

Some articles in this issue ...

Broadcast media and political propaganda in Nigeria
Victor Kogah

The Internet: The paradoxes of an open medium
Mike Ibezimako & Daniel Bo

Reporting HIV/AIDS: Shifting the paradigm
Etim Anim

Journalism, democracy, stability and national integration
Muyiwa Popoola

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and the new world information and communication order
Yakubu Ozohu-Suleiman

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Church S. Akpan & Barikui Nnaane

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And the creative capacity of broadcast stations in developing
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press coverage of the "Danish cartoons" crisis
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A forum for research and inquiry

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Information for contributors

JM&C is offered as a forum for the stimulation of intellectual discussion and promotion of research in mass media as social organisations, media and society, and journalism, communication and mass communication as academic disciplines, as well as their roles in society. In addition, the central role of communication technology in the collection and delivery of information in the 21st Century provides challenging opportunities for media and communication scholars to explore the interface of communication, mass media, technology and society. Research reports and well-thought-out papers in this new, exciting and complex area are welcome.

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Abstract: An abstract of not more than 200 words should be presented at the beginning of Page 1.

Author information: To be presented in a cover page, it should show author's name, title of article, academic or professional title, university/institution and department of affiliation, and area of specialisation.

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Examples:**In-text citations**

The media operate within a field of social forces, according to McQuail (2005). He asserts that, "The general notion that mass communication interposes in some way between 'reality' and our perception and knowledge of it refers to a number of specific processes at different levels of analysis" (2005, p. 84).

Numbers

Numbers 1- 9 are rendered in words; 10 to infinity should be left in figures. Percentages in the text should not be rendered as %, but as percent. However, in tables and parenthesis, they should be rendered as %.

Examples:

10 percent of the population.
25 units (or 10%) of the total.

References**Books:**

McQuail, Denis (2005). *McQuail's Mass communication theory* (5th ed.). London: Sage Publications.

Journals:

Anim, Etim (2006). Inefficient management as a factor in the collapse of newspapers: A case study of the defunct Sunray. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 46 - 59.

Newspapers:

Awokoya, Lewis (2006, October 15). The recent PDP congresses and democracy. *Sunday Tribune*, p. 16.

The same style should be used for magazines.

Book chapter:

Nwagbara, Grace (2000). Writing for the eye. In Des Wilson (Ed.), *Introduction to print media: Readings in Nigerian journalism* (p. 33 - 48). Lagos: Stirling-Horden.

Internet web page or report:

Wellington, Ron (2006). *Heavy metal pollution*. Retrieved November 28, 2006, from <http://Web address>. If there is no date for the document, use n. d. (for no date).

Contents

- 5 Victor Kogah *Broadcast media and political propaganda in Nigeria*
- 17 Mike Ibezimako & Daniel Bo *The Internet: The paradoxes of an open medium*
- 29 Etim Anim *Reporting HIV/AIDS: Shifting the paradigm*
- 49 Muyiwa Popoola *Journalism, democracy, stability and national integration*
- 60 Yakubu Ozohu-Suleiman *Scanning the interface of new communication technologies and the new world information and communication order*
- 71 Church S. Akpan & Barikui Nnaane *Ethical issues in public relations practice*
- 81 Mbuk Mboho & Chinenye Nwabueze *International media contents: Implications for the audience and the creative capacity of broadcast stations in developing nations*
- 92 Stella Chinyere Okunna & Kate Azuka Omenugha *Media, ideology and the nation: The Nigerian press coverage of the "Danish cartoons" crisis*
- 110 Chukwudi Okechukwu Okwechime *Functionalism versus aesthetics: A study of calendars in Nigeria*
- 124 Oloruntola Sunday & Etim Anim *Implications of the Internet for Nigerian Journalism*
- 140 Aniefiok J. Udoudo *Ownership as a factor in press coverage of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta*

Journalism, democracy, stability and national integration

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Abstract

This paper seeks to emphasise and establish the indispensable role of journalism in stabilising Nigeria's new democratic governance and fostering national integration. Using a theoretical journalism role and function approach, the paper examines journalistic functions in a democracy and identifies the barriers to effective utilization of professional journalism in achieving true and dividend-yielding democracy in the country. The paper recommends measures needed to break the identified barriers. These measures constitute the new role that journalists are expected to play if they are to contribute to the enthronement of a virile, stable, democratic and productive polity.

Introduction

Journalism is the profession or business of gathering data, opinions, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, idiosyncrasies, values, ideas and nuances, among other items, in the form of information, collating, sifting and processing the acquired information by writing and packaging them for dissemination to the public. The means of dissemination are generally the technology-assisted media of newspapers, magazines, radio and television. The 21st century has added to this array of media the Internet, which in itself has become a mass medium of the mass media, providing as it does a vehicle for the transportation of the aforementioned traditional mass media (Anim, 2007, p. 350). All over the world, journalists provide diversified information about people, government and the society at large. Journalists inform citizens about events in their locality, community, country and the world in general. Throughout the world, they gather, collate, write, edit and report news for millions of readers, listeners and viewers.

According to Daramola (2001, p. 1), there are major fields of journalism, which include Newspaper, Magazine, Radio, Television and News Services. All these are divided into two main branches print journalism (or the press) and broadcast journalism (or wireless). Writing for paper, magazine and other periodicals constitute print journalism while broadcast journalism embraces the process of writing and reporting for radio and television.

Theoretical framework

Any honest search for a viable objective and subjective role of journalism in stabilizing democratic governance in Nigeria ought to be located within the framework of the various theories that have been postulated over time on journalism and national development. The most applicable of these theories to our discourse is the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press. The Social Responsibility theory owes its origin to an American initiative, the United States Commission on Freedom of the Press, also known as the Hutchins Commission, of 1947.

The main impetus for the establishment of the Hutchins Commission was the growing awareness that in some important respects the free press as advocated within the framework of the Libertarian theory had failed to fulfil its promise. It had failed to deliver expected benefits to the society. As Kunczick (1998, p. 47) notes, the theory of Social Responsibility, therefore, rests on the notion of a free press acting socially responsibly and that press freedom is always conditional upon certain obligations to the society which the press serves. The theory thus reconciles independence with obligation to society. As articulated by the Hutchins Commission in the blueprint of the theory, journalists are expected to perform their social responsibility role by providing:

1. A truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them meaning
2. A forum for the exchange of views and criticisms
3. An access to the day's intelligence
4. A representative picture of all the constituent groups in the society
5. A clarification of the goals, values and ideals of the society

Based on the tenets and assumptions of this theory, therefore, any journalistic effort aimed at uniting the various sections of the Nigerian society through ensuring a virile, true and dividend-yielding democracy, must be closely tied to the social responsibility requirements of the press. Consequently, it is the position of this paper that, journalists have an indispensable role to play in stabilizing democratic governance in Nigeria; and doing this creditably and impressively is, indeed, one of the several variables of integrating the complex multi-ethnic Nigerian nation-state.

Journalism and the stability of Nigeria's democracy

In the words of Ebo (1990, p. 133), the nations of the world live under a variety of political systems. Some of the systems are totally or predominantly undemocratic while others are essentially democratic. Although the political literature does not reveal anywhere one can find a state of ideal democracy, it is generally thought that Nigerians are currently living in a democratic polity in the sense that political regimes since May 29, 1999 were adjudged to be democratically ushered in through electoral processes. Political analysts and writers have described this as the dawn of democratic Nigeria. Thus, government at all levels in Nigeria since then have claimed to anchor their respective title deeds on the implementation of the popular will. Apparently, this

sole legitimisation of authority is seen to be accepted in principle by many Nigerians.

Mac Bride (1980, p. 55) seems to have documented the place of journalism in democracy. According to him, the legitimisation of journalism as a democratic institution connotes that journalists serve the people and are responsive to their needs. Typical of every democratic system is the change and enlargement in popular needs and desires of the people as time passes. Subsequently, it follows that journalism cannot be static if it is to meet the dynamic challenges of democracy because. Thus, in ensuring a virile democracy for Nigeria, journalists in Nigeria must be dynamic and evolutionary, not static. They must operate in an environment in which:

1. The individual becomes an active partner and not a mere object of communication.
2. The variety of message available to the Nigerian public must be increased.
3. The extent and quality of social representation or participation in the journalistic process must be augmented.

Indeed, to bring the spirit of democracy and those cherished values of freedom, quality and human rights into the world of Nigerian journalism, they (journalists) must continually strive to make the voice of their broad Nigerian public heard and get its wishes satisfied. The need for the attainment of excellence in the pursuit of these lofty but desirable goals constitutes the point being raised in this paper, which is to expose the role of journalism in the stabilization of democratic governance in Nigeria, with a view to bringing about national integration.

Journalistic functions in a democracy

It is imperative now to consider how journalists under a democracy are expected to go about fulfilling their legitimate functions. For individual members of the Nigerian society to play their part as responsible citizens at the local, national and even international levels, they must be adequately informed, possessing sufficient facts on which to base rational judgements and select courses of action. They must be educated and entertained. These are the three traditional categories in which journalistic functions are described. However, an attempt shall be made in this paper to broaden the scope of this discourse. As members of the fourth estate of realm in a democratic society, the main functions of journalists are postulated as the following:

- **Information:** This consists of the collection and dissemination of news, facts, messages, opinions and comments required by the populace in order to understand and react knowledgeably to personal, environmental, national and international conditions as well as to be in a position to take appropriate decisions.

- **Socialisation:** By this process is meant a common fund of knowledge provided to enable people to behave as responsive members of the society. Socialization also fosters social cohesion and awareness, thereby making it possible for people to take active part in public life.
- **Motivation:** Through journalism, people can be motivated to promote the immediate and ultimate aims of the Nigerian society as well as stimulating personal political choices and aspirations.
- **Education:** Journalism can provide a forum for political debate and discussion during which facts needed to facilitate agreement or to clarify differing political viewpoints on public issues are articulated and exchanged. Consequently, there will be transmission of knowledge required to foster intellectual development, the formation of character and the acquisition of formidable political skills formally and informally.
- **Integration:** Journalists can serve as powerful force for integration by providing for citizens, access to the variety of messages, which they need in order to know and understand one another. This, according to Hazard (1986, p. 27), brings about a better appreciation of one another's living conditions, viewpoints and aspirations.

Impediments

Hinged on the outlined functions of journalism in ensuring a "democracy without tears", it hardly needs saying that the goal of democratization targeted by Nigerian journalists in carrying out these functions faces many difficulties, obstacles and resistance. As implied at the beginning, a perfect democracy does not exist anywhere. There are only varying degrees of egalitarianism and freedom in countries that claim to be democratic. Consequently, since journalists necessarily reflect the nature of the society in which they operate, there are apparent inequalities in wealth distribution even in the most democratic states. These inequalities inevitably create disparities between those who are well-served by journalists and those who are deprived. These disparities in turn create a gap between the cultural elite and illiterate or semi-illiterate masses, which ultimately results in a gap between the information-rich and information-poor. This cannot fail to have an adverse effect on journalism. For instance, with the present economic downturn, how many Nigerians can afford to buy newspapers and magazines today? Because of inaccessibility of a considerable number of Nigerians to television, the medium has been described as an elitist medium.

As Jika (1990, p. 28) has stated, any objective trace of the role of journalism in the democratisation of any political entity must be comprehensively linked to the ownership factor, the dominant values, and how journalism is used to perpetuate the dominant class and its values as well as the culture, life-styles and ideals of the ruling class. Hypothetically, therefore, it

follows that journalism in Nigeria is controlled by the ruling class to entrench and disseminate its own values and ideas. Consequently, the dominant class utilizes journalism for its own values and ideals to the detriment of the subordinated classes even if superior to those of the dominant class.

Accordingly, as McBride (1980, p. 57) observes, distortion of news and other editorial items is not uncommon. It is quite common to corrupt information into dissemination of half-truths, and even falsehoods, while persuasion even in the hands of the most vociferous advocate of democracy can easily be turned into manipulation and propaganda. It is true that there is ample evidence of advances in news collection, production and distribution in this era of acclaimed democratic Nigeria. And, improvement can be seen not only in quantity of news that is disseminated but also in relevance and timeliness. Yet paradoxically, almost everywhere, it is generally acknowledged, but with little or no research evidence, that there are distortions in information. This is a barrier to democracy.

Distortion of news, in a strict sense, occurs when inaccuracies or untruths replace authentic facts. There are various other ways in which news events may be distorted. As Ebo (1990, p. 135) sums it up, distortion also occurs "where events of no real importance are given prominence and when silence is maintained on facts or events presumed to be of no interest to the public." In the words of Sallant, former President of CBN News:

Journalism is more than a free competitive enterprise, in a democracy it is a great moral one... I stand by the overriding principle of providing the people with what they ought to know, rather than choosing only what some survey or instinct purports to tell us what the people might be interested in....

Subsequently, the freedom of the press starts where the fundamental interest of its ownership ends, for he who pays the piper dictates the tune. Both in principle and in practice, *The Guardian* would never be critical of its interest, ideologies and action as the *Vanguard* may be. While the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) may be apologists and megaphones of the Federal Government of Nigeria (their proprietor), African Independent Television (AIT) and even as Splash FM Radio may express and champion anti-imperialist and pro-revolutionary ideas, values and oppose the position of the government.

There is another barrier to the full development and efflorescence of the journalistic art in a democracy. This barrier underscores the need to place renewed stress on amending the various restrictions and legal limitations faced by journalism. The Nigerian press had suffered greatly in the hands of the successive military dictators who ran the country for several decades. Journalists were brutalized, detained and jailed for no just cause. As a consequence, the orientation of "government said," "brown envelop," (what the Americans call check book journalism) "apologist" and "mega phonic" journalism have been imbibed by many Nigerian journalists. Apparently, now there are reactionary journalists who studiously continue to defend and propagate reactionary views, ideas and policies, thereby offering themselves

as fronts for the ideological propagation of the dominant values.

However, the psychological disposition of some journalists to the battle for sanity and national development cannot be over-emphasised. There are radical journalists who, according to Jika (1990), identify themselves with the ideas, values and aspirations of the marginalized classes, and who, despite the limitations imposed on their practice and the dominant control of journalism in Nigeria, continue to crusade for social justice and betterment both for the living and the unborn.

Breaking the barriers: what new role for journalists?

It may be rewarding at this point to define national integration which, as is being advocated in this paper, can only be put in place by a stable democracy. National integration, according to Onyenankeya (2002, p. 5), is one of the highfalutin words Nigerian leaders bandy about all the time. In recent times, the phrase has become a regular refrain at political rallies, campaigns, public forums and even in the media. Obviously, one of the salient and key terms of reference given to the 2005 Sovereign National Conference as convened by the Federal Government was to deliberate on how to integrate the diversified and heterogeneous sections of Nigeria. Realising the issue of national integration as one that is of premium and principal national interest, often times, political commentators and nascent political associations desperately struggling to be relevant in the polity, have made national integration their swan song.

However, national integration is only being heard of but its dividends are seemingly not forthcoming. Indeed, many Nigerians still appear in the dark as to what the concept means. Going down the memory lane, the true meaning of the concept of national integration remain shrouded in the rhetoric of the Nigerian Civil War. Like such hackneyed phrases as "national question," "national identity," and "public interest," the concept of national integration appears to be lacking any explicit identification. There are various types of integration - economic, political, social, cultural and educational. Consequently, Nigerians see the concept of national integration from different perspectives. To some, the idea is just rhetoric or the wishful thinking of politicians, while others see national integration as a desirable initiative that should form the building blocks for national unity. In conceptualising national integration, therefore, this paper submits the nebulous concept as "constituting those deliberate initiatives by governmental or non-governmental organizations to bring the perceived economically, educationally or politically disadvantaged areas or parts of the country at par with the rest of the country so as to minimise conflict and ensure the prevalence of peace and stability."

This paper has attempted to isolate the "stability of democratic governance" as one of the principal variables of national integration. The reasons are not farfetched. The literature in respect of democracy is replete with the universal endorsement of the concept of democracy as "the government of the people, for the people and by the people." Also, it is indisputable that in an ideal democracy, people rule themselves directly and indirectly through their

representatives. It then follows that if any system claims to be truly and purely democratic, there should exist harmony, cohesion, peace, understanding and tolerance in such a system or polity. Consequently, it is irrefutable that whatever else happens in other sectors of a democratic polity - economic, social, educational, cultural, or political (which are all indices of national integration), is determined by the system, mode and type of governance in that polity as well as the disposition of the masses to such governance.

Ideally, journalism should be at the forefront in the crusade for national integration or any programme that borders on national interest, unity and cohesion of Nigeria's diverse social, economic, political and religious configuration. However, it is obvious that the problems being faced by journalists in Nigeria, with regard to ensuring national integration through a stable and profitable democracy, appear as stumbling blocks. Now, it is imperative to hazard answers to the central question: What is to be done to utilise journalism for national integration by means of democratic stability?

First, there is the problem of inaccessibility to the media caused by inequitable distribution of wealth. The governments, private individuals, media practitioners including journalists themselves should set up local or regional media. An enlightened public is a wise public. These local media would not only impose a tedious financial task on the populace, but also identify with the cultures, values, beliefs and aspirations of the people. The medium of radio is seen to have great potentials in this respect because of its cost-effectiveness and ability to transcend the illiteracy barrier. For journalists to ensure a stable democracy for Nigeria, there should be the development of critical attitudes on the part of the audience towards what is offered to them; whether these are expressed through organized pressure groups or simply through spontaneous rejection of the dominant values and views of the ruling class. Actions taken by numerous grass-roots groups consisting of citizens, workers, peasants, young people, women and others have been known to have significant effects. In Nigeria, citizens groups should be formed to voice their concerns and opinions to local, state and national authorities and to the journalists themselves.

To stimulate critical awareness and discernment in the Nigerian public is a major responsibility of journalists. The public must learn to distinguish between truth and falsehood, to separate opinion from fact, taken into account the subjectivity of journalists and to dissociate what is ephemeral and trivial from what is lasting, sound and valuable. In this way, the public would be able to maintain an attitude of constructive doubt by endeavouring to elicit from information reaching them that which merits consideration, withstands scrutiny and matches their own individual experience.

The practice of journalism and mass communication in Nigeria is 149 years old (1859-2008). It is, therefore, mature enough to play a significant role in helping to democratise Nigeria and facilitate national integration. In fact, because of its many years of experience, journalism should be at the forefront of this crusade for democracy and when it is put in place, the journalists should also be at the centre of all efforts to sustain what has been achieved for national

stability and progress. For Nigerians to be integrated through democratic stability much is expected of Nigerian journalists.

In this regard, a more responsible and responsive journalism is needed to install democratic stability as a prerequisite for national integration. This, according to Nwosu (1990, p. 108), can be called journalism with a human face. It is a brand of journalism that places the country and its teeming masses first. It is a brand of journalism that is guided mainly by the principle of public interest, even when it is analysing a purely government event, because government exists for the people. It is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the masses, no matter their ethnic groups, social status, religions or creeds. It provides avenues for the exchange of ideas, comments or opinions among all segments of the society to enhance balanced political and socio-economic development.

Second, journalists are expected to be more investigative, critical and pungent. They ask the necessary questions for the masses and from the masses. They monitor the governments and the masses with the aim of generating facts and opinions that would inform good governance and good citizenship. This does not necessarily mean an antagonistic or anti-government journalism that does not see anything good in government and engages in destructive criticisms. But, it is not the errand-boy, "government-said," praise-singing and other unethical journalistic practices of the present days.

Third, the Nigerian public expects creativity from Nigerian journalists. Greatly needed are the intelligence and imagination to produce ideas, opinions and facts that will help Nigeria solve its multifarious problems, deal with new challenges and continue to march towards continued political and socio-economic development. It is a brand of journalism that will be able to creatively combine Nigeria's modern and traditional communication modes to help in the achievement of various rural development objectives through effective mobilisation of the masses.

To ensure the emergence and sustenance of good democratic culture as a necessity for national integration, Nigerian journalists should practise combative international journalism. This recognises the fact that Nigeria is a part of the international system and cannot survive in isolation but that it does not believe in any theory of interdependence that is permanently skewed in favour of the developed countries and against the interests of Nigeria as a national entity. Nigerian journalists should be proud of Nigeria, Nigerians and what Nigeria stands for in world politics and international relations. This, of course, does not mean blind support for any government in power but a conscious effort to let the national interest guide journalistic practice in the global network.

Conclusion

Nigerian journalists must come with a new journalistic philosophy that should guide or inform journalistic practice and ensure greater effectiveness. Such a philosophy should be utilitarian, pragmatic, and development-oriented. Media

practitioners, journalists and policy makers alike should consolidate on their past and present strengths and achievements and find solutions to their problems and weaknesses. These are the challenges faced by the Nigerian journalists in forging and sustaining the national integration needed by all and sundry from a stable and truly working democracy.

It is high time Nigerian governments at all levels stopped all the extra-legal and indirect measures that restrict access to information and impair the effectiveness of journalistic practice for democratic stability and national integration. The governments and the people of Nigeria should also learn to repose more confidence in Nigerian journalists. Journalists in Nigeria have the obligation to play the kind of role identified and analysed in this paper. Only in playing this role satisfactorily will they irrefutably justify any assertion that the Nigerian Press is indeed the Fourth Estate of the Realm.

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Scanning the interface of new communication technologies and the new world information and communication order

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Abstract

A New World Information and Communication Order is a corrective ideological measure to stem the overbearing media and data monopolies which the leading industrial powers of the "First World" hold over "Third World" countries. Relevant though it is for development in the Third World, the New World Information and Communication Order is still at variance with contemporary World Information and Communication Order. Now, expectation seems to be growing in some Third World countries that the new technologies might break the barriers to equal participation in global communication and information flow. How realistic is this expectation? This paper analyses the point of connection between new information and communication technologies and New World Information and Communication Order. How capable are the new technologies of breaking the barriers and connecting with a truly New World Information and Communication Order? This paper concludes that the new information and communication technologies are mere sophisticated robots, which cannot implement other than the ideas conceived by their designers and developers. Therefore, rather than being a source of hope, the new technologies have further complicated and pushed farther from realisation the demand for a New World Information and Communication Order.

Introduction

We may hypothesise that the manner and extent of the freedom or imprisonment of information determines the manner of knowledge and the extent of achievement in its acquisition, transmission and usage, and consequently the extent of achievement in overall human development. (Ozohu-Suleiman, 2006).

If the media have come to be an arena where the affairs of public life are played out, and a dominant source of definition of images of social reality, as McQuail (1987) observes, it is simply because of their control over information. Thus, without doubt, it is the crucial roles which information and communication play and the impact they have on the development of human societies that underscore the global debate on what is known as the New World Information