The Media and the Ideology of Insecurity: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Two Editorials on Federal Government-Boko Haram Face-off

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Abstract

Recently, Nigeria has been enmeshed in the throes and quakes of insecurity. The media as the fourth estate of the realm is in the centre of the problem. Through its news reporting and editorials, the media mediate in events between the government and the masses. The media regulate the thought direction of the readers; hence, helping them to formulate ideologies on national issues through language. The study aims to examine two editorials on the Federal government-Boko Haram face-off to reveal the media's roles in the event. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the paper evaluates how the editorials represent the ideology of insecurity and how they contribute to or solve the problem. To achieve this, van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach to CDA is employed. Eventually, the study discovers that words, phrases and clauses (i.e. language) are essential in discourses. Through these elements, the editorials present the raging insecurity problem as insuperable because the Boko Haram insurgency is ideologically positioned as the powerful side. The 'Us' vs. 'Them' represented the federal government as a weakling who is beaten in its own game. However, the editorials, particularly, datum A, by qualifying the insurgent group with 'Islamic', presents a face threatening act against the Islamic faithful. It is therefore concluded that the media needs to be more sensitive to its language use in order to save the delicate bond of the nation from disintegration.

Keywords: media, ideology, national insecurity, critical discourse analysis, manipulation, socio-cognition

Introduction

This paper attempts a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of some textual elements that impact directly on the ideological representation of the national insecurity presently bedeviling Nigeria.

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CDA follows the functional theoretical position of Halliday (1973, p. 65) that "language is as it is because of its function in social structure". Hence, the agenda of CDA is primarily achieved through application. Therefore, on the basis that ideologies and opinions of newspapers are often not personal but social, institutional or political (van Dijk, 2001), the study adopts the socio-cognitive approach of Teun van Dijk and applies such features as: words, phrases and sentences which reflect the ideological representation of national insecurity in Nigeria, lexical choices that capture 'Us' versus 'Them', words, phrases, and sentences that implicate extra meanings and polarization patterns to its analysis of two editorials sampled from two Nigerian national daily newspaper; namely: *The Punch* (Thursday January 17, 2013) and *Daily Trust* (Tuesday February 5, 2013).

The study investigates the contributive roles play by the media in mediating in the situation as well as worsening the arguments channeled toward addressing the problems of insecurity. The editorials, sampled in this study, are explored to reveal the discourse manipulative strategies they employ in aggravating the situation and also those used to alleviate or mitigate it. According to van Dijk, (1995) manipulation is discursive and should be studied by CDA.

Theoretical Framework

CDA is an applied linguistic approach to language study. Its aim is to examine the representations of ideologies which are systems that are of the basis of the socio-political cognitions of groups (Lau & Sears, 1986, Rosenberg, 1988; cited in van Dijk, 1996). For Haig (2013), CDA "reflects a commitment to connecting texts to the widest possible social context, and it makes use of critical social theory as the means for making such connections". These perspectives of social, discursive and cognitive analysis of texts see CDA as a tool that presents discourse as central communicative interaction in social life.

Language, in its written or spoken modes, conveys meaning, sometimes, beyond the users' imagined intent. Often, listeners or readers decipher and place the speaker or writer in perspective according to the latter's use of language.

CDA, therefore, "emphasizes power, exploitation, and inequality as the social conditions of language" (Hanks, 2009, p. 120). The analysis of language in CDA goes in tandem with that of critical social theory with special regard for language as a vehicle for conveying ideologies, which to van Dijk (1993, p. 258), are "the 'worldview' that constitute 'social cognition': schematically organized complexes of representation and attitudes with regard to certain aspects of the social world".

Van Leeuwen (2009) posits that critical discourse analysts, despite, the different methodologies and diverse theoretical orthodoxies are united on the common goal of critiquing "the hegemonic discourse and genres that effect inequalities, injustices and oppression in contemporary society". Since the society is not free of political, economic or social discourses, language responds to communicative situations in social life. CDA explores text to contribute to debates of national interests. Hence, it prospers as a tool that influences change on the macro structure of the society.

The Socio-Cognitive Approach to CDA

From the foregoing, CDA is presented as a multidisciplinary approach. It investigates the cognitive process involved in participants' communication or interactions. In CDA studies, van Dijk has contributed immensely. His socio-cognitive approach hovers on the belief that the topics that people talk about represent the things that exist in their minds. Hence, topics of national interest, such as 'national insecurity', religious tolerance, youth restiveness, etc. are registered on the people's minds, and are deservedly reported on the pages of newspapers. Hence, Tomasello (2009) posits that language is a social convention through which human beings direct one another's attention to various aspects of their shared environment. By so doing, language users manipulate, direct or redirect the thoughts of others, and create an entirely different but dominantly circulated worldview which tends to replace reality over time.

Al-Sharoufi, (2013, p. 10) avers that manipulation is a premeditated discourse mainly aimed to instigate people to take certain actions that serve the writer's ideology.

The writer as the language user "draws (un)consciously on vast cognitive and cultural resources, calls up models and frames, sets up multiple connections, coordinates large arrays of information and engages in creative mappings, transfers and elaborations" to prompt his/her readers into performing a seemingly complex mental operations (Fauconnier, 1997). CDA adopts the cognitive linguistic tenet that language and thoughts are embodied. To affirm this, van Dijk postulates a triadic model: social cognition, social structures and discourse structures. According to him, social cognition mediates between social structure and discourse structures to reveal the ideological and polarization patterns in press discourse. Hence, CDA investigates the relationship among human thoughts, bodily experience, imagination and the manifestations of these in human social interaction.

The Media and National Security

The media take up the role of watchdog as the fourth estate of the realm. In other words, it plays a mediating role between the government and the governed. Through objective reportage, the media exposes socio-political and economic ills in the society they serve. In this, the actors of these ills are exposed with dependable facts and evidence that will prevent the allegation of slander or libel against the media. This implies that media reports must come with utmost integrity in the interest of the nation.

The late sage, Chief Obefemi Awolowo, says "The more prosperous a state is and the more equally and justly distributed its wealth is, the less liable it is to the danger of internal disorder and the more able it is to discourage external aggression". Against the backdrop of this, the media are assigned the functions of championing the course of adhering strictly to the socio political ideology of the nation it serves. In the Nigerian situation, therefore, the media in its appreciation of the dissenting ethnicity, religious, languages and incurable mutual suspicions, hovering on the nation like bubonic plague, must avoid, as much as possible, subjectivity, prejudice and imbalances in news reports. Thus, responsible media, committed to the goals of nation building and national development "must tread warily and exercise great discretion" (Gambo, 2008 p. 18) if it is to strengthen the national security of its country for peace and national development.

The Nigerian Media in the Centre of National Insecurity

A threat to national security in Nigeria has a long history. This can be attributed to many factors among which the seemingly incurable mutual suspicions across ethnic, religious and linguistic borders is primary. The Nigerian socio-political situation needs to be evaluated via media editorials as a means for gathering evidence that reveal the ideology or worldviews favoured or represented by the media for or against the challenges and flourish of national insecurity currently bedeviling Nigeria. Recently, many Nigerians had had and still having share of the quakes in national insecurity. The ethnic and religious configuration of the nation coupled with the uneven distribution of national wealth and social cleavage between the rich and the poor has made Nigeria liable to the danger of internal disorder.

Religion and ethnicity, therefore, become the primary suspects in the present situation. A multi-modal approach to Discourse Analysis (not adopted in this study) will evidently reveal the ideological presentation of a male figure in turban and mask with a gun or explosives in one hand and the Holy Qur'an on the other on pages of newspapers as one of the ways the media places itself in the centre of national insecurity. This study, based on the notion that language is at the centre of every human events, protests, crises, demonstrations, etc. examines the language of two editorials. The central aim is to reveal the ideological stance of the editorials in the insecurity power play. The following section presents a Critical Discourse Analysis of the data sampled for this study.

Data Analysis

Ideological Representation of Insecurity

Words, phrases and sentences which reflect the ideological representation of national insecurity in Nigeria emphasizes the reality of the situation. The security of the nation is obviously crippled and clogged up with the relentless strikes by the 'presumptive'/'faceless' group called Boko Haram. The threat posed by the sect has exposed the nation to internal disorder and fear. The samples drawn from the data deployed for this study put this in perspective.

Datum A	Datum B
*The deadly Boko Haram insurgency *A threat to corporate existence of Nigeria *The aggression of the Islamist terror group *Boko Haram relentless onslaught *The international terror-backed insurgency; terror acts; insurgents; terrorists; smoked out; refugee; murderous intent; terror group; Boko Haram bloodletting; terrorism is based on perverted logic; these apologists *Jonathan said the intention of the terrorist is to send him and members of his government into hiding… *… except within the safe confines of Aso Rock, then the government is in hiding and no assurance of his intention to "crush Boko Haram" will be taken seriously Defeating, terrorist attacks; smoked out; collateral damage, the war zones *who lost family members considered to have been killed unjustly by security membersBoko Haram terror threat; operational capacities; putrid ideology.	*Second-in-command in the leadership hierarchy of Boko Haram *Ceasefire in its year-long violent insurgency, *the group's leader; Boko Haram leaders *The carnage of the last three years; offers; mayhem; threats; many splinter groups; Boko Haram; the de facto head of Boko Haram, the group was faceless, national security, ceasefire, if no bomb exploded, no one was beheaded; no place of worship was affected in that period, *an end to the senseless killings and destruction of properties; ceasefire offer; ceasefire order, militant activities

The expressions sampled above on the two columns topicalized the quakes of insecurity rocking the nation. "The deadly Boko Haram insurgency" is topicalized and presented ideologically as a "threat to the corporate existence of Nigeria". Insecurity through militant insurgency will break the bond of unity holding the different particles of the nation together. In the centre of the insecurity is the group called 'Boko Haram'. This group is emphasized through repetition. The phrase is repeated ten times in datum A and four times in B. The editorialists presented 'Boko Haram' as a synonym for insecurity. The power of 'this group' is so enormous that the President was cowed at its feet. The editorials ideologically posited that there is role swapping in the control of security elements in Nigeria. Even where the "presumptive second-in-command in the leadership hierarchy of Boko Haram" declared ceasefire, military authorities however said they would subject the ceasefire to a 30-day test… the offer

[would be] taken seriously if no bomb exploded, no one was beheaded, or no place of worship was affected in that period.

The ceasefire was presented like an offering to an undeserved god. The insurgent group made a mockery of the ceasefire offer by making it a ridiculous presentation.

The topic of the editorials is cognitively received by readers as an insuperable security problem. Datum A presents the militant activities of Boko Haram as "relentless onslaught" while datum B pictures it as a lingering incurable epidemic with "the carnage of the last three years". The onslaught of serial 'terror acts' by the 'insurgents' made for easy association of the group with "murderous intents" and "putrid ideology" of "bloodletting" 'collateral damage', killing 'unjustly' (datum A), 'mayhem', 'beheading', 'bomb explosives' (all topicalized as "senseless killings and destruction of properties"). These words and phrases have insurmountable psychological implication of insecurity in the cognitive or mental domain of the nation in particular.

The extreme psychological implication of insecurity is felt in the President who was quoted as lamenting that the motive of Boko Haram is "to take over Abuja so as to make him and those in Government to go and hide". The readers who constituted the masses will feel disappointed and lost faith in the ability of the government to 'smoke out' the 'insurgent group'. The situation, though objectively represented was heightened or overblown to awaken the sleeping giant in the security agents and the presidency in particular.

Further still, the editorialists converged on the worldview that a part of the country has become a 'war zone'. However, the editorialists contribute to the inglorious generalization that 'the insurgent' is Islamic. Giving that Nigeria is an ethnic cum religious sensitive nation, one would expect the media to mediate neutrally without bias or prejudice. Such implicating and incriminating expression as:

Book Haram is just exploiting hints of dialogue with murderous intent. As a typical terror group, Boko Haram meaning 'western education is abominable' has repeatedly enunciated its objectives, which are to Islamize the northern part of the country, enforce the sharia law and control part of the country.

Citing this comment in an editorial throws weight behind the actors of terrorism. This is a clear case of verbal terrorism because phrases like "hints of dialogue with murderous intent …, to Islamize the northern part of the country, enforce the sharia law and control part of the country" emphasize the power of the agents of insecurity. van Dijk (1993) opines that if we want to emphasize our positive side and deemphasize theirs, we should topicalize that in discourse. Hence, editorialists ought to deemphasize the agents of terrorism along with their intents and actions, and emphasize the place of peace in fostering the unity of the nation.

The ideology of modifying Boko Haram with 'Islamic' is an aberration and desecrations of a holy alter. Boko Haram connotes 'perverted logic' (datum A) while 'Islam' is a religion of Allah which preaches peace and brotherhood. Therefore, it is 'oxymoronic' to qualify Boko Haram with Islamic as this will lead to a face threatening act against the believers of Islam. The media, again, should not fan the embers of crises but quench the raging fire of ethno-religious sentiment through sensitive editorials.

Lexemes and Phrases that Reflect 'Us' vs. 'Them'

To reflect binary oppositional uniqueness between 'Us' and 'Them', the editorialists use words that present such distinctions as 'Boko Haram' vs. the 'Government', 'the North' vs. 'Nigeria', 'Islam' vs. 'others' and 'International Terrorist' vs. 'Nigeria'. The word, phrase and clause choices which reflect these role relations are sampled from the two editorials and presented below.

Datum A Boko Haram vs. Government	The North vs. Nigeria	Islam vs. Others	International terrorists vs. Nigeria
_President Goodluck Jonathan's… to crush the….Boko Haram _Boko Haram relentless onslaught was to take over Abuja… …the government of its readiness to swap the current Kid gloves tactic … the group…once told Jonathan that his conversion to Islam would bring an end to the insurgency. …, Jonathan had chosen to advance motives other than those originating from the group for its actions. …not matter how straight-to-the point the president's analysis of Boko Haram may be, if he does not back it up with decisive action, the group will continue to get bolder. ... he (Jonathan) seemed to have forgotten that his government is already operating in hiding . **Datum B** …the second-in-command… of Boko Haram…declared cease-fire in its year-long violent insurgency. …The move followed talks between the group and officials of the Borno State government …condition … all detained members of the group should be set free The public sceptism and the government likeworm reception of the announcement (cease fire); mayhem	Until recently… Boko haram named some prominent northerners as representative in a proposed dialogue.	The aggression of the Islamic terror group. **Editorial vs. Govt** The government should resist the temptation to take measures that may scuttle it. Security agencies should be able to determine which faction is doing what, and act accordingly.	That has so far failed. For a crack down against the international terror-backed insurgency. -Boko Haram members were indeed being trained by AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb). **Boko Haram vs. the People** Everyone would welcome a respite from the carnage. …..the mayhem did not abate even when the authorities…

From the above, it is evidence that Boko Haram's target is the government. The group, as presented on the sample above, is bent on frustrating the government through the national security sector. Therefore, in the two editorial analyzed, it is evidently observed that the pattern of "Us" vs. "Them" are tilted towards the group's resolution to cripple the national security through terrorism. Predominantly in Datum A, the 'Us' (the government) is against 'Them' (Boko Haram). However, the latter is ideologically positioned as the powerful group capable of 'offering' a conditional restoration of security to the former.

The editorialists manipulate the discourse to spur the government to take its rightful position, as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and the chief controller of the security agencies, to ensure and guarantee the safety of lives and properties of the nation. The other forceful patterns emphasize in the editorials are 'the editorial' vs. 'the government', 'the north' vs. 'Nigeria', 'Islam' vs. 'others' and international terrorist vs. Nigeria. The difference between datum A and datum B is seen in that datum B does not give any credence to 'the north' vs. 'Nigeria' and 'Islam' vs. 'others' patterns which are emphasized in datum A. In all, these varying patterns definitely reflect the ideological and cognitive impacts the editorialists intends to convey to their readers. The most predominant, as seen from the foregoing, is Them-Them-Them (i.e. the Boko Haram) being more active and determined than the government and its security agencies who choose "to advance motives other than those originating from the group (Boko Haram) for its actions". Hence, the government is ideologically presented as being indecisive in its efforts to ensure national security.

Words, Phrases and Sentences that Implicate Extra Meanings

Since manipulation is discoursal, editorials use it to bring readers to their ideological tent. Editorialists depend on implicating information (Al-Sharufi, 2013) through the use of words, phrases or clauses whose interpretation requires recourse to background knowledge. The use of the expression sampled below implicates extra textual meaning.

… appear to represent a radical change in attitude by government that has often advocate dialogue as a means of containing the aggression… (Datum A).

The underlined part of the extract above implicates the use of dialogue in solving the Niger-Delta militancy. The editorial tries to relive the Yar'Adua administration's handling of a similar situation. Also, the editorial implicates, with the sentence: "In a rare show of clear sightedness, the President reportedly said that the real motive of Boko Haram's relentless onslaught was to take over Abuja so as to make me and those in government to go and hide", that the government had a shallow analysis of the situation in reference to his wobbly handling of such other crises as 'fuel subsidy protest', etc. This is aimed to position the readers at the centre of evaluating the situation themselves. According to van Dijk (1998, p.158), opinion are explicit, and dominant and formulated from the viewpoint of the newspaper or its editor so as to contribute to the opinion formation of the reader about a current news events and national issue.

However, datum B buys into the idea of the peace talk. In its argument, the editorial summons the schema of the Niger Delta event in support of the dialogue proposal for solving the problem.

The government already has a blueprint in the document that has <u>moderated militant activities</u> in the Niger Delta And, to save the face of the present administration as capable and independent in thought and action, the editorialist quickly adds: "It may not <u>necessarily</u> take the same pattern". This still implicates the meaning and ideology of tardiness of the president in moderating the insecurity problem. So, while datum A is blunt and direct, datum B is advisory and indirect in implicating the extra meaning and ideological position of chastising the government and alleging it of administrative 'tardiness' and 'rudderlessness'.

Datum A also implicates the Nigerian security agents as anti-people and therefore terrorists too in their own right.

And for intelligence to succeed, the security forces must be seen to be on the side of the people, not as enemies. (Datum A)

This obviously implies that there is a fine line between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security agencies.

Polarization Patterns

The editorials showcase a polarization pattern between the views about the readiness of the government and the commitment of Boko Haram to its terror acts. The web of polar relation created by the two editorials sampled can simply be summarized as 'The weak' vs. 'The Powerful'. As the weak side, the president or government was held for many fallacies that only beg the question that solution to the raging insecurity is not elusive. The samples below put the argument in perspective. The president:

Boko Haram's relentless onslaught was to take over Abuja so as to make me and those in government to go and hide. For a President that once said that <u>terrorist acts</u> were taking place all over the world and it was Nigeria's <u>turn</u> to experience one (Datum A) The Borno State government has not conmented on the issue, declaring only that it was a matter for the Federal Government because it concerned national security. Military authorities however said they would subject the ceasefire offer to a 30-day test. (Datum B)

These are evidence that the government has been beaten at his game. However, the ideology represented by revealing the polarization pattern in the security conflict is to make the government rise up to the demand of the situation. Another important pointer to the polarity between 'The group' and the 'Nigerian government' is the obvious ridicule of the military might of the nation which was evidence in the government fear to

Hold important national events at the Eagle Square, Abuja, except within the safe confines of Aso Rock, … (Datum A) For a commander-in-chief of the nation's Armed forces so obviously cowed, 'what is the security of the nation?' the readers, through the editorial, may be prompted to ask. Polarization pattern reveals the power relation between or among discourse participants. As seen from the analysis thus far, the binary polar differences evidently support the ideological position of the editorials.

Findings and Conclusion

The study carries out a Critical Discourse Analysis of two editorials: "Jonathans Order to Crush Boko Haram" (*The Punch*, January 17, 2013) and "The Ceasefire Offer by Boko Haram Faction" (*Daily Trust*, February 5, 2013). The choice of the topic, its analytical framework and the data are informed by the currency of the central theme: national insecurity and the agent of national threat on the one hand and the place of CDA as a media theory on the other.

The paper has shown that ideology is crucial to editorials which are often subjective because they represent the opinions and argument of the newspaper or its editor on news events. However, editorials themselves are the newspapers' analyses of news events which lead the readers eventually to formulate ideology on the issue.

The study reveals that the editorials analyzed topicalize issues which aggravate situations rather than mitigate them. Through the exploration of words, phrases and clauses that represent insecurity, the editorials exaggerate the national insecurity problem as insuperable. This is achieved by presenting the administration as a weakling in containing the agents of insecurity. This is supported by the lexical items and phrases that reflected the 'Us' vs. 'Them' role relation. The editorials foreground the ideology that 'them' (i.e. Boko Haram) is on the winning side. Therefore, Boko Haram is basking in the euphoria of its success at frustrating and crippling the nation's security sector. Moreover, the editorials use words, phrases and clauses that implicate extra meanings by tasking the cognition of the readers. These expressions task the schema and frame of the readers in such a way that extra textual referencing is inevitable to the understanding of the editorials.

It is therefore concluded that socio-cognition is indispensable for the effective interpretation of media ideology through Critical Discourse Analysis. And, sensitive issues in editorials must be handled delicately and with great caution so as to avoid inciting readers to counter violence. The maintenance and sustenance of the nation's unity must supersede individual's or corporate bodies' interests. The delicate bond of the country must not be overstretched through media reports, analyses and comments which threaten national integration.

Editorials in Nigeria media should deemphasize the agents of terrorism along with their intents and actions, and emphasize the place of peace in fostering the unity of the nation because peace is the fertilizer for national development.

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