of a political state. Almond and Coleman (1960) quoted in Blake and Haroldsen, 1975, p. 44), "note that all functions performed in the political

system, namely political socialization and recruitment, interest articulation, interest aggregation, rule-making, rule application as well as rule adjudication are performed by means of communication."

Popoola (2008, p. 124) equally stressed that an important ingredient of every democratic society is communication. He noted that communication affords leaders excellent opportunities of relating to and coping with the environment. North (1967) quoted in Isaak (1981, p. 292) similarly declared that "politics could not exist without communication, nor could wars be fought." It is therefore traditional and expected of the political system for it to be bombarded with messages, demands and requests. The system must read, treat and react to them appropriately. Decisions on such messages must be made known through appropriate feedback mechanisms. Through this approach, the system achieves its goal of meeting the aspirations of people. According to Ulmer (1962, P.397) "it is through communications that inputs are received and acted upon, and outputs are generated by a system." Deutsch (1963, P.7) made a similar declaration. "It is through communication, that is, the ability to transmit messages and react to them, that makes organizations." One would have, therefore, expected members of the Boko Haram sect to explore the opportunities offered in Almond and Coleman's structural functional analysis by legitimately putting their demands across within the system, and this would have been treated appropriately. A sketchy diagrammatic picture of these functions is presented below.

Adapting the Structural-Functional Theory in Explaining Boko Haram's Demand



Source: Adapted from O.P. Gauba, 2007, p. 97

What members of the Boko Haram sect should have done is to process their demands (inputs) through the available legitimate structures of the system, and the system in turn would have processed their requests and passed them on in the form of output (laws) rather than resorting to bombings, the killing of journalists and other violent acts. Further application of this theory is presented in the next section of the paper.

VIII. The Press and Terrorism in Nigeria: An Analysis

The mass media are globally regarded as the most important and strategic agent of socialization. Isaak (1981, p. 216) maintains, "adult attitudes toward most issues are the result mainly of newspapers, television and radio news reports. The point is that if the media have a point of view, the mass public will naturally come to have the same point of view." Trenaman and McQuail (1961, quoted in McQuail, 1987, p. 275) further argue that "the evidence strongly suggests that people think about what they are told by the media."

As the fourth estate of the realm the media are professionally and statutorily empowered to ensure a harmonious relationship between the state and society. In so doing, the media could embark on pro-development reporting by focusing on productive ventures upon which citizenry could be gainfully employed rather than on terrorism and violence. They could also focus on proposed projects by the state and society, including the critical analysis of government policies and programmes.

According to Adesina (2010, p. 2), "the media could bring before the state the deplorable conditions of the people in order that government could be challenged to alleviate their problems." He added:

"The purpose of governance is to touch lives of the citizenry positively. For government to do this effectively, the media should speak for the voiceless, champion the cause of the defenceless rather than lend itself as a tool of repression to government. It must be a tool for empowerment, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of society and identifying how the people can be helped" (p. 2).

The media could also be in the vanguard of the campaign against corruption, maladministration, 'god-fatherism' which tend to rob the citizenry of the dividend of democracy. As Chiamuta (1997, p. 44) observes, "many African leaders will do everything possible including promising to perform miracles in order to better the living conditions of the people, especially, the lives of the down-trodden in society, just for such leaders to get hold of the reigns of power without performing. Once the leaders got the well-sought chance, within few months, they will renege in their promises." A similar view was expressed by Jackson (2001, p. 8) who stressed that "politics in sub-Saharan Africa generally was not a contest to develop the country but to gain control of the apparatus and to use it. Politics is sought to enrich, or at least maintain the comfort of the rulers, their defenders and supporters. Government then became a kind of protection racket run by the ruling elites for their own benefits."

Even though Momoh (1985, p. 111) was of the view that the Nigerian press could have done more if the government had not tied their hands through several laws which obstruct the statutory and professional roles of the media -- such as the Newspaper Act of 1917, the Printing Press Regulation Act of 1933, Official Secrets Act of 1962, Newspapers Amendment Act of 1964, Public Officers Protection against False Accusation Degree No. 11 of 1976, Newspaper (Prohibition of Circulation) Decree No. 12 of 1978, State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 2 of 1984, and Public Officers (Protection against False Accusation) Decree No.4 of 1984 among others -- the greatest barrier being faced by newsmen today is that of terrorism.

The northern part of Nigeria where the problem of Boko Haram is more prevalent is a region described by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) in 2007 as "being more ravaged by poverty." In its editorial on December 20, 2011, the *Nigerian Compass* (p.10) quoted the then Governor of the Apex Bank, Professor Chukwuma Soludo, who said, "High and persisting level of poverty in the country is a northern phenomenon." The *Nigerian Compass* went further:

"A more recent report says that states in the North East consisting of Borno, Bauchi, Taraba, and Adamawa had the highest incidence of poverty ranging between 54.9 and 72.2% followed by North-West which consists of Katsina, Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa and the North central consisting of Plateau, Benue, Nasarawa, Niger, Kwara and Kogi" (*Nigerian Compass*, December 20, 2011, p. 10).

The paper blamed the northern political class, who ruled Nigeria for 38 years out of the 51 years of post-independence Nigeria, as not doing enough to advance their people. "Essentially, the underprivileged were exploited by a political elite who sought power for the sake of it," the paper added (p. 10).

In a related development, the National Bureau of Statistics recently released alarming data on the deteriorating standards of living in the country as a whole, pointing out that an estimated 71.5 per cent of the country's population in 2011 were relatively poor. The

statistician-general of the Federation, Dr. Yemi Kale (2012, quoted in *The Compass*, February 14, 2012, p.10) reported that "with a population of about 150 million, about 112.5 million Nigerians were reported to be living below the poverty line during the period under review."

The *Vanguard* newspaper in a related development also blamed the northern leaders for not empowering the people. The paper observed in an editorial that several governors in the region had launched empowerment programmes which reduced young people to commercial motorcycle riders, without skills, without education and without a future. The unfortunate thing about the youth empowerment through the motorcycle (*Okada*) is that they have become a tool used in armed robbery in the region.

The Niger state governor, Aliyu Babangida, was further quoted by the paper blaming the royal fathers in the north for discouraging education in the region. The position of the governor is, however, a negation of that of the Boko Haram sect, who regard western education as sinful. To worsen matters, eminent northern leaders have, to the great concern of government, refused to openly condemn the activities of the Boko Haram sect.

The *Daily Sun* newspaper, in its lead story of Monday, November 21, 2011 says "the government is not comfortable that northern leaders and elders are not condemning the Islamic sect enough on the spate of attacks and the loss of lives and properties." Evidently, their silence may be due to fear of reprisal attacks from the sect.

Meanwhile, Sarah Jubril, a top northern politician and presidential aspirant on the platform of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), has condemned the silence of notable northern leaders regarding the Boko Haram insurgency. In an exclusive interview with the *Daily Sun* of November 21, 2011, anchored by Remi Adefulu which was given a front page treatment, she asked rhetorically "what happened during the 38 years that we had rulership? These are questions we northerners should ask ourselves. Why should you be agents of destruction and not agents of building and development? My people say in my language, where elders are, things do not go bad. The retired generals, public

servants, civil servants must speak out now to stem the tide of Boko Haram. This is certainly not the best time for prominent people in the north to keep quite. They must speak out and offer concrete solutions."

The perplexing aspect of the Boko Haram's activities is that it could worsen the nation's economy. As Sarah Jubril (November 21, 2011, p.1) rightly observes, "The more they do this bombing, the less investors we would have, and the less investors, the less industries, the less industries the more unemployment, the more unemployment, the more the frustration and the more people run away."

As a result of Boko Haram's ceaseless attacks, the US and Canada, according to *The Nation* newspaper article (2011, p.1), have issued a travel warning to their citizens coming to Nigeria. The UN has also placed an indefinite embargo on all official travels to Nigeria on similar grounds. The *Guardian* newspaper, in its editorial on October 13, 2011, however, described the decision as being too harsh. The paper opined that terrorism is a global issue, and since the UN has not suspended all official visits to other affected countries, the decision to suspend all official travels to Nigeria is unfortunate.

The *Guardian* (October 13, 2011, p. 34) was further of the view that the UN decision would cause Nigeria major damage adding that:

"The country had already lost the right to host global food security meeting of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) which was moved to Senegal. The shift was attributed to the suspension of all official travels to Nigeria by the UN."

In a related development, the *Punch* newspaper editorial on the current state of the Nigerian economy quoted some eminent Nigerians who expressed great concern over the state of affairs in the country. The paper quoted former President Olusegun Obasanjo saying that "an Arab spring type of revolution that has toppled governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, which is also threatening the governments in Yemen and Syria could be replicated in Nigeria" (December 14, 2011, p.18).

The newspaper re-echoed an earlier call by a 79-year old legal luminary, Professor Ben Nwabueze, who had earlier opined that only a bloody revolution could address the country's problems. The paper (2011, p.18), quoted Nwabueze saying, "what we need is a surgical operation because this country can only be changed by blood; bloody revolution so that whoever survives would gather the pieces." A retired jurist, Justice Kayode Eso, and Professor Adebayo Adedeji, a former UN bureaucrat, were further quoted in the editorial agreeing that "the only way out for the country is revolution" (2011, p. 18).

There is much anxiety and an uneasy calm, especially in the north eastern part of the country, as a result of the activities of Boko Haram. The group claims responsibility for the suicide bombing of the police headquarters and the United Nations (UN) office in Abuja in which 24 people were killed and many others injured.

About 150 people were also killed when the group coordinated simultaneous attacks in Damaturu and Potiskum in Yobe state and Maiduguri. Following sporadic attacks by the sect on institutions, media establishments, corporate bodies and individuals, soldiers now guard electricity installations across the country. According to the ministry of power, the decision was meant to compliment the efforts of policemen. "The deployment of troops followed the recent call by the international intelligence community on the Federal Government to enhance security at critical infrastructural facilities in Nigeria" (*The Punch*, November 15, 2011 p.19).

Nigeria's aviation and energy sectors have already been identified as "potential future targets" of Boko Haram by the US House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security. While noting that the sect had adopted many of the al-Qaeda targeting tactics, the committee observed that many Boko Haram members had entered the south and that the sect may soon begin serious attacks on oil installations in the Niger-Delta. The Committee warned the US never to under-estimate the striking capability of the sect. Meanwhile the sect has openly listed party structures as part of its targets for destruction.

Agence France Presse (AFP), (quoted in *The Punch*, November 25, 2011) which attributed its story to Abu Qaqa, spokesman of Boko Haram, stated, "Nigerians should henceforth steer clear of party offices while owners of buildings used for political engagements should promptly convert them to other uses or risk losing them." The report further quoted the spokesman of the sect saying their next targets of attack would be political party offices and all buildings where political party posters are posted. Similarly, anyone who adorns his house with the symbol of any political party should remove it or else the building would be burnt down.

The US, in a related development, has warned of possible Boko Haram attacks on notable hotels in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. Amongst the hotels listed are Transcorp Hilton, Nicon Luxury and Sheraton, all favourite hotels of diplomats, politicians, and the business elite. The US Embassy has urged US nationals to stay away from the listed places. The intention of the threats is to frighten foreign investors away from Nigeria. However, President Goodluck Jonathan has asked foreign investors to ignore the menace of Boko Haram and invest in the country. The President was of the view that the development is a challenge which the country will soon overcome.

To check the bombing, former ECOMOG Field Commander, General Joshua Dogonyaro, called for intelligence gathering by security agencies noting, "Only proper intelligence gathering could bring the spate of sectarian strife in the Jos Plateau State and other parts of the country to an end. The security agencies should also be pro-active and sensitive to their environment" (*The Punch*, December 20, 2011, p. 14).

IX. Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper critically discusses the press and terrorism in Nigeria with special reference to the emergence of the Boko Haram sect as well as the debilitating effects of the group on the Nigerian media. While noting the crippling effects of the group's activities on Nigerians and foreigners residing in Nigeria, the paper urges the government to do

everything possible to halt a re-emergence of Thomas Hobbes' state of nature in Nigeria which Popoola (2001, p. 20) says "no modern state could afford."

The paper put forward three research questions:

The first asked whether Boko Haram insurgency constitutes a threat to press freedom in Nigeria. The graphic details of the bombings, including the assassination of journalists, presented in the paper, imply an affirmative answer to the question.

The second asked whether Boko Haram constitutes a threat to Nigeria's sovereignty. The answer is also in the affirmative as only the state possesses a monopolistic power over the use of force, including power over lives and property. The directive by the sect demanding southerners to relocate to their states also poses a serious threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria. Political observers recalled that such calls were the prelude to the Nigerian Civil War of 1967.

The third asked whether the media have any role to play in salvaging the situation. The answer is also in the affirmative. As the fourth estate of the realm and trustees of the public, the media are strategically placed as the main institution that could help in educating and enlightening the citizenry about the danger of indiscriminate violence.

Consequent upon the above, the paper recommends the following:

1. The Boko Haram group should explore the open opportunities provided by democracy to put forward their demands on the system through its input and output mechanisms. There is no demand or agitation that cannot be discussed and appropriately handled in a democracy.
2. If members of the sect are afraid of coming forward for fear of being apprehended by security operatives, the State Assemblies in the Northern states, especially Borno, Yobe, Kaduna, Kano and Bauchi, where activities of the sect have been

- more pronounced, can conduct a public hearing of their demands. If the outcome of such a public hearing is positive, then, their representatives in the National Assembly can then begin a process of amendment to the constitution. A referendum would then be conducted with the support of 2/3rds majority of the State Assemblies of the existing 36 states of the federation.
3. The government should overhaul the security apparatus in the country because the way this sect has been operating without much success on the part of the security agencies gives rise to great concern.
 4. The government should also recruit fresh blood into the Nigeria Police Force. The current strength of about 357,000 is grossly below the UN benchmark of 1 policeman to 400 civilians. With an estimated population of 150 million, Nigeria is certainly under-policed. With adequate hands, training and tools for operational efficiency, the police would be able to curb terrorism in Nigeria.
 5. The mass media should extend publicity against the activities of Boko Haram. Parents, religious leaders, as well as opinion leaders should educate the youth about the danger of being used for selfish motives by any clandestine group.
 6. Media owners in the country should be compelled to provide life insurance cover for all journalists, especially those covering crime, defence and political issues. In addition, compensation should be paid to the immediate family members of journalists who die either as a result of terrorist attacks while carrying out their professional duties, or in active service.
 7. The government should urgently address the issue of poverty and youth unemployment that is assuming frightening proportions in the northern part of Nigeria and in Nigeria in general.

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Tayo Popoola is a lecturer at the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos. His PhD area of specialization is political communication. He is also a print

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