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BLAME-FRAME AND PRAISE-FRAME ON THE *BOKO HARAM* TERRORISM IN NIGERIA NEWSPAPERS: A DISCOURSE EXAMINATION

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Abstract

Boko Haram, as reported by the media, has been terrorising Nigeria, especially since 2009. Linguistic studies on terrorism and Boko Haram in Nigeria have considered, among others, the representations of the group by the media and policy makers. However, insufficient discourse attention has been devoted to the framing tactics deployed by social actors in identifying the roles played by two administrations in the escalation or denigration of Boko Haram terrorism in Nigeria. Yet, the consideration can lend further insights into the Boko Haram operations, and identifying the possible failures and successes in curbing the menace in Nigeria. Therefore, this paper examines the strategies deployed by social actors (political, religious and ethnic) as reported by selected newspapers to identify the roles played by two administrations in the State, Nigeria. For data, different utterances on the blame-praise frames, credited to different social actors are purposively selected from the electronic versions of newspapers from 2013 to 2017 (two years each from two administrations). Guided by aspects of critical discourse analysis, with bias for van Dijk's ideological structures, the study revealed that there are two broad frames on the administrations: blame-frame and praise-frame. The blame-frame strategies

include blame-frame as propaganda tactic, finger-pointing and demonization strategy, justification for political migration, buck passing, and social-control technique. The praise-frame strategies include praise-frame for ventilation and behavioural reinforcement, strengthening bilateral relations, proof of change actualization, and self-praise. The frames are reinforced with sixteen ideological discourse structures, including 'actor description', 'authority', 'categorisation', among others.

Keywords

Blame-Frame, Praise-Frame, *Boko Haram* Terrorism, (Critical) Discourse Analysis, Social Actors, Nigeria

1. Introduction

The actions of *Boko Haram* (BH), especially in northeastern Nigeria, have had physical, social and psychological effects on the people of Nigeria (Osisanwo 2017a). *Boko Haram*, otherwise known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* is acclaimed to be a militant Islamic group, who are apologists to the teachings of Prophet Mohammed and Jihad (Adesoji 2010). The *BH* attacks, which have been condemned by both the Nigerian government and international communities, have been having some effects on the different sectors in Nigeria since 2009. The acts perpetrated by this group were seriously felt in the larger part of the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) who attempted series of unsuccessful peace-pacts with the group till he handed over power to President Muhammadu Buhari on May 29, 2015. Initiated by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri, *BH* has been involved in ceaseless assaults on Nigeria, and taken responsibility for bombing establishments, shooting the guiltless, and snatching the defenseless (Adesoji 2010; Osisanwo 2016). The group has not only perpetuated fear in Nigerians, it has rendered thousands of people homeless, and forced many to flee their homes. At different times, BH had bombed bus stations, churches, army headquarters, police headquarters, and so forth. Specifically, they had attacked the Yola prison, Adamawa and freed 14 prisoners; attacked several communities in northern Nigeria; bombed the Catholic Church, Madalla, killing several worshippers; bombed *ThisDay* office in Abuja among others (Osisanwo 2017b). The activity of the group on 14 April 2014 shook the country and alerted the world of the havoc being perpetrated in Nigeria. BH extended its havoc to school girls by abducting about 276 Chibok School girls in Borno State,

Nigeria; and burnt down some buildings in the school. Most of these activities happened during the regime of Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan.

Upon assumption of office, President Muhammadu Buhari promised the whole world that he would crush the group within a very short time, and rescue the Chibok girls. At first, the President, a former General in the army, ensured the procurement of standard ammunition for the military. The trials and attempts of President Muhammadu Buhari started yielding positive results when the military apparatus started taking over some of the territories that had been hijacked by the group. The government of President Muhammadu Buhari scored a huge mark with Nigerians and the world at large when it first rescued twenty-one of the missing girls on October 13, 2016. The responses, attempts, trials, failures and successes of both administrations (Jonathan's and Buhari's) were represented with blames or praises by social actors in the media. The media, including electronic, online, traditional, among others, have widely reported the terrorist acts, the war on terrorism and the blames and praises of the government of the day by social actors. This paper is, therefore, interested in the way the stake holders and other social actors have framed, as reported, the administrations of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) and President Muhammadu Buhari (PMB).

2. Situating the Research

Linguistic studies on *Boko Haram* terrorism have largely dwelt on other areas but the consideration of the blame-praise frames by social actors as reported in the newspapers. Such studies have only examined areas that relate to pragmatics (Chiluwa & Oyegoke 2013, Odebunmi & Oloyede 2016), lexis (Ogungbe & Alo 2014), grammar and discourse (Aghedo, 2012; Yusha'u 2012; Ayoola and Olaosun, 2014; Roelofs 2014; Osisanwo 2016; Chiluwa & Odebunmi 2016); stance and engagements in online discourses (Chiluwa & Ifukor 2015; Osisanwo 2017a & b), and a few others in relation to the reportage of the activities of BH. Roelofs (2014), the most related study to the present, executes a discourse analysis of the frames and blames on the *Boko Haram* uprising from July 2009 to 2012. Roelofs (2014) analyses the scuffle over the meaning of the uprising, using the Horowitz and Brass' meta-conflict as theoretical framework, supported with a discourse analysis methodology based on the work of Foucault, Lakoff and Johnson, and identifies four competing conceptions of the state. Despite the relatedness, this work still differs from the present one in approach and focus. While the timing in its report is between 2009 and 2012, the present study is examining 2014 – 2017. The

present study is also not only limited to blame frames, rather it also examines the praise frames as constructed, not really by the media but social and political actors. This is capable of revealing the Nigerian stake holders' and the international communities' perception of the state's successes or failures in combating *BH* terrorism in Nigeria.

3. Frames, politics and discourse

Frames are 'structured understandings of the way aspects of the world function' (Fauconnier and Sweetser, 1996:5). Frames refer to "schemata of interpretation" to texts and any communicative act or events in social reality; they are the different analytical viewpoints to look at action or 'what is going on' (Goffman, 1974:21). Discursive frames are useful if they can be thought of 'as culturally or sub-culturally structured and structuring sense-making resources' (Coupland and Garrett 2010:15). To Entman (1993: 52-53), "frames have at least four locations in the communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture" and the analysis of frame illuminates "the precise way in which influence over a human consciousness is exerted by the transfer of information from one location such as a speech, utterance, news report, or novel to that consciousness." Discourse in politics can be broadly viewed as discourses that relate to politics or political views. van Dijk (2006:732) argues that political discourse is defined in terms of political contexts; and also posits that 'the relations between discourse and political ideologies are usually studied in terms of the structures of political discourse, such as the use of biased lexical items, syntactic structures such as actives and passives.' In relation to the present study, frames are seen as the different constructions with which social actors, including politicians, stake holders, party stalwarts, public officers, presidents of countries (sitting and former) describe or represent others. Such representations are sometimes relayed verbatim by the media, and at other times, the media bring in some amendments to suit their ideological pursuits. In this paper, therefore, the interest is in the discourse choices presented by social actors to represent the administrations of GEJ and PMB in relation to *BH* terrorism in Nigeria

4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The present study is guided by the van Dijk's (2006) socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Out of the hundreds of possible categories, van Dijk (2006:735-739) introduces 27 categories of ideological discourse structures which include the following: 'actor description', 'authority', 'burden' ('Topos'), 'categorisation', 'comparison', 'consensus',

'counterfactuals', 'disclaimer', 'euphemism', 'evidentiality', 'example'/'illustration', 'generalisation', 'hyperbole', 'implication', 'irony', 'lexicalisation', 'metaphor', 'self-glorification', 'norm expression', 'number game', 'polarisation', 'Us-Them', 'populism', 'presupposition', 'vagueness', 'victimisation, dramatisation and polarisation. According to van Dijk the ideological discourse often features the following overall strategies of what might be called the ideological square: emphasise our good things, emphasise their bad things, de-emphasise our bad things, de-emphasise their good things. This theory and the structures guide the analysis in this paper. Meanwhile, we have found sixteen of the twenty-seven useful for the purpose of this paper. They include *Actor description*, which has to do with the way in which actors or members of a particular society are described either in a negative or positive way; *Authority*, which has to do with mentioning authorities to support one's case; *Categorisation*, which has to do with the organisation of people into different groups; *Comparison*, which has to do with comparing ingroups and outgroups; *Consensus*, which has to do with a political strategy involved in forming agreement and solidarity; *Disclaimers*, which is used to save face by mentioning our positive characteristics but focus exclusively on their negative attributes; *Evidentiality*, which involves the use of some evidence or proof to support one's knowledge or opinion; *Example/Illustration*, which involves using concrete examples in form of short stories to illustrate or make a general point more credible; *Implication*, which involves deducing or inferring implicit information; *Lexicalisation*, which involves using specific lexical items to express underlying concepts and beliefs; *National Self-Glorification*, which is a device used to create positive self-presentation by glorifying one's country; *Negative other-presentation*, which involves classifying outgroups as bad; *Norm expression*, which involves giving norm statement about what 'we' should and should not do; *Number game*, which involves using numbers and statistics to appear credible; *Polarisation*, which involves categorising people as belonging to us with good attributes and them with bad attributes; *Positive self-presentation*, which involves classifying ingroups as good; and *Dramatisation and Polarisation*, which involve telling bad stories about people who do not belong to US.

Data for this study were purposively drawn from different utterances on the blame-praise frame, credited to different social actors on the state's actions and inactions at combating the *Boko Haram*. The purposively sampled utterances are retrieved from electronic versions of newspapers which span 2013 to 2017, that is, two years each from the administrations of former

President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari. The analysis is guided by aspects of critical discourse analysis, with bias for van Dijk's ideological structures.

5. Analysis and findings

The data revealed that there are two broad frames on the two administrations – blame-frame and praise-frame. Each of the frame categories has at least four framing strategies. The blame-frame strategies include blame-frame as propaganda tactic, blame-frame as finger-pointing and demonization strategy, blame-frame as justification for political migration, blame-frame as buck passing, blame-frame as social-control technique. The praise-frame strategies include praise-frame for ventilation and behavioural reinforcement, praise-frame for strengthening bilateral relations, praise-frame for proof of change actualization, praise-frame for self-praise. The frames are reinforced with sixteen discourse structures including actor description, authority, categorization, polarisation, comparison between self and other, consensus, disclaimers, example/illustration, self-glorification, number game and so forth. The analysis is organised below under the two broad frame strategies – blame-frame and praise-frame.

5.1 Blame-Frame

In the newspapers, the state under the administration of GEJ and PMB were assessed based on results. The administration of GEJ received more of the blames were that of PMB received more of the praises in combating *BH* terrorism. The five blame-frame strategies are examined here.

5.1.1 Blame-frame as propaganda tactic

Propaganda is a regularly term used in politics and the media to give information that is not objective in order to influence the people and extend the agenda of a group. This is often achieved by presenting facts selectively so as to promote a particular perception. In propaganda, words are often carefully selected and loaded in order to elicit an emotional response rather than a rational one from the people. In our data, some of the social actors engage in blame-frame using strategies that compromise objectivity. For objective report, when non-propagandist claims are made, such reports are substantiated with facts and figures. Texts 1 & 2 are examples of reports that use propaganda tactics to get to the electorate and Nigerians at large.

Text 1: PDP accuses APC of backing Boko Haram

NATIONAL leadership of the People's Democratic Party, PDP, has again alleged that the leadership of the All Progressives Congress, APC, was behind the continued cases of insurgency where members of the Boko Haram sect have engaged in massive killings and wanton destruction of property. The PDP, however, boasted that no amount of blackmail and wild allegations against President Goodluck Jonathan can exonerate the APC of blame for insurgency and wave of violence ravaging some northern states of the country. In a statement, yesterday, by PDP National Publicity Secretary, Olisa Metuh, the PDP noted that the memory of Nigerians was not short on the body language and inciting utterances of APC leaders, including their presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, which had served as fuel to the raging flame of terrorism. (*Vanguard* December 22, 2014)

The report in Text 1 was made during the regime of GEJ in 2014. In the text, the PDP through its national leadership, and in particular, its National Publicity Secretary, Olisa Metuh, blamed the APC of sponsoring *Boko Haram*. This is reinforced through the use of discourse structures such as *number game* "continued cases", *generalization*, where there were no specific facts to substantiate its claim, *negative other-presentation* and *actor description* "the PDP noted that ... the body language and inciting utterances of APC leaders, including their presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari, which had served as fuel to the raging flame of terrorism" to describe and cast aspersion on its political opponent, the APC, and possibly earn the sympathy of Nigerians or voters. We turn to compare with Text 2.

Text 2: The Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed said the APC had in a statement on September 8, 2014 said that PDP's political manipulation of the Boko Haram had to be understood as part of its poker-like calculus for clinging to power ahead of the 2015 elections. "The Boko Haram crisis was used by the PDP to rationalize the government's abdication of its constitutional responsibilities, including visits and assistance to areas affected, as well as effective response to abductions. For instance, the then government was silent over the kidnap of the Chibok girls for over 15 days. Two-and-a-half years after that statement, we have been vindicated by the report that claimed that Jonathan rebuffed an attempt by the British government to help rescue the girls. We hope Jonathan will now refrain from stoking further controversy over the lingering abduction issue and allow the government of the day to focus on its ongoing negotiations to release the Chibok girls," Mohammed said. (*The Guardian*, 7 March, 2017)

The report in Text 2 was made during the regime of PMB in 2017. In the text, the APC through the Minister of Information and Culture, Lai Mohammed also blamed the administration of GEJ on its handling of the *BH* terrorists, especially the kidnapped Chibok girls, using unsubstantiated facts to accuse the PDP to have played politics with the lives of the Chibok girls. This is reinforced through the use of discourse structures such as *comparison*, *number game*, *illustration*, *negative other presentation* and *positive self-presentation*. *Comparison* is strategically used to weigh the trials and attempts by the two regimes, *number game* is used in “for over 15 days,” to further show that the PDP regime was not proactive. In the statement, “APC had in a statement on September 8, 2014 said that PDP’s political manipulation of the Boko Haram had to be understood as part of its poker-like calculus for clinging to power ahead of the 2015 elections,” it used *illustration* to prove that the PDP only attempted perpetuate itself in power. Finally, the use of *negative other presentation* and *positive self-presentation* is to appear credible to the masses while making the other party look bad.

In texts 1 and 2, both speakers presented unsubstantiated issues to promote a particular perception. Both parties also emphasized what they considered to be bad in the other and good in them in order to elicit an emotional response rather than a rational one from the people.

5.1.2 Blame-frame as demonisation strategy

Demonisation refers to the characterization of individuals, groups, or political bodies as evil. It is often deployed in politics, especially where there are political rifts in order to denigrate an opponent that the masses may see him as evil. This strategy is related to propaganda; hence it is often fraught with the discourse structures of *negative other-presentation*. In our data, some of the social actors engage in blame-frame deploying strategies that denigrate the blamed. Texts 3 & 4 are examples of reports that use demonisation tactics to relegate the GEJ administration.

Text 3: Obasanjo blames Jonathan for Boko Haram’s spread

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has blamed ex- President Goodluck Jonathan for the unending Boko Haram menace... According to him, it was unfortunate that Jonathan did not take the insurgency seriously, because he thought it was a device by the north to bring down his government. He said the country needed to tackle the origin of the problem rather than the symptoms. Obasanjo explained that when he visited Maiduguri in 2011, he learnt about the sect’s grievances, which he took to Jonathan with the expectation that he would address the issues. “Even when the Chibok girls were abducted, it took a while for the government to believe. Now if that is the situation, you can understand why the right attention was not paid to the issue of Boko Haram when it should have been paid. (*The Guardian* 12 September 2017)

Text 4: Shettima blames Jonathan for delayed rescue of Chibok girls

Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State lamented that it took President Goodluck Jonathan 19 days after the kidnap of the girls to call him on phone on the issue. (*The Guardian*, 29 March 2016)

The reported speakers in both texts 3 and 4 are office holders (former and current) in Nigeria. Hence, they are stakeholders. Both of them blamed GEJ for allowing the menace of *BH* to practically become institutionalized before reacting. Using discourse structures such as *authority*, *actor description*, *evidentiality*, *illustration* and *national self-glorification*, they finger-pointed GEJ as the man at the helm of affairs of the Nigerian State who refused to be swift with acting on the menace. Using *number game* and *negative other-presentation*, both speakers mentioned how long it took GEJ to believe, speak or make a call in relation to the abduction, a construct him as a bad leader.

5.1.3 Blame-frame as justification for political migration

Political migration from one party to the other is a regular phenomenon among politicians in Nigeria. It is a situation where a candidate switches membership from one party to the other. Most times, such members always look for a reason to defend or justify their action, as evident in Text 5.

Text 5: Senator Blames Jonathan for PDP's Woes

A stalwart of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Borno State and former National Assembly Liaison Adviser to late President Umaru Ya'Adua, Sen. Abba Aji, has accused the immediate past President Goodluck Jonathan of allegedly "destroying the party for selfish interests" before handing over to the new government. Senator Abba Aji, who was defending his decision to defect from PDP to the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Maiduguri Saturday... said the fight against Boko Haram in the North East sub-region of the country did not receive timely attention from the Jonathan presidency until things got out of hand, warned that an additional year or more to the increasing on going insurgency in Borno state and the affected sub-region, could compound and create bigger problems for the state and the country. (*The Guardian* 19 July 2015)

In Text 5, a politician, a stalwart of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Borno State and former National Assembly Liaison Adviser to late President Umaru Ya'Adua, Sen. Abba Aji, also frame-blamed GEJ for the insecurity in the country, labelled him as being selfish and sluggish in swinging to action to bring the menace to a halt. The senator deploys the *negative*

other-presentation discourse structure to describe GEJ and foregrounds them as things he cannot identify with; hence, the need for him to leave the party, PDP, and move to the party in power, the APC. His nailing of GEJ strategically positions him to look credible to the electorate and Nigerians at large.

5.1.4 Blame-frame as buck passing

Buck passing is the act of attributing one's responsibility to another person or group. The expression is often used as a strategy in power politics. In our data, despite the fact that many had condemned the Jonathan government as the chief culprit in the entrenchment of insurgency in Nigeria, he still plays the buck passing game by blaming others. This is related to what is termed “kick-the-dog” effect where the individual (President Jonathan), a superior blames their subordinate (northern governors), or another situation where he blames his political opponent. Therefore, as other members of the public kick the president, he searches for another immediate or remote “dog” to kick. Sometimes, such acts are propagated down a hierarchy until the lowest rung. This is exemplified in Text 6.

Text 6: Jonathan Explodes! Blame northern governors, not me for Boko Haram!’

PRESIDENT Goodluck Jonathan yesterday took a swipe at governors for accusing the Federal Government of bad leadership, asking them to stop pushing blames when they have failed on their part to provide primary and secondary education for their citizens... and employment consequent upon which they are ready tools for terrorists. (Vanguard March 30, 2014)

In Text 6, buck passing is used as a blame strategy. GEJ deploys *dramatisation and polarisation* structure to attribute the entrenchment of the menace of terrorism in Nigeria to the governors in the northern part of the country whom he claimed had “failed on their part to provide primary and secondary education for their citizens... and employment consequent upon which they are ready tools for terrorists.” He deploys the ideological discourse structure, *disclaimer* to distance himself from the governors and drop the blame-buck on their doorsteps.

5.1.4 Blame-frame as social-control technique

Social control is the process by which an individual is led to develop actual behaviour which is confined to the narrower range of what is acceptable for him by a society. It has to do with either the internalization of norms, values or belief systems by the process of socialization

or through external sanctions, especially through the government. In our data, this is specifically deployed as behavioural control for the masses.

Text 7: Nigeria is winning against Boko Haram, says Obasanjo

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has said the Nigerian nation is winning the war against Boko Haram insurgency that has claimed many lives and property in the North-East sub-region of the country. He said that the military and other security agencies were on the ascendancy over the forces of destruction, menace and dangers of terrorism and insurgency that has lasted for over six years in the country. While praising the efforts of President Muhammadu Buhari in tackling insurgency and terrorism, Obasanjo said: “Talking to the president about the issue of insurgency in particular and insecurity in general, I know that he is very concerned and not only concerned, he has got it right.”
(*The Guardian* 29 March 2016)

In Text 7, former President Olusegun Obasanjo (OBJ) negotiated between both the blame-frame and the praise-frame. First, he sees himself, being a former president, as an *authority* who could assess the two presidents and offer a necessary guide to the country. No doubt, the international community and the Nigerian people in general have been very disappointed and become pessimistic about the democracy in Nigeria. OBJ therefore resorts to the use of social control that is, the internalization of norms, values or belief systems by the process of socialization or through external sanctions, especially through the government in order to have an impact in their belief system and refine their behavioural attitude to the democracy in Nigeria. This is also hoped to allay their fears, and control their mind on what to believe. Hence, he uses the discourse structures: *comparison* and *categorization* (to compare between the two administrations and categorise them separately), *number game* and *evidentiality* (to describe GEJ as culpable having allowed huge destruction under his watch thus: “Boko Haram insurgency that has claimed many lives and property in the North-East sub-region of the country”), *actor description* and *negative other-presentation* (to blame and bring out the negative attitude of GEJ) *positive self-presentation* (to identify with PMB as a winner and someone who listened to him on insurgency matter thus: “Talking to the president about the issue of insurgency in particular and insecurity in general, I know that he is very concerned and not only concerned, he has got it right.”). His conclusion is to make Nigeria have a sigh of relief that normalcy is on its way.

Text 8: Dasukigate: Sultan Praises Buhari, Chides Past Government Officials

The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, has condemned the sharing of cash meant for the war against Boko Haram, from the Office of National Security Adviser (NSA) by some politicians, describing the act as ungodly. The Sultan however endorsed the anti-corruption war of President Muhammadu Buhari and sought more international support for the campaign...The Sultan decried the conversion of funds meant for the purchase of arms to fight Boko Haram to personal use by past government official. He said "This was done with the connivance of some unscrupulous politicians. Such funds would have enhanced the capacity of the military to fast track the curtailment of insurgency in the north east of Nigeria. *THEWILL* (July 29, 2016)

In like manner, in Text 8, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III, negotiated between both the blame-frame and the praise-frame. First, as the Head of Muslims in Nigeria, he sees himself as one involved in the social orientation of his Muslim-brethren, and by extension the other Nigerians. The Sultan deploys the discourse structure: *comparison* to compare between the two administrations in order to sufficiently blame the GEJ administration and praise the PMB administration. He also deploys the *norm expression* and *evidentiality* to condemn the abnormality, anti-social and anti-people atrocity committed in the GEJ administration under the watch of GEJ, where the cash meant for the procurement of arms to fight Boko Haram were diverted into personal use by politicians thus "condemned the sharing of cash meant for the war against Boko Haram, from the Office of National Security Adviser (NSA) by some politicians." The sultan resorts to the use of social control that is, explaining out what the norm relating to the value or belief system in the country should be. As the head of a religious group, his public declaration goes a long way to assure the followers and practising Muslims that some of the stakeholders know and believe in what is right. This is hoped to allay their fears, and control their mind on what to believe. His use of *actor description* and *negative other-presentation* frames the negatives in GEJ administration; his *positive self-presentation*, identifying with PMB as an achiever whose anti-corruption drive revealed the ills that were unleashed on the Nigerian treasury by the GEJ administration, frames PMB as someone who deserves "more international support for the campaign" against *BH* and corruption.

5.2 Praise-Frame

In the newspapers, the state under the administration of GEJ and PMB were assessed based on results. The administration of PMB received more of the praises for its combative posture against the *BH* terrorism. The four blame-frame strategies are examined here.

5.2.1 Praise-frame for ventilation and behavioural reinforcement

This strategy is a bit related to the social control, earlier treated in the last section. While ventilation is a system or means of providing fresh air for the people, behavioral reinforcement has to do with redefinition and reassurance of purpose or good in the administration. Since Nigerians, some of who have had to flee their comfort zone in the northeastern part of the country have become immersed in doubts and distrust in the government in combating terrorism, the people needed to be assured and reassured that the government had started overpowering the insurgents. Some of the social actors therefore engage in praise-frame for the PMB regime so that the masses would believe that succour has come their way, while they tenaciously have faith and trust in the government that more help will come. This is evident in texts 9 and 10.

Text 9: Shehu of Borno praises Buhari's leadership in fighting Boko Haram

The Shehu of Borno, Alhaji Abubakar Ibn Garbai, has commended President Buhari on his commitment to ending the Boko Haram insurgency... He said the President had demonstrated great political will to end the insurgency and to address the humanitarian crisis ravaging the northeast. (*Sun Newspaper Nigeria*, December 31, 2017)

Text 10: Knocks, Kudos for Buhari's govt @2

It was a mixed bag of knocks and kudos as socio-cultural organisations such as the Arewa Consultative Forum, Ohaneze Ndigbo and Afenifere gave a mid-term assessment of the President Muhammadu Buhari's administration. They lauded the administration for degrading Boko Haram militants in the North-East and for the release of over 100 out of the over 200 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by the terrorists three years ago. (*The Punch* [May 27, 2017](#))

The praise-frame was constructed by the Shehu of Borno in Text 9, using *positive-representation* structure to praise PMB on “on his commitment to ending the Boko Haram insurgency.” In Text 10, the praise-frame was constructed by the leaders of the three most populated ethnic groups in Nigeria, that is “the Arewa Consultative Forum, Ohaneze Ndigbo and Afenifere” who represent the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba groups respectively. The news reporter represented their constructions using *evidentiality* and *number game* “the release of over 100 out

of the over 200 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by the terrorists three years ago” to score PMB above average. The presence of the time frame “three years ago” connotes that it was an inherited condition from the previous administration since PMB has just spent two years in government. The praises and commendations in the two texts show that the PMB government has greatly assisted in healing the wound that the BH terrorists created, by “degrading Boko Haram militants in the North-East,” thereby providing fresh air for the people, resulting in exhaling a sigh of relief from Nigerians, and in particular, some of the parents of the kidnapped Chibok girls. This engenders a behavioral reinforcement, redefinition and reassurance of purposeful leadership in the hearts of Nigerians, especially the northeasterners who have left their comfort zone in order to stay alive.

5.2.2 Praise-frame for strengthening bilateral relations

Bilateral relations relate to the kind of association that holds between two groups or two countries. Such relationships can either be strengthened or affected by their individual actions and inactions. Leaders of foreign countries also praise-framed PMB to strengthen the relationship between the country and Nigeria.

Text 11: Obama meets new Nigerian president with praise for anti-extremist agenda

Barack Obama welcomed Nigeria’s new president to the Oval Office on Monday and praised him for working to bring “safety, security and peace” to a nation challenged by economic strains, a history of corruption and violence unleashed by the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram. Obama met with President Muhammadu Buhari less than eight weeks after Buhari took office, to underscore the importance the US attaches to good relations with Nigeria.

(The Guardian, Mon 20 Jul 2015)

In Text 11, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, praises PMB for his anti-extremist agenda. The report deploys the discourse structures: *evidentiality* to depict the terrible scar with which Nigeria has been identified to by others thus: “to bring “safety, security and peace” to a nation challenged by economic strains, a history of corruption and violence unleashed by the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram;” and *implication*, that is “Obama met with President Muhammadu Buhari less than eight weeks after Buhari took office, to underscore the importance the US attaches to good relations with Nigeria” to accentuate the need to strengthen the bilateral relationship between the USA and Nigeria.

Text 12: Boko Haram: Chadian President hails Buhari for relocating military command to Maiduguri

President Idris Deby of Chad has praised President Muhammadu Buhari for his “wise decision” to relocate the Nigerian Military Command center from Abuja to Maiduguri, to speed up the defeat of the insurgent group, Boko Haram. The Chadian President said the decision, which was announced in President Buhari’s inaugural address, was a right step towards restoring peace and security to states affected by terrorism, and the sub-region.

In like manner, in Text 12, the Chadian President, President Idris, hails and praises PMB for his anti-extremist agenda. Using *actor description*, he describes PMB as one who acts in the right direction for relocating “the Nigerian Military Command center from Abuja to Maiduguri, to speed up the defeat of the insurgent group, Boko Haram.” This underscores what Chad stands to benefit if the terrorists are actually decimated. The report also deploys the discourse structure, *consensus* to form agreement and solidarity with Nigeria, and underscore the bilateral relations, especially in uniting to combat *BH* terrorism since the neighbouring countries like Chad are also affected by the activities of the insurgents.

5.2.3 Praise-frame for proof of change actualization

The different agenda of the PMB party, the APC, when campaigning for the 2015 election were subsumed under the word “change.” In praise-framing the PMB government, members of the party and other apologists sang praises of PMB, especially for actualizing one of the agenda of the party. This is exemplified in texts 13 and 14.

Text 13: The senate president, Dr. Bukola Saraki, yesterday commended the Nigerian Armed Forces and Buhari for the defeat of Boko Haram at their final enclave in the Sambisa forest... Saraki said he was delighted by the news of the capture of Sambisa, stressing that it is a great way to end the year.
The senate president stated, “The news of the Nigerian Army defeating Boko Haram in their most dominant stronghold is truly gratifying. This is a gift to all Nigerians as we enter this festive season and round off this year. “I want to congratulate President Buhari for his leadership, and his dedication to crushing the insurgency in the country. I want to also commend the Nigerian people for believing in our men and women in uniform, and supporting them and their families through prayers and goodwill messages.” (December 25, 2016)

In Text 13, the Senate President, Dr Bukola Saraki, deploys the discourse structures: *consensus* to form agreement and solidarity with the PMB government, *national self (party)-glorification* to create a positive self-presentation by praising PMB, glorifying the administration and country, and more importantly, using *implicature* to commend the APC, his party, for the actualization of the change mantra by defeating and displacing the *Boko Haram* terrorist at the Sambisa Forest enclave.

5.2.4 Praise-frame for self-praise

Self-praise relates to situations where individuals blow their own trumpet so that others can be educated on their trials and exploits. Some of the expressions in our data show that PMB either commends his administration or the Nigerian security forces.

Text 14: **Buhari: Army has crushed Boko Haram’s last enclave in Sambisa**
President Muhammadu Buhari has praised troops of Operation
Lafiya Dole for dislodging Boko Haram insurgents from the
Sambisa forest in Borno state. In a goodwill message to the troops on Saturday, Buhari commended the troops for their determination and resilience in clearing the remnants of the insurgents from the forest. “I am delighted at, and most proud of, the gallant troops of the Nigerian army on receipt of the long-awaited and most gratifying news of the final crushing of Boko Haram terrorists in their last enclave in Sambisa forest,” the president said. (December 24, 2016)

In Text 14, PMB uses the discourse structure: *national self-glorification* to self-praise and glorify the Nigerian army, and by extension, his administration; *lexicalisation* to praise-sing the Nigerian army using expressions such as “their determination,” “their resilience,” “the gallant troops,” and their achievement using expressions such as “**dislodging Boko Haram insurgents**,” “clearing the remnants,” “crushing of Boko Haram terrorists,” and other expressions which lexicalise his joy, for instance “delighted,” “most proud of,” “long-awaited and most gratifying news.” The Nigerian army were equipped and sent on the assignment by PMB. Their success is his success, their achievement is his; hence, their praise is his praise.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the framing tactics deployed by social actors in identifying the roles played by two administrations in the escalation of the emergence of *Boko Haram* terrorism or the denigration of same, in order to identify the possible failures and successes on the war against the insurgents. It purposively selected retrieved reports from the electronic versions of newspapers from 2013 to 2017 (two years each from two administrations). Guided by aspects of critical discourse analysis, with bias for van Dijk's ideological structures, the consideration of the war against *Boko Haram* terrorism in the administrations of former President Goodluck Jonathan and President Muhammadu Buhari as reported by selected Nigeria newspapers has revealed that there are two broad frames on the administrations: blame-frame and praise-frame. While the blame-frame has five framing strategies, the praise-frame has four framing strategies. The blame-frame strategies include blame-frame as propaganda tactic, blame-frame as finger-pointing and demonization strategy, blame-frame as justification for political migration, blame-frame as buck passing, blame-frame as social-control technique. The praise-frame strategies include praise-frame for ventilation and behavioural reinforcement, praise-frame for strengthening bilateral relations, praise-frame for proof of change actualization, praise-frame for self-praise. The frames are reinforced with sixteen ideological discourse structures, including 'actor description', 'authority', 'categorisation', 'comparison', 'consensus', 'disclaimer', 'evidentiality', 'example'/'illustration', 'implication', 'lexicalisation', 'national self-glorification', 'norm expression', 'number game', 'polarisation', 'populism', 'dramatisation and polarisation.'

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