

# Stylistic Representations and the Rhetoric of the Image/Text in Select-Nigerian Newspaper Reports on Terrorism

By

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## Abstract

The visual dimension of terror incidents is represented in the media as photographs, plated to illustrate and tell the stories as they happened. This study examines the stylistic representations as well as the persuasive effects of images of terror scenes from selected Nigerian newspapers. The motivation for the selection of the newspaper images is based on their overall rhetorical signification: meaning operation and visual structure – that which shows action-based images of victimization and attack. Using Halliday's meta-function of language and Harrison's Representational Meta-function to analyze texts – images and linguistic signs, this study observes that reporters were moderate in the representation of terror stories told in pictures, as there were minimal obscene scenes; though some images did not adequately capture and/or represent the position of the stories they seemed to represent. Professionalism, ethical caution and/or moderation held sway in some representations; however, some unreadable photos were portrayed as amateurish photo-journalism by the newspaper reporters and their editorial team.

*Keywords: Newspaper reports; Representation; Rhetoric; Terrorism; Victimization*

## *Introduction*

The representation of the photographs of attacks and the victims of terror on Nigerian newspaper pages is a significant aspect for scholarly investigation. The term terrorism seems prevalent nowadays than when it first emerged in Nigeria in the 1970s (Uja, Nafada&Ahimie, 2011). Even though there have been some activities that relate to acts of terrorism like the hijack of a Nigerian airline in the 1960s, the term terrorism became rampant and known to many in Nigeria in the 70s, as Uja et al have purported. Different studies have examined terrorism in various ways. As a global phenomenon, it is viewed by scholars, organizations, and governments as a menace in society; and therefore, needs a collaborative effort in combating (Norris, Just & Kern, 2003).

Defining terrorism is a challenge to many scholars. This is so because, the term is evasive and can be used to mean many things and different interpretations; including being viewed as any act of a

member of the opposition group or left winged extremists who is standing on an opposing view with the power that be, as in the saying “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter”. Jenkins (2003) has opined that terrorism is socially constructed and it is usually difficult to define. There are different motivations to the causes of terrorism. One of the driving forces is the ideology the group holds; this usually results in destruction of lives and properties. This is because, for the terrorist organization, attacks must be impactful – the reason suicide bombers or explosives are usually targeted at crowded areas – places where people cluster: market places, places of worship (churches and mosques), schools, motor parks, and any location that attracts a gathering of humans or human activities.

The recent upsurge in terrorist activities has given the media some impetus to engage the public in reporting terror events. Terrorists, on the other hand, in a bid to implement their heinous agenda, leverage on the operations of the media to gain some aggrandisement. Diverse studies from scholars such as Nacos (2002; 2006), Rohner and Frey (2006) and Bilgen (2012) have also revealed the synergy that exists between the media generally and terrorist groups. Nacos (2002), for example, calls this relationship a dangerous symbiosis. For Umueri and Galadima (2012), since the media wields so much power in society as to determine people’s attitudes and reshape them, it is thus expected that the media demonstrates some form of fair coverage on national security and terrorism in Nigeria (Ottoh, 2019).

### *Literature Review*

#### *Terrorism*

There are a number of definitions to the term, terrorism. Some scholars view it as the mass murder of innocent civilians by highly organized killers for political or social purposes such as in the former Soviet Union where 62million victims were recorded; The People’s Republic of China, 35million victims and the Nazi Germany, 21million victims, all considered as the bloodiest terrorist incidents so far in human history (Ellis & Walsh, 2000:501; Anderson & Taylor, 2005). Hawthorne (2012) contends that terrorism is a type of war, which he calls a-small-scale-war. With the way “new terrorism” is operated, it is difficult to corroborate Hawthorne’s description of terrorism “as a-small-scale-war”; since the terrorists’ tact and strategies have taken a different turn, in recent times. While some have argued that terrorism is motivated by religion, Duyvesteyn

(2004) sees it as a political rhetoric; a label used by the government to forestall attacks on them. It means that terrorism could just be a label by government on left-winged extremists. In addition, terrorism could be a political “game” that the government uses against the governed who will run to them as saviors.

Criminologists like Ellis and Walsh (2000) consider terrorism an act of intimidation of innocents. For Ellis and Walsh (2000), although terrorism has a long history, there was a dramatic upturn in its activities in the 1960s. They also posit that terrorism is as old as the human discovery that people can be influenced by intimidation (p.501); intimidation through the use of language or pictures or other signs that can be interpreted as coercing. The acts of terror and people who perpetrate them seem to have rational motives which Ellis and Walsh (2000), believe are rooted in history and politics. From a historical point of view, Ellis and Walsh (2000, p.502) claim that terrorist activities have been associated with an earliest terrorist group, a Jewish nationalist and/or religious sect called *Sicarii*.

According to Ellis and Walsh (2000), the *Sicarii* group who was called the first century terrorist organization operated against the occupation of Roman forces around 70 A.D., using savage methods that are deadly against Roman and the Jews too. Ellis and Walsh (2000) maintain that the *Sicarii* were extremists among the Zealots who resisted Roman rule and later became terrorists and assassins. The *Sicarii*, in a bid to resist Roman oppression, went about public places with daggers to kill as many people who sympathized with Rome. The *Sicarii* group was seen as the earliest terrorists who heavily opposed the Romans’ occupation of Judea.

In Nigeria, Uja, Nafada and Ahimie (2011:2) trace the origin of terrorism to the 1970s. Since then, there have been different terrorist attempts by different groups; but the Boko Haram group seems to stand out in their activities. The history of Boko Haram has diverse assumptions as different scholars have perceived it. One of such speculations in Uja, Nafada and Ahimie, (2011:2) is that the Boko Haram uprising began in 1995 as *Sahaba* with Mallam Abubakar Lawan. Mallam Abubakar Lawan studied at the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia. However, before 1995, there were some religious unrest in Nigeria beginning with the *Al-Masifu*, loyalists and followers of Alhaji Muhammed Marwa Maitasine who in the 1980s had held Kano and its environs to hostage. This led to the burning of eight Churches in October, 1982 (Ottoh-Agede & Agede, 2016).

Maitasine who took advantage of the economic and political decay in Nigeria then became the leader of the Islamic group, and allegedly combined Islam with sorcery. His ambition to extol and enthrone Islamic laws gave room for more radical Islamists and this appeared to his followers to be a divine legitimacy. For Maitasine, western influences must be rejected by true Muslims. He said that a true leader must be spiritual in the Islamic sense (Ottoh-Agede & Agede, 2016:26-28).

Other terrorist groups have come up after Maitasine; and Sheik Mahmoud Gumi was one of those who in the 1980s agitated and taught the ideology that a Muslim should not accept to have a non-Muslim as a leader. Gumi proposed for Nigeria to be an Islamic state. In his teachings, Gumi said that Muslims are not to have any relationship with non-Muslim, whom he referred to as “infidels”. Another of this kind was the *Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awati wal-Jihad*, which translates, “people committed to the propagation of Islamic traditions and jihad”, a movement started by Mallam Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri, northeast, Nigeria (Uja, Nafada & Ahimie, 2011; Ottoh-Agede & Agede, 2016). From the foregoing caveat, Boko Haram, is an offshoot of these sects as their ideologies point to the same cause. Gumi and Maitasine are both precursor groups to Boko Haram.

### *Roland Barthes’ Rhetoric of the Image*

Rhetoric is an art of persuasion used in spoken, written and any other visual discourse to influence audiences’ perception and attitude. As an art of persuasion, rhetoric induces style; and permits a writer or speaker and/or a visual artist and photographer to adopt the style that privileges what s/he is set out to do (Ottoh, 2019). Style is one’s peculiar way of doing things. And, stylistics is the study of style. The study of rhetoric is as important to style as stylistics is to rhetoric.

In “The rhetoric of the image”, Barthes (1964), argues that no picture contains information in itself or that a picture contains so much contradictory information that it takes a verbal message to fix its meaning. Schaeffer (1987), on the other hand, refutes Barthes’ position and avers that neither art photography nor scientific photograph requires linguistic determinism, even though Schaeffer (1987) later agrees that the accompaniment of the linguistic sign can only add to a more “realistic” interpretation of the photograph, he also believes that the photograph alone are meaning-sufficient, that is to say, photographs have significant meanings embedded in them, and that the accompaniment of a linguistic text can only result in tautology. For this reason, Schaeffer claims

that most images are meaning entrenched and may not need any addition of the linguistic sign for the reader to derive meaning.

Visuals are important in representing meaning. They are often used by advertisers to bait or entice their audience. Harrison (2003:28) avers that “visuals persuade readers about messages”. This is the reason most product promoters would employ graphic designs of images to sell or promote their brands. Good advertisers or product promoters usually employ catchy images and/or visuals that the reading/viewing audience can interpret and derive meaning from. This can be applied to the way language, whether linguistic or non-linguistic is deployed for the reader. Therefore, a little carelessness in the use of language whether in news reports or for advertorial can wreak a whole nation, and/or misguide a society (Ottoh, 2019).

Visual Rhetoric (VR, hereafter) has now become a subfield in anthropology, literary studies, art theory, psychology, graphic design, communication and media studies, marketing, and culture studies. Scholars in these fields believe that images work less through cognition and more through effect, emotion, and embodiment – that is, images are processed through feeling before they are understood at a cognitive level (Danesi, 2017). VR became influential after the publication of these three works: Barthes’ (1964) “The rhetoric of the image”, Arnheim’s (1969) *Visualthinking*, and Berger’s (1972) *Ways of seeing*. These texts argue in different ways that visual images convey as much information as the verbal texts, if not even more (Ottoh, 2019).

In Barthes’ (1964) article, the context of an image is investigated in two ways: how an image makes meaning and where interpretation stops, and if there is anything beyond the meaning. Barthes categorized the meaning of an image into three: The **linguistic message**, the **coded(connotative) iconic message** and the **non-coded (denotative) iconic message**. The linguistic message is characterized by the linguistic signs encoded as captions and labels that accompany press articles, comic strips, film dialogue, among others. The linguistic message functions either as **anchorage** (that which is prone to multiple meanings; directs the reader to the signified of the image) or **relay** (texts that complement one another; commonly found in press photographs and film).

In the coded iconic message, meaning is basically derived from the image by inferences from the reader’s cultural background knowledge (CBK) of the image. The context is evoked by what is

shared between the reader and the image. Here, the image reader has to connect with the image making allusions to shared background information (SBI) or context. The non-coded iconic message is encapsulated in the scenes and RPs, also, the relationship that exists between the signified and its direct analogical representation. According to Lunsford and Ruskiewicz (2004:8-9):

Today, images crowd in from all directions, not only from television, video, film and the web, but from traditional print texts as well— from the graphs and charts in a financial report to the daily newspaper to the textbook you hold in your hand. ...these images carry part or most of the messages readers are intended to receive. As a result, critical readers pay attention to the visuals in any text they read, understanding that these have a significant impact on how readers interpret and respond to those texts. If a picture is sometimes worth a thousand words, it pays to spend some time thinking about what makes that picture so valuable.

Photos tell stories like every other narrative. Photographic communication has emerged in recent years as an important mode of mass communication and certain scholars such as Nwankpa(2014:22) posit that “picturization of photos on the print pages or any other media makes us eyewitness of the events as they happen and force us to realize with a power never before contemplated the strife and life, the hope and despair, the humanity and inhumanity of the world in which we find ourselves”. It is obvious from everyday practice that “pictures make the abstract concrete and humanize distant events and disaster” (Friend, Challenger and McAdams, 2000:448-9). This study agrees with Harrison’s (2003) position that an image is not the result of a singular, isolated, creative activity, but is itself a social process where its meaning is negotiated between the producer/author and the viewer or the analyst, reflecting their individual socio-cultural and political beliefs, ethos or philosophies and attitudes (p.47).

#### *Meaning and Representation of Terror Images in the Reports*

The act of presenting events in a more concrete way makes people say that photo is one way of making people see things the way they happen in spite of the distance or place. In fact, in this study, photos represent acts, such as disasters, whether terrorist or not, that people did not witness first hand. Photographs speak a universal language as most cultures can read similar meanings to them (Pisarek, 1983; Sonesson, 1989; Tuman, 2003).

Photographs have the tendency to attract attention, arouse curiosity in the viewer and manipulate emotions in them (Sturken, 1998). Some of these emotions may be those that represent goodly emotions as laughter, for a photo that caricaturizes, and fear for that which is horrifying, hideous, dreadful, gruesome, and/or shocking. Parsa, in his abstract, posits that many people today “live in a visually intensive society and a world of spectacular and exciting images. They are bombarded with an orderly and continuous stream of visual stimulation from all manner of media every day. They see mediated images more often than they read words”. He concludes by saying “images sell everything”. The next segment looks at the types of rhetoric and their relevance in communication (Ottoh, 2019).

In reading an image, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) suggest that the analyst should be able to answer these questions: (i) Who are the represented participants (RPs) of the image? and (ii) What is the image about? To answer the above important questions, this study deploys Harrison’s (2003) representation category which interrogates the structure and processes of the image alongside Halliday’s meta-function of language as captured in Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL).

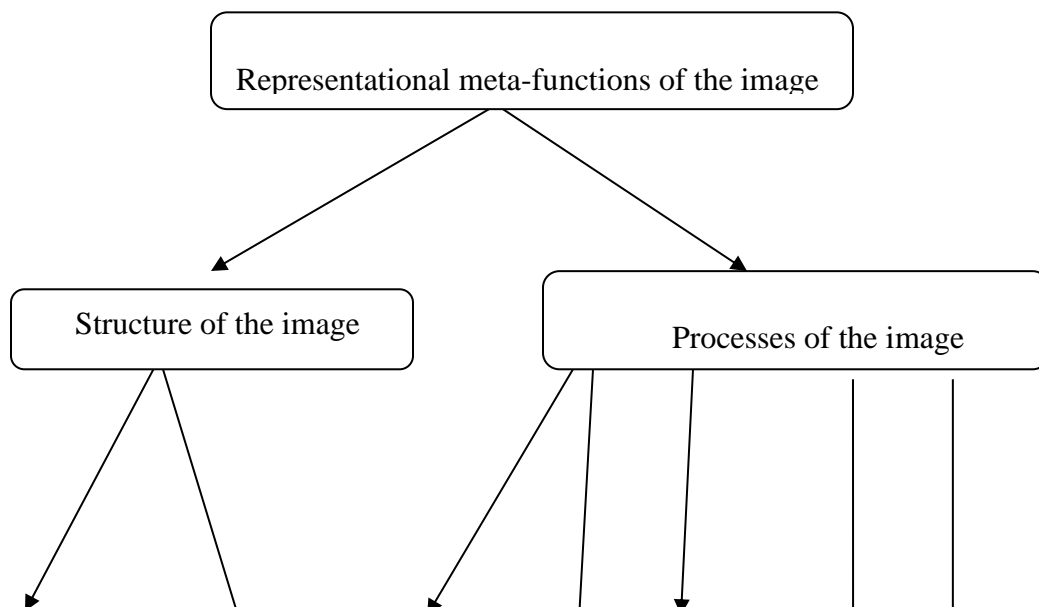
## **Theoretical Approaches**

### *Halliday’s Meta-functions of language and Harrison’s Meta-functions of the Image*

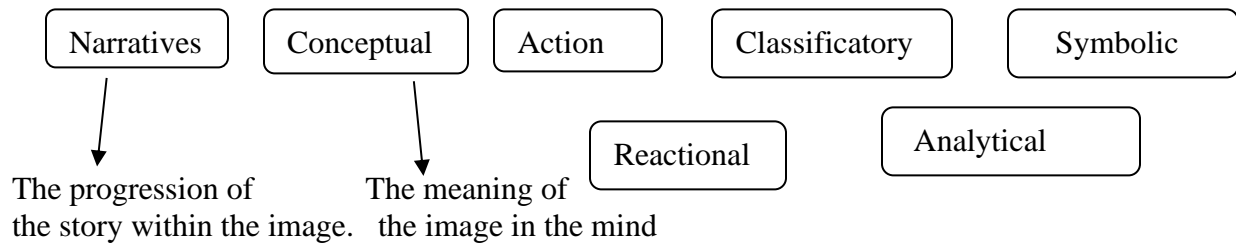
Representation is a symbolic offer, a clone and/or semblance which can also be seen as a stand-in of something or somebody. The ideational function of language explores how reality is represented, alongside the other functions such as the interpersonal (which shows the relationship that exists between a text and a text reader), and the textual (which deals with the inner workings of the text in terms of coherence, reference to the real world and other rhetorical practices within the text). The focus here is mainly on the ideational function whose emphasis is on the representation of reality in the text – how readers are able to relate or make sense of a text with some form of shared background knowledge (SBK) or shared background information (SBI) as the case may be. These two concepts are sometimes used interchangeably to mean the same thing; where someone is aware or is familiar with events within the text (context) with inferences from other texts (co-text). The represented participants are not strange materials to the reader. Therefore, the study, using Hallidayan ideational function explores the stylistic aspect of representing ideas in image and the linguistic signs that accompany the image in the selected newspaper reports.

To buttress and/or reinforce Halliday’s framework, the study added insights from Harrison’s (2003) Representational Meta-function which examines structures as narratives – a process where images tell stories by allowing viewers infer or produce meanings about the represented participants (hereafter, RP). RPs tend to be grouped together to present viewers with the “concept” of who or what they represent, while Processes, on the other hand, include, (1) the action that the image takes, (2) the reactional function which is the *semiosis*, that interaction between RPs, (3) classificatory function, where RPs are grouped into kinds and class, for example, advertisements for beauty products often have classificatory images such as group of models, (4) analytical function, where RPs are portrayed in “parts and wholes” structure, the whole becomes the Carrier (vector) on which the parts called Attributes are entrenched or subsumed, (5) symbolic function: symbolism is one of Pierce’s categorization and some scholars believe that the frameworks: icon, index and symbols are somewhat insufficient or inadequate for analyzing images. See the following schema:

Fig.1: **Modified Representational Meta-Function Schema (adopted from Ottoh-Agede, forthcoming)**







For the purpose of this paper, RPs are analyzed for what they “mean”. For instance, the images of terror attacks on newspaper pages are analytical, reactionary, symbolic and full of action. Therefore, the following questions are useful in doing a representational meta-function analysis:

- i. Who are the RPs in the image?
- ii. Are there any vectors in the image that indicate action? If so, what kind of story does this action tell?
- iii. If there are no vectors, what is the image trying to tell us in terms of social/cultural concepts?
- iv. What types of conventional thinking do different objects evoke in viewers?
- v. Is the image a complex one with more than one process embedded within it? If so, how do these embedded processes add to viewer`s overall understanding of the image? (Harrison, 2003:52 in Ottoh-Agede, forthcoming).

## **Methodology**

This study is a multimodal endeavor based on stylistics and rhetoric, and therefore views both written and image texts as analyzable. The study analyses texts and discourses from Nigerian newspapers. The choice of these newspapers is informed by their ideology – orientation or postures, accessibility and coverage. The discourse-focus for this paper is Boko Haram terrorist activities and other banditry in the Nigerian context.

## **Sources of Data**

This article explores data that capture the stylistic representation of terrorist activities in the print media. Data have been selected from the *DailyTrust*, *WeeklyTrust* and *Leadership* newspapers based in the north, *TheNation*, *DailySun* and *TheGuardian*, published in the south. The selection of these six Nigerian newspapers is to interrogate how news producers deploy image and text to stylistically induce and/or appeal to the reader about discourses of Boko Haram attacks. The study, thus, interrogates reporters' ability to objectively and plausibly use language to report a somewhat delicate subject as terrorism, as perpetrated by Boko Haram, without some elements of skew in the reports.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Press media texts have been analyzed by using either qualitative or quantitative methods. Previous studies, especially in the United States concentrated on content analyses; focusing on the message with the assumption that its contents can be broken down into units of meaning in an objective and replicable manner. Most of these works examined the content of newspapers on subjects as sports, politics and crime (Mckay, 2006). This study, as a multimodal investigation, examines the linguistic and non-linguistic elements of newspaper reports on Boko Haram terrorist activities. The paper adopts a critical stylistic method to explore data from the perspective of style and rhetoric. The design is qualitative and each report is analyzed by:

- a. Identifying the rhetorical postures and style used by the reporters; focusing specifically on rhetorical representation in the reports.
- b. Describing reporter's attitude in image representation and the interpersonal function of the text.
- c. Analyzing structures of images in context or SBI/K and/or CBK and the portrayal of terror in the print media.

### **Data Analysis**

#### *Social-construct as Meaning Operation in Terror Image Representation*

Terrorism has a social construct as it describes the behaviors of human beings who are part of the society. The image below depicts wreckage caused by terrorists.

Plate 1: **Image of wreaked tricycle affected by bomb**



**Identifier:** *DailyTrust*, Wednesday, December 5, 2012

Without the relay of the linguistic message, one is tempted to say that the image depicts an attack in a car park or motor park as the case maybe. However, the report, using linguistic signs, explains that the images are relics of tricycles (Keke NAPEP) where the attack occurred; not a car park but a bus stop at Baga in Maiduguri. The images of a trailer, a white loaded car and other tricycles at the background of the wreaked ones suggest that the scene is a busy place that attracts human beings or some activities that human beings are involved in; thus, describing it as a bus stop is persuasive enough to tell the attraction of the terrorists towards the scene of incident. The ambiguity of the visual code of the tricycles is narrowed by the relay which tells the story that they are destroyed by terrorists. The relay combined with the nonlinguistic items provides a bimodal dimension of the text which produces the rhetorical structure or the embedded meaning. The image below depicts confusion at the scene of a terror attack:

Plate 2: **Image of vestiges after a bomb attack**



**Identifier:** *DailyTrust*, Wednesday, July 8, 2015

The meaning operation and visual structure of the image are depicted in the second-degree victim – represented here as participants in a terror attack; properties such as clothes, shoes, caps (head gears), a building, a satellite dish, and other vectors of motion are shown in Plate 2. The chaotic theme is portrayed in the way vectors are scattered around. The implication is that there has been a violent display which may have resulted in the death of many.

The RPs are people who are gathered around the scene of incident probably trying to rescue victims or checking out things. The level of mayhem is depicted in the relics. For the loss of properties, it is obvious from the image that people's belongings are being destroyed; it is not shown whether there are human deaths recorded. However, the linguistic caption above the image explains that up to dozens of humans are killed and many injured. The elements represented in the image are adequate to persuade the reader/viewer that something is the case and that there has been a violent display at the scene which may have affected many people. The theme of displacement is also depicted in Plate 3 below:

Plate 3: **Image showing destroyed homes**

# 11 elders burnt to death as Boko Haram kills 40

- Air Force kills dozens' of suspects
- Tambuwal writes CDS on visit

From Baburin Kayode, Hasting  
**B**ELEAGUERED Borno State had yesterday another taste of horror, with Boko Haram terrorists killing more than 40 residents of Inkhana, a village in Kosofga Local Government Area. Among the dead were two policemen and 11 elders, who were too weak to flee the massacre. The insurgents set ablaze houses, shops and the only standing police station on the Maiduguri-Damaturu road. But there were reports that dozens of the terrorists were killed in nearby Sambisa forest while fleeing after the attack. The Air Force, The Nigerian learnt, pounded the insurgents as they fled.



**DESOLATION** A woman and her kid stand in front of their burnt house at Inkhana in Borno on Tuesday after Boko Haram's terrorist attack, in which about 40 people died and 11 were burnt to death.

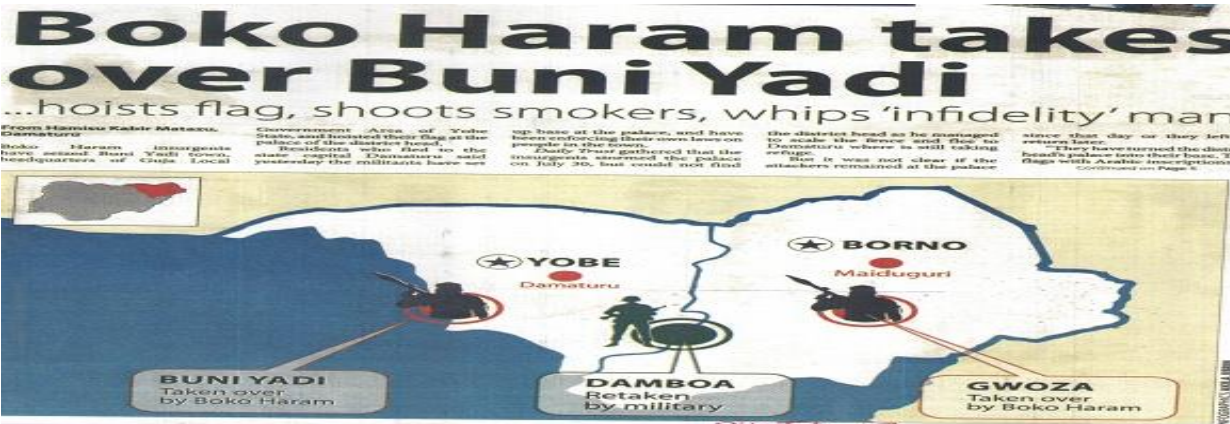
## We can crush Boko Haram, says Air Chief

From Ghazis Ogunwade, Assistant Editor, Abuja  
**T**HE Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Amosla Amosu, is sure that the Armed Forces can crush the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast as soon as possible. Air Marshal Amosu spoke yesterday while receiving the Commandant of the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Air Vice Marshal John Ifemeje, who visited him at work in Abuja. He said there was a synergy between his office and that of the

**Identifier:** *The Nation*, Wednesday, March 5, 2014

To further illustrate this, the report in Plate4 uses visuals to represent an occupation of the terrorists, where the map of Nigeria is drawn, significantly foregrounding the places such as BuniYadi in Yobe State and Gwoza in Borno, that are being taken over by the terrorists, while the military stands in the middle retaking Damboa which is a boundary between both states. See the image below:

**Plate 4: A map showing places of Boko Haram occupation**



**Identifier:** *Daily Trust*, Thursday, August 21, 2014

Unlike other images discussed in this paper, this image in Plate 4 is a replica of the Nigerian enclave showing the geographical location of the places under attack by Boko Haram. The image is not a direct analogical representation of the scenes of attack but a map which imitates the locations of the attack. The representation of Boko Haram and the military is also imitated with

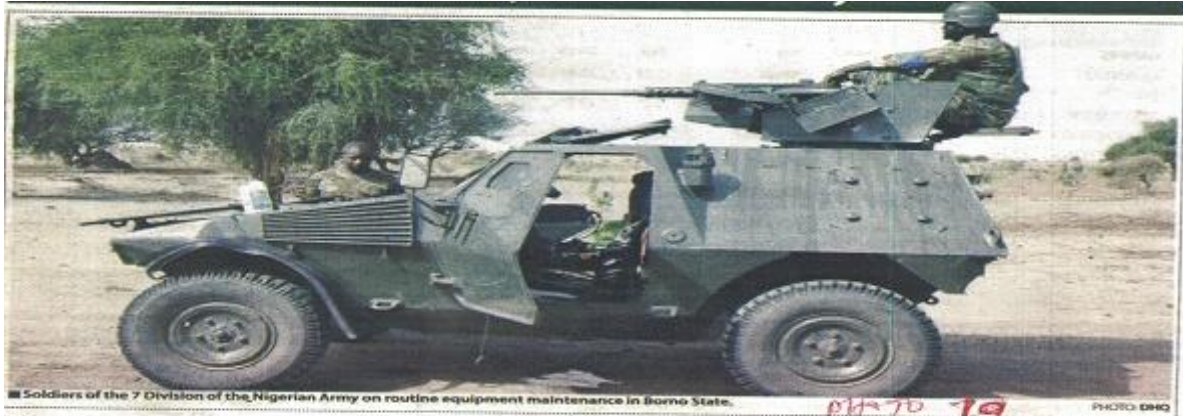
icons similar or approximated to the real objects; using icons of armed men to symbolize both parties. But the difference is shown in the weapons they possess; as the military is made to hold guns while the terrorists are seen holding arrows – a symbolism that depicts the insurgents as possessing sophistication in their tactics while the military is portrayed as susceptible to using outdated weapons of war, symbolized in the arrow which is why they (military) are yet to defeat the terrorists in the areas represented.

In most of the reports, Boko Haram has enjoyed attention on their activities. In Plate 4, a carto-  
semiotic analysis of the map depicts the idea that the terrorists have occupied the territories –  
BuniYadi and Gwoza. The use of the map is to create in the reader a picture of the places invaded  
by the terrorists which adequately persuades and appeals to the reader in different ways. The  
cartographic implication of the map is in consonance with the headline and the report generally.  
The reason for employing visuals of the locations where the insurgents have occupied or taken-  
over is to give the reader an idea of the places of conflict. Again, the headline has aided in the  
understanding of the news text.

### **Action and Analytical Elements in the Images**

Some images are full of action vectors which adequately represent the activities in the reports. In  
the following images in Plates 5,6 and7 discussed as comprising action and analytical elements,  
there are vectors of outrage showcased in different ways by the Nigeria military, the civilian Joint  
Task Force (JTF) and the opposing forces, the Boko Haram.

Plate 5: **Image showing military`s displayed action**



■ Soldiers of the 7 Division of the Nigerian Army on routine equipment maintenance in Borno State.

PHOTO 19

PHOTO DMO

## Boko Haram attacks Mafa again

...Troops clear  
insurgents' camps

See pg. 4  
for more  
>>>

**Identifier:** *Daily Trust*, Friday, March 7, 2014

As part of the war against terrorism, the image in Plate 5 above showcases military prowess. The image does not represent the stated headline: “Boko Haram attacks Mafa again”. In the image, the attack is not portrayed as the caption has stated. The image, therefore, is a form of metaphor which tells the public that something is being done even as Boko Haram attacks Mafa. From the image, one cannot see the troops fighting anyone; however, what is seen is the war equipment which the report claims is undergoing maintenance. The meaning operation and the visual structure of this war equipment on the newspaper page (even as the opponent intensifies the game) is to show the public that government is making effort to win the war against terrorism. The function of this type of war technique is to appeal to and persuade the audience in some way that makes them feel secure. Thus, the image evokes some sense of security on the general public.

Another meaning operation in the visual image one could see as being a motivation to the inclusion of the image on the newspaper stems from the fact that a retired General, Muhammadu Buhari has made a case that the “Federal Government needed to take decisive action [to end the killings], and not keep up the rhetoric” (para.1). Thus, by responding to the General’s statement, the military through the newspaper media showcases their dexterity of telling the public that something is being done or that decisive steps are being taken to end the killings.

This is, therefore, a way of debunking Buhari’s claim that the government is only given to falsehood. The visual rhetoric in the image is interpreted as a display of capacity, gallantry, courage and/or heroism which the military should have been known for, while the opponent tries to say otherwise. The visual trope in the image is a reecho and an amplification of the purported war against terror of the Federal Government; as the image bolsters the rhetorical effect of the statement “...Troops clear insurgent’s camps” beneath the image. The following image in Plate 6 tells the story of power struggle as Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, is seen wearing a military uniform. This proves the sect’s ideological thinking of seeing themselves as warriors.

Plate 6: Image showing Shekau in military uniform

**Shekau: I'm not dead**

**It's all lies, says military**

*From Yusuf Ali, Abuja*

**B**OKO Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has shown up again in a video, boasting and yelling at a crowd. He said he was not killed, contrary to what the military said. But the Defence Headquarters (DHQ) yesterday said it was all lies and propaganda. It insisted that the impostor claiming to be Shekau had been killed in the battle of Kumbungu in Borno State. The DHQ, in a statement issued in Abuja, said it was still studying the video. It said: "The Defence Headquarters is studying the claims made in the video purportedly posted by the terrorists showing their leader Abubakar Shekau as dismissing his death. From immediate observation and what some credible news outlets claimed to have seen, the video did not indicate when it was shot, neither did it show any proof of life or currency such as screen time or date. The video also did not make any reference to anything that has happened since the impostor's reported death."

**Ex-presidential aide Remi Oyo dies at 61**

*From Augustine Eshikoya, Abuja*

**J**OURNALISM has lost one of its jewels, with the death in Britain of former presidential aide Mrs Olatunji Oyo. She was 61. The immediate past Managing Director of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) passed on Wednesday while receiving treatment for cancer-related ailment. Oyo was the media adviser to former President Obasanjo between 2003 and 2007. Her death was announced in a statement by her husband, Mr. Vincent Oyo yesterday.

**SEE ALSO PAGE 6**

*Continued on page 6*

**Identifier:** *The Nation*, Friday, October 3, 2014

Shekau’s military costume is symbolic of the war context in which the terrorists are engaged in. The appearance symbolizes *wardom* or a warring situation. His aggressive nature is manifested in his comment that showcases boast, “I am not dead”. The image shows a hoisted flag which means a conquest or capture of the territory in some ways. The chief Boko Haram ideologue, Shekau, was claimed to have been killed by the military. Through the media, the insurgents got to know the alleged death of Shekau. To correct the impression that he was killed by the military, Shekau comes out in a video boasting: “I am not dead”; a statement that exhibits egoism – deflating the propaganda of the Nigeria military. The RPs of the image are a flag of the “Islamic state”, a truck and his militias, with guns, whose faces are not revealed. For not veiling, Shekau connotatively



wants to prove the point that he is the one and he is still alive; so that, his accusers will know. Thus, while his followers veiled up, the egoistic and fearless Shekau stands with face uncovered. The implication is to debunk the military's claim and to assure his followers that he is alive. The symbolism derived from this image is that of power relation and struggle, intimidation and conquest.

The RPs in the following image reveal conflict and tension. The people with the weapons backing the reader are not the insurgents, but the locals who are going for a reprisal attack on the perpetrators of terror:

Plate 7: **Image showing armed men on reprisal attempt**



**Identifier:** *DailySun*, Monday, February 2, 2015

Plate 7 shows members of the community that are affected by insurgency going for a reprisal. The people, whose faces are concealed as they are captured backing the reader, are armed with weapons such as guns, sticks, machetes, motorcycles among others. It is therefore, unclear as to the particular place the youths are headed. But the report has explained that the represented participants here are not Boko Haram members but youths of the community attempting a reprisal attack on the terrorists.

### **Discussion of Findings in the Study**

In the images, there is a creation of a textual universe symbolic of terrorism. Terrorism related themes such as **deceit** (disguise), **insecurity** (victimization, destruction, fear, death, pain, displacement, shock) and **power relations** (aggression, violence, conflict) are depicted in the visual elements used to persuade the reader. Some of the images are represented in oblique angle camera shots. The ideological implication of the use of an oblique angle is to suppress or background the negative graphic incidents reported in the news stories. Oblique angles are less revealing (Ojebuyi&Salawu, 2018), and this implies that by their use, editors have deployed ethical caution or moderation in the representation of the images. Note that, not all the images are less offensive, those that portray pains cannot be said to be less offensive.

The three Hallidayan meta-functions of language featured prominently in the images. At the level of the textual, linguistic items function as a relay to add to the information of the images. The textual configuration of the linguistic items limits ambiguity or reduces pensiveness, where possible. At the interpersonal level, images have a subdued or reduced direct interaction with viewers as most of the offensive graphic portions of the incidents are concealed from the audience. The positioning of the cameras euphemistically represented the images such that the full scene, which may have burnt human victims, are not fully represented. This finding corroborates Ojebuyi and Salawu's (2018) study that states that "news editors demonstrated professionalism and ethical restraint by not using sensational, offensive and graphic images to frame the panic-invoking stories" (p.10). The findings in this study, in line with other studies like Paul and Elder, (2006), Matusitz, (2016), and Ojebuyi and Salawu (2018:11), indicate that news producers, in keeping to their roles as watchdogs and gatekeepers, need to apply some caution and moderation in the use of offensive and sensational images that may cause some moral or emotional panic. Also note that textual configuration or representation of images on newspaper pages influences social reality and audience emotional participation in the visual texts.

## **Conclusion**

Visual images, like most non-linguistic texts, are based on individual perception. In reading images, the analyst has the freedom to infer meanings that must be based on and derived from the cultural background the reader shares with the image. The image reader most times draws inferences or allusions from the society or other shared contexts that the image presents, by showing the connection (interpersonal function) between the represented participants and the

processes involved in the image composition. The image reader also evaluates the represented participants and the symbolism of the image which may be portrayed in its nature and function. This paper has therefore looked at the various images that terror narrators deploy in the reports. The images used here are delineated under the themes of destruction, confusion, victimization, pain, aggression, intimidation, conflict, anxiety, shock, displacement and death.

Analyses of the Plates 1- 7 reveal a depiction of a war situation; portrayed in the violent scenes, destructions of lives and properties, among others. The scenes of attack are dramatic and spectacular, with elements that are very persuasive; giving the reader a clue to the effect of the attack. The deployment of terror images in the reports helps to tell the stories the way they happen without much of photo editing. The visual structure and meaning operation in all the images stimulate a sensational feeling in the reader as some author has said, images do not tell lies, and a picture speaks for itself. Therefore, for the secondary witnesses, such as consumers of news reports on terror, these images give the inkling to the real terror activities perpetrated by Boko Haram.

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