

Social media: a protagonist for terrorism.

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Social Media: A Protagonist for Terrorism

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ABSTRACT

Terrorism is ubiquitous. Most states around the world have experienced some form of terrorism. Terrorism has undermined the profile of Nigeria and has generated a tense and fragile political system. This paper underscores that the prevalence of grievance and the lack of an innovative economic base in Nigeria are amongst the key factors that stimulate terrorism in the state. In Nigeria, terrorist activities have become endemic. A cursory look on these activities has proven that social media has become a source for propagating terrorism. This has generated multifarious security challenges as well. This paper is aimed at analyzing terrorism and social media. It further proceeds to examine the main thrust of the paper submitting that social media is a viable tool for terrorists. From this standpoint, the paper explores a case study analysis to further explain and evaluate the symbiotic relationship between social media and terrorism in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS

E-Terrorism, Globalization, Internet and Nigeria, Social Media, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

Terrorist from all over the world, in privacy have the opportunity to disseminate terrorist ideologies and propaganda through the Internet. This publicity is transmitted through the use of a gizmo on social media platforms, essentially given the fact that it can be transmitted to a wide pool of audience (Odunsi, 2017, p. 3). According to Anna (2013, p. 1), terrorism is a media phenomenon that enables terrorists to create awareness, instigate fear, interrupt daily living, and generally garner attention (Altheide, 2013).

With the ushering of globalization, an individual through the use of gadgets can use digital interface such as social media to connect with a vast majority of the world's population. The world indeed, has turned into a global village. Terrorist activities live and breathe on the wave of social media platforms with which it thrives (Opejobi, 2017, p. 1). Studies have found that “nearly 90% of the organized terrorism takes place online through the mode of social media” (Weimann, 2012). Terrorism has increasingly become a sophisticated and dangerous threat to world order with the aid of advanced information technology with the phenomenal growth in social media (Majekodunmi, 2015, p. 128).

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

This paper hinges on two significant discussions based on dependency model and the grievance model.

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First, the discourse of dependency which is interconnected with globalization is essential in exploring social media as a tool for terrorist activities in Nigeria, given that it is a sub-concept of the political economy theory or the theory of economic imperialism which are sacrosanct issues that aids and affects terrorism in Nigeria.

The dependency theory connects to neo-Marxist theory as an economic radical theory. The crucial progenitors of the theory are: Samir Amin (1973), Andre Gunder Frank (1969), Daniel A. Offiong (1980), Raul Prebisch (1950), Paul Baran (1967), Dos Santos (1970), and Scott Arighi (1992). According to Fukuyama, (1992, p.100): "This theory has been the most recent attempt to keep Marxism alive in the underdeveloped world." This theory depicts that the world is alienated amongst the wealthy and the poor countries and operating in such a way that the less-developed countries are financially and administratively dependent on economically developed countries (Olaniyi, 2001, p. 16). The manipulation of less developed countries are propagated by colonialism and by their disadvantaged position in the world economy, which situates them as being connected to discounted principal merchandises such as agronomic produces and raw supplies (Odozibodo, 2014, p. 18).

Conversely, technologically advanced countries produces extortionate and highly-inflated imports for trade to the less industrialized countries such as Nigeria. This development further enriches the states that are at the top of the world's financial table, whilst they exploit the less advanced countries on the marginal side of the world-system (Olney, 2001, p. 10). Implementing the procedures and practices of international financial and economic matters to best suit the economically advanced nation-states, thereby retaining the dependency pattern of the less-developed countries (Nwachukwu, et al, 2015, p. 276).

Okereke and Ekpe (2002) eulogized the dependency theory and agreed that the theory marks a vociferous exit from the other existing theories of colonialism, thereby giving an acumen on how to untangle various corollaries by which states in the periphery level are subjugated by those at the center level through dependency. Generally, the application of this theory lies in the strength of its practicality. For example, this theory delineates the connexion between the center and the periphery levels of the world system and has the propensity for hypothesis testing and pragmatic generalizations (Odozibodo, 2014, p. 19). It therefore suffices to assert that Nigeria is a disadvantaged country under the influence of globalisation. Nigeria is the sixth largest oil exporter with a daily yield of about two million barrels, per foreign exchange. Nigeria is vastly reliant on the trade of crude oil to the measure of over ninety per cent (90%) of our nationwide revenue (Majekodunmi and Adejumon, 2012, p. 201). Consequently, it goes without saying that globalization has generated the dependency of the Nigerian economy, since its basic export is convolutedly intertwined around raw materials (Majekodunmi and Adejumon, 2012, p. 201).

According to Udoette (2004, p. 34), globalisation is nothing but an enormous agenda of global politics, which is an imposing system of neo-colonialism. Boko Haram's rejection of westernization and ideologies, the refusal to be dependent on the globalization, albeit westernization influence and penetration is a strong motivation and correlation for social media terrorism.

This discourse is apposite in this paper as Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country rich and unique with its diverse cultures, religions, values, and norms. Every individual belongs to a particular culture and way of life that is of utmost value, uniqueness and benefit to such individual. However, globalization undermines culture, cultural norms and values immensely. As such, an individual will not want his or her culture to be subsumed under another culture. Thus, culture can be identified as "social glue that unites individuals under an umbrella" (Olomogbo, 2015, p. 25).

It is conceivable that with the cultural penetration of globalization, the advent of a definite set of standards and principles that remains principal and being disseminated from place to place across the globe, there are bound to be conflict, which could further degenerate into violence and terrorism (Douglas, 1992).

It is crucial to note that Nigeria is a multi-cultural state, with cultural boundaries. It is communal, oriented as opposed to a total fusion of all cultures for all citizens. However, the theory of dependency

is still significant and fixed due to the cultural dynamism in Nigeria. Although, it may not be able to work in countries like the western world where there has been a process of de-culturalisation.

Secondly, the grievance model was propounded by Ted Robert Gurr in his celebrated work of 'Why Men Rebel' 1970. Grievance can be considered as a model apposite to this paper due to the fact that terrorism may be a causal effect of a collective grievance of a group. A group of people may be driven toward terrorism if their basic needs are not adequately met (Howard, 2010).

This theory is also not without flaws, it has been criticized that not all grievances lead to violence and more often than not, although it not usually accepted, the central cause of such conflict has some economic, financial or greed factor attached to it (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002).

For instance, the Niger Delta perceived agitations of their elect's greed, led to their grievances. When the wealth of the state is not distributed in *pro rata* equal proportion, there is bound to be an economic and political violence. The nexus between the terrorist groups that we have in Nigeria such as Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen is for the reason that of their acuties on deficiencies in terms of socio-economic, psychological needs, social injustice and inequalities, political and resource control (Olomajobi, 2015, p.167).

The grievance theory in relation to the focus of this paper, social media as a tool for terrorist activities in Nigeria informs us that the social media is exciting and could possibly be addictive, it helps the terrorist not only to publicly showcase their grievances through social media platforms, it further enables them to justify their activities of grievances (Livingston, 2019).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND TERRORISM

There is no single universal and generally acceptable definition of terrorism as there are mélanges of definition depending on one's perspective. Nonetheless, in examining this phenomenon, it cannot be over emphasized that the term 'terrorism' resonates and reverberates terror globally. Terrorism entails but not limited to threats, be it executed or not, particularly, the psychological and emotional trauma that terrorism leaves its victims with is quite appalling. Essentially, what a country brands as terrorist activities, may appear to another as a freedom fighter's activity (Majekodunmi, 2015). Terrorism is a term that depicts the use of violence, threat, to intimidation or exert fear. Terrorism is intertwined with violence and confrontation against a stouter opponent (Stepanova, 2008). Furthermore, terrorism could be related to methodical obliteration of a people be it wholly or partly in connection with ethnicity, radicalism, religious orientation, of a group of people (Attoh, 2012).

Terrorism is a contentious term. The rationale for the contention in the definition of terrorism is not farfetched. One has to know the basis for which violence is used at a time and for what purpose either by individuals, groups or states. Enders and Sandler (2011, p.3) defined terrorism as "the premeditated use or threat to use violence by individuals or protestant groups against unarmed people in order to obtain a political or social objective by intimidating a large audience beyond that of the immediate victim". According to Abolurin, (2011, p. 15): "Terrorism is a scourge that takes innocent lives, threatens values of humanity, human rights and freedoms, and impedes development and world progress". This definition borders on the social factor. In concurrence, Mike, (2016) views terrorism as a modified form of revolt and insurrection in attempt to terrify a citizen or society to gain psychological advantage for the pursuit of specific goals. This can be explained to mean an oppression by the stout over the feeble. Chiktara and Girdhari (2002, p. 10), assert that "terrorism is a term used to describe the method or the theory whereby an organized group intends to actualize its vowed goals via the systematic use of violence employing deliberate murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends." Wardlaw, (1982) opined that 'terrorism refers to the use of force by an individual or a group, either agitating for or in opposition to an established authority with the intention to create extreme anxiety or fear including effects on a target group larger than immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators.'

Arguing in this direction, Bocksette, (2008), ‘terrorism is described as political violence in a harsh conflict carried out to induce terror and fear through violent victimization and destruction of noncombatant targets with the intention to send a message from a secret, organized and agitating group to the government and general public in order to reach political goals, either short term, midterm or long term’, (cited in Abolurin, 2011 p. 374). Bellany, (2007, p. 116) in his definition brought out the factor of politics and religion into play, as these factors serve as ideologies for which terrorism is resorted to. He defines terrorism as a strategy used by organized armed forces without regard to ‘humanitarian considerations to achieve political together with religious together with warlike ends, with the intention of creating a pressing fearfulness in the minds of target persons (usually directed at civilians) or the lives of those close to them, or their property’.

With slight difference to the foregoing definitions, Neumann, (2009, p. 105) argued that terrorism is a social phenomenon which involves “the deliberate creation of fear, usually through the use (or threat to use) of symbolic acts of violence, to influence the political behavior of a target group.” Of these definitions, certain elements are to be taken cognizance of. They are; political ideology, religious ideology, indirect confrontation, expression of displeasure on societal or government policies, the use of violence (i.e. organized and premeditated use of force) and the creation of societal fear. However, the act of terrorism is usually done indirectly, usually not with head-on confrontation with the main target. For Chiktara and Girdhari, (2002, p. 78) “Terrorism is the cowards’ weapon, as it involves sneakiness and obviates facing an enemy.” This definition is evident in the activities of terrorists across the world.

Isumonah et al, (2013) unanimously explain the concept of terrorism in their definition with the inclusion of their perceived factors. They define terrorism as the intentional act involving the use of violent and criminal actions (such as suicide bombings, sabotage, abduction, killing, hijacking and kidnapping) to induce fear (terror) and produce other psychological effects by secret and organized sects in pursuit of political, ideological, religious and other sectarian goals that challenge and seek to change the status quo within and beyond state boundaries. It becomes international when it goes beyond the confines of a state. Hence, terrorism becomes transnational when the actions of the terrorists in a nation are geared towards hitting another nation for whatever reasons as conceived by the group or individual (Obizulike-Osuofia, 2013, p. 33).

Blakeley (2012), succinctly explained that state violence is a measure used to coerce a group or population to yield to the desires of select few (elites) by employing terrorist acts in order to create terror to curb political opposition. Similarly, Mitchel, (1986) purports that state or non-state oriented terrorism involves intentional pressure and ferocity focused on selected target, with the intent to induce intense anxiety in a particular object bystanders who ascertain with that prey in such a way that they distinguish themselves as prospective and imminent fatalities. In this manner, they are compelled to change their comportment in a way desired by the actor. A veritable example for such, is the notable historical account of “the total terror of the French state during the immediate post-revolutionary period of 1789” regarding its actions conducted within its own border (Omar, 2008, p. 98). The error was tagged as ‘*Regime De La Terreur*’ which means ‘The Reign of Terror’ (Omar, 2008). Those who resisted the administration were arrested, imprisoned and put to death by guillotine without given the benefits of trials or legal procedure, with victims amassing to about thousands, (Simonsen and Spindlove, 2000).

Furthermore, state-sponsored terrorism is a form of truncated and forced engagement that states carryout towards its engrossment in a war devoid of being alleged or held responsible for such engagements. In an equal vein, a state that harbors terrorist groups or showcases a negligent attitude towards curtailing the activities of terrorists within its territory is involved in state terrorism (either actively or passively) (Shefata, 2015). Altogether, the victims of terrorism could be the governments that are part of terrorist target acts as well as officials or individuals who are slain, injured, kidnapped, taken hostage or robbed by terrorists (Sobel, 1978).

Organisation of African Union Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (the Algiers Convention) by the 35th Ordinary Session of Heads of State and Government held in Algiers, Algeria, in July 1999 defined terrorism as:

any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage.

It seems that this definition would embrace regimes who are committing gross human rights abuse towards its citizens.

Fishman (2019, p. 84) notes the importance of social media to the terrorist:

The reality is that terrorists use a wide range of different digital platforms for different purposes. Analysts know this, of course, and should lean into this granularity to drive a much more nuanced conversation about the threat posed by specific online behavior on particular platforms, and the techniques companies can employ to manage it.

Social media emanates with a constraint-free space, anonymity that prompts individuals to communicate freely, interact without restraint (Koehler, 2014). Essentially, social media provides terrorists with a benign galaxy outside corporeal attack, somewhere safe and an ambience whereby training material can at the worst case scenario simply disappear or be detached (Torok, 2013). Stern and Berger (2015, p. 3) notes that:

the birth of a media model that has been transformed, expanded, and refined to a science....ISIS has made its name on the marketing of savagery, evolving its message to sell a strange but potent new blend of utopianism and appalling carnage to a worldwide audience.... ISIS is using beheadings as a form of marketing, manipulation, and recruitment determined to bring the public display of savagery into our lives, trying to instill in us a state of terror.

It is instructive to note that, social media sustains terrorist organizational activities for the spread of terrorist ideologies. In its sense, they are “able to store materials and exist in a cyber-space from which they cannot be permanently deleted, terrorist organizations have also realized the benefit of being able to remain operational in the cyber-environment even if the physical environment is threatened” (Bertram, 2016, p. 230).

The following key social media platforms, though are by no means exhaustive, are examined below:

YouTube and Terrorism

This is a social media platform that is impeccable for posting videos online especially the ‘how to...’ videos. It is so easy to watch and learn as most of these videos has a step-by-step guideline that allows the audience to train and practice the guidelines. Videos such as how to make bombs, shoot, combine chemicals and numerous terrorist acts are well explained. Furthermore, these videos assists the inquisitive minds carry out the on-line instruction. It has approximated 1.5 billion active users on a monthly basis (Kallas, 2018). YouTube platform is the world’s largest video sharing social networking program that also encourages individual(s) or group’s private YouTube channels (Jamie, 2017). Terrorist upload videos on the regular and these videos do not incite violence albeit *prima facie*, thus, YouTube will not remove the uploaded videos without more.

Terrorist use social media as their tool to share strategic and operational messages (Glazzard, 2017). These messages could be in the form of how to clean an AK 47; 'How to make bomb with recipes prescription'; 'How to become a tactical shooter'; and 'How to use and maintain military-type equipment.' (Mohammed and Yakubu, 2017, p. 35). YouTube is a powerful platform for not just posting or storing videos and films that can be viewed across the globe. It is influential because of the networking capacity that it generates. Terrorist could easily monitor YouTube information without being physically present. They can also observe the views on their posts and the comments irrespective of whether the viewers have subscribed or not irrespective of where they live (Lee, 2015, p. 1). What is more important, is that any individual can open an account with an email address and begin to post propaganda at no cost (Lee, 2015). For instance, Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's gang leader, along with his cohorts posted a video of *Chibok*'s girls kidnap in order to win cheap popularity, gain unnecessary yet, highly desired attention and in the process, to sympathizers (YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRfrLXPi8N8>).

Facebook and Terrorism

Mark Zuckerberg commenced this social media platform at Harvard University, for his fellow students. There is no restriction for joining the Facebook community or signing up a Facebook account. Statistics shows that this was the first social networking site to surpass the one billion users. The number of active users per month is approximately 2.01 billion users (Kallas, 2018). Given the global audience of this media, Facebook and terrorism are highly interconnected at the global sphere (Asongu, et al. 2019).

This social media app help friend and families to connect, businesses to grow, update the world on location, daily activities and basically an individual could post whatever he or she wishes to share whenever (no time restriction) and wherever in the world.

This social media platform has an equally powerful force being that it rampantly aids terrorist activities with the click of a key, standardized messages can be jointly and severally sent to friends, followers, stalkers and the world at large. This platform arouses discussion and communication since it almost always ask its users questions like 'what is on your mind?' 'What will you like to share?' 'How are you feeling today?'

WhatsApp and Terrorism

Facebook purchased this networking site in 2014. This platform thrives autonomously and has engaged a vast number of individuals all over the world. On a monthly basis, it records about a billion active users (Jamie, 2017). WhatsApp enables users to send messages and make phone calls over the Internet. This media, proffers a unique feature of addressing and communicating feelings with the use of emoticons. Most notably, it was gathered that WhatsApp enables terrorists to communicate in confidence, since the security personnel cannot read their encrypted messages (Rayner, 2017). Thus, WhatsApp would be a useful tool for terrorist groups such Boko Haram to carry out its terrorist activities. WhatsApp may be conceived to be the most effective tool for terrorist activities given the fact that it can communicate jihadist propagation and that information can be transferred in secrecy information.

Twitter and Terrorism

Twitter records an active user figure of almost 330 million on a monthly basis (Kallas, 2018). Twitter is a tranquil path that enables its users to write and post short messages to the world known as tweet with a limited number of characters [140 words] (Jamie, 2017). The Boko Haram terrorist group for instances tweet regularly justifying their actions, reckoning it to be for the good of the people, stating that they are freedom fighters and are only helping fellow Nigerians (Chiluwa and Adegoke, 2013). It is important to note that a vast majority of Nigerians have taken to twitter to condemn the dreadful acts of Boko Haram (Chiluwa and Adegoke).

The benefits that social media provides particularly twitter, is not only extensive but also undeniable. (Bertram, 2016. In addition to above, Braddock and Horgan (2015), rightly identified through the operational use of social media platforms, twitter to be precise, that Islamic states influences an extensive multitude of fans, impending recruits, combatant entities as well as opposition through social media interactions.

Twitter is an influential and an easy method for terrorist to connect with their sympathizers, either through direct messages popularly known as Direct Messages (DMs) or by tweeting, hash-tagging and further retweeting in order for their publicities to trend. There are several terrorist accounts and tweets that details terrorist statistics of killing and geographical location detailing havoc and generating feedbacks. @statedeptspox; @Max Abrahms. The twitter platform is rampantly used for communicating with government and its officials like its counterparts. For example, terrorists sometimes negotiate and make demands through social media platforms as consideration for the release price tags. There have also been further movements to deter social media terrorism on almost all social media platforms especially the twitter platform which also records trends. #BringBackOurGirls; #OurMumuDonDo are examples of social media trends predominantly, on twitter trends which leads or has led in the past to top-tier international recognition and support. This is a typical example as it evidences the power of social media outlets.

Furthermore, there have been trending tweets such as that by Abubakar Shekau who acclaims that the Boko Haram's terrorism is merely a tool for political business which has political undertone and alliances.

Skype and Terrorism

This is a networking site typically known or convening meetings, conference calls, social or official usage, it allows audio and video, (webcam) connection to the world. It has about 300 million active users per month (Jamie, 2017).

These social media platforms have ways of ensuring that repulsive contents cannot be exhumed and accounts suspended or deleted depending on the nature of the repulsiveness. However, in most cases, terrorist seems to have devised a counter mechanism by having numerous and active accounts that cannot be related to the ones exhumed. Hence, to deter terrorist activities from social media would require a contrivance that can guarantee the eradication of terrorism. Skype terrorism is more on the internal than the external level as it is not as popular and open as its other counterpart's social media terrorism. With this social media platform, online meetings can be easily converged.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA

Social media has proven to be a valuable tool and a strategic assistance for terrorism as acts of terrorism now trends on social media. To a great extent "social media allows groups in isolated areas to reach the hearts, minds and wallets of supporters" (Nakhla, 2016, p.2).

Social media benefits are enormous to terrorists ranging from independent location; internationality; anonymity and cost benefits. The anonymity factor of social media is robust in the sense that technologically inclined terrorists can even hide their Internet Protocol (IP) addresses and easily cover their tracks. Thus, it becomes difficult, if not impossible to be hindered or brought to justice. Social media's engagement in terrorist activities has a wide outreach since it is cost effective. Social media terrorism could even be the use of online worms or viruses to take the place of propagations (Brunst, 2010).

Terrorist poignantly maneuver and exploit social media as an apparatus for their egotistic interest and subjective desires. Terrorist disseminate information to their targeted audience and communicate with them in an accurate time. (Khan, 2013).

Conceivably, it was when the Niger Delta people sensed that their natural resources were not equitably distributed in *parri passu* for natural their resources that Niger Delta resolved into violence

(Aiyesimoju, 2015). Factors such as injustice, illiteracy, political grievances, political and economic marginalization and unemployment creates perceived grievances and stimulates terrorists into considering that oppression or intimidation are avenues for deriving the freedom and justice that they rightly deserve (Torok, 2020).

Broadly speaking one might be inclined to accept that “there is a widespread embitterment with the Nigerian State arising from its failure to meet its obligations to the people and the perception that State policies are implemented to advance private interests for personal accumulation” (Aiyesimoju, 2015, p. 20).

Legal Mechanisms: The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 [as Amended]

Conscious of the need to strengthen legal mechanism to prevent, deter and punish acts of terrorism, the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, enacted the Terrorism [Prevention] Act, 2011. The Act was amended in 2013 through the Terrorism [Prevention][Amendment] Act, 2013. The Terrorism Prevention Act of 2011 is the principal Act while the Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) Act 2013 is the amendment to the principal Act. The Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) 2013 Act makes provisions for extra-territorial application of the Act and strengthens terrorist financing offences. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 has extreme and stringent measure which depicts the Nigerian’s National Assembly’s legislative action to confronting and curbing terrorist activities in Nigeria. The Act describes terrorism as:

... the calculated and extreme utilization of violence or threatened violence, perpetuated by malignance, to cause solemn harm or violence against individuals, regimes and their assets with the intention to procure political, religious or ideological goals, through dismay or coercion or instilling fear on civilian population.

The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 consists of forty-one sections. Section 1 of the Act has the heading “Acts of Terrorism and Related Offences.” Section 1(1) reads:

1. A person who knowingly

- (a) Does, attempts or threatens to do an act preparatory to or in furtherance of an act of terrorism;*
- (b) Commits and do anything that is reasonably necessary to promote an act of terrorism;*
- (c) Assists or facilitates the activities of person engaged in an act of terrorism, commits an offence under this Act.*

Section 1 of the Terrorism Prevention (Amendment) 2013 Act Provides: “All acts of terrorism and financing of terrorism are hereby prohibited.” Section 1 (2) provides: “A person or body cooperate who knowingly in or outside Nigeria directly willingly *does, attempts, or threatens any acts of terrorism...*” The provisions of Section 5(1) of the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act (2013) prohibits soliciting giving support to terrorists. The Punishment for giving support to a terrorist is imprisonment for a term not less than twenty years. One of the key achievement in the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act (2013), which is omitted the Terrorism Prevention Act (2011), is the provision for e-terrorism. It will be difficult for offenders to escape punishment because of the encapsulated word ‘whatsoever’ in the legislation, widens the Terrorist Act.

Although, the Act is a comprehensive statute, it is not perfect. There are provisions in the Act subject to abuse. One of them is located in Section 25(1) of the Act. The section provides that a judge may as be necessary issue a warrant to (a) enter and search any premises or place; (b) search any person and (c) stop board and search any conveyance.

Section 25 (1) of the Act is a violation of Section 37 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which states: “*The privacy of citizens, their homes, correspondence, telephone*

conversations and telegraphic communications is hereby guaranteed and protected.” This ensures that privacy of communication is guaranteed, and ultimately, allow individuals to freely express themselves, by sharing information (Scaife, 2015). Although, terrorism in its various forms cannot be eradicated, it is hoped that the Act will curb or will be one of the pragmatic approaches towards curtailing the menace.

Legal Mechanisms: Nigerian Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention), Act 2015

With the expansion of the internet and social media platforms, there has been an antecedent increase in internet related crimes in Nigeria. Nigerian Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015, is a proactive legislation, which is a pre-emptive attempt by the Nigerian government to curb cyber related crimes. Cyber-crimes could be a used by terrorists to disrupt power systems, destabilize gas and oil production, and hack in online banking system (Foltz, 2004). Particularly, the Act is connected with criminalizing cyber-terrorist attack by the use of computer related technology such as hijacking systems, or disrupting power grids. Some cybercrimes are interconnected with terrorism. Cyber-crimes that caused death and destruction would construed within cyber-terrorism (Czerpak, 2005).

It is important to note that cyber-terrorism is connected to intention to disrupt networks of computers attached to the internet, through the use of harmful viruses, while terrorism as noted above is the use of unconventional warfare used by a weaker opponent against the stronger opponent. It could also be referred to “the use of computer network tools to harm or shut down critical national infrastructures (such as energy, transportation, government operations)” (Weimann, 2005: 130). In this regard, cyber-terrorism is a warfare against cyberspace (Parks and Duggan (2011).

Section 18 of the Nigerian Cybercrime Act has made an explicit provision for cyber-terrorism and defined it as:

- (1) Any person that accesses or causes to be accessed any computer or computer system or network for purposes of terrorism, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to life imprisonment.*
- (2) For the purpose of this section, “terrorism” shall have the same meaning under the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011, as amended*

The Nigerian Cybercrime (Prohibition and Prevention) Act 2015 defined the term ‘terrorism’ as defined under the terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011 (as amended) as seen above. Social media has afforded terrorist organizations key equipment’s in the sense that it has detached the dependence “on third party media and allows organizations to self-propagate their own material, and further have the material re-disseminated widely amongst social media networks” (Bertram, 2016, p.230). Nonetheless, the vitality of tendering information via social media platforms is not monopolized and the same is accorded to terrorist in executing their terrorist activities (Bertram, 2016).

At this point, it is pertinent to mention that social media platforms secures and ensures a discretionary amount of privacy and concealed communication, avoiding detection through easily delivered, yet effective encryption conventions that are conveyed by social media amenities such as Whatsapp (McMillan, 2016). The social media platform furnishes fundamental evangelists, tacticians, and fanatics as an avenue aimed at accomplishing and manipulating, provoking, persuading, and encouraging “jihadist activism at a global level” (Rudner, 2016, p. 8).

Case Study: Boko Haram

Boko Haram was initially founded in the United States to counter Western Education and was not declared a terrorist organization until 2013 (Chothia, 2014). “The case of the terrorist group *Jama’atul Ahlus Sunnah Lidda’awati wal Jihad*, generally referred to as Boko Haram which means Westernization is a sin, giving great publicity to terrorist actions such as killings, kidnapping, bombing, disruption of public peace and so on” (Aiyesimoju, 2015, p. 18).

This terrorist group is notorious for their ethno-religious attacks of all sorts. It is by far, the greatest threat posed to Nigeria. Boko Haram is a terrorist group based in Borno state; their terrorist activities have proven to know no bounds. Boko Haram activities are undoubtedly extreme and severe; this is a major concern for Nigerians and Nigeria as a whole. For instance, Boko Haram, terrorist group in Nigeria, published a video statement on YouTube, a social media platform, justifying their actions (BBC, 2012). This terrorist group, are extremist known for death, destruction and kidnapping of school children (the *Dapchi* schoolgirls, the *Chibok* girls with international repute). Essentially, “the abduction of Nigerian federal girl’s secondary school students in Bornu State that is, the Chibok amongst others, and the very recent Dapchi schoolgirls, has greatly increased the public pressure on government representatives to give in to terrorists’ requests” (Aiyesimoju, 2015, p.19).

There has been numerous killings of the innocent civilians by Boko Haram, ranging from targeted killings, which includes but not limited to the police, non-Muslims, and the army (Majekodunmi, 2015). It is more worrisome that the social media has been a major source of platform for engineering and promoting the Boko Haram disheartening activities for the whole world to view. This goes a long way in undermining foreign investment and economic participation amongst the international community. Moreover, the very few who invest are extremely cautious in the processes of such transactions (Akpomera and Omoyibo, 2013).

In Nigeria, the expansion of terrorism concocted by Boko Haram threatens national security, undermines political and economic development. Boko Haram’s Arabic-language Twitter account was launched as an official handle for Boko Haram media group called Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa and this was immediately promoted by key pro-IS media operatives in 2015 and the group have been using manipulation skills to influence publicity. Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa, Boko Haram’s Arabic Twitter account has streamed several videos that depict its victorious feats (Mohammed & Yakubu 2017). Examples are evidenced on twitter through random tweets and hashtags such as @Urwatu_Wutqa, @Alurwa_Alwuthqa, and #BokoHaram. In addition to that, Boko Haram recently uploaded some videos treating and promising to cause more havoc on Nigerians (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeSZ2iYlm6U>).

More often than not, this group of terrorist manipulates the government’s inadequacies to better their own ultimate end goal. They use these inadequacies to win followers who would be willing to go extra miles and bomb for instance, church building, military barracks and other important places and organizations. These followers are sometimes deluded, as they believe that they have a very special reward in heaven when they die and they become too willing and eager to die for a perceived just course.

CONCLUSION

The concept of terrorism and the social media are two concepts that we may not separate from each other because they are usually interwoven with each other. Social media is to a very large extent perceived to be the link between propagating terror. Hence, it is generally conceived that the social media has great influence for the spread of terrorist ideologies. Various social media platforms affect the activities of the state and its people in one way or the other. Social media in Nigeria has undoubtedly been having a similar impact on nations in terms of politics, culture and commercial life with the consequences of information being more accessible than ever before in the country.

Social media has recorded a number of successes, even though it has been a negative force such as enhancing terrorism, identity thefts and cyber bullying amongst others, therefore it must be carefully balanced against the many benefits of social media. The Boko Haram insurgency and its usage of social media platforms has brought to the fore the negative side to information management on social media. Nonetheless, social media has been helpful for the development of Nigeria.

Social media and terrorism is one of the principal pressures that has dazed the Nigerian state especially in the areas of national security, political, harmony and socio-economic stability. Corruption needs to be eradicated, our political leaders need to start functioning as opposed to using political

seats to continuously amass wealth for their pockets, our government need to ensure basic social amenities, political goods for ensuring citizens' sustenance and combatting terrorism in the long run. The mass media needs to devise an immediate, appropriate, and effective measure that is soothing and that will best eradicate this fundamental issue of terrorist utilizing social media as an utensil for terrorism. The media should aid in combating social media terrorist as opposed to fueling it, they ought to deter those that are likely to be motivated. Media should be curbing and not aggravating terrorist activities as a thin fine line ought to be drawn and must not be easily crossed.

Terrorism albeit, social media terrorism is a perilous circumstance which should not engulf a state, for it may consume the referent object. The Boko Haram sect has inflicted gross insecurity on Nigeria as a whole. This should not be. For what is evil is evil, and what is a crime is a crime. Inhumanity must stop. There should be more regulations for social media giants. The terrorists for their personal and greater gain have constantly manipulated the lacuna in the regulatory measures of social media platforms. It is high time it stopped by introducing stricter regulatory measures.

Furthermore, policy makers should be meticulously guided to clasp and exploit alphanumeric expertise as a machinery to execute 'counter-radicalization' and 'counter-violent extremism interventions' through the same social media ordinal latent and object the same onlookers as extremist establishments. It simply goes without saying that a social media can be used as a double-edged sword, as a tool for protection, that is government's counter-terrorism and also as a tool for perpetrating terrorist activities by terrorists.

Using the proverbial adage that 'diamonds cut diamonds', it then seems clear that social media complexities needs a social media solution. The Nigerian government should thrive to serve its citizenry effectively, deliver sustainable political goods and curb citizens' continuous grievances which usually propels terrorism. There should be a joint effort or a form of collaboration between government and citizens in order to successfully combat social media terrorism.

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