

# Boko Haram Assault on Nigeria: Towards Effective Mass Media Response

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## Abstract:

The Islamic sect, Boko Haram has waged a relentless war of attrition on Nigeria since 2009. The sect has attacked mostly government's establishments, security operatives, places of worships, markets and lately, the mass media. These assaults have accounted for countless deaths and injuries to Nigerians and destruction of property worth millions. Many have expressed concern that the attacks if not decisively checked could spell grave danger to stability of the country, worsen security of lives and properties as well as freedom of speech and other related freedoms. The mass media, given their power and influence could play very significant role in winning the war against the Boko Haram insurgency. This paper critically examines the whole situation: the Boko Haram sect and its attacks; the assault on media houses, government's response, mass media and objectivity, the media and terrorism and makes recommendations on how the mass media could be effectively deployed in the effort to stop the sect.

## 1: Introduction:

The African continent has, in the past decade been assailed with high incidence of terrorism. Such groups like the notorious Al-Shabab in Somalia have mushroomed over the years to become a potent threat to the stability of the continent. In Nigeria, the radical Islamic sect, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad but more popularly known as Boko Haram or Western education is sin) has been unleashing mayhem in Nigeria since 2009 ostensibly because of the killing of its leader, Utsaz Mohammed Yusuf by the police that year. The sect initially concentrated their gruesome attacks on selected government's targets especially offices of security agents. The sect later expanded its campaign to include places of worship especially churches and international targets like UN building in Abuja. Today, the sect has added media houses and markets as its prime targets.

When the sect warned that it will hit more targets including the media houses, many Nigerians including the reporters themselves were not under any illusion that the sect would not carry out the threat given its notoriety for ruthlessness, meanness and bloodletting. True to this fear, on April 26th 2012, the sect made good their threat hitting the offices of *Thisday*, *The Moment* and *Daily Sun* newspapers in both Abuja and Kaduna in well-planned and coordinated bomb attacks, promising the media houses more future attacks. Latest statistics show that over 1000 people have so far died in the sect's attacks while many others have sustained various degrees of injuries.

Consequently, Nigerians have expressed the fear that these innumerable attacks on innocent people and the media portend grave danger to the stability of the country, security of lives and property and to the entire Nigerian fourth estate (and by extension), freedom of speech; if an urgent remedy was not found for the unbridled blood-letting perpetrated by the sect. Bokor (2011) for instance, fears that peaceful co-existence of diverse faiths is definitely threatened by such fundamentalist tendencies... this threat is reinforced by the fact that Boko Haram has fast become Nigeria's version of Muslim extremist groups operating with impunity elsewhere, maiming and killing those they consider as infidels. One has enough cause to be alarmed at this turn of events. What we are worried about is the careless abandon and audacity with which these groups function. The problem therefore, is how the mass media should respond to this enormous challenge.

Besides, not a few Nigerians also believe that the media represent a potent force in the effort against the dreaded sect given the government's ineffectual, flip-flopping approach to the menace. They therefore, fear that by hitting the media, another strong pillar in the fight against the sect, freedom of speech and other related freedoms would be permanently extinguished if the sect succeeds in subduing the media.

It is in view of the fears expressed above that this study, using the critical analytical method, examines the Boko Haram sect and its attacks (including on media houses), government's response, terrorism and the mass media; the issue of objectivity, and makes recommendations on how the media should respond.

## 2: **Theoretical framework:**

This study is anchored on the **framing** theory of the mass media. The concept and theory of framing suggest that how an issue is presented influences how it is perceived and subsequently the decisions they take and the choices people make.

On the other hands, this means that the way a news item is presented can have an influence on how it is interpreted or understood by the audience (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007:12-12). In their ground-breaking study, Kahneman and Tversky (1981) found that the way a decision was presented or 'framed' affects the choice people make.

Scholars (Zaller, 1992; Kahneman and Tversky, 1984; Iyengar, 1991) agree that though cognitively active, people are often not well-informed on most matters of socio-political significance, hence framing weigh in heavily and indeed influence their reaction to communications.

A professor of communication at the University of California at Berkeley, George Lakoff opines that communication itself comes with a frame. According to him: "the elements of the communication frame include: a message, an audience, a messenger, a medium, images, a context, and especially, higher-level moral and conceptual frames. The choice of language is, of course, vital, but it is vital because language evokes frames -moral and conceptual frames (Lakoff, 2004). Though Gamson (1992) agrees that frames diagnose, evaluate, and prescribe; he also describes conditions that might mitigate this influence.

Framing in the words of Entman (1993) essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment for the item described. He adds that, "frames, then, define problems – determine what causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits usually measured in terms of common cultural values, diagnose causes – identify the forces creating the problem; make moral judgments – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and suggest remedies – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects (Entman, 1993:52).

Fairhurst and Sarr (1996) identify three elements of framing to include language, thought and forethought. They believe that language helps people to remember information and assists them to transform how they view situations. They add that to use language, people must have thought and reflect on their own and other people's interpretive frames. The forethought helps leaders to detect and frame appropriately in spontaneous framing opportunities.

One of the core assumptions of framing is that the way in which the news is brought, the frame in which the news is presented, is also a choice made by journalists. Thus a frame refers to the way media and media gatekeepers organize and present the events and issues they cover, and the way audiences interpret what they are provided... Frame influence the perception of the news of the audience and not only tells them what to think about, but also how to think about it (www.utwente.nl).

This theory is relevant to this study because, first, Boko Haram is a shadowy but powerful sect bent on eclipsing the government of the day and enthroning its political and religious beliefs on the people. Second, the mass media can contribute immensely in the containment and ultimately, the defeat of the sect by the way they frame the stories on the sect and its activities.

## 3: **Boko Haram: the sect and its activities**

Nigeria as a nation has had a long, checkered history of religious upheavals. Religious uprising that gave birth to the current Boko Haram insurrection and others before it started in the northern city of Kano in 1980 and later spread to other cities, mostly in the north. Isichei (1987:194) recalls that:

In December 1980, his (Marwa's) followers in Kano revolted; the city was convulsed in what was virtually civil war; and 4177 died; among them Maitatsine himself. In October 1982, a new uprising broke out in Bulumkutu, 15 kilometres from Maidugri, far to the east. 3350 were killed. Fighting also broke out in Rigasa village near Kaduna, which spread into the city. In March 1984, there was an out break of violence in Yola, capital city of Gongola state, which left between 500 and 1000 people dead. In April 1985, there was yet another uprising in Gombe Bauchi state when over a hundred were killed.

After the mindless religious massacres of the 1980s, there was a brief period of calm before another orgy of religious-engineered crises took centre-stage. It started when Sani Yerimah as the Governor of Zamfara state introduced Sharia legal codes in his state and was promptly copied by most of the northern states. As the hullabaloo caused by the Sharia crises were dying down, intractable ethno-religious crises engulfed Plateau state.

The emergence and growth of the Boko Haram sect has been attributed mainly to social malaise and absence of effective engagement of the nation's youths. In an editorial, *The Guardian* newspaper noted that Boko Haram has a social

root. It is largely populated by young and often educated but unemployed believers who are, in the 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. This is the meaning and import of Boko Haram (*The Guardian*, 11/02/2011).

Today, Boko Haram carnage has paled all the preceding religious crises and their accompanying orgies of destruction into insignificance. Using a combination of rifle attacks (AK-47 primarily) and suicide bombings, the sect has successfully attacked very important targets. The most ruinous of these include: 1) Nigeria police headquarters in Abuja; 2) United Nations Building in Abuja; 3) St. Theresa's Catholic Church Madalla, near Abuja; 4) Potiskum Cattle market, Yobe state, 5) Bayero University Kano; three Churches in Kaduna, among many others.

Boko Haram as a sect began quite a long time ago but only became a threat around the year 2002. The sect took its name from Book (which means western education in Hausa) which was derived from the word Boka meaning sorcerer. Some Islamic scholars believe that Boko Haram gained acceptance of the public because of its effectiveness in teaching Islam, austere life and community service. The Boko schools, they contend, taught Islam more effectively than the Islamiya schools (Makarantar Allo) did and many Yan Boko have deeper knowledge of Islam than most peasants... Boko improved the community's material lot and did not lead to wholesale conversion as the Muslims feared. It brought great dependence on income and the lifestyle, opulence, ego and vanity of the Yan Boko alarmed traditionalists (Sani, 2003).

Abimbola (2001:20) posits that, the group came into existence in the 1960s but only started to draw attention in 2002 when Mohammed Yusuf became its leader. 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.

Its brushes with security operatives came to a climax in 2009 when the police, acting on the orders of the then President of Nigeria, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to flush out the group, engaged them in gun battle that lasted some days. This led to the extra-judicial murder of Mohammed Yusuf by the police. In 2011, the sect regrouped and started its bloody campaign in the country and has not looked back since then. This time around, its attacks extended to all the government's establishments and even the media houses.

Since the killing of its leader, the sect has waged a relentless war against the government and all perceived enemies of Islam. It has turned down all entreaties for negotiated settlement of the crisis. The first move for a peaceful resolution of the conflict was undertaken by former President Olusegun Obasanjo in September, 2011. The ex-president had gone on a peace mission to Babakura Fugu, the father in-law of the sect's slain leader. This move ended in fiasco when two days after that visit, the host, Fugu was brutally murdered by the sect's assassins. The second was undertaken in March 2012 by Sheik Datti Ahmed (the president of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria), chosen by the sect to mediate on its behalf. Sheik Ahmed pulled out of the negotiations citing government's insincerity. The third was the mediation role played by renowned Islamic scholar, Sheik Dahiru Bauchi. The Sheik had revealed on June 6, 2012 that he was mediating in an ongoing effort between the government and the sect. The sect soon after, disowned the effort and seriously warned Sheik Bauchi to discontinue further talks with the government. It followed this up with another round of bomb attacks in Maidugri and Jos thus effectively shutting the door to negotiated settlement. It has carried out further attacks on churches in Kaduna since then.

#### **4. Government's Response**

The response of the Nigerian government has been incoherent, inconsistent and sometimes, ambiguous, unidirectional and largely ineffectual. At the initial stage, the president vowed not to dialogue with a faceless group without some clear-cut demands. He consequently formed the Joint Military Taskforce (JMT) to crush the sect but the taskforce has so far failed to achieve that objective. Rather the JMT has sometimes, been accused of abusing and killing of non-sect members. All the failed underground attempts at dialogue with the sect are marked government's deviation from its 'scorched earth' policy. The tepid assurances of security chiefs of crushing the sect have only angered it into more brazen attacks.

The absence of a well-defined government's policy on Boko Haram accounts for government's confusing and contradictory statements on the sect. for instance, the National Security Adviser, General Andrew Azazi (rtd) reportedly blamed the undemocratic practices of the ruling People's Democratic Party as a major cause of the Boko Haram menace. Again, in a response to reporters' questions (when he visited the bombed media houses in Abuja), on whether the government may change its policy and negotiate with the sect, the president reportedly equivocated. He answered: "They are correct to say we should dialogue. Those who are saying we should not dialogue are also correct. When you have a terrorist situation, you also look at the global best practice" (*GlobalPost*, 28/04/2012).

Thus far, the only show of government's strength in the battle against Boko Haram seem to be the sack of the former Inspector General of Police, Hafiz Ringim for gross incompetence in handling police issues concerning the sect, and

later, Andrew Azazi and Haliru Mohammed; National security Adviser and Defence Minister respectively for similar reasons.

## 5. Media and Terrorism

The mass media and terrorism seem to enjoy what amounts to a symbiotic relationship even though terrorists seem to need the media more than the media need the terrorists. This might inform the reason why a former prime minister of Britain, Margaret Thatcher has widely been cited by scholars (Muller et al. 2003:65; Vieira, 1991:73,) as saying that, “publicity is the oxygen of terrorism.” The above assertion is understandable given that the main objective of terrorists is to spread message of fear to as many people as possible including those not directly involved in the attack; and the mass media play a very vital role in achieving this objective. This may have informed the recent definition of the relationship between terrorism and media as, “sleeping in the same bed, but with different dreams.”

One thing of note is that the media thrive in crisis reportage for it significantly increases readership, viewership and listenership (in reality, more ad patronage) and hence, they respond to terrorist attacks with undisguised zeal and enthusiasm. The media are rewarded (for broadcasting terrorism) in that they energize their competition for audience size and circulation – and thus for all-important advertising, (Nacos, 2006:82).

Apart from the well-known media quest for ad patronage is the issue of news definition: the media’s ravenous appetite for unusual, alarming, anecdotal, high melodramatic and human interest stories. There is this popular (even if cynical) media aphorism that ‘if it bleeds it leads’ and its less obvious corollary, if it doesn’t bleed, it certainly shouldn’t lead and indeed, may not fit for print at all,’ (Mueller, 2007:33). And indeed, terrorism fits these for it does not just bleed but spurts rivers of blood. The lust for human interest stories and drama according to Nacos (2000:174), can lead to over coverage of terrorist activity. An example is that in the early 80s, the American television channels ABC, CBS and NBC broadcast more terrorism related stories than stories on poverty, crime, unemployment and discrimination combined.

Brian Jenkins submits that it makes no difference that ordinary homicides vastly exceed murders caused by terrorists. The news media do not allocate space or air time proportionally according to the leading causes of death in the world. News in general is about the unusual, the alarming, the dramatic. It is not summing up of information. It is anecdotal, (Jenkins, 1981:2).

On their part, the terrorists covet media publicity with something near to obsession. Gerges (2005:194-7) had noted that the use of media publicity was so important to al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, that his close associates within the group variously speak of him as being ‘obsessed’ with international media; ‘a publicity hound’ and as having ‘caught the disease of screens, flashes, fans, and applause’. He adds that Al-Zawahiri (bin Laden’s second in command) had once remarked that “more than half of this battle is taking place in the battle of the media.” Affirming this terrorists’ obsession with media, *The Economist* (July 14, 2007) cited an Islamist magazine as saying: “Film everything; this is good advice for all Mujahedeen. You should be aware that every frame you take is as good as a missile fired at the crusader enemy and his puppets.

Carlos Marighella (the notorious Brazilian guerrilla) had in his work: *Mini-manual on the Urban Guerrilla* confirmed that insurgency, “is based on the direct or indirect use of mass means of communications and news transmitted orally in order to demoralize the government (Marighella, n.d:103).

Various other scholars (Hoffman, 2006; Nacos, 2000; Ganor, 2002) have also written vicariously on the issue of terrorists’ use of the media to achieve their goals. Hoffman (2006:174) explains that, without the media’s coverage the act’s (terrorist’s) impact is arguably wasted, remaining narrowly confined to the immediate victim(s) of the attack, rather than reaching the wider ‘target audience’ at whom the terrorists’ violence is actually aimed.” Similarly, Brigitte Nacos agrees with Hoffman that, “without massive news coverage, the terrorist act would resemble the proverbial tree falling in the forest: if no one learned of an incident, it would be as if it had not occurred.” Boaz Ganor forcefully argues that, “terrorists are not necessarily interested in the deaths of three, or thirty – or even three thousand people. Rather they allow the imagination of the target population to do their work for them. In fact, it is conceivable that the terrorists could attain their aims without carrying out a single attack; the desired panic could be produced by the continuous broadcasts of threats and declarations – by radio and TV interview, videos and all the familiar methods of psychological warfare (Ganor, 2002).

Scholars and experts in terrorist warfare have come up with positions and views on why the merchants of terror avariciously crave the media. Alexander, Carlton and Wilkinson (1979) had identified three reasons: attention, recognition and legitimacy for this unbridled quest. Nacos cited in TTSRL (2008:6) extended the terrorists’ media objectives to four. According to him: The first is to gain attention and awareness of the audience, and thus to condition the target population (and government) for intimidation: create fear. The second goal is recognition of the organization’s motives. They want people to think about why they are carrying out the attacks. The third objective is to gain the respect and sympathy of those in whose name they claim to attack. The last objective is to gain a quasi-legitimate status and a media treatment similar to that of legitimate political actors,” (Nacos, 2007:20).

Gerrits (1992) believes that the terrorists' use of the mass media is more inclined to psychological warfare: demoralizing the enemies (like governments); demonstrating strength; gaining sympathy and creating fear and chaos. Bandura (1998) concurs that the mass media are used in this respect for moral justification, arousal of sympathy and intimidation of the public. But by far, the main objective of the terrorists' media use is the creation and spread of fear among the people for as Hoffman (2006:174) rightly postulated, "only by spreading the terror and outrage to a much larger audience can the terrorist gain maximum potential leverage that they need to effect fundamental political change."

#### 6. **Boko Haram and Nigerian Fourth Estate**

Even with the media publicity acclaimed to be the 'the oxygen' of terrorism, the relationship between the radical Islamic sect, Boko Haram and the Nigerian media has been anything but symbiotic. It is paradoxical that while other terror groups cultivate and extensively use the media, that Boko Haram is doing the opposite. The sect has not hidden its disdain and distrust of the Nigerian media. Shortly after its September 28 2011 threat to deal with the media reporters, the sect, in a display of its maniacal fury, pumped bullets into Isah Zakari, a reporter with Nigerian Television Authority and Bernard Akogwu, a photographer with Channels television. The condemnation that greeted the killings had hardly died down when it bombed the offices of *Thisday*, *The Moment* and *Daily Sun* newspapers in Abuja and Kaduna on April 26, 2012. The sect cited reasons ranging from lack of objectivity to blasphemy on the side of the media for the attacks. In the words of its spokesman, Abu Qaqa:

We have repeatedly cautioned reporters and media houses to be professional and objective in their reports. This is a war between us and the government of Nigeria; unfortunately the media have not been objective and fair in their report of the ongoing war, they chose to take side. It is not only *Thisday* that has engaged in negative media campaign... but the sins of *Thisday* are more. They once insulted the Prophet Mohammed in 2001 and we have not forgotten. Nigerian media would not be a problem if they do their job professionally without taking sides.

Qaqa further warns: We have just started this new campaign against the media and we will not stop here, we will hit the media hard since they have refused to listen to our plea for them to be fair in their reportage.

The questions to ask here are: What in reality is objectivity in media reportage? Is objectivity in mass media reporting always advised especially when it involves a bunch of mass killers like Boko Haram? *Cambridge Dictionary* says that to be objective means not influenced by personal feelings or opinions; considering only facts. Ekwueme (2011:2) explains that in most countries the world over, objectivity in news reportage means a middle path between two extremes in an issue: that is a little to the right and little to the left. This implies that the tenet of objectivity is abused to the extent to which the report tilts towards one side. This means maintaining a certain level of detachment on the part of the reporters.

If this is objectivity, is it advised in reporting the activities of a sect like Boko Haram? It is definitely not. Dalei and Mishra (2009:6) agree that religious issues, for instance, can almost suddenly transform into huge political crises in case of extreme objective coverage by the media. Media must know what type of coverage is likely to create tensions and differences and cannot afford to be absolutely objective when sensitive religious issues are concerned. They further explain that:

Objective and extensive coverage of terrorist attacks may also be detrimental to the interests of the nation instead of being beneficial. Today's terroristic acts are 'Tria Juncta in Uno' requiring along with a perpetrator and a victim, the public, for who it is all carefully choreographed, to gain maximum attention. Grievance claims, self-display and propaganda all come together in a theatrical performance for an audience whose participation is solicited.

Here, the issues at stake here go far beyond objectivity. It involves patriotism, public and national interests. No media the world over would ever dance to the whims and caprices of the terrorist in the name of being objective. What is therefore, called for is that report that tilts towards satisfying the needs of the nation and the public in this time of crisis irrespective of whether it is objective or subjective. This was the position of a FoxNews reporter while reporting *Operation Matador* (which the US marines launched in Syrian border with Iraq to check cross border activities of terrorists) when he called the marines '*our boys*'. Ekwueme (2011:11-12) explains that by calling the marines '*our boys*', the reporter was clearly subjective but he feels that since he was not carrying a gun against the terrorists in Syria like his other countrymen who are risking their lives, he, at least owed them a patriotic duty of reporting them in that way. Objectivity in this case, to him, does not matter.

#### 7. **Boko Haram: Effective Media Response**

The mass media play huge roles in public perception, acceptance or rejection of criminal behaviour the world over. Hence the media could influence public acceptance of some ordinarily illegal steps taken government in combating the



activities of Boko Haram by the way they frame and present them. Similarly, the way the media frame and shape the Boko Haram insurrection in the people's mind can shape and condition the way the public view and responds to their attacks.

The mass media in Nigeria, despite coming under attacks by the Boko Haram sect can help immeasurably in building positive and courageous attitudes in the people in response the sect's threats. This can be done through the way the media frame their reports on Boko Haram attacks. In this respect, choices of words, pictures and the language of the reports become pivotal. Shah, Watts, Domke and Fan (2002) say that choices about language, quotations, and relevant information can make the difference in such reports. Entman (1993:52) agrees that this may involve the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.

It is in view of the above suggestions that we recommend that the mass media in Nigeria embrace (with little modifications to peculiar needs) the six principles developed by the Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Martin E.P. Segliman committee after the September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, New York. Entitled '*Six Rules for Government and Press on Terrorism: Undercutting Fear Itself*' it provides as follows:

- 1. Reduce Helplessness:** Dangers like the one posed by Boko Haram become less fearful when they are presented in controllable manner. The media should tell Nigerians in specific terms what actions they could take to reduce the danger of Boko Haram attacks. Measures like advising and encouraging the public to report any suspicious movements or unknown, new faces to the security operatives and such other actions will have positive impact.
- 2. Blunt Availability:** According to Tversky & Tversky (1973) cited in the report, because evocative images are more available in memory, we tend to over-estimate how likely they are to occur. By showing, printing or airing vivid pictures of the victims of Boko Haram attacks, we are unwittingly playing into the hands of Boko Haram as these pictures help in spreading their message of fear. Though news has to be reported, they should be couched in strong reassuring words and phrase that give the audience confidence with little of the often gruesome pictures of the victims.
- 3. Reframe:** Framing has a lot to do in how people perceive risk and danger. Frame a risk in terms of loss and people are less likely to take it but reframe it in terms of gain and they are more inclined to take it. Instead of overly stating the number that died in a Boko Haram attack, we may pay more attention to the number that survived it. This will give people confidence that after all, the sect's attack is not an immutable death sentence.
- 4. Tell the Story of Survival:** It does not help if our local media keep on harping only on government's lack of preparedness, ineffectual policies, the success of the Boko Haram raids, the sect's invincibility among others that tend make the people helpless in face of a ruthless enemy. Rather, they should pay more attention to similar situations where the government came out triumphant through diligent and purposeful use of resources. For instance, it took the Gbaramantu assault on Niger Delta to rein in the dreaded Niger Delta militants and force them to embrace peace.
- 5. Preach Courage; It is Contagious:** Just as fear is contagious, so too is courage. Those who preach courage and heroism inspire it in others (Bandura, 1977). Both the government and media should inspire courage and not fear and helplessness when speaking on Boko Haram activities. Hence, those making such announcements (reporters and government officials) should convey a sense of courage and confidence as it will impact positively on the audience.
- 6. Use Safety Signals:** The public should be informed of when threats are no longer expected as much as they should be told when there is a palpable threat. Leaving the public to live in perpetual fear of imminent Boko Haram attacks weakens their resolve to face down the threat. So when the media in collaboration with security operatives should give the people the all-clear signal to relax their anxiety and enable them go about their business when there are no immediate threats.

Apart from this six-point principle, the media should discourage opposition politicians from unduly criticizing or making statements that tend to discredit the government on the issue of Boko Haram insurgency for political reasons. Boko Haram is a national challenge that should transcend cheap posturing for political gains. It calls for closing of ranks.

Most importantly, the media can use their contents to paint a very bad picture of the sect and position them negatively in the minds of people particularly, those who have sympathy for the sect. In this manner, they can re-educate the populace and make them divulge concrete and vital information on the sect to the security operatives. Once the sect began to lose the sympathy of its supporter, its days are definitely numbered.

**8. Conclusion:** The mass media has the capacity to make all the difference in the effort against Boko Haram. In fact, if properly and effectively deployed, substantial part of the war against Boko Haram can be fought and won in the media. Doing what is advocated above is a tall order and may entail surrendering some basic rights and professional codes of conduct but it is worth it for according to Dalei and Mishra (2009), "accepting the danger presented by terrorism does not mean any less commitment to a free and independent press. Rather the media themselves must balance the public's right to know with related responsibilities: their obligations to safeguard human life and to ensure the preservation of a democratic society, if only for their own self interest." They add that, "we need to have more journalists thinking on the lines of David

Broder, who has written that, “if we thought about terrorism more and understood its essence, we would probably stop writing about it, or we would cover it with considerably more care and respect.” The media reporters should therefore, far from being intimidated by the spate of bombings in the country including those on their offices, brace up to the challenge and frame Boko Haram appropriately and rightly as faceless, conscienceless and bloody bunch of mass-murdering terrorists bent on ruining the country with their nihilistic demands. Using such framing can make all the difference.

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