

Linguistic Determinants of Militancy and Terrorism in Nigeria: The Case of M.E.N.D and Boko Haram

Chris Uchenna Agbedo*

Department of Linguistics, Igbo & Other Nigerian Languages, University of Nigeria, Nsukka-Nigeria

*E-mail of the corresponding author: christopher.agbedo@unn.edu.ng info@linguisticsafrikana.com

Tel.: +2348(0)36868498

Abstract

This paper engages in the sociolinguistic profiling of militancy and terrorism in the Nigerian context. In this regard, it underpins the linguistic determinants of militancy and terrorism as revealed in the periodic statements of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (hereafter, MEND) and Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal jihad, otherwise known as Boko Haram. As a militant group, MEND seeks to defend the rights of the people of the Niger Delta against the predatory and corrupt Nigerian government and exploitations of the foreign energy companies. Boko Haram, an Islamic sect, seeks to establish a fully Islamic state in Nigeria through an armed revolt against the security forces of the Nigerian state. Over the years, these groups have continued to employ periodic statements intended to actualise their sectarian objectives. A number of statements from each of the two groups are analysed to evaluate the factors of phraseology and recurrent common themes. The picture, which emerges from the analysis, suggests that the common themes and phraseology in these statements revolve around their sectarian objectives, which show linguistic indicators of extremism, militancy and terrorism. Such flags and indicators offer a window of opportunity for law and security agencies to identify citizens of militant and terrorist propensity, with a view to synergizing preemptive and preventive intelligence infrastructure for countering militancy and terrorism in Nigeria.

Keywords: linguistic determinants, militancy, terrorism, M.E.N.D, Boko Haram, security, Nigeria

1. Introduction

In contemporary times, the world has witnessed a resurgence of militancy and terrorism. The activities of militants and terrorists have tended to threaten global peace and induce fear in the minds of the people. In Nigeria, the upsurge of militancy, insurgency, and terrorism engineered by MEND and Boko Haram poses grave security challenges to the nation and summons on the part of the law and security agencies a synergy of strategies to combat the situation.

The sectarian ideology of MEND hinges on waging an all-out war against the continued exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta and devastation of the natural environment by public-private partnerships between the Nigerian Government and multinational oil corporations involved in the extraction of oil in the region. MEND has sought to portray itself as defending the rights of the people of the Niger Delta against the predatory and corrupt Nigerian government and foreign energy companies. In this way, the key themes and objectives of MEND's campaign have been to obtain a greater share of, if not exclusive rights to, the Niger Delta's oil and gas revenues; to end corruption in the delta; and to gain the release of key leaders from prison, such as Henry Okah and Alhaji Dokubo-Asari. MEND's first public statement came in January 2006 and illustrated the group's determination to pressure the Abuja government and foreign energy companies into reforming their policies in the delta. That statement, which came just following the kidnapping of four employees supporting Shell oil, stated that MEND sought: (i) the release of the jailed NDPVF leader, Alhaji Dokubo-Asari, and former Bayelsa state governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha; (ii) USD1.5 billion in compensation payments for environmental degradation by the oil producing companies; and (iii) a greater share of national oil revenues.

Boko Haram, which in the local Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden," officially calls itself "Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad - *والجهاد للدعوة السنة أهل جماعة*" i.e. "People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad." As an Islamist sect, Boko Haram has targeted Nigeria's police, rival clerics, politicians, churches, and public institutions with increasing violence since 2009. It is leading an armed revolt against the government and security forces. The sectarian group's ultimate ambition is the establishment of a fully Islamic state in Nigeria, including the implementation of criminal sharia courts across the country.

**Boko Haram****Insignias of Boko Haram and M.E.N.D****Niger-Delta militants**

In the frenetic and precarious world of militancy and terrorism, it could prove difficult if not outright impossible to discern the flags and indicators which suggest that one is involved in terrorism-related activities. Nonetheless, developing an understanding of basic linguistic paradigm can suffice to yank the veil off the faces of militants and terrorists in their murky domains before rather than after an attack. In other words, a clear understanding of the terrorists' linguistics indicators can provide useful insights into the mindset of militants and terrorists. Our basic intention in this paper is to examine the statements and press releases of MEND and Boko Haram at different times with the hope of establishing a pattern of phraseology and consistent references to sectarian themes. In so doing, we have hope to provide a set of linguistic indicators of militancy and terrorism, from which security agencies can generate a template identifying such extremists prior to rather than after attacks.

2. The twin concepts of militancy and terrorism

In this section, we examine the twin concepts of militancy and terrorism and determine the extent to which MEND and Boko Haram fit into the theoretical prism as conceptually framed and used in the literature.

2.1 Militancy

The inherent trace of dualism as an ontological reality of the militancy concept was gleaned from the famous 1963 speech to the March on Washington of Martin Luther King, Jr. wherein he explicitly espoused 'the marvelous new militancy' of the anti-racist struggle of those years. In sensitizing the American public to what he called 'the fierce urgency of Now,' King (1963a) contrasted his brand of militant tactic favourably with 'the tranquillizing drug of gradualism' that plagued the more reformist wing of the movement. By 1968, the year of his death, King's radicalism and openness to militant forms of protest had, by all accounts, only intensified. And yet, in his final speech, on the night before his assassination, he reiterated his longstanding view that "we don't need any bricks and bottles, we don't need any Molotov cocktails" (King 1968a). The dialectical tussle about how to reconcile the conflicting views thus ensues. Is it feasible for one to oppose 'bricks, bottles and Molotov cocktails,' but embrace protest militancy? Perhaps, a leeway out of this dialectical wicket is to provide a common language or shared vocabulary for discussing militancy in intelligible terms, pointing out those specific forms of militancy that ought to be used under various circumstances.

Militancy, notes D'Arcy (2011), refers to any action or activity that is grievance-motivated, adversarial, confrontational, and collectively carried out. Militancy is 'grievance-motivated' in the sense that it is neither solely recreational nor solely opportunistic, but is rather motivated in some large part by a desire to protest against something, to press demands for change. A militant action is 'adversarial' in the sense that its targets are not treated by the protesters as potential allies or partners, open to being convinced or won over, but rather as intransigent adversaries, to be pressured and if possible defeated by means of struggle. Militancy is 'confrontational' given that, rather than avoiding conflict and seeking accommodation and compromise, it seeks to initiate or intensify conflict. According to King (1963b), militancy seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue". Militancy is a 'collectively carried out' action because it is not performed by individuals acting alone, but by participants in social struggles, acting in concert with their fellow protesters. Therefore, militancy in summary is any form of grievance-motivated, adversarial and confrontational collective action.

The preceding discussion presents a corpus from which one can distill at least four modes of militancy - (i) Symbolic defiance, (ii) Physical confrontation, (iii) Property destruction, (iv) Institutional disruption. All in all, these four basic modes of militancy are meant to capture the semantic import of a typical militant tactic, the merits of which are assessed along two axes, that is, moral acceptability and strategic efficacy. In this paper, we opt for property destruction as the militant tactic adopted by MEND intended to intensify conflict and compel its adversary (Federal Government of Nigeria) to initiate meaningful social changes.

2.2 Terrorism

The word, terror, notes Tilly (2007), points to a widely recurrent but imprecisely bounded political strategy defined as “asymmetrical deployment of threats and violence against enemies using means that fall outside the forms of political struggle routinely operating within some current regime”. For him, terror as a strategy ranges from (1) intermittent actions by members of groups that are engaged in wider political struggles to (2) one segment in the modus operandi of durably organized specialists in coercion, including government-employed and government-backed specialists in coercion to (3) the dominant rationale for distinct, committed groups and networks of activists. In trying to identify salient characteristics of terror, Hoffman (2006: 41) proposes that terrorism is: ineluctably political in aims and motives; violent – or, equally important, threatens violence designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; conducted by an organization with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure (whose members wear no uniform or identifying insignia); and perpetrated by a sub-national group or non-state entity. Ruby (2002:10) notes that the US State Department defines *terrorism* as “politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience”.

Religious terrorism is terrorism by those whose motivations and aims have a predominant religious character or influence. According to Juergensmeyer (2004), religious terrorism consists of acts that terrify, the definition of which is provided by the witnesses - the ones terrified - and not by the party committing the act; accompanied by a religious motivation, justification, organization, or world view. Hoffman (1999) has characterized modern religious terrorism as having three traits: (i) The perpetrators must use religious scriptures to justify or explain their violent acts or to gain recruits; (ii) Clerical figures must be involved in leadership roles; (iii) Apocalyptic images of destruction are seen by the perpetrators as a necessity.

From the periodic statements of Boko Haram, it is obvious that the activists are more inclined to religious terrorism with all the traits outlined above by Hoffman (1999) than any other form of terrorism. In the next section, we examine the statements of M.E.N.D and Boko Haram and determine the operational value of the linguistic themes and how the often-used themes by the militants and terrorists provide overt indicators of radicalism, extremism, militancy, and terrorism.

3. Linguistic determinants of militancy and terrorism

It is pertinent to state from the onset that a basic understanding of the linguistic patterns of militancy and terrorism in addition to an individual’s natural investigative intuition could be of immense relevance in determining someone’s ideology and religiosity. For the professionals such as intelligent officers and security operatives, a working knowledge of such linguistic patterns can assist in evaluating on close to a quantitative basis the flags and indicators of those M.E.N.D and Boko Haram masterminds as well as budding individuals potentially involved in militancy and terrorism. In other words, developing an understanding of such basic linguistic patterns is one of such proactive measures of identifying militants and terrorists and ferreting them out of their cocoons prior to rather than after an attack. By adopting such proactive step, the costly despoliations and destructions that are usually the fatal outcome of militant and terrorist attacks would have been nipped in the bud.

From the perspective of research in the field of evaluating veracity and deception in criminal statements, Adams (1996) posits that statement analysis can be an important investigative tool and should also aid law enforcement interviewing approaches. If such analysis is effective in criminal cases, then it can be useful in counterterrorism as well. While many terrorists and militants may seek to cloak their beliefs as they infiltrate society, Adams shows that, nevertheless, linguistic behavior is subliminal. In this connection, statements from the spokespersons of M.E.N.D and Boko Haram provide a useful baseline. These groups have continued to issue periodic statements calling for sustained militant and terrorist attacks on the Nigerian state and providing justifications for such attacks. Statements from the groups’ spokespersons were selected and analyzed to evaluate the factors of phraseology and recurrent common themes. (See Appendix).

In the case of M.E.N.D, the statements of its spokesperson, Jomo Gbomo are consistent in terms of theme and phraseology. Table 1 provides an outline of Gbomo’s phraseology and themes. The spokesperson focuses the content of his message on the Nigerian government and its allies – multinational corporations involved in oil explorations in the Niger-Delta. Table 1 outlines Jomo Gbomo’s themes and phraseology. A statement analysis reveals a crushing sense of fatalism, uncanny sure-footedness, and puritanical belief in grand conspiratorial design. The consistent themes are couched in phrases that are meant to ‘convince’ rather than ‘convey’. The whole essence in this regard was to convince the Nigerian government and its allies (Shell and Chevron) of the overweening capacity of ‘Operation Cyclone’ to cripple the Nigerian oil export industry until the Government takes practical steps at redressing systemic injustice in the Niger-Delta; dispel the false impression of peace and

security in the region; and dispatch a lethal 'welcome' to the US Naval warship on a reconnaissance mission on the Gulf of Guinea.

In summary, the entire statements periodically released by Jomo Gbomo were meant to convince their adversary that "the fight for the liberation of the of the Niger Delta has only begun and will not cease until we have reclaimed every inch of land stolen by the western oil companies in collaboration with puppets such as Goodluck Jonathan and other dubious so called elders of the Niger Delta." In this historic struggle, the statements appeal to the conscience of all Niger-Delta people to rise and join the campaign and encourage the M.E.N.D fighters to keep up the spirit. In another statement captioned 'Clarification' released on Monday 6 February 2012, Gbomo made further efforts to 'convince' Nigerian and South African governments of the group's capability to accomplish its stated objectives. In dismissing the comments of the spokesman of the military Joint Task Force, Col. Timothy Antigha and South Africa's International Affairs Ministry on the group's attack on the Agip Oil pipelines as ignorant, Gbomo underscored M.E.N.D's demonstrable invincibility on the one hand and obvious vulnerability of the oil companies, and the pathological helplessness of the Nigerian military on the other.

In the case of Boko Haram, the statements toe the inviolable fatwa pattern provided by the Islamic fundamentalists worldwide and constant references to the Qur'an and the *hadith* collections imbue such statements with iconoclastic significance, which amplifies the operational value of the linguistic phraseology and themes. (Table 2 shows the recurring words and themes). Whether the statement is issued by Abu Qaqa, the official spokesperson or Imam Muhammad Abubakar Shekau (the sect's acclaimed Spiritual Head), there is always evidence of admixture of politics and Islamic theology, with every statement underscored by such catalyzing events as establishing an Islamic state in Nigeria, attacks on the Nigerian state and her security apparatus, release of their members from detention. A kind of disjointed treatise garnished with fixated phrasal mantras usually follows such statements. An analysis of such statements reveals deliberate efforts on the part of Qaqa and Shekau to convince Muslims in Nigeria and elsewhere to rise in defence of their Islamic faith, which predisposes them to rebel against 'apostate' governments and question any system or practice that constitute 'shirk'. This point was underscored by Shekau in one of his statements, which partly read thus: "We are calling on all Muslims in this part of the world to accept the clarion call and fight for the restoration of the Caliphate of Usman Danfodio which the white man fought and fragmented. The white man killed prominent Islamic clerics and emirs and also replaced the white Islamic flag with the Union Jack." In the like manner, Abu Qaqa utilizes a number of consistent words and phrases to dismiss any call for negotiation with the federal government:

Almighty God has told us repeatedly that the unbelievers will never respect the promises they made. As such, henceforth, we would never respect any proposal for dialogue. In fact, we have closed all possible doors of negotiation. We would never listen to any call for negotiations. Let the government forces do whatever they feel they can do and we too would use all the ware-withal at our disposal and do what we can... We are optimistic that we would dismantle this government and establish Islamic government in Nigeria.

In an interview with Reuters at the presidential villa in the capital Abuja, Jonathan said, "If they clearly identify themselves now and say this is the reason why we are resisting, this is the reason why we are confronting government or this is the reason why we destroy some innocent people and their properties ... then there will be a basis for dialogue. We will dialogue, let us know your problems and we will solve your problem but if they don't identify themselves, who will you dialogue with?" But Shekau said negotiations suggested by President Goodluck Jonathan between the sect and the government will not happen. "He's lying. He cannot do it. If Jonathan does not repent as a Muslim, even if I die myself, Jonathan's going to see. He's looking at me like I'm nobody, but he'll see." In essence, both Shekau and Qaqa have issued statements, which provide a sense of common themes and phraseologies to give reasons for their action, justify the sect's insurgency as well as list conditions for ending the campaign.

From the foregoing, it is easy to elicit high frequency words, a recurrence of emotive catchwords, mantras and nerve-jangling shibboleths, which makes for an understanding of word usage as a single indicator of militancy and terrorism. It goes without saying that Shekau and Qaqa might have relied heavily on such revealing *Suras* (Chapters of Qur'an) as [2.191], [3.28], [3.151], [4.34], [4.76], [5.51], [8.12], [8.69], [9.5], [9.14], [9.29], [9.30], [9.33], [9.123], [22.39], [33.61], [47.4], [48.28], [48.29], [61.9], [62.6]. Following the footsteps of such Islamic fundamentalists as bin Laden, Zawahiri, and Gadhafi long immersed in the linguistic and ideological ferment of jihadism, the Boko Haram Islamists adapt consistent themes and phrases that they justify through Islamic text references, which adherents use to justify terrorism. In this connection, the Boko Haram members tend to look up to the Charter of a sister group, *Hamas* for inspiration. A sample of the Charter, for instance, shows how the group

uses an Islamist patina to justify its actions. Article III provision states: "In all, they fear God and raise the banner of jihad in the face of the oppressors, so that they would rid the land and the people of their uncleanness, vileness, and evils." Article VIII reads: "God is its target, the Prophet is its model, the Qur'an its constitution: Jihad is its path, and death for the sake of God is the loftiest of its wishes," while Article XIII contends: "There is no solution for the Palestinian question except through jihad. Initiatives, proposals, and international conferences are all a waste of time and vain endeavors. The Palestinian people know better than to consent to having their future, rights, and fate toyed with." Therefore, the statements of Shekau and Qaqa often couched in the traditional diction of Hamas, Mujahedeen, and al-Qaeda can enable generation of a template consisting of common words and themes that can enhance the intricate job of identifying an Islamists who might be straddling the thresholds of militancy and terrorism.

4. Operationalising linguistic indicators

From the standpoints of M.E.N.D and Boko Haram, the operationalizing linguistic indicators point to a set of common words and themes from which the militants and terrorists choose to weave an intricate web of militancy and terrorism with a ring of manipulation, coercion, and threat. For the Niger-Delta militant group, the central aim is to convince the Nigerian government of its capability to destroy the oil industry by launching terrorist attacks on oil facilities in the region and create panic in the minds of the oil exploration multinational corporations. The same quest to convince those outside the extremist faction to follow their exclusionary belief system provides the ideological props for the Boko Haram activists to lean on. This puritanical belief in the inviolability of jihadism leaves their audience with little or no doubts about the unambiguous purity of Islamic laws and how they must be observed by all people created by Allah. Such is the disposition of all Islamic extremists who view the world from the binary perspective of black and white bereft of any modicum of gray area. This modal characteristic is in tandem with the binary associative thinking, which conceptually distinguishes the extremists as 'true believers' from the rest as 'non-believers'.

From the realm of psychoanalysis, this psychological disorder relates to the borderline personality theory in which the patient 'splits' everything in the world he/she comes into contact with into good and evil. As representatives of 'good', Boko Haram militant believers owe it a sacred duty to purge the *Kafir* 'non-believers' of their evil trappings either by power of conviction or force of death. This explains the proclamation of Mawlana abul Ala Mawdudi, founder of Pakistan's Fundamentalist Movement:

Islam is a revolutionary faith that comes to destroy any government made by man. Islam doesn't look for a nation to be in better condition than another nation. Islam doesn't care about the land or who own the land. The goal of Islam is to rule the entire world and submit all of mankind to the faith of Islam. Any nation or power in this world that tries to get in the way of that goal, Islam will fight and destroy.

Even Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam stated this in no nebulous terms: "He who fights that Islam should be superior fights in Allah's cause." In Qur'an, Sura 9: 123, Muslims are enjoined thus, "O ye who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you, and let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who keep their duty". In Sura 48: 29, the Qu'ranic injunction says: "Mohammed is God's apostle. Those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers but merciful to one another."

Therefore, to advance the cause of Islam is to implement the complete domination of Islam over all other religions with the goal being the eventual elimination of other religions. In other words, the sole duty of Islam is to depose all unbelievers from the leadership of man, and to take the leadership of the world and place it under the control of Islam and enforce the Islamic way of life which is its permanent feature. When a Muslim dies while attempting to advance the cause of Islam, including by warfare and killing, it is not considered suicide, but a glorious act worthy of a secured place in Paradise. Yunis al-Astal, prominent Muslim cleric and HAMAS member of the Palestinian parliament, had in stolid defence of jihad, declared in an interview on 23 June 2007, "The most exalted form of jihad is fighting for the sake of Allah, which means sacrificing one's soul by fighting the enemies head-on, even if it leads to martyrdom." Similarly, an Arab Muslim terrorist reiterated this Muslim belief on a suicide video made shortly before he committed an act of terrorism in the name of Islam:

My message to the loathed Jews is that there is no god but Allah. We will chase you everywhere! We are a nation that drinks blood, and we know that there is no better blood than the blood of Jews. We will not leave you alone until we have quenched our thirst with your blood, and our children's thirst with your blood. Jihad is the only way to liberate Palestine - all of Palestine - from the impurity of the Jews. My dear mother, today I sacrifice my life, to be your intercessor on Judgment Day. Don't let me see you sad on my wedding day with the virgins of paradise.

The Muslims are quick to recite the Qu'ran, intone Allah-Hu-Akbar and declare, "Allah is a merciful God". Curiously, Ishaq: 327 encapsulates Allah's injunction to Muhammad, which provides a perfect example of how they perceive this 'divine' quality in their God:

Allah said, "A prophet must slaughter before collecting captives. A slaughtered enemy is driven from the land. Muhammad, you craved the desires of this world, its goods and the ransom captives would bring. But Allah desires killing them to manifest the religion."

These doctrinal teachings and many other historical antecedents suffice to explain the terrorist mentality, which Boko Haram insurgents seemed to have imbibed with ferocious intensity. Nonetheless, Naseer Ahmad Qamar, Editor Al-Fazl International, London, quoted Hadhrat Aqdas, Promised Messiah says:

Islam is such a religion, which does not need the support of sword for its propagation. Rather, the inherent excellences of its teachings, its truth, enlightenment, reasoning, arguments, and the active assistance of God the Exalted, the signs, and His personal attention are such matters that always drive its progress and propagation...

Altogether, the common words, phraseology and themes utilized by M.E.N.D and Boko Haram suffice to provide illuminating linguistic indicators of militancy and terrorism, which offer a window of opportunity for law enforcement agents to pull the veil off the identities of such extremists in their arcane domains prior to rather than after unleashing terrorist attacks.

5. Conclusion

In recent times, it seems that M.E.N.D's militancy has ebbed considerably perhaps, due mainly to the amnesty initiative. However, this is not to overlook the certain uncertainties in the Niger-Delta region deriving from the apparent collapse of the amnesty programme. With many senior militants stepping out of the way, the door is now open for a new generation of leaders to seek the profits made by their former commanders. Should the high-profile militants who accepted the amnesty decide to return to the fight, they might find their former positions filled by others and could go on to form new groups to fight for their former territories and criminal rackets. The situation is further complicated by the Nigeria's unstable political system, which has unlimited capacity to engineer, fuel and drive militancy. It has been customary for elections in Nigeria to pose a unique threat to national security. The tendency has been for violence to erupt in the year leading up to the polls, as militants are hired by political gladiators to whip opponents into line and mobilize votes. Already, there are clear signs that the elections of 2015, when the presidency is expected to be rotated to another geopolitical zone of the country, would be prone to all manner of violence, which only militants tend to have the exclusive birthright to incubate and hatch.

While the militancy-driven security challenges of Nigeria could be discussed in futuristic terms for now, the same cannot be said of the Boko Haram's insurgency. In the northern region of Nigeria, hardly a week passes without incidents of killings, which bear the bestial impromptu of Boko Haram. The latest of such attacks was recorded on Thursday, 22 November, 2012 when unidentified gunmen swooped on a market in Wudil Kano killing three policemen on the instant before escaping with the same meteoric velocity they appeared. The latest Kano incident presents a microcosmic reflection of Boko Haram's broader offensive and dangerous expansion into the Northwest Nigeria. With the Kano attack of 20 January, Boko Haram had expanded from its traditional area of operations in northeastern Nigeria's Borno State and is now capable of conducting attacks across a 900-mile breadth of northern Nigeria, including the strategic state of Sokoto, which is the focal point in its strategy to 'purge northern Nigeria of its traditional Islamic leadership'. The July 20 attack of Sokoto was in fulfillment of its threat issued shortly after Kano offensive. In a telephone statement, Boko Haram's spokesman said, "this is an open message to the amir of Sokoto Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar III... What happened in Kano will be inevitable in Sokoto unless you intervene and ensure the immediate and unconditional release of our members who were specifically arrested in the city of Sokoto." For Zenn (2012), implicit in Boko Haram's attack of Sokoto is a clear message to the Sultan: Boko Haram seeks, as part of its 'grand plans to Islamize Nigeria', to transfer religious authority from the sultan of Sokoto and other traditional leaders to the sect's religious leaders through a campaign of intimidation and assassination. The attack, which was repeated on August 6, when suspected Boko Haram members on motorcycles threw grenades at the Shagari police station was a prize for the Sultan to pay for "violating the sanctity and honor of Muslims," by calling for "peaceful coexistence" between Christians and Muslims, an "end to the bloodshed," and for "dialogue and communication" to address Nigerian Muslims' grievances instead of "wreaking havoc on society."

Another import of Boko Haram's lethal forays into the northwest region, which lends more dangerous dimension to the parlous security situation in Nigeria, is Sokoto's geographic location. Sokoto is only 300 miles from "Azawad," the separatist region of northern Mali that is now under the control of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Eddine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). This makes it a natural entry point for AQIM militants to infiltrate Nigerian territory via Niger Republic. AQIM's proximity to northwestern Nigeria and the increased security measures multinational corporations are implementing in Niger to avoid kidnappings make Nigeria a suitable target for a new string of AQIM operations. There have been reports of Nigerians traveling north through Niger to northern Mali to join AQIM or MUJAO, as well as reports of Boko Haram members receiving militant training in Niger and setting up bases in southern Niger's largest city, Zinder, which is 150 miles north of Kano. The increased factionalisation of the Boko Haram insurgency could equally brighten AQIM's chances of connecting and forging sectarian alliances with militant cells in northern Nigeria, which shares over 450 irregular, unmanned border crossings with Niger and Chad, with just about 12 official crossings secured by Nigerian troops.

The scary security situation perhaps explains the feline fluidity, seamless regularity and clinical efficiency with which the Islamist sect has been prosecuting terrorist attacks in the various parts of northern Nigeria. Between 23 and 26 November, gunmen suspected to be members of Boko Haram launched successful coordinated attacks in Maiduguri, Kano, Jaji (Kaduna) and Abuja. In the Maiduguri attack, 20 mini-skirt women were massacred; in Kano, 3 policemen were wasted when gunmen swooped on a market in Wudil; in Jaji, twin bombing attacks on St Andrew Military Protestant Church left 11 dead and wounded about 30 others; in Abuja, gunmen attacked the SARS unit of Nigeria Police, killing two and setting over 30 detainees free in the process. Incidentally, none of these dastardly acts elicited even a glib response from the federal government. This is not surprising. Having run out of its tasteless and fossilised 'being on top of the security situation' rhetoric, the apparently clueless and roundly confused federal government now takes refuge in moping and mooning about like an inebriate giant in drunken stupor while the Boko Haram insurgency smoulders and festers and like a wild harmattan fire lapping up the rich plains of the Sahel savanna with effortless ease. The implication of the foregoing is that militancy and terrorism have remained a very potent security challenge to Nigeria.

In this paper, we have examined the linguistic determinants of militancy and terrorism in Nigeria. Selected press statements of M.E.N.D and Boko Haram were analysed to evaluate the basic factors of phraseology and recurrent themes. The common themes and phraseology of these statements are limited to the sectarian objectives of the two groups. For M.E.N.D, the common themes and phraseology derive from the oil exploration in the Niger-Delta region by the multinational corporations (Shell BP, Agip, Chevron, etc), and the attendant environmental and economic injustice, the clamour for resource control. On the part of Boko Haram, the statements elicited shed light on the sect's central objective – the establishment of an Islamic state in Nigeria – which it sets to achieve through armed revolt against the Nigerian state and her security agencies. By analysing these statements, it becomes feasible to develop an understanding of basic linguistic patterns, which can assist in the identification of extremists and militant believers in their murky domains of operation prior to their attacks. Such preemptive strategy could prove to be the most effective form of protection and security in the precarious world of militancy and terrorism.

In this connection, it summons on the part of the Nigerian law and security agencies a renewed kind of commitment to synergize security and intelligence infrastructure that would predispose them to develop familiarity with the linguistic flags and indicators of militants and terrorists. Such proactive security framework is an inescapable option in the onerous task of combating militancy and terrorism in Nigeria. Perhaps, what remains is the political will of the Federal Government to combat the security challenges head-on. Of course, the lousy option of *siddon dey look* is not open to Nigeria. Moreover, the cost of developing such intelligence infrastructure can conveniently be accommodated in the 2013 budget that boasts of a spending proposal of 'paltry' N1.320 billion "for refreshment, meals and other miscellaneous expenses" for the State House.

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Appendix

Table 1: M.E.N.D’s Phrases and Themes

Text words	Major themes and phrases
Freedom fighters	Injustice, slavery, rape, human rights abuses in the Niger-Delta
Revolution	Oil companies – Shell, Chevron, Agip, Sacoil to be rid of Niger-Delta
Operation cyclone	Environmental degradation – oil spills, gas flaring, pollution
Militancy	Demand for economic and environmental justice Nigerian agents and puppets -
Hostage-taking	Presidents Obasanjo, Yar’Adua, Jonathan to be taught lesson
Ransom	Liberation of Niger-Delta region
Amnesty	Amnesty programme as ploy to plunder Niger-Delta resources Involvement of western powers
Nigerian Government	Detention and secret trial of Henry Orkah Rejects replication in Niger-Delta of U.S expansionist adventures in Afghanistan, Iraq
Bombing	Resource control issue to be decided by Bismarck’s ‘iron and blood’
Deception	President Jonathan – a disgrace to Niger-Delta cause
Odi genocide	
Resource control	
President Jonathan	

Table 2: Boko Haram’s Themes and Phrases

Text words	Major themes & phrases
Apostate government	No to negotiations with the Nigerian secular state
Islamic state	Establishment of Islamic state as inviolable
Jihad	
Prophet Muhammad	Nigerian government & Christians as enemies
Champions of Islam	All Muslims rise & defend Islamic cause
Infidels (Kafir)	
Dictates of Allah	Release of detained members by security forces
Caliphate	Conversion of President to Islam as a precondition
Detention & Killings	West as a corrupting influence in governance Killing of Kafir (infidels) as a sacred duty to Allah

Excerpts of Press Statements of M.E.N.D April 24, 2008

Dear Mr. President,

On Monday, April 21, 2008 at 0100 and 0310 Hrs commandos from the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) in continuation of Operation Cyclone (the crippling of the Nigerian oil export industry) attacked two major oil pipelines in Rivers state of Nigeria located at Isaka River and Abonema River (close to Idama flow station). The pipelines may belong to Shell and Chevron. Today's attack was prompted by the continuous injustice in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria where the root issues have not been addressed by the illegal and insincere government of Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan...If the root issues such as the control of our resources continues to be swept under the carpet, and the governments deception of the Niger Delta people continues; including holding sons of the Niger Delta hostage in Northern Nigeria, then, like Otto von Bismarck once remarked, "the great questions of the time will be decided, not by speeches and resolutions, but by iron and blood". Yours Sincerely, Jomo Gbomo

MEND Statement: Bomb blasts and oil installations attack (Mon Mar, 14 2011)

By Jomo Gbomo

M.E.N.D will soon commence with simultaneous bomb blasts and attacks on oil installations in the Niger Delta and other strategic locations in Abuja and Lagos states of Nigeria...The government of Goodluck Jonathan has shown its unwillingness to address the key issues of the Niger Delta but chosen instead, to continue doling out bribes to thugs and plunder the resources of the Niger Delta into his presidential campaign while deceiving the world and Nigerians that there is peace in the Niger Delta. Our revolution like our fellow brothers in Northern Africa will start with the crippling of the Nigerian oil industry to flush out all Western oil companies operating in the Niger Delta region and the simultaneous bomb blasts never anticipated in the history of this country. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta salutes the courage and dedication of its fighters who have against all odds persisted in the fight for justice. **Jomo Gbomo**

MEND Statement: Attack Reminder (Sat, Jan 29, 2011 at 10:07 AM)

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (M.E.N.D) views with scum the appointment of a new presidential adviser on the Niger Delta. The continuous deception of the Nigerian government and International Communities of a promise of peace without justice in the Niger Delta is simply a ploy by Goodluck Jonathan to secure the presidency of Nigeria and continue the plundering of the Niger Delta...In this new chapter, nothing will be spared, from land based offices to oil platforms and storage facilities. We will bring all these to ground

level...The fight for the liberation of the of the Niger Delta has only begun and will not cease until we have reclaimed every inch of land stolen by the western oil companies in collaboration with puppets such as Goodluck Jonathan and other dubious so called elders of the Niger Delta. Jomo Gbomo

Excerpts of Press Statements of Shekau Abubakar and Abu Qaqa, Sect leader and spokesperson of Boko Haram

The Nigerian state and Christians are our enemies and we will be launching attacks on the Nigerian state and its security apparatus as well as churches until we achieve our goal of establishing an Islamic state in place of the secular state. We are responsible for the suicide attack on a church in Jos and also another attack on another church in Biu. We launched these attacks to prove the Nigerian security wrong and to debunk their claim that we have been weakened by the military crackdown...We will attack Nigeria again and again... until the country becomes an Islamic state...Shekau

"Through the wisdom of Allah, we have launched the attack with absolute precision. The attack was carefully scripted and executed. We have said it several times that the UN is one of our prime targets..."More attacks are on the way, and by the will of Allah we will have unfettered access to wherever we want to attack. "We have more than 100 men who are willing to lay down their lives for the cause of Allah. ... Abu Qaqa on UN Headquarters Bombing in August, 2011

"Last night's (Friday, 20 January, 2012) attacks and bombings of Kano city followed our warnings in the second week of December, 2011. We were responsible. I ordered it and I will give that order again and again. God gave us victory. We attacked the security formations because our members were arrested and tortured. Our women and children have also been arrested. They should know that they also have wives and children. We can also abduct them. It is not beyond our powers. Soldiers raided an Islamic seminary in (the northern city) of Maiduguri and desecrated the Koran. They should bear in mind that they also have primary and secondary schools and universities, and we can also attack them..."...Abubakar Shekau

"We will consider negotiation only when we have brought the government to their knees...Once we see that things are being done according to the dictates of Allah, and our members are released [from prison], we will only put aside our arms – but we will not lay them down. You don't put down your arms in Islam, you only put them aside. Al-Qaida are our elder brothers. During the lesser Hajj [last August], our leader travelled to Saudi Arabia and met al-Qaida there. We enjoy financial and technical support from them. Anything we want from them we ask them...Qaqa

The rights of the country's Christians would be protected in our Islamic state. Even the prophet Mohammed lived with non-Muslims and he gave them their dues. But everyone must abide by sharia law. There are no exceptions. Even if you are a Muslim and you don't abide by sharia, we will kill you. Even if you are my own father, we will kill you. It's the secular state that is responsible for the woes we are seeing today. People should understand that we are not saying we have to rule Nigeria, but we have been motivated by the stark injustice in the land. People underrate us but we have our sights set on [bringing sharia to] the whole world, not just Nigeria..."...Shekau

"We're killing police officers, we're killing soldiers and other government people who are fighting Allah and Christians who are killing Muslims and talking badly about our Islamic religion...I am not against anyone, but if Allah asks me to kill someone, I will kill him and I will enjoy killing him like I am killing a chicken...Negotiations suggested by President Goodluck Jonathan between us and the government will not happen. He's lying. He cannot do it...If Jonathan does not repent as a Muslim, even if I die myself, Jonathan's going to see. He's looking at me like I'm nobody, but he'll see..."...Shekau

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