GEOPOLITICAL VARIATION IN THE REPORTAGE OF SECURITY BY *THE NATION AND DAILY TRUST* NEWSPAPERS (2010-2020): A PROGNOSIS

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ABSTRACT
This study explores the geopolitical trajectory in the reportage of security issues in Nigeria by The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers between 2010 and 2020.The two national dailies have within the period under study engaged reckless reportage of insecurity news in the geopolitics of information dissemination, which endangers the lives of many innocent Nigerians in order to favour their states of operation and deepen acceptability in their constituencies, hence promoting unhealthy Northern and Southern dichotomy to the detriment of national security. The main objective of the study is to unveil and measure the geopolitical variation in the coverage of security threat bedevilling the country by The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers between 2010-2020.The study employs content analysis. For the content analysis, front page and editorial columns were identified as units of analysis, whereby five (5) frames tagged by the research as geopoliticization, glorification, escalation, de-escalation and neutral (GEOGLOESDEN) were content analysed. The study hinged on Framing Theory as the theoretical framework. The study depicts that the ownership control has made The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers to report security challenges in a subjective manner, thus, promoting the existing Northern and Southern dichotomy in their reportage of security situation. The two national dailies are expected to be nationalistic and report security issue in an objective manner instead of framing narratives that can exacerbate tension. The study, therefore, recommended among other things that The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers should strive hard to outgrow reporting insecurity based on geopolitical disposition as a way in bridging the menace of insecurity in Nigeria. They should strive hard to engage in an in-depth and

analytical reportage of security threats without giving credence to subjective and speculative information.

1.1 Introduction

Generally, the media reports issue whose effects make audience predispose to an avalanche of messages that are both beneficial and counterproductive to development path. Nigeria as a sovereign state is under severe internal socio-economic and security challenges. In essence, these security challenges have social, economic, political and environmental implications. Security issues in Nigeria are intricately linked to the activities of ethnic militia, religious bigots, insurgents, terrorists, armed bandits, armed robbers, kidnappers, Indegineous People of Biafra (IPOB) among other criminal elements which resulted in the loss of lives, displacement of persons and destruction of properties. The influence and power of press in building, unifying or destroying a nation state, particularly a heterogeneous society such as Nigeria is all possible with its coverage. This explains Shehu's (2006:p.28) submission that "whatever the audience makes of media information or messages is determined by the way such messages are mediated.

The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers often reports security related issues some of which seems to be sensational and subjective on the basis of Northern and Southern dichotomy. The fact that Daily Trust is largely a Northern based newspaper while, The Nation is largely a Southern based newspaper makes their pattern of reportage of security issues of interest in academic discourse. The geopolitical context and placement of some of their reports and the variations involved between 2010 and 2020 is the focus of the paper.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There have been divergent views about the performance of The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers in the reportage of security issue which could result in different perceptions by the public. So, there is a need for a clearer presentation and analysis of their pattern of reportage of security situation. The scourge of insecurity in Nigeria particularly in the way it has been reported between 2010-2020 by The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers has become a monster which possess serious challenges to the security terrain in Nigeria. It multifaceted manifestations include culpable homicide, extrajudicial killings, secessionist agitation, cybercrime, armed robbery, kidnapping, farmer-harder conflicts, ritual killings have some variations which worth studying a prognosis to interrogate their pattern in the wording and placement with their potential to widen the geopolitical appeals. In most of the aforementioned security threat the two national dailies appears to be escalators of the crises through disinformation and sensational reportage. Hence, the study.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

i. To what extent did geopolitical considerations influence the pattern of reportage on security issues bedeviling Nigeria by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers between 2010 and 2020?

ii. How could the pattern of reportage by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* lead to escalation or de-escalation of insecurity facing the country between 2010 and 2020.

iii. How has the prominence given to the issue of insecurity by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers between 2010 and 2020 drew the attention of government and the public in search for solutions?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

i. Ascertain whether the geopolitical considerations influence the pattern of reportage on security issues bedevilling Nigeria by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* between 2010 and 2020.

ii. Determine whether the pattern of reportage by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* lead to escalation or de-escalation of

insecurity facing the country between 2010 and 2020.

iii. Interrogate whether the prominence given to the issue of insecurity by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers between 2010 and 2020 drew the attention of government and the public in search for solutions.

1.5 Conceptual Discourse

Certain terms have been operationalized authoritatively and base on the context they were used in this study, this include: the concept of press, geopolitics and insecurity.

1.5.1 The Concept of Press

These are media of communication which are actively involved in processing and mediating reality by presenting timely accounts of events in the society. The print media have a mechanism that depends on information dissemination. These include newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets and comics that carry messages to the populace by appealing to their sense of sight. One common thing about the print media is that they involve the pressing of ink on paper using plates and blocks, and special machines. The print media includes books, newspapers and magazines. (Turow, 2012:p20).

1.5.2 The Concept of Geopolitics

According to Cottle (2019:p.14) The concept of geopolitics is quite multifaceted and diversely gained crucial importance already with the emergence of ideas on spatial and geographical substantiation of the behavior of states in the international arena. Literally, it has to do with the politics that is determine by geographical location. For this research, Nigerian geopolitics was analyzed through operational variables, history, and geography. It is therefore, operationalized as the type of reportage on security situation by *The Nation and Daily Trust* newspapers that is geared towards projecting certain geopolitical interest through inappropriate choice of words and regional slang in the news item on security due to their locations. This reveals the fact that the phenomenon of geopolitics of security reportage by the two national dailies under study has the potential to exacerbate Northern and Southern dichotomy, hence deepening acceptability in their respective geopolitical zones to the detriment of national security.

1.5.3 The Concept of Insecurity

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. (Michael,201:p.32) affirms the foregoing definition of insecurity as " a state of being not secure, lack of confidence. This article operationalizes insecurity to mean lack of safety or the existence of danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of trust; doubtful; inadequately guarded or protected; lack of stability; disturbed; lack of protection and unsafe. Insecurity will make you lose trust, be frightened, unsettled, oppressed, lose focus, and be devastated and lose your humanity as a result of pattern of reportage along geopolitics by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers.

2.1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

A number of literature were reviewed. This section attempts a synthesis of the arguments and counter-arguments as to the proper role of the media in conflict reporting with particular reference to the Nigerian experience. The disputation centres on whether in covering conflicts the press contribute to the escalation or de-escalation of the security threat. McCombs & Mauro (1984), Gerbner (2012), Chaffee (2018), Sandman (2019) and Umechukwu (2020) agrees that the press is both agents of political communication and propaganda. Omu (2014,p:19) notes, “The early Nigerian press was essentially a political press which took on the opposition to the government”. Galadima & Enighe (2017:p.12) supports this view that: “The press was owned and run by nationalists to confront the colonial government." It was ‘press of protest’ in which, Umechukwu (2011) said, seditious and criminally libelous articles were written against the colonial government in the name of nationalism. However, this helped in the constitutional reforms and the granting of self-government to The Nationalists.” There is a consensus amongst scholars about the role the press could play in political reporting which is a primary area of development in any polity. Politics without so much emphasis determines the wellbeing of a society.

Shaw & McCombs (1972) did comprehensive work on Agenda Setting and are in

acknowledgement of the fact that press surveillance of events and issues revolves around setting agenda for civic concern and action. Generally, it is held that media professionals or reporters determine what is news, which political happening or condition will be covered or prescribed and which to downplay or give prominence in their coverage of national and international issues. *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers' captions and reportage of security issues with specific focus on their front page and editorial categories especially from the period under study.

2.2 Theoretical Perspective

This study hinges on Framing Theory as its theoretical framework. Framing has been a leading political communication studies approach for more than three decades. The concept of framing was first posited by Gregory Bateson in 1972. He sees psychological frames as a "spatial and temporary bounding of set of interactive messages" that operates as a form of metacommunication. Framing describes the practice of thinking about news items and story content within familiar context (Goffman, 1974). The major premise of framing theory is that an issue can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and be construed as having implications for multiple values or considerations. In view of its wide usage, scholars from divergent fields have applied the model for different research purposes (Ruigrok & van Attevelt, 2017).

Framing relates to the agenda-setting tradition but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues at hand rather than on a particular topic. The basis of framing theory is that the media focuses attention on certain events and then places them within a field of meaning (Goffman, 1974). Framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the readers or audience influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning. The most common use of frames is in terms of the frame the news or media place on the information they convey, framing theory explains that the media create this frame by introducing news items with predefined and narrow contextualisation. Frames can be designed to enhance understanding or are used as cognitive shortcuts to link stories to the bigger picture. Although framing theory can be criticised due to its difficulty to measure, it is relevant to this study as it helps in depicting the relationship between the way *DailyTrust* and *The* Nation newspapers frame news and its potential exacerbate security situation between 2016 and 2020.

3.1 Methodology

Data in this study is mainly generated from the daily reports of the two newspapers from 2010 to 2020 and a quantitative content analysis is employed for the analysis. This consists of all editions of the selected newspapers published in Nigeria within the eleven (11) years study period i.e. between 2010 and 2020 respectively. This amounted to 8,030 editions for the two newspapers i.e. 3,650 per each. The Nation and Daily Trust newspapers have been chosen through the use of Stratified Sampling Method by dividing the Nigerian newspapers into two geo-political zones i.e. northern and southern based newspaper respectively. The Nation as a Southern based newspaper while, Daily Trust a Northern based newspaper respectively. Notwithstanding, in political communication parlance, the relevance of the newspaper can only be determined through its selling and circulation. According to Newspapers' Circulation Figures Vs Sales Figures (2020), Statista Search Department (2021) Daily Trust newspaper is the most widely circulating and most selling newspaper in the Northern states. While, The Nation and Punch newspapers are going hand-in-hand in terms of their circulation and selling in the Southern states of Nigeria.

Thus, the study employed simple random sampling technique (balloting) in which each of the highest selling and most circulating newspapers in the Southern Nigeria were assigned a number and put in a container, closed it, shake them very well, brought them out and chose the *TheNation* newspaper at random to represent Southern based newspapers. While, *DailyTrust* was on the other hand, chosen being the highest selling and most circulating newspaper in the Northern Nigeria to represent Northern based newspapers generally. Afterward, the study employees cluster sampling by dividing the publications of the two national dailies under study on monthly publications. This is to say a cluster for each newspaper for a period of one month. This allows for easier identification of the issues of insecurity and the way the news are placed. Thereafter, the research adopted Systematic Sampling Technique and selected the sample size of 15 for the study. The samples were selected viz:

Population = 31

= 31

15

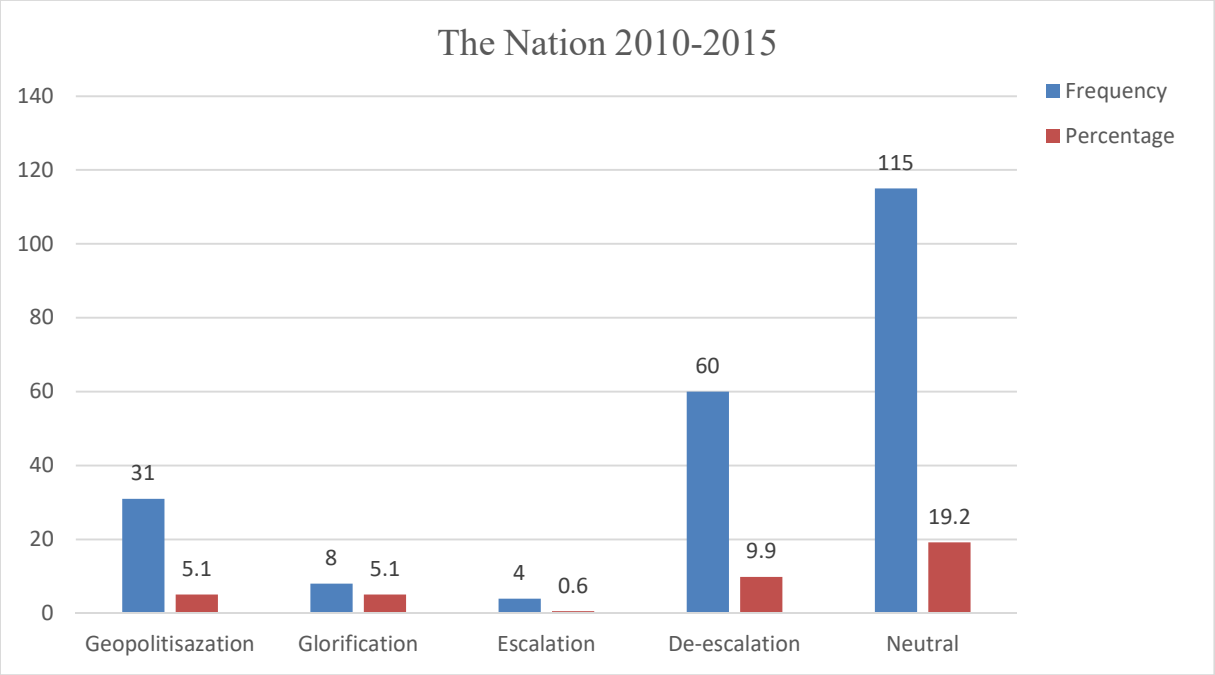
= 2 nth

Hence, 2nd January was picked through the use of simple random sampling procedure which means any reportage that fold on the even numbers days, thus, the remaining elements are as follows: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30. Therefore, the same procedures was utilized for the remaining elements under study. The unit of analysis for this study are the news stories that appeared on front pages and editorials published on the insecurity. According to Ohaja (2012:p,10), Martin & Fabos (2014:p,22) held that "if you want to know the opinion, character, interest and direction of the newspaper, look out for its front page and editorial". So, this informed our decision to study the aforementioned categories of The National dailies under study.

4.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This segment offers critical reflections and discusses the empirical findings of the study. It also presents and analyses the data generated through content analysis and attempts to interpret the implications of the results. The data are sourced from the two selected newspapers and coded within the context of what the paper tagged as Geopoliticization, Glorification, Escalation and De-escalation (GEOGLOESDEN). The coding system yielded n917 news items upon which analysis of the study is based. The aim of the content analysis is to reveal and understand the dominant frames in the coverage of insecurity that helps in answering the research questions. The data are sampled and analysed quantitatively using simple frequency and percentage (%).

Figure 4.1: Coverage Comparison and Variation of the Frames by *The Nation* Between 2010 and 2015



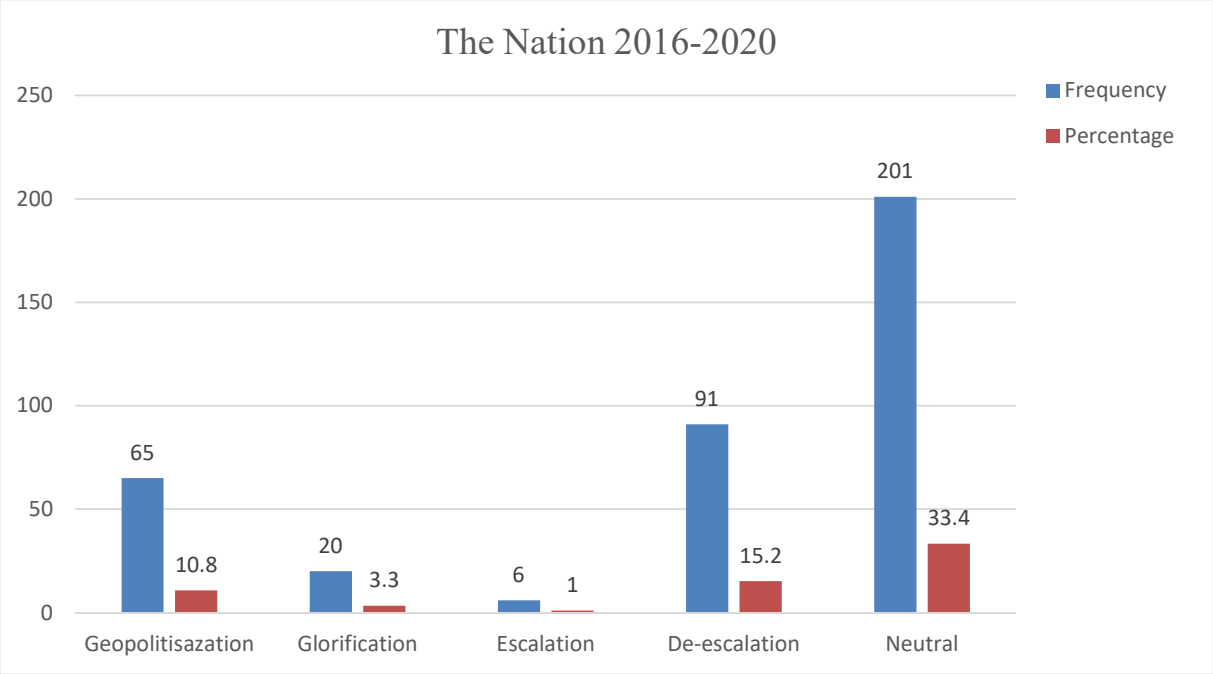
Source: Field Work,2023

The data from figure 4.1 shows that the reportage of *The Nation* between 2010-2015 on the basis of geopolitization framed is (31) which represents 5.1%, glorification of insecurity frame has eight (8) representing 1.4%, in the same vein, the coverage that can led to escalation of insecurity constitutes four (4) frames representing 0.6% only and de-escalation reports has sixty (60) representing 9.9% only. It is obvious from the foregoing that the pattern of coverage by The Nation newspaper within the trend of GEOGLOESDEN has increased from 2010-2015 respectively.The two excerpts out of many, from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers established that;

Jos, Jang and Genocide: The violence broke out when a Hausa Man, Mallam Kabiru of Dute Uku in Jos Local Government was reconstructing his House which was destroyed two years ago. Some Biron citizens who felt that the Hausas should not be allowed to rebuild destroyed houses nor return to where ever they had been expelled during previous crisis started stouning the workers. (*DailyTrust*, February 4,2010:14 Editorial Page).

The Predators: Oyo government has to check the excesses of Bororo Fulanis in its domain. Bororo Fulanis have turned Oyo indigenes into victims of barbarious slaughter and rape. The stories pass as though they are harmless rituals. But this is unfair, not only to the indigenous people in Oyo villages, but to the idea of justice. The nefarious activities of the Bororo Fulanis in a set of Oyo villages should attract the attention of the higher authorities of the police. In these times when the settler-indigene dialectic is overwhelming our debate, we should not subsume, but their nationalities are often vague. (*TheNation*, March 12,2010:15 Editorial).

Figure 4.2: Coverage Comparison and Variation of the Frames by The NationBetween 2016 and 2020



Source: Field Work,2023

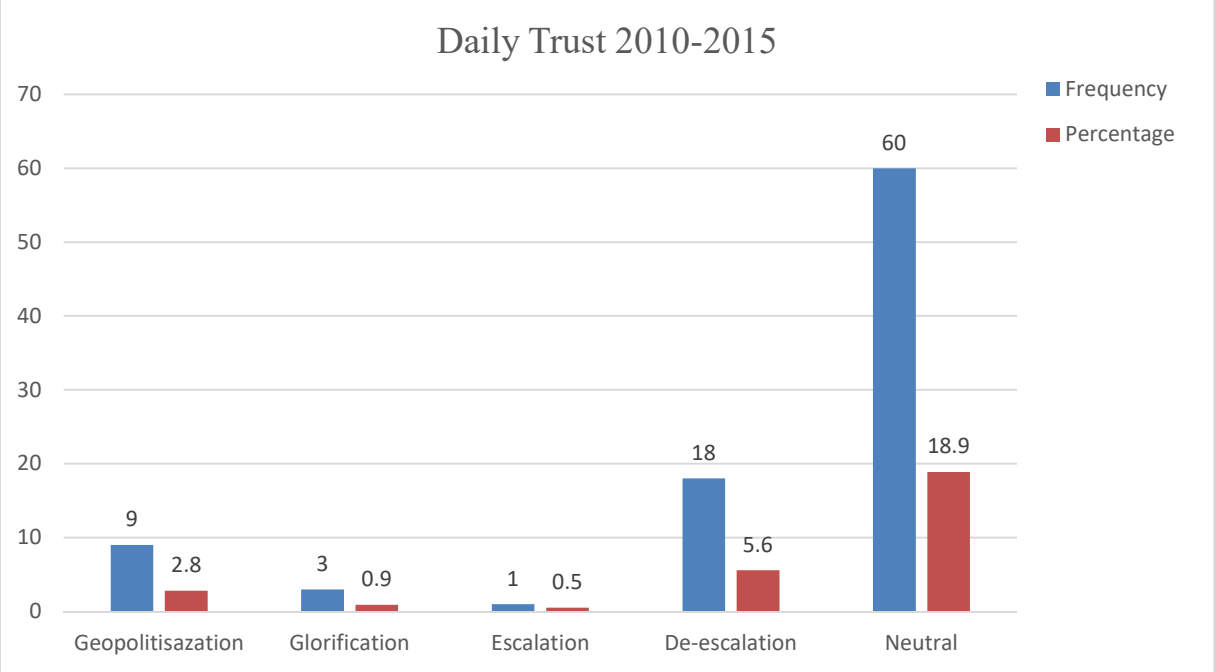
The data from the figure 4.2 reveals that the reportage of *The Nation* between 2016-2020 on the basis of geopolitization framed were sixty five (65) representing 10.8%,glorification of insecurity frame had twenty (20) representing 3.3%, similarly, the coverage that may led to escalation of insecurity constitutes six (6) representing 1% and de-escalation were ninety one representing 15.2% only.It can be assumed that the findings above depict that *The Nation*

newspaper gave move prominence the context of what the paper identified by the study as GEOGLOESDEN between 2016-2020 compare to 2016-2020 respectively.Two excerpts, out of many, from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers reviewed confirmed that;

Robbery Suspect or Mistaken Identity: Musician lies in critical condition after being shot over alleged robbery, I only went to the police to clear my name victim: IS Stanley Ukphabia, popularly known as Desty Randy a armed rober or a victim of circumstance? This is puzzle many residents of Mando, a sleepy suburb of Kaduna, are trying to resolve. Many who are close to him believe he cannot be involved in a crime. But the Imo state-born hiphop artist based in Kaduna is currently lying critically ill at the Barau Dikko specialist Hospital, Kaduna after a gunshot he received from the police on the allegation that he was involved in armed robbery. (*TheNation*, August 20, 2011:12 Front Page).

Police Rearrest Suspected Serial Killer in Ibadan: The Police Command in Oyo State says it has rearrested Sunday Shodipe of Southern extraction, the alleged serial killer who escaped from detention at an Ibadan Police Command.The spokesman of the Oyo State Police Command,Gbenga Fadeyi, confirmed the rearrest of Shodipe to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) yesterday.(*DailyTrust*, August 24,2020 Front Page 44).

Figure 4.3: Coverage Comparison and Variation of the Frames by Daily Trust Between 2010 and 2015



Source: Field Work,2023

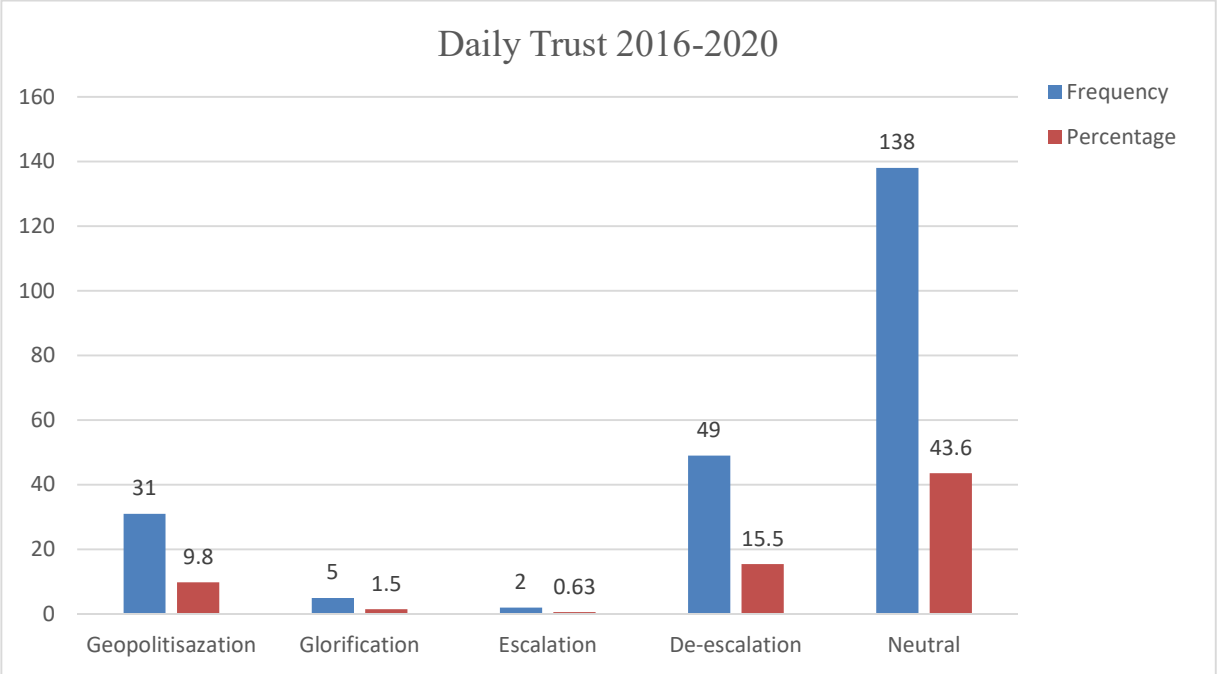
The data in figure 4.3 indicates that out of the entire news items featured by *Daily Trust* between 2010-2015, geopoliticization has nine (9) representing 2.8%, news that indicated the tendency of glorifying insecurity were three (3) representing 0.9%, in the same vein, on escalation of insecurity has one (1) only representing 0.5% while, de-escalation of insecurity were eighteen (18) representing 5.6% only. This depicts that the pattern of GEOGLOESDEN in the *DailyTrust* newspaper has increased from 2010-2015 respectively.The two excerpts out of many, from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers established that:

Fulani Herdsmen Kill SERVICOM Boss in Niger: THE Director-General of SERVICOM in Niger State, Alhaji Saidu Ibrahim, has been killed. He was allegedly hit with cutlass last weekend by two warring Fulani herdsmen while trying to mediate between them in Sabon Daga village on

Minna-Bida Road. "For the avoidance of doubt, the late Alhaji Ibrahim was on his way to Bida when he noticed two Fulani men fighting. He had driven past them, but reversed to mediate between them. "(*TheNation*, September 14,2010:8, Front Page).

Secret Killings Persist in Jos: The Spate of secret killings in the restive city of Jos, Plateau State with the discovery of the corpse of city resident Adamu Harma Abubakar, who was abducted by unknown gunmen last Friday. According to Hajiya Khadija, who is an official of Jama'atuNasril Islam and Chairperson of Hausa Fulani Muslim Women Peace Forum in Plateau State, said the killing of Adamu was part of the ongoing secret killings in some part of Jos by non-Muslims. (*DailyTrust*, March 24, 2010: Front Page).

Figure 4.4: Coverage Comparison and Variation of the Frames by *Daily Trust* Between 2016 and 2020



Source: Field Work,2023

The data in figure 4.4 above depict that out of the entire news items featured by *Daily Trust* between 2016-2020, geopoliticization had thirty one (31) representing 9.8%, news based on glorification of insecurity were five (5) representing 1.5%, escalation of insecurity had two (2) representing 0.63% while,de-escalation of insecurity were forty nine (49) representing 15.5% only. In comparison, the findings above reveal that *Daily Trust* newspaper gave more prominence to the insecurity from 2016-2020 within the context what the study tagged as GEOGLOESDEN perspectives.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The essence of the is to confirm the findings of the research. This will be done by responding to each of the research questions raised, relying on the results of the analyses, some excerpts from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers reviewed by the researcher, responses of the interviewees, the theory employed by the researcher.

Commencing with Research Questionb1(RQ1, to what geopolitical considerations influence the pattern of reportage on security issue bedeviling Nigeria by The Nation and Daily Trust between 2010 and 2020?), the results obtained in the analyses in figures 4.1,4.2,4.3 and 4.4 were relied upon in determining the answer to RQ1. Figures 4.1,4.2,4.3 and 4.4 reveals that *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers have during the period under study, significantly devoted a number of front pages and editorials while reporting

insecurity thereby projecting the interest of their states of operation, hence promoting unhealthy Northern and Southern dichotomy. On news reports, *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers have nine hundred and seventeen (n917) news items on the security issue that meet the selection criteria whereby *TheNation* had six hundred and one (601) representing 65.5% mostly in favour of the interest of Southern states of Nigeria, while Daily Trust had three hundred and sixteen (316) equivalent to 34.5% largely in favour of the Northern states. It also indicates that out of six hundred and one (601) news items featured by *TheNation*, five hundred and ninety-eight (598) representing 99.5% appeared on front page; while only three (3) representing 0.50% were editorial stories, whereas, out of three hundred and sixteen news items (316) devoted by *DailyTrust*, three hundred and seven (307) representing 97.2% were editorial stories; while only nine (9) representing 2.8% were editorial news. This has clearly shown the interest and preference that *TheNation* newspaper has given to the Southern geopolitical zone, while *Daily* Trust is for Northern geopolitical zone within the period under study.In addition, significant number of the audience of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers,3.9% have believed that the newspapers have jettison the huge gap that existed in the quest for information balance between the two goepolitical zones of Nigeria i.e Northern and Southern geopolitical zones of the country.

For Research Question 2 (RQ2,How could the pattern of reportage by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* led to escalation or de-escalation of insecurity facing the country between 2010 and 2020.).Figures 6.3,6.5,5.6,5.7 and 5.8, excerpts from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers were heavily relied upon in establishing RQ3.The analyses in figure 5.5 clearly shown that 2.11% of news items reported by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers featured in their front pages and editorials can led to escalation of the menace of insecurity thereby pleasing their states of the operation, promoting rivalry between the Northern and Southern geopolitical zones of the country, hence they can hold this country to ransom.

In respect to Research Question 3 (RQ3,How has the prominence given to the issue of insecurity by *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers between 2010 and 2020 drawn the attention of government and the public in search for solutions?),the research relied on the results obtained from figure 5.1,some excerpts obtained from the editions of *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers, Newspapers' Circulation Figures Vs Sales Figures (2020) to establish RQ5.It was found that the two national dailies under study featured nine hundred and seventeen (n917) news items on the issue identified that meet the selection criteria which *TheNation* had six hundred and one (601) representing 65.5%,while *DailyTrust* had three hundred and sixteen (316) equivalent to 34.5% only. The above clearly depicts that both the two newspapers under study have given prominence to the issue under investigation, but the analyses clearly have shown that *TheNation* newspaper has given more prominence to the issue of insecurity than *DailyTrust*. However, it was observed that both the two national dailies gave favourable attention to their states of the operation on basis of geopolitical inclination. The prominence given to the issue is significant enough to draw the attention of government and public in search for solutions, because no any meaningful development will be achieved in the atmosphere of rancour and acrimony.

5.1 Conclusion

The study set out to establish the pattern of geopolitical variation as it pertains the reportage of security related news by *DailyTrust* and *TheNation* newspapers in order to achieve its objectives, the study utilised content analysis and weighted the coverage of each of the newspapers under study.Although, the above findings indicates that the two national dailies were succeeded in prioritizing neutrality in their reportage of security situation, the newspapers however engaged in the reportage of security issue in favour of their respective geopolitical zones to the detriment of national security, hence reporting security threat facing the country without giving credence to an in-depth and analytical reportage.The front page and editorial columns of the newspapers demonstrates that *DailyTrust* has favoured the interest of Northern geopolitical zone of the country, while,*TheNation* was Pro-Southern geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

5.2 Recommendations

From the findings and conclusion of this study, it is suggested that *DailyTrust* and *TheNation* newspapers should perform their functions diligently for peace, unity, growth and development. *TheNation* and *DailyTrust*

newspapers should do much more than reporting insecurity on the ground of supporting their respective constituencies, but also involve mechanism for ensuring peace-keeping process through their coverage.

The study recommended that *TheNation* and *DailyTrust* newspapers should strive hard to outgrow reporting insecurity based on geopolitical disposition, as that will go along way in bridging the menace of insecurity to the barest minimum in Nigeria.

They should avoid unethical reportage of security threats de-emphasizing the propensity of geopolitical leaning associated with their coverage of security issue bedevilling Nigeria. This will help in promoting peaceful coexistence for development.

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