

## A SOCIO-LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY AS A REFLECTION OF POLITICS, RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM, AND TERROR

BY

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### Abstract

Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has been attributed to many reasons for its persistent rise in the various attacks on government facilities, killings of human beings, and bombing of security formations. Daily, the Nigerian society continues to witness different terrorist attacks carried out by members of the Boko Haram sect. In this study, we examine the phenomenon from the perspective of politics, religious extremism, and terrorist activities. In essence, the study is a retrospective-sociolinguistic explication of the activities of Boko Haram during President Goodluck Jonathan's administration when the activities of the sect were still confined to the North East and by extension, the government reactions at that time. Unlike today that Boko Haram has spread to almost all parts of the country with their heinous activities as represented in the conduct of the "herdsmen" and "unknown gunmen" the previous administration witnessed insurrections in only one region of the country. Data for the study were elicited from newspaper reports on the activities of the terror group in that era. The analytical framework is anchored on the theory of sociolinguistics. Findings reveal cases of politicization of sect activities, filaments of religious ideology, and cases of extremist-terrorist activities.

**Keywords:** Sociolinguistics, Representation, Boko Haram, Politics, Religion, Terror

## Introduction

Religious extremism and the power struggle can be said to be largely responsible for Nigeria's internal conflict. This is because conflict arises when one group decides to impose its brand of religion on another group because of extremism...whereas, with Boko Haram in Nigeria, religion is a contributing factor to the insurgency or conflict. However, a heterogeneous society like Nigeria requires a lot of cohesion this has been extensively dealt with in Bassey Ekpenyong's works (2019a, 1994 & Ekpenyong & Tanyi (2019) observe. In such works, he observed "The process of sloganeering expressed the typical ethos, aspiration's and compliments chosen by each of the states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja and that the captions meet the expected standard of sloganization as a means of communicating ideas, beliefs, precepts or brand marks". There is therefore the need for all religions to treat one another with mutual respect. It is therefore believed that such conflicts as we have in Nigeria naturally generate antagonistic memories that are sometimes hard to heal, even long after the cessation of conflict. Insurgencies are more disruptive to human security when there is a struggle for control of

political power between the component major ethnic groups or an imbalance in the distribution of social economic resources. The perpetrators however call for an all-inclusive government to accommodate everybody; because in the absence of an inclusive government, the art of reconciliation and healing of memories becomes difficult and even unreal unrealizable this study, we adopt sociolinguistics which is not only explicitly dedicated to the study of the text in context but also accords both factors equal importance. It is an approach capable of identifying and describing the underlying mechanisms that contribute to those disorders in discourses that are embedded in a particular context--whether they be in the structure and function of the media, or intuitions such as a hospital or a school--and inevitably affect communication. Wodak has carried out research in various institutional settings such as courts, schools, and hospitals, and on a variety of social issues such as sexism, racism, and anti-Semitism. Wodak's work on the discourse of anti-Semitism in 1990 led to the development of an approach she termed the discourse historical method.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Wodak & Ludwig (1999) argue that viewing language from a sociolinguistic perspective entails three things at least: first, discourse "always involves power and ideologies. No interaction exists where power relations do not prevail and where values and norms do not have a relevant role" (p. 12). Second, "discourse ... is always historical, that is, it is connected synchronically and diachronically with other communicative events which are happening at the same time or which have happened before" (p. 12). This is similar to Fairclough's notion of intertextuality, as we will see. The third feature of Wodak's approach is that of interpretation. According to Wodak & Ludwig (1999), readers and listeners, depending on their background knowledge and information and their position, might have different interpretations of the same communicative event (p. 13). Therefore, Wodak & Ludwig (1999) assert that "THE RIGHT interpretation does not exist; a hermeneutic approach is necessary, Fairclough (1995b:15-16).

The politics of media, according to Fairclough (199b:36), should be considered in media analysis as well. Many critics, (Chomsky, 1989; Fairclough, 1995b; Fishman, 1980; Fowler, 1991; Hackett, 1991; van Dijk, 1991, 1993), argue that the commercial mainstream media works ideologically and is in the service of the powerful, the elite, and the state. Fairclough (1995b) argues that media discourses "contribute to reproducing social relations of domination and exploitation" (p. 44). At the same time, he observes that sometimes the interests of the media are in conflict state, for example in the case of the Vietnam war when American television, by showing images of the war turned the public opinion against the war (Fairclough, 1995b:45). Gowing (1991) and Schorr (1991) also speak of the impact of television, in 1991, in convincing the Bush administration to intervene in Northern Iraq to help the Kurdish refugees. To explain this, Fairclough and other analysts such as Hackett (1991), following Gramsci, use the concept of hegemony. Similarly, Chomsky (1989) and van Dijk (1998a) point to the media's power of manufacturing consent. According to Fairclough & Chuliaraki (1999), Hegemony is relations of domination based upon consent rather than coercion, involving the naturalization of practices and their social relations as well as relations between practices, as matters of common sense-hence the concept of hegemony emphasizes the importance of ideology in achieving and maintaining relations of domination. (p. 24)

The mainstream media, according to Hackett (1991), are "agents of hegemony" (p. 56). According to Hackett, no power could last forever through imposing force. As he observes, this is particularly true of democratic countries such as the U.S. and Canada where the public is mostly literate, has a history of experiencing the freedom of expression, and has a right to vote (pp. 56-57). In these countries, the ruling class needs to achieve the public's consent through persuasion and domination, and the mass media is one of the essential elements in manufacturing this consent (Chomsky, 1989; van Dijk, 1998a; Hackett, 1991; Fowler, 1991, Okune 2006, 2011, 2020)

**For instance, practices of media text production and consumption:**

Production and consumption of media texts are two other important dimensions of media and their institutional practices. Production involves a set of institutional routines, such as news gathering, news selection, writing, and editing (Fairclough, 1995b; Fowler, 1991; van Dijk, 1993). Consumption mainly refers to the written text (i.e. the press), read and comprehend text.

Selecting news reports is one of the important practices of text production. Mass media always have far more material than space, therefore, not all news makes it to the newscast (Fowler, 1991, p. 11). This means that there is a process of selecting news, what to weed out and what to publish. In terms of criteria for such selections, according to Carruthers (2000, p. 16) and Eaman (1987, p. 51), newsworthiness is not an inherent characteristic of events and news items. It is rather determined by the production and institutional practices. So, "events become news when transformed by the news perspective, and not because of their objective characteristics . . . news is consciously created to serve the interest of the ruling class" (Eaman, 1987, p. 51). As a result, "the world of the Press is not the real world", rather a partial one, which is but "skewed and judged" (Fowler, 1991, p. 11).

Selection by journalists and the media is also involved in choosing the sources of information, for example, who gets interviewed or who gets to be quoted or heard in news. According to Fairclough (1995b), one striking feature of news production is the overwhelming reliance of journalists on a tightly limited set of officials and otherwise legitimized sources which are systematically drawn upon, through a network of contacts and procedures, and sources of 'facts' and to substantiate other 'facts.' (p. 49) In contrast to officials, ordinary people, whenever they are used as sources, are mostly allowed to speak about their personal experiences than opinions on an issue (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 49). According to Fairclough (1995b) and Fowler (1991, p. 22-23), this heavy reliance on officials as sources of information is tied to the media's dependence on the status quo to keep their ownership and continue their profitability. The consequence of this, according to Fairclough, is "a predominantly established view of the world, manifested textually in, for instance, ways in which the reporting of speech is treated" (1995b, p. 49).

## DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Our focus in this segment, therefore, is to describe reports on insurgency as the reflect politics, religious extremism, and terrorism in Nigeria. The Boko Haram sect has proven to be hydra-headed and has become almost impossible for the security agencies to overcome. A lot of academic works have therefore been carried out on the activities of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria from the point of view of language study (see Ebim (2019a, 2019b & 2017). Such cited works opine that "The Boko Haram sect has constituted a serious menace not only to the Nigerian society but to the entire

west African sub-region. The leadership of the organization ranging from the late Mohammed Yusuf to the “late” Abubakar Shekau has proved to be highly illusive to the Nigerian security network”. For this reason, the sect has been variously described by different people and media outfits as Ebim (2017) opines that “In Nigeria, militants have been given various names that have been highly militant, along political, social and religious lines. Ranging from the Niger Delta Militants to the Boko Haram Insurgents, the issue of linguistic labeling in the media about militants about been a serious one... the study aims at revealing inequalities of power as a standard approach to media texts. While also studying the phenomenon from the perspective of semiotics, Ebim (2019) opines that the aim was to “clarify the meaning construction process and its interpretation by the reader at the perceptive level and explicate the course of shallow meaning units into the deeper levels of meaning in the selected pictorials generated from the insurgency in Nigeria. Flowing from the above forms of analysis, we, therefore, engage the data in this, study from a sociolinguistic point of view. We, therefore, observe that he, therefore, news content extracted below attests to the above postulation:

Boko Haram’s threat: We’ll resist any attempt to harm Jonathan – Ex N-Delta militants: The threat by the violent Islamic group, Boko Haram to bring down the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan in three months has drawn the flak of stakeholders in the Niger Delta region warning of grave consequences should any harm befall him. Reacting to the violent Islamic Boko Haram threat on the President, Spokesman of the defunct Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF), a former militant group in the creek of the delta, Capt. Mark Anthony warned Boko Haram to mind its utterances in the interest of peace. EXTRACT E61

The extract is a reaction to the allegation that the Boko Haram sect had threatened to “bring down” the administration of the then president Goodluck Jonathan within a space of three months of their attacks. Ordinarily, the Boko Haram threat ought to be a national issue that demands seriousness on the part of the relevant security operatives. However, it is the Ex Niger-Delta militants that took the responsibility of “defending the president” by reacting to the threat issued by the Northern insurgents. This is a clear indication that the entity called Nigeria is a “mere geographical expression”. As reported above, it is not only the ex-militants that reacted but “all major stakeholders” who spoke through the mouthpiece of the former militant group “Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF)”. The reaction calls for peace through being “mindful” of their utterances. Continuing, the ex-militants observe:

“Boko Haram has continued as though they have the licence to kill. Threatening the life of the President is taking the matter beyond any imaginable limit. “We think the Boko Haram is

gradually coming out behind the curtain to avail Nigerians of the real motive of the group after all.” The ex-Niger delta chief described as an affront on the sensibilities of ex-militants in the Niger Delta who have had over 10 years of violent confrontations with the Nigerian Army under the Joint Task Force warning that any attempt to harm the President would spell doom for the nation. In a statement entitled, “Boko Haram, Mind Your Utterances, N/Delta Ex-militants warned,” the group said, “The attention of the leadership of Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF) has been drawn to the ranting of Islamist militants Boko Haram leadership utterances of planning to bring President Goodluck Jonathan’s democratically elected government to an end in three months. EXTRACT E62

Certain discourse patterns in the above extract need a closer examination. Those utterances tend to confer the sole responsibility of protecting the president on the shoulders of a sectional militia group. Such utterances as: “Boko Haram has continued as though they have the licence to kill. Threatening the life of the President is taking the matter beyond any imaginable limit. “We think the Boko Haram is gradually coming out behind the curtain to avail Nigerians of the real motive of the group after all.” Close scrutiny reveals that the “Boko Haram” insurgents have the liberty to “kill” because they have a safe haven which is protecting them from any form of prosecution “We think the Boko Haram are gradually coming out behind the curtain to avail Nigerians of the real motive of the group after all”. To however label the speech of the Boko Haram as ranting as revealed in this text “The attention of the leadership of Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF) has been drawn to the ranting of Islamist militants Boko Haram leadership utterances” is an indication of a call to anarchy and an affront on the sensibilities of the Boko Haram insurgents. Any reasonable person who believed that this threat was the business of ex-militants to react was just joking as even the elders from the Niger Delta region saw the threat as a slap on their faces:

“We are warning the entire northern leaders to advise their children to be mindful of their actions and utterances as any attempt on President Goodluck Jonathan’s life shall spell doom for the entire nation. We will resist violently because we have said it over again and again that the Presidency for the South-South was a sympathy vote by the entire country to appease Niger Delta ex-militants and the region over federal government criminal abandonment of region’s oil and gas wealth being exploited over 50 years.” EXTRACT E63.

The opening sentence accuses the “northern elders” of knowing the identities of the perpetrators of violence and who have been described severally as “faceless”. To say they should “advise their children to be mindful of their actions and utterances” is a direct accusation/indictment which needs a critical examination. But to also say “We will resist violently” entails that the duty of protecting the president of a country “rests on the shoulders” of militants and ex-militants. In the same report, the federal government is rather criminalised instead of the various militia groups who have been portrayed as “gangsters”, “criminals” etc. the Ijaw media group also added its voice to the political dimension to the ragging Boko Haram insurgency by spelling out in clear terms the perceived link between extremism, insurgency, and politics in Nigeria.

Any harm to Jonathan’s life would elicit grave consequences – Ijaw Group: In its reaction the Ijaw Media Forum through its President, Elder Asu Beks urged the Islamic group to have a rethink, warning that any attempt to harm the President would be visited with grave consequences. Elder Beks said, “Like other discerning Nigerians, the Ijaw Media Forum knew before now that the entire Boko Haram crisis was a well-organized political movement packaged by those opposed to the Jonathan administration.”, “We are not surprised that this threat is coming from Boko Haram and their political backers. EXTRACT E64.

The knowledge that the “Ijaw Media Group” had all the while that the Boko Haram insurgency is a political agenda well planned and orchestrated to “destabilize” the government of a “minority” leader is quite alarming. But to describe the insurgents as “a political movement” is the height of intolerance on the Nigerian political scene where there is persistent scheming to ensure that only the major ethnic groups have their say in the political running of the country. Again, the knowledge that the insurgents are being sponsored as reported in that extract is a clear indication that there is an agenda to “destabilize” the then government based on ethnic sentiments and parochial political ideologies. There seems to be a lack of clarity on what insurgency is all about in Nigeria. Some see the situation as religious; others see politics playing out while others believe the land is a major factor. But from the newspaper reports so far, politics seems to be a major factor of insurgency. Even some sections of the northern part of the country key into the notion that insurgency in the country is as a result of the power shift. In the extract below, the middle belt renaissance is of the thinking that Boko Haram insurgency aimed at the then sitting president:

Insecurity Instigated to Undermine Jonathan: The Middle Belt Recognisance group has alleged that the security situation in the country was a deliberate attempt to undermine President Goodluck Jonathan. It said this is so because the President comes from a minority group in the Niger Delta. EXTRACT E65.

The use of the word “deliberate” connotes “calculated” or “orchestrated” meaning that the actions of the militants are not coincidental but well-hatched plans. To “undermine” “well-hatched” here is to “challenge” “destabilize” “weaken” or even “destroy” according to the report is because the sitting president is from “a minority” tribe. This utterance is not in defence of the Niger Delta but an attempt to assert its own identity as an independent region within the larger bloc of the northern state as the report further observes:

The group condemned recent remarks by leaders from the north suggesting that the middle belt has no independent identity, thereby tying the region to the apron strings of the far north. He said no region in the country is superior to another. The statement condemned the concept of the north as encompassing the central states of Nigeria, calling the idea, “anachronistic and irrelevant in contemporary context”. EXTRACT E66.

The subsequent remark substantiates our initial suspicion that the threat of domination, suppression, and intimidation are responsible for most of the crises that ravage the nation. The report also challenges the alleged “superiority” identity imposed on the larger ethnic group while that of “inferiority” is conferred on the “minority” tribes thereby leading to the divide in attitude and relationship with one another in the society. The “core north” as used often in the nation’s media reports is a concept that imposes a heavy burden on those that are not from the “core” north as typified in reports. This is the political dimension in which the nation’s insurgency takes. Just as the Niger Delta militants believe that the President was under constant threats, the Niger Delta militants declared the former Vice President, Atiku Abubakar persona non grata within the Niger Delta region, thereby blaming the then president Goodluck Jonathan’s woes on the former vice president. But the umbrella body of the Northern elders, the Arewa Consultative Forum was quick to react:

ACF others urge Ex-Militants to Withdraw Threats On Atiku: Following threats by ex-Niger Delta militants to former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) has urged them to make a retreat in the interest of peace. ACF described the threat of barring Atiku from the Niger Delta region as misguided, lacking in reason and in conflict with democracy. The forum’s position was contained in a statement signed by its National Publicity Secretary Anthony Sani. Sani said the threat by the militants is a deviation from the peaceful resolution of differences in the political process common in democracy. He described the action as counter-

productive which will do nobody any good.  
EXTRACT E67.

Discourses of this nature are capable of “overheating” the polity thereby further encouraging insurgency as we experience in Nigeria. There is an intricate link in Nigeria between politics, governance, corruption, poverty, and violence. Politics is largely driven by money. Elected officials are hardly accountable to citizens. The well-connected exercise undue influence according to the strength of their purse and the strings they can pull. The various elite factions – political, economic/business, bureaucratic, traditional, and religious – have been drawn into a political economy driven by huge oil receipts and implicated in wide-scale and systemic corruption.

The high rate of insurgency emanating from religious extremism has polarised the nation along religious lines. For extremist groups like Boko Haram, it is a holy war but for most Nigerians, it is part of a senseless fight for survival. Each of the two dominant regions in Nigeria i.e. Christianity and Islam contains ethnic and religious minorities who harbour grievances against ethnic and religious majorities they see as hegemonic oppressors. These grievances are sometimes expressed through bitter political complaints, through insurgency stoked by political elites and incendiary media rhetoric, and through violent insurgencies. The desperate advancement of religious solutions to socioeconomic and political problems has deepened social fissures and spawned extremist and violent insurgencies such as the ongoing Boko Haram Islamist terrorist campaign, which has killed and maimed Christians and Muslims alike. The adoption of the Sharia legal system by a slew of Northern Nigerian Muslim-majority states between 2000 and 2002 was the high point of this new politicization of religion. Once Sharia was introduced, it only added to the fear of Christians that they would be persecuted and their freedoms, guaranteed in the Nigerian constitution, curtailed. Christian communities in the affected states protested, their protests stoked by the rhetoric of Christian politicians and leaders. Clashes between Christian and Muslim communities with a history of peaceful cohabitation followed, in which thousands of people were killed, property destroyed, and hundreds of thousands displaced. Sharia had been a sticking point in Nigerian politics for decades. In 1978 when many Northern Nigerian Muslim delegates to a constitutional conference sought to extend Sharia beyond the realm of family law, Christian delegates protested, and the Sharia debate almost tore the conference apart. A compromise allowed states with the majority or significant Muslim populations to set up Islamic courts but Sharia’s application was restricted to inheritance and family law. The endemic nature of religious extremism got entrenched into the Nigerian socio-political landscape that the Chief of Army Staff reacted in all of the nation’s national dailies but extracted from one of the media houses chosen for study in this research. This was so entrenched into the nation’s polity that the Chief of Army Staff had to issue a warning to take a stand against its infiltration of the military as reported below

Ihejirika Warns Soldiers on Religious Extremism: The Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Azubuike Ihejirika has warned officers and men of the Army against religious extremism, saying the authorities will not hesitate to fire anyone found wanting in that regard. Ihejirika gave the warning at the weekend during the graduation ceremony of 1,600 soldiers, who attended the two-month Basic Counter Terrorism Course 13/13 at the Nigerian Army Training Centre (NATRAC) in Kontagora, Niger State. EXTRACT E68.

As experts have observed, religion is often at the heart of any conflict, especially in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious setting such as Nigeria. And as such religion and extremism go *insitu* because they are ideologically based. The word “extremism” as used in the above extract can be equated with such words as: “radicalism”, “fanaticism”, “fundamentalism”, “terrorist”, “extremist”, “militants” as well as “violent” and such categorizations are capable of causing disaffection because they are judgemental. Such words can only occur through the process of media slanting and media framing to portray such social actors in a bad light as belonging to “them” and not “us” see (van Dijk 1999:112). The “warning” by the Chief of Army Staff did not come without any repercussions or consequences as he further states: “the authorities will not hesitate to fire anyone found wanting in that regard. The word “fire” as used within this context does not refer to the military usage as in “shoot a gun” or within the denotative parlance which refers to “the ability to generate heat” but the word is used in this context to mean “dismissal” from the Nigerian Army where the culprit will possibly face “a court martial” as used within the Army in “civil prosecution”. All the utterances above are based on “rumours” which the Chief of Army Staff describes as “falsehood” as he posits inter alia:

“It has been observed of recent that a religious cleric has been distributing inciting statements, leaflets, and Compact Disc loaded with information to confuse, misdirect and cause disaffection among you. It is also targeted at breaking the esprit-de-corps which binds us together as a fighting force,” he said. He said the allegations that the Armed Forces are opposed to the Federal Government’s plan for amnesty for members of the Boko Haram sect are false. “Most of the spurious allegations recently raised by a religious cleric accusing the Joint Task Force (JTF) of conniving with Boko Haram to give locations and timings to conduct attacks are untrue and baseless,” Ihejirika said. “You can see for yourselves the infrastructural developments around you in Kontagora Barracks which are also replicated in other barracks all over the country to

improve your efficiency, service delivery, and well-being.” EXTRACT E69.

The rescinding of the “misleading” information contained in “Compact Disc” to “confuse”, “misdirect” and “cause disaffection” is the thematic preoccupation of the Army Chief’s message to “you” here referring to the military officers whose “esprit-de-cors” is about to be broken by the “incorrect” message being “distributed” by a certain “Muslim cleric”. The implication of using the label “Muslim” in describing the “cleric” is a deliberate attempt to situate the source of “misleading” information as reported in extract E69. Such utterances are capable of “sparking” fire to further degenerate the insurgency which had already got to an advanced stage. As if reacting to the alleged use of compact discs to weaken the spirit of oneness amongst the soldiers, the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN rejects the alleged imposition and sanctioning of sermonic preaching through certain laws. In the next extract, the association rejects the imposition of sanctions on certain “men” of God to regulate their use of language.

CAN rejects attempt to regulate preaching: The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in the 19 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja has rejected the attempt by the northern governors to regulate religious preaching in the north using traditional rulers, saying that it will not be practicable? CAN also be said that it is holding the federal government and the five state governments where violence erupted during the Boko Haram crisis which it said led to the beheading of 11 Christians, including three Pastors, and the burning of 20 churches. Addressing a news conference in Kaduna yesterday evening, the Secretary of CAN in the area, Elder Saidu Dogo said that the fundamental issue that motivated the Boko Haram movement to unleash terror on innocent Nigerians is the quest for the total implementation of sharia in the country. Also, the Kaduna state Secretary of CAN and Publicity Secretary of Northern CAN, Rev. Joseph Hayab, in his own contribution said that Christians already have their own internal mechanism to regulate their own preachers. Hayab said that no Catholic, Anglican or Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) can preach the gospel without being licensed to do so, adding that this was the situation in other churches. EXTRACT E70.

This reaction emanates from the 19 Northern states’ governors’ decision to use traditional rulers to regulate the mode of preaching of religious scholars and pastors as well as catholic Reverend Fathers within the crises ridden states. This is where politics gets intermingled with religion thus leading to clash of ideologies and

culminating into religious insurgency in a volatile society such as Nigeria. Religion and politics are separate entities that do not follow the same patterns or regulations but when politicians begin or decide to pontificate on behalf of religious practitioners, it leads to chaos, and to avoid that chaotic scenario, the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN states categorically that the organization “is holding the federal government and the five state governments where violence erupted during the Boko Haram crisis responsible which it said led to the beheading of 11 Christians, including three Pastors and the burning of 20 churches”. This means that if the 19 northern states governors had the capacity to regulate the activities of religious practitioners, they should have the same capacity to “regulate the activities of the Boko Haram sect”. While the Islamic sect is bent on ensuring that sharia law becomes the legal norm in Nigeria, Christians are of the opinion that they have their regulatory bodies that ensure that the tenets of the Christian religious practices are adhered to:

Traditional rulers or Emirs are not qualified to regulate religious preaching because it will create more problems than solutions. How can a Muslim Emir or Christian traditional ruler regulate preaching in Christianity or Islam as the case may be? We are addressing this Press Conference with a heavy heart as a result of the mindless killing of Christians and destruction of their churches in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, by members of the Islamic fundamentalists known as Boko Haram. Since the incident, some northern leaders including the federal and the Borno state government appear to be suppressing the facts of the violence as it affects Christians in Maiduguri and we feel it is imperative to tell the world about the callousness, the barbarism that the Islamic sect meted on Christians. The Boko Haram sect went about wielding dangerous weapons and abducting Christians to the enclave of their leader, Mohammed Yusuf in the name of implementing Sharia in Nigeria. They were forcefully converted to Islam after they were tortured. Three pastors and eight other Christians who resisted the forceful conversion were beheaded on the order of the leader of the Islamic sect. while 20 churches were burnt to ashes by the fundamentalists. The Christian Association of Nigeria in the 19 Northern States is holding the Federal Government and the five state governments where violence erupted responsible for the mayhem, especially the Borno state government. EXTRACT E71.

By attempting to use “traditional rulers” to regulate the “preaching” of Islamic scholars or Christian preachers is to equate orthodox practices in religious worship with traditional practices

and even superimpose the superiority of traditionalists on religious practitioners. And to challenge this decision of the politicians, the religious hierarchy rhetorically enquires how can a Muslim Emir or Christian traditional ruler regulate preaching in Christianity or Islam as the case may be. This is also followed by the use of certain lexical items to describe the heinous crimes committed by the Boko Haram sect in the name of propagating their religious beliefs. Such lexical items are: “wielding” “dangerous weapons” “abducting” “forcefully converted” “tortured” forceful conversion” “beheaded” “20 churches were burnt to ashes” “mayhem”. All the linguistic labels above fall within the same semantic level of “heartlessness” by sharing a great deal of semantic overlap meaning that the words have the capacity to explain each other. These linguistic labels adequately explain the activities of the Boko Haram in relation to carrying out their ideological belief within their region. Insurgencies are the most-covered subjects, while other subjects such as politics, and economy are relegated during such situations (see Schary, 1969; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985; Van Slike Turk, Richstad, Bryson & Johnson, 1989; in a different perspective Gans, 1980; Knopf, 1975; Merten, 1986; Van Dijk, 1991). In doing so, particular groups may receive special attention such as the insurgency in Nigeria thus leading to bias which is usually indicated by the amount of space allocated to such groups that is always very little even when the “other group” is the major actor, (Van Dijk, 1991). The implication is that the particular group does not have the opportunity to challenge the negative definitions given of it in the press (Merten, 1986). In other words, such group members are mostly represented in the news as speechless actors involved in negative acts (TerWal, 2002). In the next extract, the umbrella body of all Christians in Nigeria accuses the late president Umar Musa Yar’adua led federal government and the then governor of Borno state, Ali Modu Sheriff of shielding the insurgents from prosecution. According to the accusation, the height of this complicity is the “hasty” execution of the founder of the Boko Haram sect, Mohammed Yusuf.

CAN Accuses FG, Sheriff of Complicity: Alleges bombing of 20 churches, killing of 14 pastors. However, the leadership of the Christian Association, (CAN) has accused the Federal Government and Governor Modu Sheriff of Borno state of complicity in the Boko Haram crisis. Addressing a press conference in Abuja yesterday, National Secretary of CAN, Elder Samuel Salifu, stated that the urgent manner in which the Boko Haram sect leader, Mohammed Yusuf was killed in custody was only an indication that the Federal Government did not want him to expose his sponsors and backers. EXTRACT E72.

The implication of the above scenario is that the leadership of the sect group was “hastily” executed to cover up certain individuals within the government circle. The politics of “finger pointing” comes into force as the Christian Association of Nigeria clearly

states that the “then governor of Borno state” Ali Modu Sheriff was culpable in the complicity to ensure that the message about the notoriety of the “Boko Haram” in unleashing terror on the masses is not exposed. For instance, Ekpenyong & Tanyi (2020) adopted the “nominal group structure within the grammatical framework of the English language to carry out the functions performed by the sub-structure within the larger clause structure on the one hand and the rank-shifted approach”. This is brought out in the use of the following lexical items: “accused” “complicity” “urgent manner” “killed”- words that denote “conspiracy to murder” in a hidden manner and to “conceal” the act of violence which has been committed to avoid legal sanctions or prosecution in a civil court. This is evident in the report which further states that the “Government paid deaf ears to the 21 security threats and reports by the SSS for two years purely out of complicity, and sympathy for the fundamental objectives of the Boko Haram sect, but only reacted when the government felt its own security was threatened. The association rhetorically probes:

Why was government preserving the Boko Haram sect? How did the sect acquire arms without the notice of government? Who are their sponsors? Why did Governor Sheriff refuse for more than two years to say a thing about the group even as their headquarters was in his state? Finally, how did his commissioner become second “in-command in the Boko Haram and yet the governor is just knowing about the group now? When Boko Haram was allowed to establish its headquarters in Maiduguri despite security reports, it raises logical question who are the people in government sheltering the Boko Haram sect from prosecutions. Why were the leader Mohammed Yusuf and his second-in-command, Alhaji Buji Fai an ex-commissioner in Sheriff’s government reported to have been captured and taken to Government House and silenced so quickly? EXTRACT E73.

Rhetorical Questions as used above are special syntactic devices whose essence is to reshape the grammatical meaning of the interrogative sentence. In other words, a question is no longer a question but a statement expressed in the form of an interrogative see the sentence. Tanyi & Ebim (2020) work “explicates the pattern of propaganda rhetoric in the media to enact and represent the prevalent realities of the Boko Haram crises in Nigeria by examining and analysing the responses, reactions and the utterances by the major actors in the raging insurgency war”. Thus here is interplay of two structural meanings: that of the question and that materialized. Both are materialised simultaneously. Rhetorical questions express various feelings, emotions, or a particular state of mind of a speaker. The more intense the feelings of a speaker are the more repetitions, gradations, and exaggerations are used. They express disappointment, bitter feelings, disagreement, reproaches, and anger.

## CONCLUSION

In this study we examine from a sociolinguistic perspectives reports on insurgency that have been churned out of the acts of terrorism. Using this approach, we identify the discourse patterns in the various reports of the crises to explicate the issues in relation to the crises. This is because sociolinguistics emphasizes the way reports communicate and the system dominating their usage in a crises situation. As an apparatus directly associated with culture, sociolinguistics is fundamentally diverse from the traditional criticism; obviously, primarily it analyses texts taking into cognizance the sociocultural surroundings of the event. In this study, we arrive at the conclusion that the moment a news item goes through the production process it becomes ready to be read and understood; that is, it becomes ready for consumption, but how it will be consumed has been the centre for much debate in the analysis of media discourse in particular. Discourse analysts naturally make assumptions about how audiences read and comprehend texts. We realized that the 'proposition and response interlocution' that underpins personal conversations also find expression in national discourses or what is today trending as 'public conversation'. Many meaning patterns in the Boko Haram national experiences and reactions have been effectively deconstructed through sociolinguistic analysis. It has been affirmed that a society undergoing profound pains and uncertainties will cry out, ask questions, raise allegations and make inquisitions to unravel "mysteries" surrounding disturbing events. The major group actors in Nigeria came out to interrogate the insurgencies and their communications have been significantly analyzed here for both academic knowledge and social evolution.

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