Public Relations, Quest for Sustainable Peace and Security: A Reflection on the Boko Haram Impasse in Nigeria

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Abstract

Military measures aimed at ending the destructive onslaught of Boko Haram fundamentalists who have devastated north-east parts of Nigeria seem to be taking long to achieve. This implies peace and security eluding the country unless some other actions are pursued as alternative means of attaining sustainable tranquillity in the country. To this end this study explored the application of principles and techniques of public relations as enduring method of achieving attitudinal transformation for winning the terrorists. The process involves professional practices which will subtly and surely revise the violent disposition of the terrorists through the use of communication. Descriptive analysis was applied encompassing review of literature, theoretical framework and recommendations which include government's use of professional public relations practitioners and consultants; training and retraining of media and communication practitioners on global best practices of coverage of national security issues, and preparedness with reliable strategic action plans for effective management of future crisis situations like the Boko Haram insurgency.

Keywords: Public relations, conflicts/crises, sustainability, national peace and security

Introductory Backgrounds

Two popular axioms engage our minds here. First, "without peace there can be no development". Second, "No economy thrives in an environment of insecurity", Anweh, *et al* (2014: 221). The spate of insecurity in Nigeria orchestrated by the insurgency of *Boko Haram* in the north-eastern part of the country makes the two popular statements two incontestable facts. The menace of *Boko Haram* has been adjudged to have surpassed the challenge of the 30-month Nigeria civil war. Put in another context, *Boko Haram* has been the greatest threat to Nigeria's national unity in the post-Nigerian civil war era. It has caused social dislocation among the citizenry, stagnated socio-economic development, truncated the country's quest for infrastructural development, led to unprecedented level of tension and political instability. It has also occasioned the dissipation of the country's resources, resulted in lack of trust and confidence among and within the political class, worsened the spate of infrastructural decay in the country and even exposed several areas of inadequacies at various spheres of our national defence and security system. As a result of its onslaught, the capacity and capability of the Nigerian Armed Forces has been put to question.

The Nigerian army has witnessed unparalleled challenges notwithstanding the few gains of the recent weeks. To some critics, its inability to rescue the over 200 Chibok students over a year of their abduction implies "…it is made up of persons lacking in courage and tact", *TELL* (2014). Seemingly to underscore the seriousness of the security threat posed by the extremists, president Mohammadu Buhari in his inaugural address notes: "We cannot claim to have defeated *Boko Haram* without rescuing the Chibok girls and all other innocent persons held hostage by insurgents", *TIME* (2015: 8), *TELL* (2015: 23). According to the magazine, multiplicity of factors combines to create logjam for the army in its execution of the war against fundamentalists. Among them are: the nature of the terrain - the Sambisa forest where the insurgents are operating from, the unconventional nature of the war, the brutal nature of *Boko Haram* which makes it difficult for people from the occupied areas to volunteer useful information to the army, an apparent poor equipment, motivation, low morale among the rank and file as well as alleged sabotage within the army.

Initially, the government thought containing the insurgency would be a walk over. However, unfolding events tend to prove the government wrong. Although it would be hasty to say that the former government at a stage probably run out of any practical, viable and reliable options of handling the matter, the situation so far appears to be a dig-dug affair between government forces and the insurgents. The unsuccessful attempt to tackle the extremists over the years, perhaps, is a clear indication that it is a high time other proactive, credible and positive alternative solutions are sought and one of such panaceas, no doubt, remains the professional application of the principles, practice, techniques, skills, tactics and strategies of public relations.

Contextualising Public Relations in an Environment in Dire Need of Peace

For ages, public relations has remained an efficacious and reliable choice and tool for effective management of conflicts and crises at organisational, local, regional, national and international levels. Organisations and governments have always utilised it as a potent instrument for resolving conflicts/crises: face-offs with workers; skirmishes of communities; over-bearing influence of stakeholders/shareholders; exploitative tendencies of financial institutions; misconstrued perception of customers/consumers; aspersive and negative disposition of

competitors; uncomplimentary and harsh media reports and adverse or punitive legislations from governments. Similarly, public relations always have been handy during national emergencies, disasters or wars. At the global arena and diplomatic circles, its principles and techniques are always in use for the management and resolution of conflicts and crises through diplomacy. It is at play in the current bid to douse the tension between Israel and Palestine; minimise the hostilities in Ukraine; find enduring solution to the Syrian crisis; restore peace and order in South Sudan, Congo and Central African Republic.

Whatever way it is defined, public relations cultivates cordiality, corporative disposition, healthy relations, favourable disposition and goodwill; restores understanding, trust, confidence, fraternity; repairs and heals wounds, frayed nerves, broken hope and despair, and builds linkages and partnerships. It re-establishes an opportunity for peaceful negotiations, diplomacy, tolerance, accommodation and eventual restoration of normalcy. Even under war situations, effective communication processes through public relations is usually deplored with a view to through effective engagement evolve mechanisms for restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, reabsorption and transformation when the crisis would be over.

It is, therefore, on the strength of the above insights that this paper attempts, through the application of qualitative analysis, to explore the applicability, effectiveness, capacity and capabilities of public relations in restoring peace and national security, evolving measures with which to nip future conflicts and crises in the bud and ensure harmonious relation and cohesion and consequently sustainable development which is currently eluding Nigeria due to the crisis in north-eastern parts of the country. Pertinently the question is: how do we attain peace in terrorist ravaged Nigeria and what role can public relations play?

Public relations use communication to create mutual benefits for the interest of the contending parties in an organisation and its various publics. Sam Black states that its aim is "to establish a two-way communication, seeking ground or areas of mutual interest, and to establish understanding based on truth, knowledge and full information." He also quotes the Institute of Public Relations as defining public relations as the "planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its various publics", Black (1989: 1).

Conflict is the aftermath of the inherent differences in man. Onigu Otite buttresses this position when he states that "Conflicts arise from the pursuit of divergent interests, goals and aspirations by individuals and, or groups in defined social and physical environments", Otite (1999: 1). In another popular definition, an analyst sees conflict as "a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralise, injure, or eliminate their rivals", Coser (1956: 8). At any level, the eventual consequences of any conflicts can only be guessed. Hence, the best thing is to avoid it at all costs. Yet, they continue to rear their ugly heads and will ever be so as man's interests differ.

These two definitions appropriately contextualise the preponderance of troubled spots all over the global today. Right from the family to global levels, conflict manifests as struggles, clashes, skirmishes, fighting, battles and wars. In Nigeria, there is abundant evidence of conflicts in the political, financial and other sectors. However, most pronounced is the current armed conflict the Goodluck Jonathan's regime could not end and now inherited by a new administration of Mohammedu Buhari.

On the other hand, crisis connotes conflictual situations, usually resulting in negative consequences like damages to lives and property, as a result of man's quest for supremacy or high-handedness. Often some perceive crisis as the level where conflict has gone out of control. It, however, includes naturally induced circumstances which also cause casualties and fatalities like disasters, calamities and catastrophes that may result from such events. Instances are earthquakes, fire outbreaks, droughts, famine, epidemics or floods. But in all, crisis leads to destruction of life and property.

Peace and security can hardly prevail in an environment of conflict and crisis. This work, therefore, contends the antithetical nature of these words and rather calls for sustainability in attempting to revise them. It implies the application of resources, as Hornby (2005) notes, in such a manner that it does not harm the environment. Often people use resources in such a way that the future of the environment and its inhabitants is jeopardised. Sustainability, therefore, harps on continuity and enhancement of the life span of both the users and the ecological system. In the context of this topic, it is all about using public relations to attain an enduring national tranquillity, orderliness and peaceful co-existence among the heterogynous ethnic, religious, linguistic and political groups that make up the Nigerian polity.

National peace and security readily come to mind. Ibeanu (2006) describes national peace as the absence of war or conflict and hence the prevalence of harmony, concord and amity within a country. The existence of certain social conditions in a country, even in the absence of wars, however, can still threaten peace. Such situations include poverty, exclusion, intimidation, oppression, want, fear and many types of psychological pressure. Several Christian philosophers see peace as the prevalence of the natural and original state of man. Such believers include St. Augustine. Others like Plato advocate for justice as the basis for the existence of peace, insisting on the presence of some social conditions as prerequisite for peace, Bolarinwa, Durojaye, Oluwadare and Jarikre (2010). Among such conditions are fairness, equality, egalitarianism and absence of favouritism,

nepotism, sectionalism, cronyism and god-fatherism. Some of these are negative factors militating against peace and security in Nigeria.

Ibeanu (2006) further states that sociological approach to peace is two-pronged, among which are structural-functionalist and dialectical-materialist angles, one of which postulates that for a society to be peaceful, it must provide such basic needs like education, food, good governance and security for the people. The other is an adequate government institutional framework perfectly structured to meet the needs of the citizenry. Accordingly, peace is both the absence of war, the existence of justice and absence of situations that can trigger violence as is the case in Nigeria

National security involves the protection and defence of a particular territory, for instance a country against attack. It is, therefore, the availability of means of ensuring safety and assurance of self and personal confidence for citizens of a country, as Hornby (2005) notes. The definition lays bare the importance of security to any nation. It is a single element no government can compromise as it is the taproot for the full maximisation of individuals' and collective potentials of the country for national development. And in relation to peace, it is also inclusive of everything ranging from government, organisational and institutional framework that will ensure and guarantee, between a citizen and another, happiness, comfort, confidence, good neighbourliness, trust and cooperative disposition. None of these is available in north-east Nigeria since the escalation of the activities of the Islamic fundamentalists, *Boko Haram*, which president Buhari notes is the most serious among the numerous challenges facing his new government, *TELL* (2015: 23).

Theoretical Framework
The paper is anchored on two theories and a model. They are Frustration and Aggression theory, Frank Jefkins' Transfer Process model and the Relationship Management theory.

Propounded in 1960 by Dollard, remodelled by Berkewitz and later modified by Yotes in 1962, Frustration and Aggression theory postulates that aggression is the result of frustration. It is their opinion that the failure of someone to attain certain expectations and aspirations could lead to violence. Nigerians have severally witnessed this kind of circumstance. The civil war of 1967 to 1970, the Niger Delta impasse and the current insurgency by terrorists are typical illustrations. These crises resulted from situations where people could not apparently have their socio-economic and political dreams actualised and out of frustration, resort to venting their anger through violent activities.

The Transfer Process model is gaining wide popularity and acceptance stemming from its wide areas of application in the field of public relations. The model as postulated by Frank Jefkins states that when effectively applied, public relations is capable of changing Hostility to Sympathy, Prejudice to Acceptance, Apathy to Interest and Ignorance to Knowledge. It, therefore, can serve as a blueprint, guide and roadmap for resolving conflicts at various levels of organisations or governments, hence its applicability in this work.

Ledingham and Bruning in 2000 propounded the Relationship Management theory. It stresses the application of public relations as means of cultivating mutual relationship among diverse groups of people in an organisation, society or country like Nigeria.

The suitability of these theories and model to the theme of this discourse can be seen from the point of their correlation with the subject matter. For one, since conflicts and crises result from frustration, public relations can be applied in the management of the problem which lead to such despair and anger. Some persuasive and diplomatic mechanisms could as well be evolved for resolving the *Boko Haram* insurgency. Therefore, if the postulations of these concepts are anything to go by, public relations has the potentials with which the negative effects of conflicts in any environment can be minimised and contained.

Causes of Conflict: The Nigerian Situation
Conflict amounts to disorderliness and uncertainty. Most often, emanating from man's insatiability which partly results in struggle for supremacy, it undermines and stifles growth, progress, advancement and development. Maoz (1982) calls conflict "a state of incompatibility among values, where the achievement of one value can be realised only at the expense of some other values". He, therefore, underscores the indispensability of conflicts and its universality since, no matter what, man must persistently pursue certain goals and interests, and those aspirations, even if realised, may merely lead to another need likely to bring him at loggerhead with other persons. This is the case at group, community, organisational, regional and international levels.

It must be noted, however, that not all conflict situations are negative, Bolarinwa (2006). For instance, competitive engagements like the World Cup, Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, African Cup of Nations, elections and classroom examinations are all conflictual in nature, but lead to positive and healthy results. Bolarinwa, Durojaye, Oluwadare and Jarikre (2010) further observe that resource control, psychological needs, values and information management are other causes of conflict.

As is the case in most other countries, resource control is a major issue of concern in Nigeria. Indeed, most conflicts in various parts of the world can be traced to the struggle over who gets what resource(s). The

Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria is clearly attributable to resource control. Citizens of the area are demanding for fair share of the resources accruing from their natural wealth, after all, they bear the burden of the environmental degradation resulting from the oil exploitation. On the *Boko Haram* crisis, some analysts are of the view that there is some political undercurrent. To them, the issue at stake is actually who controls the country's political base and consequently the petroleum sector which is the mainstay of the economy.

Psychological needs could be another source of conflict. Bolarinwa (2006) describes it as "psychical in nature, involving mental phenomenon within an emotional framework". It has three dimensions of interpersonal, interpersonal and situational/environment perceptions. The first involves the way an individual sees him/herself at any given moment; the second when people see others negatively; and the third, attitudes resulting from events and happenings in a place or in an environment or establishment, for example, employees' situation and experience, treatment and welfare in their place of work. Although it is not one of the major demands of the militant group, some northern politicians attribute the rise of the insurgency to the neglect of the area by successive administrations in the country, a contestable issue as northerners headed the series of military governments that ruled Nigeria between 1966 and 1999.

Divergence in value orientation could be a potential source of conflict. Such areas of differences include philosophy, religion and ideology. This can be seen in the sensitivity attached to religion in Nigeria especially between the two main religious bodies: Christianity and Islam. This is also the case in the terrorists' tendencies and sectarian crisis occasioned by *Al Qaeda* in the Middle East and North Africa. Terrorism, a dangerous angle to the conflicts ravaging most parts of the world today, Nigeria inclusive, stem from heterogeneity in peoples' values. From whatever side it is viewed, terrorism poses serious threat to global and national peace and security as is the case in Nigeria, Honderich (2006).

Initially, the current crisis was seen as sectarian. Various towns and cities in northern Nigeria witnessed destruction of lives and properties, particularly of Christians and non-northerners by Islamic fundamentalists. Successive governments attempted tackling it, without success, till the present full blown war against the state started some years ago, according to Buhari, *TELL* (2015: 23).

Effective information management is a critical factor in the maintenance of peace and orderliness in any society or country. The result, otherwise, is conflict and crisis. As Bolarinwa (2006) observes, in Nigeria, the Federal Government is mindful of this, hence it has at various levels, institutional apparatuses for efficient information and communication management. It is for this very purpose that such media organs like the Federal Ministry of Information, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), National Orientation Agency (NOA), News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) and Federal Information offices are established across the country. Although their presence has not abated communal, sectarian and armed conflicts in the country, it is an indication it could have been worst. Democratising communication is another means of ensuring peace, as UNESCO (1980) claims, by ensuring that the masses have unfettered accessibility to means of communication and prevalence of freedom of the press and expression to enable the exercising of the masses' rights to know and to be informed.

With the apparent permanency of conflict, readiness for its management is pertinent. The viable option is the adaption of measures for containing it. As far as man is alive, his needs continue to mount and with the scarcity of resources with which to fulfil them, adversity, rivalry and competition will ever persist among people. In addition, as no two people are alike, such differences between them will go on to manifest, as far as they relate with each other in the areas of religion, culture, economy and politics, scenario very much pronounced in the case of Nigeria and potent sources of conflicts. In addition, unemployment is said to be part of the causes of terrorism. Due to people's different backgrounds, their reactions to such an issue will never be alike. While some will respond mildly, gently, politely or cautiously to it, others may do so harshly, barbarically or violently, thereby causing conflict as Bolarinwa, Durojaye, Oluwadare and Jarikre (2010) note.

On the other hand, no two environments or institutions are alike. Different places people find themselves must embody what will make them exhibit certain peculiar attitudes and behaviours. For instance, a congenial working environment makes it possible for the employees to not only maximise their productivity, but also show optimal cooperative disposition to the management. In the same vein, a peaceful nation which provides all the needs of the citizens: education, health, employment, food, housing, water, security, electricity, transportation, communication, recreation and other infrastructural utilities in an equitable manner, in addition to the prevalence of justice for all, would have ensured the happiness and cooperation of the majority of its populace. The actions of the citizens will be anticipated to be supportive of the government and devoid of antagonistic tendencies, in the contention of Bolarinwa (2006). However, it is yet to be known if such inadequacies northern Nigeria warranted raising arms against the state.

Conversely, a harsh working environment will likely elicit hostile reactions from workers leading to industrial unrest, low productivity and unhealthy relationship between them and the management. Similarly, when a society or country fails to satisfactorily meet the needs of its people, the result is most likely be negative reactions manifesting in such vices like armed robbery, hooliganism, touting, prostitution, advance fee fraud,

corruption, child labour, child trafficking, drug peddling, kidnapping, militancy and terrorism. All these portray insecurity and uncomfortable environment, scenarios topical of Nigeria's. Perhaps, the worst of all these evils is terrorism, described as "…deliberate acts of a physical or psychological nature perpetrated on select groups of victims. Its intent to mould the thinking and behaviour not only of these targeted groups, but more importantly, of a larger section of society that identify or share the views and aspirations of the targeted groups", Oluwadare (2013: 130). Continuing, he observes that with intimidation and coercion, they cause "fears, anxiety, apprehension, panic and/or horror" among the citizens.

These create work for the military, paramilitary and police forces that will routinely operate on continuous basis safeguard the country's sovereignty and territorial interests. Otite (1999) succinctly agrees with this by observing that "conflict is a normal process of interaction particularly in complex societies in which resources are usually scarce". Consequently, we are not postulating Nigeria without any form of conflict, but one whose adversities would have minimal negative effects, probably, due to the effectiveness and adequacy of the measures on ground with which to efficiently manage them through pre-emptive and proactive strategies as offered by public relations. Indeed, if effectively deplored, public relations can serve as a palliative measure in the *Boko Haram* insurgency in northern parts of Nigeria.

Public Relations and Communication Imperative Ingredients for Peace and Security

Public relations as a universal concept are anchored on philosophical principles for achieving individual and organisational objectives. Substantially communication-oriented, it has gone beyond means of attaining harmonious relationship between an entity and its various publics to a veritable and reliable tool for societal harmonisation, transformation, reformation, rehabilitation, restoration, resuscitation and rejuvenation. These are possible due to the inherent qualities and features of the practice and professional.

It is variously defined from divergent perspectives from whatever angle anyone looks at it. However, Black quotes Rex Harlow, an American professional public relations practitioner, as summing it up, after analysing 472 different definitions, as:

> …a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between and organisation and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasises the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilise change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools, (Black, 1989: 4)

As loaded as it is, this definition underlines the wide coverage and scope of public relations, its indispensability in organisational management and usefulness to responsible and responsive corporate entities. Organisations which embrace the practice of public relations can hardly be taken unawares as it has sufficient mechanisms for alertness and foresightedness provisions essential for spotting possible areas of conflicts ahead of their surfacing to cause havoc within and among members of a group or organisation, the definition seems to state.

Furthermore, Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) 1982 say: "Public relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony." It is, therefore, a necessity in complex, sophisticated and complicated societies like Nigeria's whose religious, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political and social differences bother on high level of sensitivity often resulting in intolerable relationships as exemplified by the *Boko Haram* impasse. Public relations are, therefore, required as a soothing balm to assuage and comfort frayed nerves at any level of human relations and as well impact the right information to the people.

To attain cordiality between the government and people, some factors are pertinent in order to ensure and certify the forging of long lasting friendly and mutually beneficial relationship among the two parties. They are the 'memoranda of understanding' or questions that should agitate the mind as such contract is entered into and on which such relationships should be pivoted. They are means of offering the parties assurance, confidence and credence to trust the deal and each other. Mackay (2004: 59) lists 21 of such considerations among which are: "The ability of the parties to adapt in the relationship; The balance of power; Whether people are trying to be constructive; Whether people are open about things; Each party's level of commitment to the relationship; How cooperative each party is; The credibility of the different parties; Whether synergy is produced in the relationship and How intimate or frosty the relationship is"

Communication constitutes a substantial component of any managerial decision, from planning to implementation, no matter the organisation or its level. Indeed, the extent of the success of any organisational activity is highly contingent on the level of the effectiveness of the communication and information components of its decisions, choice of audience and media, their application, management or execution. This is more so with

the often divergence of some organisational audiences' backgrounds and orientations. Under this circumstance, the meticulous, creative and professional utilisation of communication tools in interacting with the target market and audience wins the race, no matter the issues at stake. Some of the critical steps to be taken have to do with strictly adhering to communication principles as evolved over the years by communication and public relations experts and authorities.

Most of the time, public relations programmes, campaigns and projects involve attitudinal and behavioural change. It is the same case in this discourse where the campaign must centre on "successfully revising the negative dispositions, attitudes, behaviours, viewpoints and opinions…" as Aliede (2012: 41) and Aliede (2012: 97) notes. What the insurgents require is attitude reorientation; as he insists that "...when the problem is that of attitude and behaviour, communication is the right prescription and answer. Any solution to this kind of problem "substantially must be communication-driven". Ozoh further elaborates:

> Accordingly, required are packages with sufficient communication components, which must not only be comprehensive, but also professionally conceived, planned, packaged and implemented. This is in readiness for massive mobilization of the people and will provide the opportunity for the utilization of persuasive and motivational strategies as is the case in other social issues: HIV/AIDS, child labour and trafficking, prostitution, kidnapping, among others. In affecting changes in people's attitudes and behaviours, these measures are tested and trusted, (Ozoh, 2005/2006: 56).

Described by UNESCO (1980:14) as an "exchange of news and messages and an individual and collective activity embracing all transmission and sharing of ideas, facts and data", communication is at the centre of man's progress. It is the grease for lubricating the society, a strategic instrument for ensuring informed, rational, reasonable and responsible decisions at individual, collective, organisation and government levels. As a result, whatever is selected as the methods, techniques and tactics for tackling any challenge: preventive, curative or consolidative, must be serious efforts geared towards the effective planning, producing and packaging of the communication components. They are the key determinants of the eventual success or failure of the entire programme and campaign.

Before the insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria attracted global attention, the country had several other conflictual issues of serious concern. Among them are: fluctuating economy; high level of unemployment, illiteracy, child mortality and poor health system; decayed infrastructure; political instability and sub-standard educational system. The insurgency, however, became more pronounced as a result of its dimension, magnitude, brutality, casualties and destruction. The murderous campaign has continued unabated with its toll on many towns and communities in north-east of Nigeria. The terrorist at a stage declared Gwosa, a town in the area the capital of their "caliphate". The implication of this development is very glaring and the Army appreciates it. "It is not only the pride and reputation of the military that is at stake, but (also) that of the entire nation", THISDAY (2014: 15) quotes its spokesman as saying. The magazine's Editorial further reports that the United States Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, better captured the gravity of the situation in an interview when she says:

> The frequency and scope of *Boko Haram*'s attacks have grown more acute and constitute a serious threat to this country's overall security. Boko Haram has shown that it can operate not only in the northeast, but in Kano, in Abuja and elsewhere…The reputation of Nigeria's military is at stake. But more importantly, Nigeria's and its children's future is in jeopardy. Failure is not an option.

These events may be prelude to worst scenario to come if care is not taken. Terrorists are emboldened and gingered to wreak more havoc by a particular attained success. For instance, the Soviet and Afghan war of 1979-1989, according to Samuel P. Huntington, resulted in what he calls:

> An uneasy coalition of Islamist organisations intent on promoting Islam against all non-Muslim forces. It also left a legacy of expert and experienced fighters, camps, training grounds, and ideological facilities, elaborate trans-Islam networks of personal and organisational relationships, a substantial amount of military equipment...and most important, a heady sense of power and self-confidence over what had been achieved and a driving desire to move on to other victories, (Huntington, 1996: 247).

Omale (2013: 261-262) advocates that governments and stakeholders in the nation's affairs must understand that addressing security in this modern age should be holistic. This has become necessary as the issue of security is today more expansive than before, as UNDP's *Report of New Dimensions of Human Security* (1994: 6) insists. They now cover such areas as economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, political security, besides social security. It must too encompass the protection of citizens' human freedom, according to UN Commission for Human Security, Hussein, *et al* (2004: 16). As Omale suggests, an effective treatment of security related matters, "Needs to be based on consultation and collaboration with different sets of actors which frequently have different interests, for example, local/national/regional/international interests, government/media, governmental/non-governmental,

civilian/military." Therefore, all problems, including deprivations, faced by Nigerians must be seen as security issues and addressed as such.

Achalonu (2012: 79)also recommends that to stoutly tackle terrorism, the mass media should through the use of appropriate communication principles, techniques and strategies take the lead in national socialisation and attitudinal change campaigns; regular awareness campaigns against terrorism should be seen as part of their social responsibilities, and the role of information as powerful and valuable tool should be recognised and applied professionally to mitigate the effects of terrorism in the country.

Isumonah, *el al*, on the other hand suggest that:

> The intricacies of terrorism, the local historical contexts and their global interface, have to be carefully interrogated and understood; find lasting solution to conflict generating factors; violence for violence approach to resolving the impasse should be re-examined as it has apparently not yielded any positive results; effects of globalisation, like migration, our porous borders, among others should be adequately addressed in the context of global concerted efforts and transnational counter-terrorism modalities, and importantly, more researches should be carried out…, (Isumonah, *el al* 2013: 9).

Indeed, adequate knowledge of the past and background of all terrorist groups is a necessity if any solution to their challenge will be total. Seemingly, it was this that informed Nigeria's president Mohammedu Buhari's declaration, after describing Boko Haram as "a mindless, godless group who are as far away from Islam as one can think of", of instituting "a sociological studies to determine its origin, remote and immediate causes of the movement, its sponsors, the international connections to ensure that measures are taken to prevent a reoccurrence of the evil." An understanding of their context, grievances and *modus operandi* of the Islamists will certainly go a long way to availing the most appropriate measures to adopt in getting rid of them.

Communication Principles and Techniques for Attaining Peace and Security
To successfully apply public relations in tackling conflicts and crises, the practitioner should stick to certain fundamental principles of communication. These are the process of communication that ultimately lead to securing the attention of the audience, retaining it, ensuring that the message is consumed, understood, assimilated and made use of. In other words, it leads to action. Impliedly, the campaign programme or project has such compelling influence that leads the target audience to strictly behave in accordance with the intention of the programme implementers. Public relations strategies and techniques when applied professionally will convince members of this radical group to abandon their dogmatic ideologies, cooperate with the government, relate amicably with people from other parts of the country and respect the religious and political beliefs/rights of others.

These principles should act as guides in writing and packaging any campaign communication message that would make audience-friendly and effective communication capable of achieving the desired impact on the targeted audience, in the opinion of Skinner, von Essen and Mersham (2001:77). To be meaningful and capable of attaining the intended goals, such messages must have certain features, which Cutlip, S. M, *et al* present in what they call "The Seven C's of Communication". The components are:

1. Credibility: communication must acceptability, believability lead to confidence and high regard.
2. Context: it must reflect the realities of the environment. Should lead to participation and should reaffirm and support the prevailing social setting.
3. Content: the message should be meaningful in line with receiver's value. It should be relevant, rewarding and gratifying.
4. Clarity: conveyed message must be in simple, clear themes, slogans or stereotype. There should be one voice and no ambiguity.
5. Continuity and Consistency: there should be repetition for penetration. This with variation to "factual and attitudinal learning."
6. Channels: use conveyance vehicles familiar to the audience, if this must be massive accessibility and respectability.
7. Capability of the audience: Audience's condition should be put into consideration, their affordability, availability, habits, reading ability and level of knowledge and socialization, all affect the effect and impact of communication, communicator must note this and put it into consideration while packaging their messages.

As tested and proved guidelines and principles, they are capable of aiding campaigners in a crusade like the fight against *Boko Haram* in achieving the communication goals if meticulously followed in planning, scribing, producing and packaging campaign communication messages.

However, the very first aspect of any strategic communication campaign exercise, as is the case here, starts with its proper planning, Center (2003: 339). To attain effective crisis management, Skinner, von Essen and Mersham (2001: 288) also state that proper planning is necessity. They propose these four key factors: "Well

defined corporate policies and procedure of crisis management; Giving responsibility to staff to involve in tackling such crisis; Training and preparing staff to handle communication during such crisis situation at all necessary avenues, and establishing communications system and equipping it." They went further to provide a blueprint for preparing/planning crisis management, roadmap for tackling challenges like the *Boko Haram* insurgency as shown below:

- Prepare crisis management plan.
- Be ready to show concern for the incident.
- Categorically position the corporate body involved as the right source of information on the incident and available remedial measures.
- Make effective use of the media in containing the situation.
- On the onset, set up a crisis/emergency control room, well-staffed and equipped to manage the crisis.
- Maintain telephone hotlines to handle torrents of calls that will accompany the crisis and man them with seasoned personnel.
- Involve the affected, effected or opponents involved in the crisis management and control.
- Also involve "objective, authoritative bodies" in the crisis management. This will elicit credibility.
- While communicating, be meek, modest, truthful, fair, accurate and concerned.
- Understand the audience and their grievances and expectations.
- When making the crisis plan, involve outside independent consultancy services, (Skinner, von Essen and Mersham, 2001: 289).

Prosecution of crisis management is followed by its review in order to draw sufficient conclusions from the lessons and experiences. However, before then, the execution of the communication components of the crisis management plan entails the skilful application of planning, expertise, artistry, experience, creativity and innovation in the organization, control, coordination, directing, monitoring, supervision and evaluation that must take place for the communication set objectives to be attained. Appropriate media are chosen to ensure that the diversified publics the communication messages are targeted at are reached. Nigeria has sufficient media institutions for pursuing such a goal. Ozoh (2001:13) while quoting Moemeka (1990) also supports using the right media, especially when the aim is to affect change in people's attitudes. As he puts it, the right mass media should change from acting as channels of distribution and transmission to becoming "vehicles for participation, expression and discussion," so as to "become effective in inducing culture-bond of rural inhabitants to strive to change their attitudes to life by accommodating new and enhancing ideas that would improve the quality of their lives".

There are, perhaps, limitless measures that can be taken to ensure effectiveness of applied communication techniques in a crisis situation. Center here offers more of such tips:

1. Anticipate the unexpected. Always be expectant of such crisis as accident, robbery, fire, flood or strike.
2. Institute and practice a crisis communication plan. Be ready ahead of any crisis.
3. Train employees. Get personnel ready for the task ahead.
4. Only one spokesman. Not two or more, just one talking to the media and the public.
5. Get one more spokesman if the crisis spreads externally, as it should if it is environmental. He will be handling the publics involved or affected by the crisis.
6. Don not speculates. Do not guess the cause, cost or anything else. Be sure to say what you know, Center (2003: 322)

Other recommendable actions include:

a. Utilizing suitable communication designs, layout, frameworks, visuals and plans to attract sufficient attention.
b. Include drawings, paintings, pictures, illustration and actualities for attention retention among the less literate groups.
c. Use aesthetics, functional, original, creative, innovative, dynamic and local measures to appeal and motivate comprehension of the messages.
d. Apply proportionally balanced and contrasted; clearly, simply, harmoniously and rhythmically packaged communication elements for informative, educative and entertainment goals of the audience.
e. Communication messages' copy should be also professionally crafted as to certain the best qualities that would be inviting, luring and conveying the intended messages.
f. Messages should lead to awareness, knowledge, desire, and conviction, making the audience to read, view or listen to the message and eventually act according to the goal of the communication message, (Aliede 2012: 43).

Conclusion and Recommendations
Winning the war against *Boko Haram* on the battle field may not lead to sustainable peace and security, hence our prescription of public relations through strategic communication. Its mechanism has such inputs that will not

only convince the terrorists to lay down their arms and embrace peace, but also influence and transform them to be part of the dialogue and other measures that will bring about long term tranquillity and security to the region and country in general.

In absence of peace and security, Nigerians' future is at stake and this is a stack reality. To regain it, Nigeria has to fight back with every available resource, implying the massive deployment of funds meant for national development to security as is currently the case as Nigeria armed forces square up with the terrorists. And doing so *per se* may not directly translate to enduring victory. A number of other factors have to come into play involving non-military measures and that is where the application of public relations comes in, hence, we further make the following six-point prescriptions:

1. The Federal Government requires and should employ the services of professional public relations practitioners whose skills, expertise and experiences are necessary to come up with the needed strategic and tactical measures of conflict management with which to holistically tackle the problem and its aftermaths.
2. A major aspect of the crisis management should be information management and as of now it is poorly handled. Often, there is conflicting information resulting from lack of coordination. The application of professionals will go a long way in saving the country from the embarrassment that go with such gaffes, blunders and mistakes being witnessed.
3. Experts in the field, when consulted, will be in better and more independent position to counsel the government on its social contracts and responsibilities to the people, absence of which lead to frustration, aggression and violence, especially under democratic dispensation. These professionals will be able to apply the relevant principles.
4. Nigerian media practitioners and managers should mind their handling of security issues, like that of *Boko Haram*, so as not to contribute to the escalation of the insurgency and also demoralise the military and the masses. Often, terrorists' actions are geared to seeking media expose and attention and by the way the press often frame their news, the insurgents are indirectly assisted to achieve their propaganda objectives, get emboldened and toughened to engage in more drastic destructions.
5. Media practitioners and managers need to undergo more training and capacity building on strategic public relations and communication principles as required in conflict management and acceptable as global best practices in handling sensitive matters like national security issues like the *Boko Haram* saga.
6. A permanent institutional framework should be put in place to fashion out some reliable strategic action plans required in future for effective and professional management of crisis situations like the *Boko Haram* insurgency, in order to, if possible, nip them in the bud, somewhat allowing them to escalate with the attendant embarrassments and other consequences as are currently the case.

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