THE NATURE TERRORISM REPORTS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

JAMES OKOLIE-OSEMENE
Department of International Relations
Wellspring University, Benin City, Nigeria
donoykea@gmail.com

ROSEMARY IFEANYI OKOH
Department of History
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
roseokoh2013@gmail.com

Abstract: As new tools of communication, an in-depth study of social networking in the era of global terrorism is attempted in this article. This emerging tradition of information sharing is driven by social media technology, which has greatly revolutionalised communication in all sectors. The article explored the information sharing relevance of new technologies in the age of terrorism and counterterrorism. It focused on how social networks are increasingly utilised by different groups. In terms of methodology, the study extracted and utilised positive, negative and neutral posts, updates, tweets and reports on social networks through different individual and organisational media accounts and blogs, and analysed the data qualitatively. Findings show that despite being used by extremist groups in promoting their political agenda, social networks are also useful in promoting positive perceptions that society has about Muslims in the era of terrorism, emphasising that Muslims are not terrorists. Through the instrumentality of social media, users are able to map the trends of terrorism and responses from stakeholders in government and security sector in curbing the menace. Given their capacity to reach a wider audience, breaking cultural and religious barriers, social networks serve as early warning signs and make it possible for people to share new ideas on possible ways of curbing the proliferation of terrorist organisations.

Keywords: information, social media, social networks, terrorism, terrorist groups.

INTRODUCTION

The information revolution that emerged in the 21ˢᵗ Century was heralded by most people across the world, a situation that manifested in the acceptance of new media technologies which facilitate social networking and development of new platforms/applications. The 21ˢᵗ Century is replete with various technological innovations that now facilitate the coverage of terrorism as there are satellites, mobile phones, Ipad and Iphones. That is why acts of terrorism now trend on social media. In contemporary international socio-economic and political system, there are social

networks and networks of terror most of which operate beyond their continents of origin as they export their acts of terrorism. Social networks have become critical tools for addressing issues of concern on terror in the public sphere to the extent that people visit their pages/accounts or status to learn the trending issues.

According to Olugbemi, Odumuyiwa & Okunoye (2014: 236), in this era of machine learning applications, support vector machine is significant in text classification, because it is always crucial to classify every data as positive or negative or neutral sentiment. Observations show that social media platforms are facilitated by hardware and software programming and most of them even become more relevant through the initiative of the World Wide Web. Through the websites, groups are formed, forms are filled, queries are made, knowledge is produced and developed. The crisis of stability shows how various nations are engulfed in terror induced violent deaths.

As the largest network of resources, the web consists of unstructured and semi structured data (Olugbemi, Odumuyiwa and Okunoye 2014: 229). Similarly, in this era of globalisation, web-connected computers enable people to link their websites together (Bossman 2009: 1). This is because online documents hold a very large amount of information with computer language as a factor of communication (Olugbemi, Odumuyiwa and Okunoye 2014: 231). Information sharing therefore becomes expedient considering the multiplicity of events, divergent of networks and platforms of communication. The forging explains why it has become difficult for people to resist activities that take place in social networking sites (Okolie-Osemene 2012). The potency of social media in enhancing the mapping of terrorism cannot be underplayed, largely due to the sharpened appetite for social networking sites.

The prevailing acts of terrorism across the world continue to threaten state stability and human security. This menace remains one of the most devastating sources of fatalities in the international political system as life becomes more brutish by the day. Conversely, not all countries have succeeded in developing effective containment strategies so much so that coalitions are increasingly established to fend threats, although this has contributed to the scholarly attention received by the phenomenon in recent times due to rising need for opinion mining as a result of divergence of perceptions on violence which largely contribute to the degrees of

condemnation, recruitment of perpetrators or accumulation of sympathisers. Acts of terrorism seem to be dominating the daily reports on social media, but the trends of terror show that it is not peculiar to few countries. Most activities on social media are electronic based, and that is why many media organisations create usernames to enable them benefit from the information sharing on those networks. For instance, the following Nigerian print media have active presence on social networks: PM News, Vanguard, Punch, Nigerian Tribune, The Nation, Daily Trust, Daily Sun, Daily Independent, Thisday, Leadership, The Guardian, Niger Delta Standard among others.

So far, some of the world's top politicians, celebrities and others have over a million or more followers, with both musicians actively engaged in social projects, anti-bullying, education and other initiatives a single Tweet can have a big impact (Zelizer 2014: 13). In 2011, Nigeria's Minister of Information, Labaran Maku expressed concern over the increase in the number of social media in Nigeria and attributed the revolution that took place in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, and other Arab states to the reports dished out by the social media. Even the President of Nigeria and various Governors now have Facebook pages where they ask citizens to visit the pages, like and follow their updates on political statements and condemnation of terrorism.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Terrorism remains one of the most cancerous features of domestic and international politics for centuries (Ojakorotu 2011: 97; Stampnitzky 2013). The loss of lives and psychological trauma that are witnessed after attacks show that the existence of groups that promote terror compounds the search for sustainable international peace and security. The advent of new digital media and ICT gadgets in the age of terrorism also posed new challenges as terrorist groups and groups involved in insurgent violence now utilise the availability of these innovative inventions to not only enhance their nefarious activities, but also use them to amass and disseminate information, issue further threats of attack and also claim responsibility of attacks.

Recent events have shown that terrorists have increasingly become information and communication technology compliant, using such tools to mobilise groups, shape or influence public perceptions on their activities, and also win sympathisers. Also, digital devices have launched such groups into the public sphere to the extent that they now have unrestricted access to the general public, intimidation and use of weapon of fear have become the order of the day among these groups. They now have user accounts aided by the network availability with combination of digital devices and social networking sites. Most times, the groups endeavour to avoid engaging in username squatting, by making their accounts active, using them regularly, mainly because not using the accounts within six months can make them to be removed without further notice. Additionally, as social networking channels are utilised by both the perpetrators and those involved in counterterrorism, observations show that not all reports that are provided on social media ebb away the terror, some rather aggravate the acts.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this paper is to identify and analyse the relevance of new technologies of terrorism and counterterrorism, which offer social media (social networking sites) the opportunity to fill the gap in information sharing and timely communication across the world. This role makes such media platforms to serve as information banks for users. The article offers insight into the following questions: What are the innovative strategies of terrorist tracking and reporting? What social media tools and platforms aid the sharing of information on terror related risks? What is the contribution of opinion mining to violence research in the age of terrorism?

Given that social media platforms remain the drivers of information, the work extracted and made use of qualitative data comprising of positive, negative and neutral posts, updates, tweets and reports on social networks through different individual and organisational media accounts and blogs. Observation of events and posts on social networks also contributed as a method of data collection. The data is analysed qualitatively in a sentiment perspective which can be positive, negative or neutral. Notably, Olugbemi, Odumuyiwa & Okunoye (2014) aver that sentiment

analysis is also known as opinion mining which has become a subject of research.

Justification: Most studies have not explored the linkages between social media, opinion mining, and terrorism reporting. Such issues demand scholarly attention especially in this era of global terrorism. Apart from neutral sentiment users, the embrace of social media by protagonists in the perpetration of terror and counterterrorism rather makes the study interesting as media accounts are created to project the goal of the groups (state actors, non-state actors, terrorist organisations) involved. Additionally, the impetus or proclivity for violence are usually backed by several reasons most of which are made explicit through opinion mining that normally characterise reports of terror on social media.

This article submits that the exact links between social media and terrorism are the issues of terrorism discussed on social media platform by different groups of people including terrorists who also have social media accounts with the aim of reporting their activities especially in terms of issuing warnings and claiming responsibility of attacks. Muslims have also been able to shape people's perception by enlightening the public that Islam is a religion of peaceful coexistence and not violence. These are the most social media activities by the users in the context of global terrorism.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL EXPLANATIONS

While some scholars describe information as the processed form of data (Okae and David 2014), others see it as the pieces of fact and figures that are gathered and processed (Oguntunde and Osofisan 2014: 184). Social networks are sites that have multiuser interface and also give people the opportunity to establish groups, relationships, effective communication and generate information. Social media which connects people from all parts of the world is enhanced by access to the internet (Okolie-Osemene 2012). Twitter and Facebook are microblogging platforms which allow users to post updates/tweets on a wide range of topics (Olugbemi, Odumuyiwa and Okunoye 2014). The Egyptian activist Hossam El-Hamalawy, emphatically stated in 2008 that "the Internet is only a medium and a tool by which we can support our 'off-line' activities" (Curca 2013: 10; Chari 2011). Off-line activities require

much desired support in the areas of communication and information sharing especially in breaking communication barriers to reach communities that are on-line, connected to social networks which use the internet.

In the words of Curca (2013: 10) it can also be said that the new tools of communication pave way for messages to be amplified and communication flows to become increasingly horizontal and democratizing. Information on terrorism and counterterrorism approaches are now readily available on social networks. In essence, Medium theory explains how media are themselves social contexts that foster certain forms of interaction and social identities, this is based on the experience of technologically – mediated communication manifesting in social networks (Meyrowitz 1985; Okolie-Osemene 2012). This aspect of communication characterise terrorist reporting and discourse on global stability. Social networks shape identities of terrorists, victims, vulnerable groups and even the authorities involved in counterterrorism.

TERRORISM

The term terrorism has been defined by the Jonathan Netanyahu Institute in Israel as systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent in order to instil fear for political ends; a situation where a group of people or individuals use violence to intimidate innocent population for political ends (Momah 1994: 53). In addition, it is also seen as transnational phenomenon which increases threat to human life, state stability and international security (Imohe 2010: 242). Most acts that portray terror are: night/day assassinations at residential areas or public places (including motor parks, markets, airports), suicide bombing, hostage-taking, kidnapping, sabotage of economic infrastructures like oil pipelines, attack on religious institutions during worship among others. Because the menace of terror eliminates victims, it has become a global issue, which dominates daily reports or discourse on social media.

The danger associated with terror has also been emphasised in the Holy Bible that "terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of thy army, they are as still as a stone, till thy people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom thou hast pur-

chased" (Exodus 15: 16); "You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day" (Psalm 91: 5). The Psalmist further espouses this idea with the following assertions: "O God, insolent men have risen up against me, a band of ruthless men seek my life" (Psalm 86: 14).

Notably, terrorism is as old as human existence, although the phenomenon's intensity rather increased over the years (Ashara 2013; Oshanugor 2004; Shaw 1997). Therefore, it should be stated that historical antecedents of terrorism are traceable to Cain's attack that climaxed in the death of Abel, Hasan Sabbah's actions at Alamut Castle, and the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia, then heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne (Baseren 2008). In Rome, Dutch filmmaker and critic Theo van Gogh was shot and murdered on November 2, 2004 by an Islamic terrorist (Mohammed B.) (Doosje et al. 2007: 130). Through social media, discussions are initiated on ways of creating and developing a collaborative framework for cooperation on anti-terrorism between media, local leaders and security forces and the general public (Laker 2013).

THE SHARING OF TERROR RELATED INFORMATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social media is highly instrumental in this 21st Century global terrorism considering how it enables people use the social networking platforms. Despite being useful in drawing together like-minded people advocating for peace, one of the challenges of using social media in peacebuilding and conflict resolution is that it can also be used to organise violence just as effectively (Shields 2014). In a related development, Curca (2013: 10) maintains that "while new media and digital technologies are new innovations, they have long been used to promote conflict and peace, though they can be vital tools to mobilize people in support of global and regional peace".

Another notable challenge of social media in the age of terror is that terrorists now infiltrate social networking sites, post updates, issue threats, claim responsibilities and also upload video footage of their actions, including beheading and abduction of people. This has made it difficult for most government officials

(even those involved in counterterrorism) to communicate freely on social networks. For instance, in September 2014, a senior national security officer, Mohamed Qanuuni who was the deputy commander in charge of anti-terrorism activities was killed in his car in Mogadishu by suspected Al-Shabaab militants who accused him of eavesdropping on telephones. The foregoing explains how cyber terrorism emerged to threaten the authenticity of information uploaded by governments and organisations.

This was also reported by the 9/11 Commission Chair, Tom Kean during an interview that Islamic State created cyber army to launch attacks on America, government was not doing enough to prevent cyber attacks. According to Kean, "before 9/11, there were a lot of terrorists thoughts and not much acts" (Fox News interview, 11/9/2014 at 9:45pm). This means that acts of terrorism became more profound after the attack on World Trade Centre in September 2001.

In terms of information war, social media platforms are utilised in control the information space to share ideas that would convince the population in favour of terrorist groups like the Islamic State and her allies. Because of most reports that seem to link Muslims with acts of terrorism, the foregoing made Shields (2014: 1) explains how the Active Change Foundation, a London-based non-profit organisation, "set up the social media campaign for British Muslims called #Notinmyname, a project that uses Twitter to share videos and photos of Muslims, particularly youth, sharing reasons why the Islamic State does not speak for them as Muslims. The project has received over 14,000 tweets using the #Notinmyname hashtag, and is highly flexible". This shows the extent people can go in using social networks to promote positive perceptions in the society by shaping their image.

In most cases, instant acts of terrorism is generated and spread through eyewitness accounts on Twitter, FaceBook, Flickr, Storify, Thunderclap, blogs, YouTube, and other multimedia formats. The swiftness with which information is widely shared on this modern communication media across the globe has helped to bridge the information gap especially on the activities of terrorists. Such instant reports on terror keep the public not only updated but also alert. In this era of global networking, career journalists no longer have the monopoly of the information sharing as freelancers, professionals in various sectors, and people from different

backgrounds post updates on recent or latest security developments and further deliberate on scenarios that heighten insecurity.

To a large extent, the creation of information communication technology has enhanced the operations of terrorist groups in many ways. For instance, the existence of social networking made terrorists to develop their interests and skills and also exchange communication with other organisations. This enables them invite and recruit many that share same philosophy into such groups. Also, the information media reports on terrorist activities continually paint very gloomy pictures in the minds of citizens thus exacerbating tension.

A clear example of this can be located in the recorded tape on the recently abducted Chibok Girls as posted on YouTube by Abubakar Shekau and his men. They sometimes use this medium of information to win sympathy from people especially those residing in the hotspots of violence. This corroborates Curca's (2013: 11) explanation that "propaganda is an important weapon of war, usually used by a government to defend its own actions and positions, a situation that made social media not to be immune to propaganda, in that it has fast become the main method of shaping public opinions and thoughts". On the other hand, ICT has improved the level of intelligence in the security sector because this in turn consistently assists them in carrying their duties especially in tracking and preventing planned attacks. The disadvantages notwithstanding, social networking is valuable to terrorists and even enable the general public to observe and comprehend the modus operandi of terrorist groups across the world, just like al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab and Boko Haram which threaten people on social media.

Social media technology is used to empower the marginalised voices such as youth (85 percent live in developing countries), a situation that has the potential to shift the discourse away from marginalised people as subjects, but instead the narrators of their own story (Hilal 2014). Social media is flooded with reports on the linkages between arms deal, money laundering and terrorism. This affirms observations from the study that no organisation can exist as planned without terrorist financing. In addition, most government agencies also use the social networks to enlighten people on the modus operandi of terrorist groups and outlined safety measures that ought to be adhered to in residential and pub-

lic places like event centres, motor parks, airports, markets, schools among others. For instance, a social media blogger, Omojuwa posted on his twitter handle on 29 September, 2014 "Al-Qaeda threatens to attack the West". This shows how social networks serve as early warning signs and indicators.

As active users of social networks, it was observed that not all stories or incidents reported in details on these platforms are given detailed reportage with much pictorial evidence on electronic media. Specifically, on television channels, the reason is due to some ethical factors especially government regulations and the need to avoid creating public sense of insecurity and prevent exacerbating fear in the polity. This explains why most eyewitness accounts posted on social media are generally believed to be more objective than those of the print and electronic media, as far as mapping the fatality trends is concerned. So far, it is through social networks that various groups created awareness on the dynamics of jungle justice and human rights violations associated with counterterrorism in most countries in Africa, Middle East and Asia. Most people were not aware of this in Nigeria until the video footage of the killings perpetrated by the security forces against the suspected Boko Haram extremists became widespread on social networks through Aljazeera.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF OPINION MINING TO VIO-
LENCE RESEARCH IN THE AGE OF TERROR

Various acts of terror have made organisations and governments to embark on reforms that would prevent recurrence in affected areas. People now gather information online to comprehend issues and figures on incidents to enable them identify groups and analyse fatality trends. Opinion mining makes it possible for users to identify the level of negation from given reports or scenarios built through incidents. Through opinion mining, we strengthen terror early warning and response system.

Interestingly, tacit knowledge which exists in the minds of men (Okae and David 2014), is made explicit with information mining on social networks in the context of terrorism discourse. Text classification seems to have dominated this era of terrorist reporting on the social media. Every report on terrorism seems to

be classified into positive or negative as the case may be: an IED was detonated by combined team of anti-bomb squad (Positive); hundreds were killed and thousands injured when the mall was bombed in Kenya (Negative). A Kenyan was reportedly arrested in September in the United States for threatening to behead colleague. Apart from trends, social media provides statistics on the violent deaths occasioned by terror. A Twitter report states, "Boko Haram kills scores, burns 540 houses in Michika".

Other Twitter and FaceBook reports in 2014 include: Syria's al-Qaeda branch says militants will attack West in retaliation for air strikes (Reuters); Boko Haram insurgency displaced over 3.3 million Nigerians; Phillipos is facing two counts of making false statements to investigators after the Boston marathon bombing (Scooperon7); Why Nigeria has not defeated terrorism – Jonathan (Daily_trust); Bangladesh arrests Briton over 'IS Jihad' recruitment; New Iraqi comedy show aims to expose the true nature of Islamic state (Washington Post on Twitter); Boko Haram: Lagos court delivers secret judgment on suspected terrorists (Nigeria Newsdesk, 30/09/2014); 300 Boko Haram insurgents arrested in Cameroon seek asylum (Daily Post Nigeria); German hostages in Philippines plead for freedom (The Punch); British media reported that a middle aged British mother of two called Sally Jones joined the Jihadists in Syria and wants to behead Christians with a blunt knife (The Guardian, September 2014); a population almost the size of Abuja is internally displaced (Nigeria Newsdesk); Nigerian troops have been conducting coordinated air and land operations in furtherance of efforts at containing the terrorists in the Northeast (Defenceinfo's Facebook report through OkolieOsemene status). French hostage Herve Gourdel killed by Algeria extremists was a 55-year old mountaineering guide from Nice; thousands gathered in cities across France to condemn beheading of French hostage in Algeria (BBC World Twitter 26/09/2014); the Nigerian senate on Thursday, September 25, 2014 approved the $1 billion external loan requested by President Goodluck Jonathan to procure arms for the containment of threat by insurgents in the north (The Trent); report from Bamako, shows that suspected al Qaeda-linked militants in northern Mali have decapitated a Tuareg hostage kidnapped last week for purportedly acting as an informer for French forces in the region (Trust.org). NollywoodNice also posted the 7 richest terrorist organisations in the

world and how much they are worth, with Boko Haram taking the 7th position. Apart from the general information value of these networks, they are academically relevant and also tools of both conflict mapping and analysis in the society.

In the words of a Nigerian scholar, Okolie-Osemene (2012: 256), social media has introduced a new order in information and communication industry across the world. This order also transcends the media dependency need earlier provided by the electronic media due to the universal availability of the internet and new digital media devices. Similarly, social networking has become a platform of social change, generation of issues and transformation. Since the founding of Twitter in 2006, it has rapidly grown to become one of the most powerful online platforms for connecting hundreds of millions of individuals and organizations around the world (Zelizer 2014: 12).

Interestingly, there has been considerable increase in social networking since the founding of Facebook which enables people to add friends, re-establish contact with friends or colleagues, communicate with family members, find lovers, create and join groups of interest, upload profile pictures, share pictures and status, like updates and also make comments on other people's status updates and discuss socio-economic or political issues extensively. Facebook was created few years earlier before Twitter but both social networks now have their logos on various social networks and websites or blogs of government agencies, organisations and companies.

For instance, Zelizer (2014: 13) outlines the following twitter accounts and their aims/purposes: "@globalvoices- Calling attention to the most interesting conversations and perspectives emerging from citizen media around the world; @AWID – Association for Women's Rights in Development: Strengthening the voice, impact and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations and movements globally; @SocialEdge – Global online community by social entrepreneurs, for social entrepreneurs; @Ning – Ning lets you easily create a social network for just about any purpose; @NickKristof – New York Times columnist, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, co-author @Half the Sky; @mrsimoncohen – Founder of @globaltolerance; Champion of media ethics & communications with con-Science; @OpenSociety- The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies

whose governments are accountable to their citizens; @Ashoka – Ashoka is an international citizen-sector organization which is leading the way to Everyone a Changemaker World; @SFCG_ – Search for Common Ground – global peacebuilding NGO head-quartered in Washington DC; @USIP – Created by Congress, the independent U.S. Institute of Peace works to prevent, mitigate and resolve international conflict through nonviolent means; @ThePCFF – Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families Supporting Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance; @TechChange – We train leaders to use tech for sustainable social change; #ICT4D #EdTech and much more; @AfPeacebuilding – The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AfP) is a coalition of diverse organizations & professionals working together to build sustainable peace and security worldwide". Most of these accounts are linked to many subscribers' email addresses where they receive alerts on updates or new posts that inform them about terror related incidents or measures adopted by governments to repel the groups that threaten human security.

The following are reports on terrorism extracted from social networks between August and September 2014 and modified by the authors, namely All Africa, Somali Current, This Day Live, Radio Biafra's twitter and other on-line platforms among others.

- Somalia: Through the Somali Disability Empowerment Network (SODEN), people with Disabilities in Mogadishu on 16 September, 2014, appealed to fellow citizens in Somalia to end all acts of violent conflict, to reduce the plight of over 30,000 people living with disability (PWD) in Mogadishu considering the costs of violence.
- Somalia: Somali national army has said senior Al Shabaab militant group members have defected and surrendered to the army in Hiraan province front line. Although the group has not confirmed government's claim, the alleged defection was motivated by 45 days ultimatum for al-Shabaab amnesty.
- The Boko Haram insurgents group has appointed a new emir for Gwoza, Borno State which is captured last week after sacking the military formation in the town.
- Anti-Boko Haram Education: In classrooms facing a sandy courtyard in the city of Kaduna, Maska Road Islamic School teaches a creed that condemns the activities of Boko Haram that cause violent deaths across the northern states.
- For allegedly saying NO to wearing of Hijab, gunmen shot and killed 50 years old Farhia Farah in Hosingo in south central Somalia. Faria was shot dead in her home on early Tuesday morning by armed men suspected to be Al Shabaab militants after ignoring warnings to uncover her head several times before
- Al Qaida linked Somali militant group Shabaab has freed five prisoners for the sake of end of holy month of Ramadan Eid festival. The group leader in the lower Shabelle region Sheikh Mohammed Abu Abdalla has confirmed the release saying they have agreed to free the five prisoners with the respect of Eid occasion.

•   Female Suicide bombers in Nigeria? The involvement of females in BH terrorism has assumed a debilitating proportion. In the past, no one imagined women becoming suicide bombers until recently when it became almost weekly report. Within one week, over four female suicide bombers have launched attacks in Kano. One of their main modus operandi is to approach their target and blow themselves up around the identified area of target.

•   On 5th August, the U.S. Department of State and the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia have signed agreement aimed at providing up to $1.9 million to support Somali-led national security sector reforms through support to Police development initiatives. The U.S. Special Representative for Somalia, James McAnulty, Deputy Secretary Todd Robinson and Somali Finance Minister attended the signing ceremony.

•   Nigeria's Defence Headquarters (DHQ) revealed within the week that it has set up an investigative team to study all human rights violations alleged by Amnesty International that there is a circulating video footage showing how Nigerian military carry out extra-judicial killing of suspected terrorists, but the military claimed that such acts of atrocity were committed by terrorists that masquerade as military men.

•   Mali: Human rights activists decried the continued jailing of children accused of having been members of the armed rebel and extremist groups by the Malian government, and that the government is committing human rights abuses in the north. Amnesty International says some ex-combatants being held in adult prisons in Bamako are as young as 16.

•   Nigeria: an eyewitness account shows that members of the outlawed Boko Haram Islamist sect have on Saturday 23 August, taken hostages of some bordering communities of Adamawa State, and the insurgents mounted their flags and took full possession of the communities.

•   Nigeria: Former Nigeria's military rulers have expressed their desire to wear their military uniforms to save the country from Boko Haram's prevailing threat. They are Former Head of State, Irahim Babangida, Former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and Air Vice Marshall Audu Bida, a former ECOMOG Chief. This was inspired by what they described as embarrassing declaration of the Caliphate Republic by the Boko Haram extremist group.

•   Somalia: Suspected Islamists have increased the casualty rate of insurgency by killing a senior national security officer while in his car in Mogadishu. Mohamed Qanuuni was recently appointed the deputy commander in charge of anti-terrorism activities but was said to have been killed for eavesdropping on telephones.

•   Nigeria: The Tribune created a feedback platform to enable people post comments either through email, Facebook page or even twitter handle ("Northern Nigeria is burning! 35 senior police officers and 13 reverend sisters' attires taken away by the insurgents in the 20th August, 2014, attacks on Nigeria Police mobile force, Gwoza, Borno State and Kano State in Northern Nigeria. Security agencies, Nigerians, intensify fights against insurgents in Nigeria" (Mathew Chinwike, re-Tribune feedback, 26 August, 2014). Re-Boko Haram Proclaims Islamic Caliphate Republic in Gwoza "Let Nigerian Army show their own video of a tour by journalists of Gwoza town for us to disbelieve Boko Haram's claim" Bayo Ogedengbe 2014: 11); Shekau is just wasting the lives of innocent people for nothing. You can never achieve whatever your aim" (Kalu Henry).

Through 'The Trent' Twitter handle, the authors were able to get information about Nigeria's Senate approval of $1 Billion External Loan for War on Terrorism on 25 September 2014, even before most media organisations gave the report. Given their capacity to reach a wider audience, breaking cultural and religious barriers, social networks make it possible for people to share new ideas on possible ways of curbing the proliferation of terrorist

Tab. 1. *Social media activities of terrorist groups*

Group	Location	Notable activities on social media
Boko Haram	Nigeria	Issuing of threats to attack people, the group's abduction of school girls led to the Bring Back Our Girls movement (#BringBackOurGirls campaign).
Extremist group Abu Sayyaf	Philippines	Posting of pictures of hostages and demanding for ransom through the social media.
The Islamic State	Middle East (Syria and Iraq)	Claiming of responsibility after attacks in Egypt and Paris, the use of social networks to win sympathisers in the Islamic world.
Al-Shabaab	Somalia	The use of social media to claim responsibility of launching attacks with explosives and threat of more lethal violence in Somalia and neighbouring East African countries which led to death of citizens, foreigners, security operatives, politicians and diplomats; the group also claimed responsibility of the April, 2015 attack that led to the death of hundreds of students in Garissa University in Kenya.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

organisations, because such platforms offer people from all walks of life the opportunity to contribute to the prevailing issues of terror and human security. It was through the social networks that most people got to know about the countries that placed travel ban on citizens or people visiting from hotspots of terror. This informed people on the level of concentration of the menace and volatility in affected areas.

It was on Twitter that Council of Foreign Relations (CFR) reported on November 23, 2015 that the Islamic State's Sunni identity could be its Achilles' heel as stated by @MaxBoot.

In addition, 71-year-old Stefan O. and 55-year-old Henrike D. (Germans) were reported missing in April, 2014 after their yacht was found empty in the Palawan province in the western Philippines. In August, photographs showing the couple in front of a German flag and surrounded by masked fighters were released

by Abu Sayyaf. The militant group originally demanded a ransom of 250m pesos (£3.4m) to release the hostages (Olterman 2014).

#BringBackOurGirls: Discouraging Terrorism through hashtag activism. According to Ngo (2014), "most of the #Bring-BackOurGirls campaign activity has been highly visible on Twitter, Facebook, and international media outlets, as the #Bring-BackOurGirls hashtag has been embraced widely by many public figures and has garnered wide support across the world. Michelle Obama, David Cameron, and Malala Yusafzai have posted images with the hashtag, along with celebrities such as Ellen Degeneres, Angelina Jolie, and Dwayne Johnson".

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that social networks are potent new tools of communication across the world. The era of terrorism has greatly enhanced mobile journalism to the extent that terrorism reporting has become expository. In recent times, many African, Asian and European countries have been wobbling on the throes of human insecurity occasioned by acts of terrorism. Reports from social media show that not all countries have been able to muster up the courage to constructively engage such anti-people organisations in finding lasting solutions to the menace.

The relevance of social media in the age of global terrorism cannot be downplayed. Users are requested to read and share reports on social networks like Googleplus, Twitter, LinkedIn, FaceBook, Viber Chat among others. Through social media group discussions, updates and reports on terrorist groups and other activities, various stakeholders are now able to sample opinions on the goals of terrorists and ways of coming to grips with their threats, at the same time achieving the goal of communicating to a wider audience who use social networks. While terror remains a monster that threatens the stability of all nations of the world, the groups involved take advantage of media publicity to sustain their existence. There is no disputation that scholars of violence research especially those in conflict and war studies have been benefiting from the updates that are generated from social networks as most institutions, professionals and organisations now post their terror related events or policy briefs/papers on social networks. For

instance, the National Defense University, Washington DC organised the Eight Annual Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Conference on 30 October, 2013; and Homeland Security Policy Institute organised an event on 'Terrorist threats for the Sochi Winter Olympics' on Thursday 30, January 2014 at Cloyd Heck Marvin Center/ Dorthy Betts Theatre, George Washington University, USA, both were publicised on social media.

From the foregoing case studies, it is obvious that winning the war against terrorism globally cannot be achieved without collaboration between citizens and governments. Security sector – public relations must improve appreciably for information gathering and timely response to early warning signals. Although technological advancement has strengthened the capacity of terrorists to launch attacks in most parts of the world, thereby aiding the networks of terror, it would be rewarding to human security if efforts are made by policy makers to examine factors that motivate radicalisation of terrorist groups in the world.

REFERENCES

D.U. Ashara (2013), *The Trauma of Nigeria's Terror Ordeals: Trends, Effects and Panacea* (Kano: Center for Crisis Prevention and Peace Advocacy).

S. Baseren (2008), *Terrorism with its Differentiating Aspects*, in "Defence against Terrorism Review", 1 (1), pp. 1-11.

C.A. Bossman (2009), *Globalisation, ICT and Information Revolution* (Ikeja: The Nigerian Army Information Briefs, Institute of Army Education).

T. Chari (2011), *Future prospects of the print newspaper in Zimbabwe*, in "Journal of African Media Studies", 3 (3), pp. 367-388.

M. Curca (2013), *The Peace Process will not be re-Tweeted*, in "The Peace Journalist", 1 (2), pp. 10-11.

B. Doosje, S. Zebel, M. Scheermeijer, P. Mathyi (2007), *Attributions of Responsibility for Terrorist Attacks: The Role of Group Membership and Identification*, in "International Journal of Conflict and Violence", 1 (2), pp. 127-141.

M. Hilal (2014), *From Subjects to Indivdiuals: Using Technology to Empower Marginalized Voices*, September 21, http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/profiles/blog/show?id= 780588%3ABlogPost%3A967065&xgs=1&xg_source=msg_share_post.

E.E. Imohe (2010), *Extra Regional Security Challenges for Nigeria*, in O.C. Eze, A.C. Anigbo, C.Q. Dokubo (eds.), *Nigeria's Security Interest in Africa* (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs).

K. Jayakumar (2014), *PJ offers best approach to Boko Haram coverage*, in "The Peace Journalist", 3 (2), pp. 6-7.

G. Laker (2013), *Ugandans Wrap Media/Counterterror Project*, in "The Peace Journalist", 1 (2), pp. 14-15.

J. Meyrowitz (1985), *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour* (New York: Oxford University Press).

S. Momah (1994), *Global Disorders and the New World Order* (Lagos: Vista Books Ltd).

N. Ngo (2014), *#BringBackOurGirls: Can Hashtag Activism Spur Social Change?* http://techchange.org/2014/05/15/bringbackourgirls-hashtag-activism-social-change/

"Nigerian Tribune" (2014), August 26, p. 11.

T. Oguntunde and A.O. Osofisan (2014), *Data Model for ICT – Based Environment for Collaborative Learning and Research*, in A. David and C. Uwadia (eds.), *Transition from Observation to Knowledge to Intelligence* (France: ISKO).

P. Okae and A. David (2014), *A DSS Model to Optimize Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Management using the Concepts of Observatory and Competitive Intelligence*, in A. David and C. Uwadia (eds.), *Transition from Observation to Knowledge to Intelligence* (France: ISKO).

J. Okolie-Osemene (2012), *Social Media and the Question of Cultural Identity in Nigeria*, in "African Notes: Journal of the Institute of African Studies", 36 (3), pp. 256-269.

P. Olayoku, V. Ukoji and J. Okolie-Osemene (2014), *Collaborative Information Retrieval: The Case of Nigeria Watch Database*, paper presented at the International Conference on Transition from Observation to Knowledge to Intelligence, organised by ISKO France, in University of Lagos, August 20-22.

P. Olterman (2014), *Islamists in Philippines threaten to kill German hostages*, in "The Guardian", http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/24/islamists-philippines- threaten-kill-german-hostages-isis?CMP=twt_gu

E. Olugbemi, V. Odumuyiwa and O. Okunoye (2014), *Sentiment Analysis of Microblogging Using Sentiment Lexicons as Noisy Labels*, in A. David and C. Uwadia (eds.) *Transition from Observation to Knowledge to Intelligence* (France: ISKO).

F. Oshanugor (2004), *Terrorism: The Nigerian Experience 1995-1998* (Lagos: Advent Communications Ltd).

C. Shields (2014), *When Social Media Broadcasts both Peace and Conflict*, in "Techchange", September 30, http://techchange.org/2014/09/30/social-media-broadcasts-peace-conflict/

L. Stampnitzky (2013), *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented Terrorism* (London: Cambridge).

"The Guardian" (2014), *British Jihadist mum threatens to behead Christians*, September 2, p. 9.

C. Zelizer (2014), *Twitter influences peace, social change*, in "The Peace Journalist", 3 (1).