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Reporting the global war on terrorism: Cases from Nigeria

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Abstract

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 on US soil changed the world and the way it views today's global security environment. The events of that day led to a global war that is referred to as the GWOT (Global War on Terrorism); a war which has since attained a ubiquitous presence in the international media. The December 2009 botched terrorist attempt involving a Nigerian and the subsequent classification of Nigeria as a high-risk area by the United States government make it imperative that the media industry in Nigeria begin a self-evaluation of how it had handled the GWOT. This paper, therefore, evaluates the Nigerian press coverage of the GWOT using the agenda-setting media model as a basis of analysis. Indications from the study are that the Nigerian press has not done well enough in this area of coverage.

Keywords: Terrorism, Global War on Terrorism, Gate-Keeping, Agenda Setting Theory, Nigerian press, United States

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Introduction

Hundreds of people die each year in terrorist attacks and it is always heart-rending news each time such attacks occur. Terrorism is present in many countries of the world; it has since become a global norm and a regular feature of news headlines. Today it is New York, tomorrow London, the next time Spain, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria and so on. There is a paralysing fear all over the globe; fear of vicious death at the impious hands of state enemies and terrorists.

Presently, everybody is a potential victim of this dilemma; there is no state in the world without designated terrorists, enemies of the state that should be liquidated. Russia, the successor-state to the defunct Soviet Union, regards its province, Chechnya, as a terrorist territory. The mighty Russian Army has not been able to defeat the terrorists who have also been blamed for several assassinations and bomb attacks in Russian cities including Moscow. Germany has been a home of terrorism even before the rise of Hitlerian fascism, but especially since then, terrorism has proved undefeatable.

Italy, France and Spain have their fair share of terrorism. Spain, in particular, harbours one of the most resilient terrorist groups in the world: ETA, located in the Basque Region. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) is the "mother" of terrorism in Europe. The Kurds, an unfortunate ethnic group, are regarded as terrorists by Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Every state in the Middle East is actively engaged in fighting terrorism. The territory under the control of the Palestinian Authority is at present in a life-and-death struggle against those it has designated as terrorists. The whole of America (North, Central and South), the Caribbean and the Pacific are sites of permanent terrorism. In some of these cities, no two or three months pass by without a terrorist act being committed on such soil. Algeria, Sudan, Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Nigeria are among African states infested with terrorism. Both India and Pakistan have been battling terrorism that developed with the dispute over Kashmir. Sri Lanka has its Tamil Tigers, the Philippines are fighting the so-called Muslim terrorists; Indonesian terrorists are particularly

blood-thirsty: they measure the success of any operation by the number of human heads they have cut off. In historical terms, Chinese terrorists are late entrants into the business of modern terrorism. But they have made their mark as a social force (Lutz and Lutz, 2004).

It therefore seems that everyone round the globe is under siege. Fear has gripped big cities of the world, raising security alerts and signals higher to sublime levels. Suicide bombers have been unleashed on society, with innocent victims blown up on daily basis. With terrorism growing as a world problem, people in these recent times wonder where it is heading. There is this particular fear that terrorist schemes and devices may not be limited to hijacking of planes, kidnappings, embassy takeovers, bombing of public buildings, metro-trains and assassinations, but might soon rise to nuclear terrorism, the use of weapons of mass destruction: chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

It is now a tradition for the US and other Western governments to warn their nationals where to go and where not, when to go out and when not to, when to disguise and when to be inconspicuous. Flights are regularly cancelled, embassies closed at short notice. Security around airports, seaports, coastlines and other sensitive areas of national economies is now tight just to avert possible terrorist attacks. Travelling has become a nightmare; a multitude of passengers are frisked at entry and departure points for the sins of those who have chosen terrorism as a means of settling political scores. In the United States, shoes are systematically examined and fingerprints taken at the airports and other areas important to their national security. The scenario so far is that of a world wallowing in fear and reeling in pain, whilst the aggressors seem to be enjoying the situation.

Political implications are often blamed for many terrorist attacks, thus, Sick (1990) sees terrorism as "the continuation of politics by other means". Herbst (2003) agrees that definitions of terrorism are typically political and misleading – biased against one group to the benefit of another. Countries that are troubled by these macabre acts

have proffered an answer to the problem of terrorism for centuries, but there is no universal agreement on a workable solution.

Defining terrorism has always been an uphill task for decision-makers, academics, defence personnel and journalists. However, Lutz and Lutz (2004:10), citing the works of Hoffman (1998), Kushner (1998) and Claridge (1996), define terrorism thus:

Terrorism involves political aims and motives. It is violent or threatens violence. It is designed to generate fear in a target audience that extends beyond the immediate victims of the violence. The violence is conducted by an identifiable organization. The violence involves a non-state actor or actors as the perpetrator, the victim of violence, or both. Finally, the acts of violence are designed to create power in situations in which power previously had been lacking (i.e. the violence attempts to enhance the power base of the organization undertaking the actions).

Terrorism may also be referred to as the calculated use of violence or the threat of it, against the civilian population, usually for the purpose of achieving political or religious ends. This is the acceptable definition to the FBI, but the British definition of terrorism does not admit this theory. The British Terrorism Act of 2000 defines terrorism in such a way that it includes attacks on military personnel; or acts not usually considered violent, such as shutting down a website whose views one loathes. On the other hand, some authorities define terrorism as the planned application of violence or threat of violence against both civilian and military targets for political and religious reasons. This particular definition enjoys a wider acceptability, because it embraces all ramifications of the act of terrorism.

Also, the Nigerian anti-terrorism bill, which states that anyone convicted of a terrorist offence can be sentenced up to 35 years in jail, according to a partial copy of the draft provided to reporters, defines terrorism as:

Any action that may seriously damage a country or an international organization, unduly compel a government or

an international organization to perform or abstain from performing an action or seriously intimidate or destabilize a population. This could include the use for terrorist ends of propaganda, violence, kidnapping, attacks on infrastructure or oil rigs, the hijacking of vehicles, the acquisition or development of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, the release of dangerous substances or arson.

The bill specifically excludes from the definition of terrorism the disruption by protesters of private or government business.

Terrorism mostly takes the form of shootings, suicide bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, drive-by shootings, lynching and random killings, and in recent times, we now have bio-terrorism, cyber terrorism, narco-terrorism, etc. However, terrorism is not just brutal and unthinking violence, deliberately designed to rattle and influence a wide audience beyond its victims; it also involves using the psychological impact of violence, or the threat of it, to effect political change, instil fear and to possibly shape public opinion in the terrorists' favour.

Terrorism became an acknowledged global issue and the phrase 'Global War on Terrorism' (GWOT) was born after the September 9/11 terrorist attacks on US interests and soil. The US President then, George W. Bush and his then-Secretary of State, Colin Powell, built a worldwide coalition for the war and formulated new policies which aimed not only to seek terrorists out wherever they operate, but also to punish them wherever they may be, using the combined assets of US law enforcement, diplomacy, and intelligence.

Nigeria, as a nation, is committed to the global war against terrorism and has continued diplomatic efforts in both global and regional forums concerning counterterrorism issues. The Nigerian government has also actively shared information about the rise of radical Islam in Nigeria – home of Africa's largest Muslim population. Nigeria is a party to six of the 12 international conventions and protocols relating to terrorism, including the Convention for the Suppression of

Financing of Terrorism. Although terrorism is yet to manifest in full in the country, the enabling conditions supportive of it have been laid down, begging to be exploited.

However, the December 2009 botched attempt by a Nigerian to commit acts of terrorism in the US is a recent case in point that again calls on responsible institutions like the media industry to assist in mobilising efforts and mounting campaigns against this hydra-headed monster called terrorism. It is on this platform that the study presented in this paper assesses how the Nigerian press covered the global war on terrorism, with the ultimate aim of identifying areas of strength and weakness.

Objectives

The study seeks to identify the degree to which Nigerian newspapers participate in the reportage of the global war on terrorism by evaluating some of the reported stories in the national dailies to find out the frequency of coverage, the depth of coverage, quality, sources, story categories, tone and prominence.

Research questions

Having considered the objectives of this study, the following questions were formulated to guide the research:

1. Do Nigerian newspapers cover GWOT issues?
2. Are GWOT stories adequately reported in the Nigerian newspapers in relation to other crime-related stories?
3. Does the Nigerian press place prominence on the reports of the GWOT?
4. In what story categories do Nigerian newspapers frequently feature the reports on the GWOT?
5. What is the tone given to the stories reported in the Nigerian press on the GWOT?
6. What is the quality of reportage given to the stories on the GWOT in the Nigerian newspapers?
7. How do Nigerian newspapers source their stories about the GWOT?

Literature review and theoretical framework

What role does the press play in a society: that of the looking glass, the mediator, or the instrument for shaping issues and events in a society? The safest response to give perhaps is that the press performs all of these functions, and even more, from time to time.

One of the major functions of the press in virtually every country is to inform the citizens about local, foreign and global affairs. People thus tend to rely on the media as their major source of news, particularly news of events outside their immediate experience. Based on information obtained from their local media, they acquire knowledge, create images and form opinions about other nations and their institutions. Global news does not end at informing the citizens; it also legitimises the interest and involvement of the country's government in international affairs.

Many reasons have been given to explain why the media of a particular country would tend to report news of countries other than theirs. According to Mowlana (1985), the reasons are economic, political, socio-cultural, infrastructural and extra-media. He argues that if the nation and its media are economically buoyant, the buoyancy will be reflected in the quantity, quality and distribution of foreign news in the media. Secondly, Mowlana (1985) argues that the political interests of a country will undoubtedly betray the behaviour of the national media. For example, the foreign policy of a country is likely to influence the direction of the media coverage to reflect national political interests. Thirdly, socio-cultural factors like language, culture, religion and traditional beliefs, and the differences or similarities between nations will explain the interest of the press in their foreign/global news coverage.

With specific reference to the African context, Da Costa (1985) reports that in several African countries, including Nigeria, global news is covered, as it affects the reporting country's psycho-political security, community of interests and imperatives of national politics. Even factors like the professional standards of journalists, their ethnic, religious and political background coupled with age, experience and

general socialisation level, assist in the selection and reportage of foreign news.

Lent (1976), writing on the platform of political communication/reporting, posits that global news reporting in a country's newspapers depends on their ties with the superpowers, colonial backgrounds, relationship with neighbouring countries, economic infrastructure, governmental stability and professional training of journalists. As a result of these factors, stories about Western Europe and North America have become 'semi-permanent' in the media of Third World countries like Nigeria. The former are newsmaker nations that are constantly being reported, as opposed to the developing countries that provide only occasional 'hot' news.

Researchers in the area of political communication have found that global understanding of the GWOT is directly shaped by how the mainstream news media report events associated with it (Kuypers, 2002). Kuypers (2002) illustrates "how the press failed America in its coverage of the War on Terror". In each comparison, Kuypers (2002:23) detected massive bias on the part of the press; he called the mainstream news media an "anti-democratic institution". In his conclusion (2002:23), he stated thus:

What has essentially happened since 9/11 has been that Bush has repeated the same themes, and framed those themes the same way whenever discussing the War on Terror. Immediately following 9/11, the mainstream news media (represented by CBS, ABC, NBC, USA Today, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post*) did echo Bush, but within eight weeks it began to intentionally ignore certain information the president was sharing, and instead reframed the President's themes or intentionally introduced new material to shift the focus. This goes beyond reporting alternate points of view, which is an important function of the press. In short, if someone were relying only on the mainstream media for information, they would have no idea what the President actually said. It was as if the press was reporting on a different speech.

Media researcher Stephen D Cooper's analysis of media criticism, *Watching The Watchdog: Bloggers As The Fifth Estate* (Cooper, 2006), contains many examples of controversies concerning mainstream reporting of the GWOT. Cooper found that bloggers' criticisms of factual inaccuracies in news stories or bloggers' discovery of the mainstream press's failure to adequately check facts before publication caused many news organisations to retract or change news stories. According to his findings, bloggers specialising in criticism of media coverage advanced four key points:

1. Mainstream reporting of the war on terror has frequently contained factual inaccuracies. In some cases, the errors go uncorrected; moreover, when corrections are issued they are usually given far less prominence than the initial coverage containing the errors.
2. The mainstream press has sometimes failed to check the provenance of information or visual images supplied by Iraqi "stringers" (local Iraqis hired to relay local news).
3. Story framing is often problematic; in particular, "man-in-the-street" interviews have often been used as a representation of public sentiment in Iraq, in place of methodologically sound survey data.
4. Mainstream reporting has tended to concentrate on the more violent areas of Iraq, with little or no reporting of the calm areas.

In his book *Trapped in the War on Terror*, Lustick (2006) claims that the media have given constant attention to possible terrorist-initiated catastrophes and to the failures and weaknesses of the government's response. Lustick alleged that the War on Terror is disconnected from the real but remote threat terrorism poses, and that the generalised War on Terror began as part of the justification for invading Iraq, but then took on a life of its own, fueled by media coverage. In a world hungry for news, people need to understand the genuine context and complexities of the GWOT and efforts geared towards winning it. They rely on journalists to provide them with reliable and timely information. But war is rarely good news for journalism.

The post-September 11 media crisis is seen everywhere. From Australia to Zimbabwe, via Colombia, Russia, the United States and Uganda, politicians have rushed to raise the standard of "anti-terrorism" against their political opponents, and have tried to stifle free journalism along the way. Journalists, their unions and the media staff they represent are in the centre of a fast-developing crisis in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11. The crisis challenges media efforts to be professional and the capacity of journalists to work safely in a deepening atmosphere of fear and uncertainty.

Payne (2005:85) summarises the role and significance of the mass media during the modern era of warfare thus:

The media, in the modern era, are indisputably an instrument of war. This is because winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. And it remains true regardless of the aspirations of many journalists to give an impartial and balanced assessment of conflict. The experience of the US military in the post-Cold War world demonstrates that victory on the battlefield is seldom as simple as defeating the enemy by force of arms. From Somalia and Haiti through Kosovo and Afghanistan, success has been defined in political, rather than military, terms. Today's military commanders stand to gain more than ever before from controlling the media and shaping their output. The laws and conventions of war, however, do not adequately reflect the critical role that the media play in shaping the political outcome of conflicts. International humanitarian law requires that media members are afforded the rights of civilians; the question is whether this is sustainable when the exigencies of war fighting suggest that controlling the media is essential.

Many theoretical models in communication research can be used to describe the Nigerian press coverage of GWOT. This is because a lot of mass communication theories describe the media's role in setting a schema or line of thought in the society. Researchers have long been intrigued by the media's effect on the national agenda, and how public opinion is formed. Several theories have been proposed to address this phenomenon. We examine agenda-setting theory as the guiding theoretical foundation for this study.

From the 1930s until the 1960s, mass communications studies focused mainly on the direct effects of the media. Communication researchers' works "revolved around a hypodermic needle model – a view that the media directly [injects] the public with attitudes which subsequently affect their behavior" (Emery and Ted, 1986). However, these studies often disappointed the researchers, who hoped to find evidence of change in public opinion due to exposure to the mass media. According to Iyengar and Reeves (1997), the majority of results from these studies showed that the direct effects of the media are merely an occasional short-term attitude change. The overall failure of this paradigm, or model, led to the development of what is known as the agenda-setting theory.

The power of the press to set a nation's agenda, to focus public attention on a few key public issues, is an immense and well-documented influence. Not only do people acquire factual information about public affairs from the press, readers and viewers also learn how much importance to attach to a topic on the basis of the emphasis placed on it in the news. Newspapers provide a host of cues about the salience of the topics in the daily news – lead story on page one, other front page display, large headlines, etc. Television news also offers numerous cues about salience – the opening story on the newscast, length of time devoted to the story, etc. These cues repeated day after day effectively communicate the importance of each topic. In other words, the press can set the agenda for the public's attention to that small group of issues around which public opinion forms.

In a similar vein, Simons (2008) notes the importance of news framing and content, and the possible effects that it has on public attitudes and opinions, as highlighted by a contract that was opened by U.S. military leaders in Bagdad. This project, according to Simons (2008:88), involves:

A two year long contract worth US\$20 million which involves extensive monitoring of Middle Eastern and US media in an attempt to promote more positive news coverage of Iraq. The stated aim of the project is to "develop communication strategies and tactics, identify opportunities, and to execute events ... to effectively communicate Iraqi government and coalition's goals, and build support among our strategic audiences in achieving these goals".

Furthermore, a study by Penn State University (cited in Simons, 2008) also showed some interesting results. The study covered news articles appearing in the period between March 19, 2003 and May 1, 2003; analysing 742 print articles from 67 news sources by 156 journalists. Researcher Andrew Linder (in Simons, 2008:89) notes that:

The majority of war coverage in the study heavily emphasized the soldiers' experiences of the war while downplaying the effects of the invasion on the Iraqi people". The study seems to demonstrate that the environment in which the journalists were placed, attached to a military unit, influences the choice and/or the opportunity of those who they interview. In this case, the outcome is favourable for the military as it downplays the devastating effects of modern warfare and portrays coalition troops in a more personal light.

The principal outlines of this influence were sketched by Walter Lippmann in his 1922 classic, *Public Opinion*, as cited in Ekeanyanwu (2007) which began with a chapter titled "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads". As he noted, the news media are the primary source of those pictures in our heads about the larger world of public affairs, a world that for most citizens is "out of reach,

out of sight, out of mind". What we know about the world is largely based on what the media decide to tell us. More specifically, the result of this mediated view of the world is that the priorities of the media strongly influence the priorities of the public. Elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent in the public's mind.

Walter Lippman's notion, based on the public's limited first-hand knowledge of the real world, created the foundation for what has come to be known as agenda-setting. Agenda-setting theory emerges from communications studies and focuses on mass media influence on setting political agenda as articulated in the seminal article by McCombs and Shaw (1972), which through content analysis of a local election documented a high correlation between media agenda and the public agenda – a correlation corroborated in numerous studies since. Their 1972 article coined the phrase "agenda-setting". Subsequent agenda-setting theorists have followed their lead in contending that the media agenda influences the political agenda more than political agenda influences media agenda.

Conceptualised over time, agenda-setting is the dynamic process "in which changes in media coverage lead to or cause subsequent changes in problem awareness of issues" (Brosius and Kepplinger, 1990:190). Bernard Cohen's statement (1963:13 cited in Ekeanyanwu, 2007) predicted that "the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about". Whether social or political, local or national, public issues are generated by the media. Consumers not only learn about an issue "but also how much importance is attached to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position" (McCombs and Shaw, 1972:176).

McCombs and Shaw's study of mediated effects on the 1968 presidential campaign nullified previous assumptions that information and how it is presented has an attitudinal effect, inducing behaviour changes. Their groundbreaking efforts focused on issue awareness and relevance, not behaviour and attitude, concluding "the mass

media exerted a significant influence on what voters considered to be the major issues of the campaign" (Infante *et al.*, 1997:366).

Agenda-setting theory proposes a relationship between the mass media and the public agenda. It suggests that the media tells the public what to think about by its coverage of a hierarchy of issues it publishes or broadcasts at a given time. Salience, the degree to which an issue on an agenda is perceived as relatively important, is a critical factor in agenda setting. It seeks to answer how a particular issue shown on the television news or printed in a daily newspaper is important. When studying agenda setting, one needs to measure how the salience of an issue changes and why the change happens.

Gitlin (1980) suggests that mass media influence has become the principal distribution system of ideology. People are only familiar with their own "tiny regions of social life" (Gitlin, 1980:14), and that the mass media bring simulated reality into their lives and people find themselves relying on those sources to provide a conceptualised image of the real world. While agenda-setting theory has its critics, the media's influence is no more evident than in the coverage of events since September 11, 2001.

If the media sets the right agenda for issues concerning GWOT, the society will not only be informed of the situation, but will be given an opportunity to participate in the global issue in ways that contribute to its success. Agenda-setting is the relationship between the salience of a story and the extent to which people think that the story is important. Further research (see Ekeanyanwu, 2007) shows that people tend to attribute importance according to media exposure.

Methods

This study made use of content analysis as the major method of data collection. This involves analysing the manifest content of Nigerian newspapers on matters of the GWOT. Consequently, content categories were developed for the analysis of newspapers studied. These content categories also formed the unit of analysis. The units of analysis were classified into subject themes, frequency of coverage,

depth of coverage, prominence, sources, quality of reports and direction/slant of reports that relate to the GWOT. Three Nigerian national newspapers: *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *The Punch* were randomly selected from the daily national newspapers in Nigeria. The selected newspapers had wide readership, consistency in news coverage, editorial independence and nation-wide acceptance; characteristics which definitely qualify them to meet the study objectives set by the researcher. The authors also carried out a pilot study to determine if the selected newspapers actually had content that is relevant to GWOT. The findings show that the selected newspapers were appropriate for the study because they covered stories that focus on terrorism and related subjects.

The sample size for the study is 360. To get this sample size, ten (10) issues were selected per month per newspaper for the year under analysis. Subsequently, for the 12 months in a year, each produced a total of 120 (12 x 10) issues. Therefore, for the three newspapers selected, this will amount to a total of 360 (120 x 3) issues. The 360 issues that were analysed for the three newspapers were selected using the simple random sampling technique, whereby numbers were assigned to identical cards to the units of the population. These cards were put into a box and reshuffled thoroughly each time a draw was made. The cards were drawn one at a time in a lottery fashion until ten issues were selected per month. This process ensured that each day of the month for the entire year had an equal chance of being selected without any form of preference for each month or date.

Unit of analysis or measurement

Generally, the ‘unit of analysis’ refers to the actual ‘thing’ counted during content analysis. Stories or reports that mentioned terrorism or the GWOT were counted using certain parameters. These parameters include feature articles, personality profiles, photo news, news stories, interpretative articles, editorials and others. The contents of the units of analysis were tested, based on the frequency of coverage, depth of coverage, prominence, sources, quality of reports and direction/slant or tone of reports that relate to the GWOT issues. The content categories are explained below:

Story types/ content categories

Feature Articles (FA): These are in-depth and detailed stories on terrorism and the war against it. They are usually longer and more detailed than news stories. They give thorough reports on issues concerned with terrorism and the global war against it.

Personality profiles (PP): These represent interviews done with political leaders and other key players on issues concerning terrorism and the global war on it. The format is usually that of question and answer. The interviewer or journalist tries to probe and interrogate the interviewee on issues concerning GWOT.

News stories (NS): These are straightforward, short stories which usually give just a brief overview on issues concerning the GWOT. They contain just the basic facts and usually are timely and objective.

Interpretative articles (IA): These are direct reports that focus on the GWOT from columnists, journalists and experts, or any person whose views the newspaper thinks are valuable or newsworthy.

Editorials (ED): These are opinion articles written by in-house staff of the newspaper. They contain the opinion and viewpoints of the newspaper concerning issues on terrorism, terrorists and the GWOT.

Photo news (PN): This means picture stories that report issues on acts of terrorism, terrorists, or anti-terrorist operations.

Others (OT): This term refers to reports that do not belong to any of specific story category presented above.

Prominence

In determining the importance given to terrorism and the global war against it in Nigerian newspapers, the following classifications were made:

Front page (FP): This entails outstanding, important and prominent stories that appear on the front pages of the newspapers.

Back page (BP): These stories are the stories considered next in prominence and they are found at the back page of the newspaper.

Inside page (IP): These are usually stories which are considered least in the ladder of importance and appear from page two (2) to the page before the back page.

Depth/frequency of coverage

In determining the depth of coverage given to the GWOT, the frequency of stories on terrorism and the war against it were placed in comparison with the frequency of stories on other global crime related issues:

Terrorism and the global war against it (TGWOT): Stories in this area reflect terrorism: terrorist attacks and other acts of terrorism around the globe; counter-terrorism efforts and the global war against terrorism.

Other global crime-related issues (OCI): The issue of terrorism and the global war being fought against it has been considered a crucial aspect of global crime and violence. This category captured such stories and used them to test the depth of coverage in relation to TGWOT stories.

Direction/slant/tone

To analyse the way stories or news about the GWOT are presented or treated, with regard to direction, the following labels were created:

Favourable: This term indicates stories or reports in the Nigerian press that present or support the GWOT, commend efforts geared towards combating terrorism globally and condemn all terrorists and acts of terrorism. Both in language and content, favourable reports are positively oriented towards the GWOT. (See Ekeanyanwu, 2007.)

Unfavourable: This term represents reports in the Nigerian press that do not support the GWOT or the efforts geared towards combating terrorism globally. These reports, in both language and content, seem to suggest that GWOT is totally unnecessary and is rather a waste of time and energy. It also does not consider GWOT as peace effort but as another kind of violence or even an act of terrorism. (See Ekeanyanwu, 2007.)

Neutral: This is used in this study to indicate such reports that do not reveal their stance or take any of the positions elaborated above in both content and the language of the presentation. These reports are strictly objective in all aspects. (See Ekeanyanwu, 2007.)

Sources of stories

In establishing the sources the Nigerian newspapers used to write their reports on issues of terrorism and the global war against it, four categories were developed:

- In-house staff: These refer to news sources that are within the Nigerian media industry, including all staff employed and paid by the newspaper in question.
- News Agency of Nigeria (NAN): These refer to those GWOT reports in the Nigerian press that are written with the help of Nigerian news agencies' bulletins and newsflashes.
- Foreign news agency reports: These refer to those GWOT reports in the Nigerian press that are written with the help of foreign news agencies' bulletins and newsflashes.
- Unidentified sources: This specifically refers to news stories on GWOT, written without a known by-line and the sources used in writing the stories are not identified within the report.

Quality of reportage

To determine the quality of reportage given to issues of GWOT, four labels used for this analysis include:

- Very high: Very high-quality reports have no grammatical and syntax errors, use simple language, are lucid and straight to the point. They are deemed as very good in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports.
- High: High-quality reports have few or no grammatical and syntax errors, they use simple language and are easy to understand. These reports are deemed as good in quality with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports.
- Low: Low-quality reports have many grammatical and syntax errors, there is poor flow of thoughts and ideas and they are difficult to understand since they mostly follow no structured pattern. Low-quality reports are deemed as poor in quality, with regard to the content and the language of presentation of the reports.
- Very low: Very low-quality reports are full of grammatical and syntax errors and are not easily understood. These reports

contain very pedestrian language and are poorly arranged with regard to the flow of ideas. Usually, these reports are deemed as very poor in quality with regards to the content and the language of presentation of the reports.

Results and discussion

For the 12-month period, the three newspapers studied reported 325 issues on terrorism and the GWOT. *Vanguard* had 26 relevant issues, *Guardian* 151 issues and *Punch* 128 issues. The first category of analysis determined the story classification. The result of this analysis for issues studied is presented in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT issues according to story types

Story type	Frequency (N)	(%)
Feature	4	1.2
Personality profile	--	--
News story	296	91.1
Interpretative analysis	8	2.5
Editorial	3	.9
Photo news	5	1.5
Others	9	2.8
Total	325	100.0

To further achieve the objectives of this study, the researcher sought to find out the prominence placed on the GWOT issues by the three newspapers. To determine this, we classified prominence based on the placement of these reports as presented in the units of analysis above. The result is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT stories according to prominence

Prominence	Frequency (N)	(%)
Front page	2	.6
Back page	--	--
Inside page	323	99.4
Total	325	100.0%

Another major objective of this study was to find out the depth of coverage given to the GWOT in the different newspapers studied. The result is presented in Figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT stories according to depth of coverage

Depth of coverage	<i>Punch</i>		<i>Vanguard</i>		<i>Guardian</i>		Total
	Frequency (n)	(%)	Frequency (n)	(%)	Frequency (n)	(%)	
Terrorism and GWOT issues	128	30.9	46	15.2	151	19.7	325 (21.9%)
Other global crime-related issues	286	69.1	256	84.8	614	80.3	1156 (78.1%)
Total	414	10.0%	302	100.0%	765	100.0%	1481 (100%)

To find out the slant or tone of stories on GWOT issues, three categories were formed. The finding is summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT stories according to the slant/tone of story

Slant/tone	Frequency (N)	(%)
Favourable	29	8.9
Unfavourable	41	12.6
Neutral	255	78.5
Total	325	100.0

Figure 5 sums up the results for the source categories thus:

Figure 5: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT stories according to the source of story

Source of story	Frequency (n)	(%)
In-house staff	6	1.8
News agency of Nigeria	3	.9
Foreign news agency reports	198	60.9
Unidentified sources	118	36.3
Total	325	100.0

For the quality of reports, the result is presented below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Distribution of terrorism and GWOT stories according to the quality of presentation

Quality of reportage	Frequency (F)	(%)
Very high	9	2.8
High	136	41.8
Low	123	37.8
Very low	57	17.5
Total	325	100.0

The data presentation, analysis and discussion have helped to answer the research questions earlier stated and also helped to satisfy the objectives of this study. The analysis of the answers to the research questions are presented below.

Research question 1

Do Nigerian newspapers cover issues on the GWOT?

The total of all the variables presented in all Figures, excluding Figure 3, show that 325 stories on terrorism and the GWOT were found in the 360 issues of newspapers that were studied. However, it should be noted that this is a minute percentage when compared to the other total number of other crime-related issues reported in the three newspapers studied. This shows that the Nigerian press does report on terrorism and GWOT, no matter how low the degree of reportage.

Research question 2

Are stories on the GWOT adequately reported in the Nigerian newspapers in relation to other global crime stories?

Figure 3 clearly indicates that out of about 1481 news reports, only 325 of such reports focused on terrorism and the GWOT. This is just about 22% of the entire reports. This shows that GWOT, when compared to other global crime issues, are not adequately reported in the Nigerian press.

Research question 3

Does the Nigerian press give prominence to the reports of the GWOT?

Figure 2 shows the degree of prominence the Nigerian press accorded to terrorism and GWOT stories. It is evident that most of the stories found on terrorism and GWOT were found on the inside pages. Therefore, one can conclude that the Nigerian media do not give much prominence to terrorism and GWOT issues. According to Hoffman and Jengelley (2007), the media no longer regards terrorist violence as especially noteworthy and consequently the coverage of terrorist events is increasingly relegated to the insides and back pages of newspapers. From the analysis done, it appears that this is the case in the Nigerian media.

Research question 4

In what story categories do Nigerian newspapers frequently feature reports on the GWOT?

Based on the research findings, Figure 1 shows that most news item on terrorism and the war against it were in the form of news stories. This is not very healthy at all. We expected detailed/in-depth analysis that would give the readers the news behind the news, as well as insights into some of the conspiracy theories making the rounds on why terrorists strike the way they do.

Research question 5

What is the slant given to the stories reported in the Nigerian press on the GWOT?

Figure 4 helped answer this question. From the analysis, it is evident that most of the news items were neutral in terms of the tone of coverage. This might be as a result of the news reporting ‘objectivity’ requirement; however, it is more discouraging than compelling. A newspaper sets the agenda for its readers; it also shapes their opinion on certain vital issues. By maintaining a neutral stance on an issue, the readers will tend to exhibit nonchalance with regard to such issues

or remain aloof as far as GWOT is concerned. This position also gives the media audience the opportunity to take their individual stance on such controversial issues like GWOT.

Research question 6

What is the quality of reportage given to the stories on the GWOT in the Nigerian newspapers?

Figure 6 explains the quality of coverage given to GWOT stories. Most reports on GWOT were high. This is a remarkable and welcome change from the late 80s and early 90s when Nigerian journalists were negligent in checking and editing their stories. It is apparent that journalists are becoming more socially responsible and making sure that their newspapers and articles are up to standard.

Research question 7

How do Nigerian newspapers source their stories about the GWOT?

Figure 5 clearly shows that for the reportage of global news, Nigerian newspapers source their information from foreign news agencies and reports. Some of the sources indicated during the analysis include AP, Reuters, AFP, BBC, CNN and even Yahoo news. It is encouraging that the Nigerian press, in its effort to flow with the global news scene, has access to global news agencies. However, it is appalling that the number of stories sourced from the News Agency Nigeria (NAN) numbered just three (0.9%). There is a need for the NAN to spread its wings and employ more staff who can cover more news, especially foreign news. This will not only provide the Nigerian media with direct access to global information, but will also upgrade the image of the Nigerian media as a whole and thus make the stories more appealing to Nigerian readers. People tend to respond to stories that are closely related to them in terms of content or source. The News Agency of Nigeria is therefore encouraged to be more responsive to the needs of the media industry at home. It is obvious that if the organisation has the required information, the newspapers might not look to the foreign news agencies for help.

Conclusion and recommendations

The findings of this study support the argument that unlike the global media, the GWOT may not be very popular in the Nigerian press. The issue has not received the kind of attention and publicity that the subject requires and the depth of coverage leaves much to be desired. If the Nigerian media audience wholly relied on newspapers for information on the GWOT, they would have been inadequately informed. Mere news stories may never adequately address issues of terrorism and the war on it. We expected more news analyses, feature articles, interpretative articles, and editorials to help the audience see beyond the straightforward news stories.

The issue of prominence is another area in which the newspapers fared poorly. Most of the news items found in the sample newspapers were on the inside pages of the newspapers, usually towards the end of the newspapers. With the December 2009 botched attempt by a Nigerian, Abdulmutallab, to commit acts of terrorism in the US soil, the Nigerian press should wake up to its responsibility and give the GWOT the prominence it deserves.

Another worrisome fact that came up from this study is that the Nigerian press still relies heavily on foreign news sources in reporting highly sensitive international issues like terrorism. This has remained a sore point in the now-comatose debate on New World Information and Communication Order and the controversy that surrounds it. Most news stories analysed were sourced from foreign news sources such as Reuters, Associated Press and AFP. Some of the reports were also sourced from mediating news organisations such as BBC and CNN who have international/ foreign correspondents. This is not a very welcome development for the Nigerian press, as it highlights the assertion that it is still dependent on the foreign news agencies for news, especially global news.

The press in Nigeria, despite the advent of the satellite, cable system, the internet and wire service, still do not have foreign correspondents or reporters who can report global news directly to them; they still rely on supplements and handouts from multinational news agencies

and other foreign news agencies. Although patronising of the foreign news agency may imply greater access to global news for the Nigerian indigenes, it shows that the media practitioners might not be entirely responsible and disciplined in carrying out their duties as information seekers and disseminators. It is important also to note that the social responsibility ability or inability of the Nigerian press is at the core of building a well informed society.

This study also supports the view that the press in many ways may have neglected the GWOT, which is the only way terrorism could be curbed. Many newspapers do not write editorials, features or give personality profiles that will enlighten the masses about the GWOT. However, we must not forget that for Nigeria to develop and command respect, especially in the global scene, Nigeria needs to participate wholly in this fight. Not only that, its citizens must be made constantly aware of the issues that surround the war. The awareness will create an opportunity for them to not only be informed of the GWOT events, but also to participate in it. The press must therefore encourage the citizens by reporting factual and reliable stories that not only give detailed information on terrorism and the war against it, but also create an opportunity for citizens to engage in and facilitate the GWOT.

The media is a very powerful tool. It plays a huge part in who we are, what we believe, where we come from and how we feel about certain issues. It is all around us, everywhere we go and thus is one of the most influential aspects of our lives. As earlier mentioned, understanding the trend in press coverage of GWOT in Nigeria is important for at least two reasons. First, the extent to which stories are covered by the news media plays a significant role in the public's assessment of the importance of the issues at stake. In a democracy, neither a public that underestimates nor a public that overestimates the threat terrorism presents is desirable, since public concern can influence governments to over- or under-respond to terrorist violence. Second, there is fear that a press that is desensitised to the GWOT inadvertently contributes to the growing deadliness of terrorist attacks. This should be addressed.

The American counterterrorism initiatives in Africa since 9/11 have been based on a policy of “aggregation”, in which localised and disparate insurgencies have been amalgamated into a frightening, but artificially monolithic whole. Misdirected analyses regarding Africa’s sizable Muslim population, its overwhelming poverty, and its numerous ungoverned spaces and failed states further contribute to a distorted picture of the terrorist threat emanating from the continent. The result has been a series of high-profile, marginally valuable kinetic strikes on suspected terrorists; affiliation with proxy forces opposed to stated US policy goals on the GWOT and the corrosion of African support for many truly valuable and well-intentioned US endeavours. Nigerians therefore have to be made aware of the original issues at stake with regard to the GWOT. The press is expected to enlighten and sensitise the Nigerian citizenry on what the GWOT is all about, what it entails and why it is essential. This way, they do not fall prey to external manipulations or pretensions.

Again, it seems that the Nigerian press had devoted too much attention to other American incidents, especially political ones, to the detriment of terrorist and GWOT issues that are equally deserving of attention. For instance in the first week of November, there were bomb attacks in Iraq, but they were hardly mentioned in the newspapers as media interest focused on the US presidential elections. There is therefore a need for the media to focus on, rather than trivialise, terrorism and GWOT issues. More prominence should be given to terrorism-related issues, since participatory democracy so far has foisted on the media as a whole and the Nigerian press in particular, the responsibilities of acting as a civic forum; a watchdog and a mobilising agent. The media should not only inform, but should also mobilise the citizens, to help create an avenue for the audience to participate in the global discussions on GWOT.

Many studies have shown that people tend to attribute importance according to media exposure; therefore, there is need for the Nigerian media to increase the frequency of their reportage of GWOT. This will impress on the mind of members of the Nigerian society the

importance of the GWOT and the need to support or fight against it, as their choice may be.

The press is also encouraged to air their own opinions in the media on terrorism and the GWOT issues. It will not only be stimulating for readers to acquaint themselves with the opinion of the Nigerian press on GWOT, but will also give them a guideline or framework on which they can build their own opinion. The Nigerian press sets the agenda for the people and influences how they shape their opinion; so the authors feel that the Nigerian press should condemn terrorism and assist its government in its efforts to win the GWOT. Also, in doing this, the media should abide by their ethics and code of conduct, by objectively presenting the different sides to the issues to enable the reader or audience to arrive at a balanced conclusion and avoid being manipulated by politicians and policy-makers.

Finally, it is our submission that media organisations should endeavour to employ international correspondents who can report global news to the Nigerian media directly. That way, the Nigerian media will not always have to rely on second-hand information from other foreign news organisations or media houses such as BBC, CNN and Yahoo News, as was evident in this study. This will not only boost the readers' confidence on the quality of the newspaper, but will also lead to the development of the Nigerian press at large.

In conclusion, conceptions of representative democracy suggest three basic roles for the news media: a civic forum encouraging pluralistic debate about public affairs; a watchdog against the abuse of power; and a mobilising agent encouraging public learning and participation in the political process. The events that border the GWOT cannot only be considered a global public affair, but also a political vendetta. This must therefore be positively and continually impressed on the citizens' mindset in the Nigerian press.

As the conflict generated by the GWOT is escalating, the stakes are becoming much higher. This drives the desire to control the message of the media towards controlling the type of influence such message

could cause. The control of images is also one of the goals the media should pursue to avoid escalating the conflicts to a dangerous negative level. For instance, the filming of US soldiers killed in Iraq returning to the US in flag-draped coffins is strictly off-limits. Images such as these have the power to heavily influence the US public, in a very profound and emotional manner, making an already unpopular war even more unpopular (Simons, 2008). However, it is still recommended that the media must set the agenda on the tone the coverage of the GWOT must take. This responsibility cannot be shirked on the platform of any political calculations.

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