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MASS MEDIA AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN POST 1999 NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the mass media in Nigeria from independence till date, particularly, as it relates to consolidating democracy. The study first assessed the role of the mass media and concluded that the watchdog role of the mass media has not helped build democratic culture in Nigerians. This conclusion was based on the obvious that both the governed and government have taken the watchdogs role of the mass media to be meddlesomeness. Arising from the aforesaid, it was suggested that the watchdog role of the mass media be changed to a guide-dog role. This it is believed will better serve Nigeria and Nigerians better than the watchdog role. It was also suggested that the mass media adopt a multi-polar method of reporting unlike the usual balance method. Some other suggestions were made in the study which it is believed will improve the functions of the mass media in the society.

Introduction

One of the phenomena which influence has been accepted and widely criticized is the mass media. The mass media significance to the contemporary man is such that if they be absent for minutes, there is likely to be drastic changes in the ways man coexist. The aforesaid emanated out of the macro and micro functions of the mass media which includes: surveillance of the society, correlation of the parts of the society, cognition, diversion, stimulation, relaxation and emotional release. An anonymous scholar once described the mass media as the oxygen of democracy. The significance of the mass media to man is such that the mass media role in the society is analyzed alongside major societal institutions such as the family, peer groups, religious order, the legislature, political parties, the executives and the judiciary. This explains why the mass media is regarded today as the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

The idea of mass communication emerged in 1450 with the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg. Since then, how man relates and cohabitate with one another has never remained the same. In today's world, man is bombarded with messages of mass communication at home, in the office, on the road, in the bedroom, kitchen, toilet, bathroom and even when playing. The pervasiveness of the mass media in the contemporary world is a phenomenon that cannot be over emphasized [Tejumaiye 2003: 95]; equally, removing the mass media from the lives of man amounts to denying man of meaningful existence. Perhaps, if the mass media never existed, this assertion might have been a nullity. It will be recalled that as far back as the 1930's, the United States Government realized the potency of the mass media and therefore saw the need to

examine its influence, thus, came about the series of Payne Fund studies which examined the effects of the mass media at all levels [micro, intermediate and macro].

Underscoring the significance of the mass media to man and society, Daramola [2003:187] argued: "There is hardly any society or sovereign state that can function properly today without the news media. The news media are important because they help us keep up with what is going on in the world". Daramola [ibid] stressed that everywhere, news media inform the public of important affairs. They transmit government policies and actions for the information of the people. They also provide information on which many readers form opinions. He concluded thus: "our daily newspaper reading undoubtedly affects our attitudes, our conducts and even our fundamental moral values. As a matter of fact, news media have shaped culture, influenced politics, played an important role in business and affected the daily lives of millions in the past few centuries".

Severin and Tankard [1987: 212] arguing for the almost indispensable presence of the mass media to man said: "Modern industrial and post industrial society is nearly unthinkable without the mass media of newspapers, magazines, paperbacks, radio, television and films. The mass media are many things to many people and serve a variety of functions, depending on the interest and needs of specific individuals". Similarly, Mackay and O'sullivan (1999:2), arguing for the relevance of the mass media in modern society argued: "The Mass Media are different from other industries because of the special nature of their activities and products. It is via the media that symbolic culture is communicated; through them, societal values and ways of making sense of everyday living and culture are disseminated". The authors asserted: "...as well as being major industries in the modern economy., the mass media occupy a very significant role in the symbolic environment as cultural institutions".

The mass media according to studies such as Huntman and Morgan [2001], Dominick [1993] have no doubt influenced almost all aspects of man's development in the contemporary world. Stressing the role of the mass media in identity development of children and in parenting, Tejumaiye [2003: 98] stated:

....nevertheless, the role and importance of the mass media in forming a child's identity is never constant. It is an enduring process which never stops. Even at adulthood, it continues. There are evidences that adults [parents] also derive conception about the world partly from media portrayals and integrate those conceptions into their ideas and practices about parenting and as well as into their relationship with their children.

The mass media have been found to play role[s] in environmental consciousness and education e.g. Nelson [1994], Enemaku [2002], Adenekan [2001], Salawu [2004], Tejumaiye [2007]. They [mass media] have been found to be almost indispensable in socialization as well as in the dissemination of knowledge e.g. Josselson [1976], Brown [1976]. The mass media roles in politics have also been established in studies such as:

Lazars field [1944], Seymour [1974], Soola [2003], Keghku [2003], Aina [2003], Tejumaiye and Rufai [2007]. Also, the mass media roles in societal culture and in cultural dissemination and transformation have been established by studies like: Carrey [1975, 1989], Schudson [1991], Wright [1975], McQuail [2001]. There is hardly any aspect of man's life that the mass media have not played one role or the other. It will be recalled that as far back as the 1950's, communication experts like Wilbur Schramm researched into areas such as Psychological Warfare, Communication for Development, Effects of Television on Children, Audiovisual Media and Programme Instructions in Schools. Another pioneer in the field of communication research, Paul Lazars field studied every filed of human interactions from Daytime Reveries of a house wife listening to Soap Operas to the Professional Codes underlying relations between doctors and patients. Perhaps, all the aforementioned among others influenced the conclusion that the mass media is the oxygen of the society.

This study, "*Mass Media and Democratic Consolidation in Post 1999 Nigeria*" examined the role[s] the mass media have played in the entrenchment of democracy in Nigeria. The study further assessed the role[s] the mass media have played and use this as a basis to proffer a new role the mass media should play in cementing democracy and democratic culture in Nigeria. It will be recalled that from October 1st, 1960 when Nigeria gained her independence from Britain till date [2007], the country had undergone several types of government ranging from democracy, 'militocracy' [military government] and guided form of militocracy as witnessed during the Interim Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan [August 26th 1993 to November 15th 1993].

Theoretical Framework

There are several theories that can be used to explain the role[s] of the mass media in nation building. These theories include: theories of the Press, Development Journalism, Functionalism, Sociology of News Paradigm, Agenda Setting and the System theory. However, only functionalism shall be reviewed in this study. According to Wallace and Wolf [1980: 14], "functionalism is "the analysis of social and cultural phenomena in terms of the functions they perform in a socio cultural system." They emphasized thus: In functionalism, society is conceived of as a system of interrelated parts in which no part can be understood in isolation of the whole. A change in any part is seen as leading to a certain degree of imbalance which in turn results in changes in other parts of the system and to some extent, to a reorganization of the system as a whole.

Wallace and Wolf [ibid] asserted that the development of functionalism was based on the model of the organic system found in the biological sciences. Functionalism emphasizes three elements: [1] the general interrelatedness of the system, [2] the existence of a normal state of affairs, or state of equilibrium, comparable to the normal or healthy state of an organism, [3] the way that all parts of the system reorganize to bring things back to normal [ibid: 15], Functionalism's most important proposition is that there will always be some reorganization and tendency to restore equilibrium between and among the institutions making the society. The emphasis on values is the second most important feature of functionalism alongside the stress on a system's interdependence and tendency

to restore equilibrium. In the words of Merton [1957], "Functionalism claims to explain social practices and institutions in terms of the needs of society and of individuals." McQuail [op cit] applying functionalism to the mass media asserted: "As applied to the mass media institutions, the presumed 'needs' have mainly to do with continuity, order, integration, motivation, guidance, socialization, adaptation etc. McQuail [ibid] posited thus "society is viewed as an ongoing system of linked working parts or subsystems of which the mass media are one, each making an essential contribution to continuity and order". McQuail [ibid] stressed that organized social life is said to require the continued maintenance of a more or less accurate, consistent, supportive and complete picture of the working of society and of the social environment. He pungently concluded that it is by responding to the demands of individuals and institutions in consistent ways that the media achieve unintended and intended benefits for the society as a whole.

Albeit, functionalism's theory is really only useful for considering questions of social integration because without integration there cannot be agreement on goals, means and no coordinated activity to achieve them' [McQuail 2000:79] No doubt, in a complex society, there will always be different ways for groups to achieve sufficient control and consensus, the mass media constitute only one institution among several that contributes towards this end. While the media tends to support the values not only of society as a whole, but also of segments within it, empirical researches has shown that the role of the mass media in helping to promote a new thinking as exemplified by the innovation diffusion and adoption theory is immense. For instance, following the works of Janowitz [1952], Stamp [1985] has been able to prove that local community media have helped to promote identity and social organization within the anonymity of large urban societies. Similarly, Jackson [1971]; Cox and Morgan [1973]; Murphy [1976] are works which have associated the media with the values of the community and the maintenance of local order. It will be recalled that Fergusson [1983] drew an analogy between Durkheim's concepts of a religious cult and the relationship between magazines and their female readers. Also, Radway [1984] found a somewhat similar media function for women readers of romance fiction. In all, functionalism advocates that the mass media are essential in the society and that they play the following roles: integration and cooperation; order; control and stability; adaptation and change; mobilization; management of tension and continuity of culture and values.

Nigeria: A Concise Socio-Economic and Political History

A discussion of the role of the mass media in the political history of Nigeria is impossible without a brief examination of the socio-economic and political history of Nigeria. The entity Nigeria came into existence in 1914 courtesy of the British government amalgamation policy when the late Lord Lugard was the Governor-General of the hitherto geographically separated nations of which prominent ethnic groups include: Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. As at today, there are over 250 ethnic groups in Nigeria. Between 1914 and 1960, there were several British colonial administrators and constitutional conferences. These colonial administrators include: Richards, Clifford, Macpherson and Clapperton. The constitutional conferences include: 1954, 1956/57 and 1959. Consequent upon the mentioned constitutional conferences, Nigeria gained

her independence from the British government on October 1st, 1960.

Between 1960 and 2008, so much has happened in the 48 years history of Nigeria that the country is today one of the leading lights of Africa and the black man race. It is even said that of every ten black man in the world, six are Nigerians. As at 2006, Nigeria remains one of the world's most strategic nations in Africa, it is the biggest trading partner to the United States. It is the fifth largest supplier of oil to the US market and an important exporter of oil and gas to Europe. As the world's tenth most populous and Africa's most populous country, Nigeria represents an inherently sizeable market that could provide trade opportunities for North American, European, Asian and even African market and companies [UNDP Report 2006:1]

With an estimated population of more than 130 million people, Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources. The dominant ethnic groups are: Hausa/Fulani [29%], Yoruba [21%], Igbo [18%], Ijaw [10%], Kanuri [4%], Ibibio [3.5%] and Tiv [2.5%] [ibid]. In terms of demography, 42.3% of Nigerians are within the 0-14 Years age bracket; 54.6% are within the 15-64-age bracket and 3.1% are within the 65 years and above age bracket. Nigeria's birth rate is 40.65 births per 1,000 people and death rate is 17.18 deaths per 1,000. Infant mortality rate is 98.8% deaths of 1,000 live births while life expectancy at birth is 43 years. The population growth rate in Nigeria is 2.37% and the country's populations are largely rural. The HIV adult prevalence rate is 5% and about 3.8 million Nigerians live with HIV and AIDS [about 10% of the total number of people living with the disease globally] [ibid].

Nigeria's economy is monoculture having depended mainly on crude oil exportation. 95% of foreign earnings are from crude oil, 65% of budgetary revenues and 20% of Gross Domestic Product [GDP] are also from crude oil. Agriculture remains largely at subsistence level and it accounts for 36.3% of GDP. The industry sector accounts for 30.5% while the services sector accounts for 33.3%. Nigeria's GDP for 2004 was \$64.1 billion; however, due to the country's high population, this figure translates to \$493 per capital, thus making the nation one of the poorest countries even in the continent of Africa. The annual economic growth rate in Nigeria used to average 3% but this has grown to 6.1% in 2004. In addition to crude oil and petroleum products, the country also exports cocoa and rubber while it imports mainly machinery, chemicals, transport equipment, manufactured goods and food items [ibid].

In terms of human development, Nigeria scores low. The country is rated 158 out of 177 countries surveyed. The Human Development Index report [2005] of the UNDP stated that 54.4% of Nigerians live below the poverty level despite the fact that the country is one of the major exporters of crude oil. Nigeria's poor development level is as a result of high level of corruption both in government and in the private sector, mismanagement of state resources, high poverty levels, low investors confidence, poor infrastructure, very terrible maintenance culture and low productivity. Others include: narrow economic base, mono-cultural economy, heavy domestic debt burden, high level of illiteracy, neglect of agriculture, selfishness on the part of rulers, the winner takes all syndrome,

political instability, religious intolerance, ethnic/tribal hatred/frictions, unrest at the nation's economic base of Niger Delta, absence of trust among the ethnic groups arising from the neglect of the past.

Politically, Nigeria has gone through thick and thin. At independence in 1960, a democratically elected government of late Sir Tafawa Balewa governed the country. However, Tafawa Balewa was overthrown in a bloody coup on January 15th 1966 by the military revolutionarists led by the late Major Kaduna Nzeogu. Though the coup failed, it however led to series of coups, counter coups and high level of political instability that characterized the nation's body polity for 33 years [1966 to 1999]. The under-listed military and civilian government ruled/governed Nigeria between January 16th 1966 and May 29th 2007:

1. Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi; January 16th 1966 to July 29th 1966 [Military]
2. General Yakubu Gowon; August 1st 1966 to July 29th 1975 [Military]
3. Major General Murtala Mohammed; July 29th 1975 to February 13th 1976 [Military]
4. General Olusegun Obasanjo; February 14th 1976 to October 1st 1979 [Military]
5. Alhaji Shehu Shagari; October 1st December 31st 1983 [Elected]
6. Major General Muhammed Buhari; January 1st 1984 to August 27th 1985 [Military]
7. General Ibrahim Babangida; August 27th 1985 to August 26th 1993 [Military]
8. Chief Ernest Shonekan; August 27th 1993 to November 16th 1993 [Appointed]
9. General Sanni Abacha; November 16th 1993 to June 8th 1998 [Military]
10. General Abdulsalami Abubakar; June 9th 1998 to May 29th 1999. [Military]
11. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo; May 29th 1999 to May 29th 2007 [Elected]
12. Umaru Shehu Yar'Adua; May 29th 2007 till date

As at today, Nigeria operates a three-tier federal structure with a central government, 36 states governments and 774 local governments' areas. Presently, the country operates a presidential system of government made up of two legislative houses [Senate and House of Representatives] at the center and a unicameral legislative system at the states and local councils. The incumbent, President Umaru Yar'Adua, was democratically elected in May 29th, 2007.

The high levels of political instability that characterized the country from 1966 till 1999, no doubt, have negative effects on the citizenry. It will be recalled that the gains of political emancipation of the pre independence era which include: joy of nationhood, unity, belief in the new entity Nigeria soon gave way to cynicisms, disrespect for constituted authority, suspension of the nation's constitution, high level of disrespect for order, total absence or lack of democratic ethos, infringement on fundamental human rights of speech, freedom to receive and impart information, right to assemble, right to life, etc. Also, the mass media [supposed to be the Fourth Estate] went through tribulations in form of closures of media houses, arrests of journalists, bans of media houses, killing of journalists, harassments of journalists and their families, etc. Similarly, the country witnessed a high level of socio-economic neglect and harassments arising

from 'militocracy'. The psyche of an average Nigerian became that of soldiers due to the fact that the military had governed for largely the greater part of Nigeria's independence and more so, because the military mentality has been ingrained in Nigerians. It will be recalled that the military government of Major General Buhari among other military regimes went to the extent of promulgating draconian decrees [Decree 4 of 1984, Decree 2 of 1984] aimed at stifling freedom of speech and subjecting the entire citizenry into perpetual fear. Nigerians cannot forget the maximum ruler, the late General Sanni Abacha, who not only destroyed the nation's body polity, but also plundered its economy. The cunningly-evasive style of General Ibrahim Babangida who subtly encouraged corruption, subjected the nation to untold economic hardship through his government uncontrolled method of spending and also destroyed whatever remains of the country's little democratic ethos [acquired between 1979 and 1983] through his penchant ambition to stay in power in perpetuity via constantly shifting of the goal post cannot be forgotten.

Between 1960 and 2006, Nigeria has had several constitutions [1960, 1963, 1979, 1989 and 1999]. Also, in between these periods, there were uncountable numbers of decrees, which to say the least, have thrown the nation into confusion more than they have improved the living conditions of the citizenry. Between 1959 and 1966, there was a multi party structure, truncated by the revolutionarists led by the late Major Kaduna Nzeogwu in January 15th, 1966. Between 1979 and 1983 there was a multi party structure, truncated by the military regime of General Buhari in 1983. Between 1989 and June 12th 1993, the country had two party structures, Social Democratic Part [SDP] and National Republican Convention [NRC], though, not allowed to grow courtesy of the proponents [General Babangida] who truncated it in 1993. There was also another proposed pseudo multi party structure [1993 to 1998], truncated by the sudden death of General Abacha in June 1998. Equally, the nation cannot forget the different times General Ibrahim Babangida cancelled or suspended the democratic process by searching for the so called 'new bred politicians'. He [General Babangida] eventually threw the nation into confusion in 1993 when the military government he headed annulled the June 12th 1993 presidential election adjudged the freest in Nigeria's democratic history.

General Babangida, after much pressure from the military as well as wide discontentment among the political class and the electorates, consequent upon the kiosk in the country, as a result of the annulment of the 1993 Presidential Election, eventually 'step aside' in August 26th 1993. An Interim Government appointed by the step aside Military President, headed by Chief Ernest Shonekan took over the reigns of government and reined for 81 days before it was overthrown in a palace coup led by General Sanni Abacha in November 16th 1993. General Abacha's government was characterized by intrigues, state planned pro-Abacha protests and brazen disregard for rules and regulations as well as massive deceits which eventually led to General Abacha's attempt to transform into civilian government. However, the General's ambition was cut short with his sudden death in June 8th, 1998. General Abdul salami Abubakar took over the reigns of government in June 9th 1998. Abubakar's government quickly set in motion the process to return the country to democracy and this was achieved in May 29th 1999. Till date, Nigeria is administered by democratically elected government.

The Mass Media in Nigeria: An Appraisal

The role of the mass media in Nigeria is best anchored on their historical development. Beginning from 1859, the profession has witnessed remarkable changes in the size and composition of its practitioners, in the range of institutional structures, in internal organization, in the complexity of roles, in its public image as well as its power and influence (Omu 1996). Omu [ibid] asserted thus:

From a place of refuge for a variety of frustrated and distressed people in the nineteenth century and an unprofitable, frustrating and soul depressing career of the 1930's, Journalism has become in the 1990's, an attractive, dignifying, and much sought after profession.

In the beginning, it was missionary journalism [mass media], to nationalism mass media, crusade for social and cultural rebirth, regional mass media, government ownership, ferment of liberal tradition, emergence of magazines, rise of the electronic media, emergence of investigative journalism, women in the mass media, "Fuji" boys journalism, beats specialization-cooperation journalism and what have you. One notable feature of this growth is that the Nigerian mass media have come to stay while credit must be given the colonial press for playing a positive role in the development of the Nigerian polity in spite of the authoritarian postures of the British imperial rulers.

It is hard to forget the contribution of the 'Iwe Irohin' which was started by Henry Townsend in 1859 and other missionary publications such as: Lagos Times, Eagles, Lagos observer, Anglo-African, Lagos critics, Lagos weekly record, The Lagos standard, The Nigerian Chronicle, The Nigeria Times, The Nigeria Pioneer, The African Messenger, Eko Akete, The Comet etc. These publications were sources of literature, veritable instruments of social mobilization and co-operation, propagators of religions and desirable social and cultural values as well as promoters of free enterprise (Momoh, 1985). There are other newspapers in the colonial era which contributions to the achievement of independence, political, social and economic sentiments cannot be forgotten, the publications include: Azikwe's group of newspapers, e.g. The *Comet* and Awolowo's group of newspapers, e.g. The *Tribune*.

After Independence, till date, the contributions of the mass media in Nigeria can be described as a 'mixed blessing'; there are positive and negative contributions. While it is hard to conclude that their positive contributions outweigh their negative ones and vice-versa, many internal and external problems have plagued the Nigerian mass media. The problems range from: harsh economic environment, harsh political and social environment, intimidation, assassination, closure, harassment and outright ban. Others include: low professionalism, poor remuneration system, unfriendly legal environment, ownership manipulations, incompetence, fake journalists, high-handedness authoritarian and despotic military government, the role of journalism as a social institution vis-à-vis as a business enterprise, poor infrastructure etc. All these singly and as a combination have contributed in no small measure to the almost lack of purpose of the Nigerian mass media. For instance, the government owned mass media organizations

are premised on not biting the fingers that feed them. This translated to mean that the mass media watchdog role is compromised and substituted with the docile, friendly and unnecessarily humane dog role, even in the face of wrong doings by the fingers. Again, many privately owned mass media organizations that are supposed to be critically constructive and unbiased in their views have been compromised by ownership influence or sectional interest. In most cases, these owners are either friend of the government, contractors, or simply businessmen who have subjugated the social institutional status of journalism for purely business interest.

The above-mentioned problems confronting or affecting the mass media in Nigeria have debased the profession so much that it has lost its respect and dignity. Today, Nigerian journalists are looked at as intruders, busy bodies, paid agents and even as detractors. There exist now a feeling of distrust between the journalists and the citizens. Rather than to mirror truth, camaraderie and integration, Nigerian journalists have allowed ethnicity, colorization of facts, parochialism, ownership influence, incompetence, bribery and corruption, brotherhood etc. to control them in their job. The dictum, 'publish and be damned' is to say the least, a mirage. Albeit; these problems are more prevalent in the government owned mass media organizations than the privately owned ones. Some areas the mass media have not fared well include: reporting ethnic issues as if it is national issues, under reporting of the rural areas, under reporting of the poor, exaggeration/ colorization of facts, misquoting sources, adherence to the code of ethnics, promoting social cohesion and oneness in diversity, be at the vanguard of a rebirth by making their message contents to promote attitudinal changes, commercialization of news, political polarization of content, selective use of facts e.g. the story which said that the Federal Capital was moved to Abuja because Abuja is only three hours from Kaduna, while it takes nine hours from Lagos.

Nevertheless, the positive contributions of the mass media to the entity Nigeria by way of publicity, critical analysis, enlightenment and education of Nigerians include: change of decimal currency in 1971; change from left to right-hand drive in 1972; change to the metric system 1973; General Obasanjo's Operation Feed the Nation 1978; President Shagari's Green Revolution; General Buhari's War Against Indiscipline; General Babangida's Social Development Programmes such as: MAMSER and DFFRI; the problems of Advance Fee Fraud (419); Nigeria's controversial membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries ((OIC); the June 12 presidential Election Imbroglio; the reportage of the level of destruction of Odi town in Bayelsa State by soldiers; the gruesome murder of Pa Alfred Rewane, Kudirat Abiola, Bagauda Kaltho, Dele Giwa and Chief Bola Ige; the killings of 19 soldiers in Benue State and the retaliation by soldiers in 2001; the coverage of Oodua People's Congress and Bakassi Boys activities. Others are: the reportage of crime waves via precision journalism; educating Nigerians on the need to vote and be voted for as represented by various debates organized by the mass media and other programmes such as Kakaki on African Independent Television [AIT]; Democracy today on AIT; State of the Nation on Nigerian Television Authority [NTA]; the Gavel on Channels TV; Fact File on Ray power 100.5 FM; People's Parliament on Star FM 101.5 among others: The mass media have also performed creditably in the

following: active surveillance of the environment, particularly, in the areas of stocks movement (buy and sales); ecological threat to our environment as well as threat to our (Nigeria) sovereignty by external forces. Other areas are: reportage of child trafficking, prostitution outside the country; the National Dialogue Issues among others.

To worsen the already terrible mass media operational situations, as at today in Nigeria, there exists the Southern media axis and the Northern media axis dichotomy. These polarizations of the means of mass communication and the practitioners have in no small measure affected the stand of each of the two axes whenever national issues are discussed. The resultant effect is that they (the media axis) have towed ethnic, religious and sectional lines in their news reports. In essence, they have confused and mixed patriotism with cynicism, the consequence of which is the murdering of responsibility. Recognizing the influence and power of the mass media in building, unifying and destroying a nation state, particularly, a complex, multicultural and multi-linguistic society such as Nigeria, Leudike said of the mass media:

You are the mechanisms of reward and punishment, the arbiter of right and wrong, the roving eye of daily judgment. You are capricious and unpredictable, you are fearsome and you are feared because there is never any way to know whether this time you will be fair and accurate or whether you will not.

Kwame Nkrumah, First African President of Ghana and a great pan Africanist once echoed a supposed role of the press (mass media) particularly in nation building when in the 1960's he asserted thus:

...to the true African mass media men and women, their media are collective instruments of education, mobilization and a collective weapon of fighting illiteracy, poverty, ignorance and the essential weapon to overthrow colonialism and imperialism and to serve as liberation of African independence and unity.

Nkrumah's statement above raised some questions. They include: Has African media men and women used their media as collective instruments of education? Have they used their media to mobilize Africans to fight poverty, ignorance and illiteracy especially after independence? Has African societies accorded the role of doing some of the mentioned functions to the mass media after independence? Has socio-cultural, political and economic phenomenal manipulations of the world by the super powers not adversely affected the mass media in Africa? Can the mass media be used to cause change of attitude in nation building?

On democracy, it is hard to assert that the mass media had performed creditably just as it is hard to conclude in the negative. What is of major concern may be reviewed from the position of the mass media as an institution along with other institutions such as the family, schools, peer groups etc in restoring balance in the system. But the questions remain have they really served a stabilizing role with respect to freedom, democracy and development in Nigeria polity? Have they not been loyal to the government or their owners? Akinfeleye [1987:118] writing on the profile of African journalists and their

journalism concluded thus: "The African mass media in general have showed a dismal failure in their assigned mission".

There is no doubt that the claim of Akinfeleye stands till date. Akinfeleye [ibid] reiterated that the mass media have either by an act of commission or desperation missed the road; and their utility and credibility are now fading away rapidly. There is little doubt that the Nigeria mass media is yet to find its feet when issues of responsibilities, issues of values and virtues [ethics] are being discussed. Tejumaiye [2006:126] concluded thus:

... If conditions exist for journalists to claim that their decisions and actions are not self determined, then where are journalism values and virtues [ethics]? Apparently, there is a cause for concern. The most unfortunate among the reasons for concern is that the practice of journalism in Nigeria is Machiavellian by nature. That is, journalism in Nigeria subscribes and practices favoritism as and when situation requires.

The mass media in Nigeria have failed to unify the complex societies making the entity Nigeria. There is need for journalists to have a rethink about their role as watchdogs. This is because the mass media watchdog role has been misunderstood by both the governed and successive governments in Nigeria. The role of the mass media has been interpreted to mean meddlesomeness. Again, the watchdog role should be reviewed because some journalists are incompetent and they demonstrate little regard for the profession and the watchdog role. The watchdog role should be reviewed because it has created the feelings that the mass media alone should watch over our esteem and nascent democracy while the populace and other societal institutions have no or little role to play in demanding for responsibility and democratic culture in all facets of societal life and coexistence.

Consolidating Democracy in Nigeria: The Mass Media Imperative

The mass media watchdog role should be substituted a Guide-dog role [Tejumaiye 2004, 2005, 2006]. GUIDE-DOG Journalism is derived from general disinterestness of citizens in societal or collective problems, particularly issues of democracy, democratic culture and governance. It is a proactive as well as a reactive phenomenon to the collective will of ensuring that the society in which we live is made better for all through collective decisions making and taking. Guide dogging not only gives the people news and information but also helps them do their job as citizens. The citizens' job meant here includes; being societally responsible to the collective interest, Guide-Dog journalism does not just watch the environment, but also actually challenges the people to get engaged and take ownership of the problems of the society. It does not position the people as spectators, but as active participants in the societal challenges, problems and successes. Guide dog Journalism emphasizes the powerfulness of the people and that the source of governmental power is the people. It aims to educate citizens about issues and current events [via consistent coverage] so that they can make civic decisions, engage in civic dialogue and generally exercise their responsibilities in the society. A Guide dog Journalist writes reports to motivate people to think and act rather than simply enticing them to watch. This however does not mean telling the audience what to think or how to act. But creating a neutral zone of empowerment by arming the citizens with information

and sometimes with methods to shoulder some responsibilities and offer some imaginations or solutions for fixing collective problems. This brand of journalism involves the people and encourages regular interactions between journalists and citizens and between the mass media and government.

Guide dog journalism takes active cognizance of the diversities of interest, geography and culture in Nigeria by reporting in **MULTIPOLAR** ways, not **BALANCED** ways. Balance suggests middle. Multipolar reporting ensures that all persons affected by issues have a voice in the story not just the proponents of the most extreme viewpoints as presently being done via agenda setting and framing. This brand of journalism does not advocate abandonment of the watchdog role; rather, it is encompassing and greater in scope than watch dogging. It however stresses the total relinquishing of the attack dog role and accommodates some elements of the crusade dog role. Guide dog journalism seeks the proper/rightful and healthy ways to agglutinate the complex society by promoting oneness of aims and purposes. It instills in the citizens that in unity we have strength and that in unity common objectives are achieved. It promotes the sovereignty of the people and emphasizes that the source of government power as well as journalistic power is the people. Guide dog journalism places the mass media and other societal institutions such as the family, the religious order, schools etc as an indispensable socialization force in the society. It flourished on the avowed universal belief that information and the need to communicate is an inalienable and indispensable right of man. Guide dog journalism advocates that citizens should take-up ownership of societal problems - social, political, economic, technological, cultural and environmental etc - and that the more we take up societal problems, the better for us all. In all, the task of Guide dog journalists is to elevate societal problems such as the need for democracy and democratic culture to the level of societal and general discussions, the end result of which is formulation of policies or modifications of public policies for the betterment of all. This can be achieved in news stories, feature articles, news analysis, editorials, cartoons, crossword puzzles and even paid spaces. Other ways are: drama, documentary, docudrama, soap operas, children programmes, news cast, news analysis, home videos, stage shows, etc.

If Nigeria's nascent democracy is to survive, the mass media among other units such as the family, schools and religious bodies, constituting the society must purge themselves of military mentalities acquired consequent upon the long years of military rule which has hampered freedom, democratic culture and development more than it has enhanced it.

Democracy is about freedom to choose the occupants of political offices as well as determining their entry qualifications; it also involves determining the rules by which politically binding decisions are made and the legitimate strategies and procedures for governance. While two main social meanings of democracy are identifiable-liberal view and radical view with their distinctive features-choice is important in politics. In making choice[s] information is a necessity. This is where the role of the mass media becomes imperative.

However, for the mass media to be relevant in the emerging democracy in Nigeria and to

be able to play significant roles in developing the nation-state, Nigeria, they urgently need these basic responsibilities as given by Merrill [1983] quoted by Tejumaiye [2004:83]:

1. The mass media must lead in the search for truths, that is, they should do more than disseminating information; they must seek to explain the meaning of information they provide and must also seek to provide understanding and expand knowledge. While they should accept the impossibility of achieving complete objectivity in the coverage, they should keep objectivity as a goal. The mass media must also remain as fair and impartial as possible in the presentation of news; they must correct distortions when and if they occur. The mass media must also endeavor to provide information and perspectives so that the audience can make their own determinations about what is truth.
2. The mass media have a responsibility to help make democracy work. This involves providing information not only for the privileged few, but also for all citizens irrespective of class and position. The mass media workers must be made to imbibe that information is necessary for a free society. The mass media must therefore serve as a check on or guide dog of those who exert power and influence in the government.
3. The mass media have a responsibility to help individuals and communities adjust to change and improve themselves. Nothing remains the same and nothing is certain except change. In all, the mass media must realize that as society changes, so they must. This is a challenge for any institution.
4. Mass media organizations have a responsibility to improve themselves via regular training and *retraining of journalists*. The Nigerian Union of Journalists [NUJ] should also be alive to its responsibilities of ensuring that standards are maintained as well as ensuring that erring journalist are dealt with. One of the greatest problems confronting journalism in Nigeria today is the issues of incompetence of some journalist, the NUJ should address this problem as a matter of urgency because it is portraying the profession badly. The mass media should follow the canons of journalism and be accurate, truthful, fair, decent and sincere in their coverage.
5. The mass media have a responsibility to remain free, independent and solvent.

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