

Government Broadcast Media Ownership Pattern and Media Content in Nigeria – Its Threats to Democracy

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Abstract:

Media ownership pattern and content also known as allegiance, loyalty and servitude. The dominant ownership of broadcast media by governments both at the State and Federal levels does not portend well for the country's democracy. Aladeodunewu (1985) writes *"the stark truth is that every medium is in varying degrees "shackled" to its set of overlords and ... its policy is largely determined by the personal spites and ambitions of its proprietors"*. Further, Dokun, B. (1987) puts it that, *the private owned media operators ensure that their interest, which is mainly financial or political or both are met through their publications and broadcasts*. Therefore, this study seeks to unravel the relationship and understanding between the governments owned media and threats to democracy, and how such has affected the media contents in Nigeria.

Keywords: Ownership Pattern, Media, Nigeria, Democracy, Broadcast.

1. Introduction

In Nigeria broadcasting started in the year 1933 when the British colonial government established a radio broadcasting station in Lagos. It operated as an appendage of the British Broadcasting Corporation, (BBC) because it was not then a full-fledged radio station. The station monitored and relayed programmes for the BBC. The programmes were originated and transmitted from London to the subscribers in Nigeria through the telephone wires. Although the programmes were purely British and sometimes directed to suit only the interests of the colonial audiences. The British colonial government conceptualized the radio broadcasting to connect the colonial boundaries with Britain, just to serve as propaganda machinery. The colonial masters used radio broadcasting to propagate and disseminate their alien cultural values, belief and norms. And further consolidate the domination of the colonial territories.

Then came the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) in 1951, as an arm of the Ministry of Information. It was a relay station, served and worked intimately with the BBC, relaying national news and many other programmes from London. Further, in 1957, radio broadcasting in Nigeria assumed relevance to the Nigerian listeners. In 1956, from the Act of parliament No. 39 of 1956, the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, NBC, was also established. It started operation as a statutory body on the 1st April, 1957. Since the NBC maintained a national station, radio station were simultaneously established in each of the three regions. In the East, we had the Eastern Nigeria Broadcasting Service (ENBS), in the West, we had the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS). Further, in the North, we had the Northern Nigeria Broadcasting Company, (NNBC). These regional stations were established to supplement the efforts of the NBC and also at improving on the quality and quantity of those local programmes for the Nigerian audience. Back in the sixties, however, Nigeria had five public broadcasting authorities, and there are;

- (a) The Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation
- (b) Western Nigeria Radio Vision Service.
- (c) Radio Television, Kaduna
- (d) East Central State Broadcasting Service
- (e) Midwest State Broadcasting Corporation.

As the Federal Government controlled the NBC, the regional stations were manned by the regional governments. While the Federal Government was solely in charge of the allocation of the broadcast frequencies. Furtherance to these, in 1979, the Federal Military Government through the establishment of Decree No.8 of 1979 restructured the NBC and this gave birth to the establishment of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, FRCN. The main goal of the FRCN Decree was the promotion of the orderly and meaningful development of broadcasting in Nigeria through the improvement in technical training, programming and staff exchange (Nwanze, 1992).

Date back second Republic, Nigeria has gone through a proliferation of state owned radio and television station. As of today, there are many state owned radio stations in Nigeria. In August 1994, the first privately owned radio station in Nigeria was Raypower 100FM established in Lagos. Also, in 1995, Minaj systems, Obosi, in Anambra state, was given license to establish and operate a private radio station, among many others.

The Federal Government of Nigeria was not left out. It established its television station in 1962 – the Nigerian Television Service in Lagos, under a management – Agreement with an American network. Also, in 1973, the Midwest Television was established while in 1974, the Benue Plateau Television became the first Television station to transmit in colours.

The major interest of each of these governments in such establishment was political: television, radio as well as print media was solely used for propaganda purposes by the politicians of the first Republic. There and then, the media were just political tools. This was further reinforced during the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 – 1970. The outcome was a sectional consciousness that phased away the realization of a truly United Nigeria. In 1973, Nigeria hosted The All Africa Games. This singularly gave opportunity for esprit de corps among television stations in Nigeria that brought some co-operations, support and co-ordination in their activities in Nigeria. This ample goal gave birth to the Broadcasting Organization of Nigeria (BON). This experiment motivated the Federal Military Government to conceptualize the benefits of establishing a common pool to finance and control television for Nigeria. The Federal Government still went ahead to enact Decree No.24 of 1977, which took effect from April, 1976. This very Decree gave birth to Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). Still under the same Decree, all the television stations in Nigeria came under one body called the NTA. Today, NTA are all over the states in the country. The exclusive monopoly of television broadcasting by the Federal Government through the NTA was broken by the 1979 constitution. Section 36 subsection (2) of the constitution provides that; "... every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions; provided that no person, other than the Government of the Federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the president, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purpose whatsoever".

The 1979 constitution though allowed the NTA to exist; it equally allowed the state governments to own television and radio stations. Several state governments under Alhaji Shehu Shagari, took advantage of this very section of the constitution to establish their own electronic channels. By the end of 1983, so many states such as Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Bendel, Imo, Anambra, Plateau and Kanu States own their stations. The challenge here was that, among all these states, the parties in control of the governments of these states were different from the party in control of the government at the centre. Since the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), was in control of the NTA which was a Federal Government owned television network. The above mentioned states being under the control of parties different from the party at the centre, saw the need to establish their own stations to counteract the propaganda of the Federal Government controlled NTA. The outcome was media war so violent as to undermine the ethics of journalism. Government own media failed to distinguish between the ruling party and the government, and turned to party organs financed by the public. The situation was so bad that it almost threatened the national security. This angered the Guild of Editors to say that; "the use of the media as an exclusive propaganda organ of incumbent governors and their parties is a serious misuse of power and abuse of office" (Daily Times May 23, 1980).

In 1960 when Nigeria got her independence, the Federal Government inherited the ownership of the media. The need to use the media as a veritable tool for supporting and supplementing education, for the mass mobilization of the people in nation integration, came alive. But the ruling political leaders had a different agenda. Leaders had a different agenda to suit their selfish purposes. These leaders saw the national integration as showering loyalty on themselves and on the legitimacy of their rule. They used the media to proclaim their activities and achievements. On the other hand, the government saw the media as a potent vehicle to achieve political socialization and re-orientation. Government used the media to promote indigenous arts, to accelerate development process and as a tool to channel talents to promote cultural values, identity and indigenous languages that had been suppressed by the colonial masters. Government sensed the powers of the broadcast media as means to disseminate information, entertainment, education, persuade, motivate, conferring status with so many other potentials like defending government programmes and policies, bringing government nearer to the grassroots, among others.

In Nigeria, ownership and control of broadcast media were left exclusively to the government at the federal and state levels. Successive governments i.e. the Civil and military continued with that until critics observed that, the exclusion of the private individuals and organizations from ownership was the fear of political opposition. These critics argued that successive administrations more especially under the military dictatorship, sought periods of stability to legitimize or prolong their stay in power. Therefore, any movement that would encourage the expression of dissent on air was discouraged and resisted. This assertion was buttressed by Head (1972), that; "... the leader of a political or military dictatorship invariably makes seizure of public communications facilities a top-priority target. During the time of crisis the media became the sole sources of reassurance and guidance in a topsy-turvy world. Characteristically, thought once order has been restored and stable social conditions again prevail, even absolute control of the media and unremitting propaganda cannot snuff out the spirit of opposition. For this reason, the clever dictator deliberately fosters an atmosphere of chronic uncertainty and incipient crisis in order to maintain his audience's susceptibility to propaganda".

For so many years and reasons best known to them, government has over-politicized the broadcast media and most times doctoring the news content to suit its needs. Government equally sacrificed professionalism for sycophancy in appointment to positions of authority in broadcast establishments. Professional broadcast journalists and reporters, due to greed or motivation, compromised the ethics of their

profession to highlight and magnify the personality of those political leaders who seek perpetual stay in the office. In such situation, such leaders conspired in the delay of the evolution of peaceful processes to political succession. The coward journalists submit easily and willingly to pressures to doctor or adjust the content and quality of news government and politicians value mostly. This amounts to praise singing and sycophancy and in the end, such governments are held hostage by those sycophants around them.

Over the years, government refusal to permit private ownership of the media was motivated by the fear that going by our historical experience, private ownership of the media can reinforce the sectional inclination of the various groups that make up Nigeria. Government's sad experience with the Nigerian press over the years, a section of the Nigerian press was said to have failed to realize that freedom should go with responsibility. Further integrity, checks, self restraint and self-regulation, and that individual and group freedom need to be checked, more especially when the collective interests of the society are needed.

Furthermore, justification for the government exclusive ownership and control of the broadcast media is that access to the broadcast frequencies is not as free or as available as in newsprint. After the independence, the cadres of independent citizens with experience and finance to establish broadcast media, and who would be acceptable to the government, were not found. This perpetuated the external control of the broadcast media, with the implication of abusing and jeopardizing the national interest.

Government exclusive ownership and excessive control of the broadcast media has been counter-productive because with experience, it shows it defeated the goals of national development and at the same time engenders muzzling of independent thought being the main tool for social, economic, political and cultural development, Ivey (1948) warned; "unless the communication process allows us to maintain a certain consents on how we want ... change to take place and to identify the goals of social change, we have a complete breakdown of social organization".

Furtherance to this view, Head (1972) equally affirms that; "change being inevitable, society needs mechanisms for accomplishing it peacefully. Without free exchange of ideas and arguments, completely bottled-up pressures may amount to the point of exploding into violence and tearing society apart".

Monopoly and Interference of the Broadcast Media (MIOBM)

In Nigeria, media ownership, controls and sponsorships are basically government and private owned. The 20th Century marked the turning point in Nigerian Journalist struggled. These incidents attest to such, (a) the enactment of the National Broadcasting Commission Decree No. 38 of 1992, (b) the case of June 12th 1993 (Nwanze 2003). These incidents brought about the liberalization of broadcasting in Nigeria in 1992. Although it has not totally erased the problem of slantism in both the electronic and print reportage. For instance, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), news still praise the government in order not to step on the big toes of the government. *Akinfeleye (2015) puts it succinctly that, democracy is threatened without a strong media and with the government owning 70 percent of the broadcast stations, Nigeria's democracy is under threat.*

The Federal and State governments still monopolize the broadcast media and this is unfair to democracy. The process of having the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) going to the president for approval after processing broadcast licenses application should be discontinued rather NBC should be given the privilege to start and end the process of licensing new media organizations. This is the reason over 2000 applications are waiting for approval (Akinfeleye, 2015).

Instead of the one hundred and forty six (146) years – (1859 – 2005) to mark objectivism in Nigerian journalism, according to Dokun (1985), Journalism is described as "swinging from government authoritarianism to economic authoritarianism. Dokun means that the government uses her media of communication to dictate and jeopardize the people's right to know the truth. Their employees are just their public relations stuge. Even when the private individual have media of communication, the government still turn such to a business venture where only the bourgeois can have access. Thereby, making freedom of the press in the Nigerian constitution 1999, Chapter (IV) section 39(i) a mirage. Forgetting that, freedom of expression and press freedom are components of good governance and sustainable development. Supporting this Ban ki-moon, the secretary General of the United Nations (UN) notes that for peace to be lasting and development to be sustainable, human rights must be respected and everyone must be free to seek, speak and impart knowledge and information on all media, online and offline.

The States are accelerating to reach the Millennium Development Goals and shaping a new global sustainable development agenda. Therefore, freedom of expression and press freedom are essential to the success at every level. Quality journalism enables citizens to make informed decisions about their society's development. This later works to expose injustice, corruption and the abuse of power and ensure social responsibility of the Nigerian media of communication.

Under section 36 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, it states, "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference" (Nwanze 2003:49) *Journalism in Nigeria has defiled the provision of the constitution. Journalism must be able to thrive, in an enabling environment in which they can work*

independently and without undue interference and in conditions of safety.

The world has recently witnessed horrendous attacks against journalists; at least one journalist is killed each week, in conflict and non-conflict areas. Even before the year, 1992, Nigeria recorded so many deaths and still recording. Consequent upon the No. 38 decree of 1992 that established the NBC, private broadcasting was liberalized coupled with the private prints. Despite this proliferation of the media in Nigeria, journalism in Nigeria is not yet void of subjectivity. Rather, the government media employers sacrifice their professionalism. Nigeria as a democratic nation, where media of communication has been liberalized and where journalist are professionally trained to show press freedom and socially responsible have been influenced. Media objectivism in Nigeria by (Okunna, 1999:28) is *called information transfer, which is to a great level different from communication. The media no longer perform its constitutional or ethical roles. She further said; "status – conferral and Agenda setting". These objectives cannot be achieved when media of communication are still tied to the apron string of its proprietors.*

Ogunsiji (1989) puts it that, the press takes the cloak of the state. In Nigeria today the reverse is the case. Journalists in the Nigeria should be shown the way to development journalism. Supporting this ascension, Edeani, (1993:133) states that *"... every journalist in a less developed country produces some measures of development journalism since development journalism stands at the centre of journalism practice in the less developed countries.* The cardinal goal of this essay really is Nigeria, with its retrogression in objective journalism ought to be developed through development journalism. When development is achieved in the sphere of journalism, other areas of the society such as religious, political, economic and social spheres will also experience development (Golding, 1977:78). *Information is the basis of social development remains a theory and utopic idea if no serious attempt is made to make the press socially responsive to the people's basic needs such as, socio-political and economic development.*

In Nigeria, media has "pluralism", "democracy" and "decentralization". Rodney, (2004) explains that "the NBC decree which charges with the supervision of broadcast industry marked the beginning of a new phase in media system. Therefore, between 1993 – 1995, the commission licenced two private radio stations, 14 television stations and 18 satellite retransmission stations to operation. Nine more radio were licenced between 1995 – 1997, and February, 16 more radio stations were licenced. These are in exclusion of radio stations, television stations and uncountable newspapers and magazines which have been exiting in the country.

With the achievement, one would wonder why these media could not offer social responsibilities to the society. The media, be it privately or government owned is charged with the interest of the society at heart. Some of the challenges of this pluralism, democracy and decentralization of the media that are attainable in Nigeria are under listed by Rodney 2004 as;

- (a) Public Affairs Reporting
- (b) Objective Reporting in the domains of economy, technology, legislation, professional standard and public dialogue. It is by the discharge of these responsibilities that the press lives up to the societal expectation.

Government owned media could be Federal Government media like the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), Voice of Nigeria (VON), Daily Times, New Nigeria. Also, State Government media are BBC on Nigeria media (2001) reported that all the 36 states in Nigeria run their own radio stations, and some operate television services. From these feats, government can boast of 38 NTA stations and more than 60 FRCN stations operating in FM/MW frequencies and overwhelming number of prints.

Government in Nigeria has more interest in electronic media than in prints media because of the supra power of electron media in the communication industry. The government spends so much to fund and sponsor government owned media. For instance, Rodney (2004) *posits that, government sponsorship of FRCN and NTA rose from ₦4.5billion in 1999 to ₦20billion in 2001 budget.*

Government exclusive ownership was criticized as a result of the fear of political oppositions. Critics argued that successive administrations specially under the military dictatorship, sought periods of stability in which to legitimize or prolong their regimes, thus sought for anything that would encourage the expression of dissent or criticisms on all. Head (1972:495) confirms that; *"... The leader of a political or military dictatorship invariably makes seizure of public communication facilities a top-priority target. During the time of crises, the media becomes the sole sources of re-assurance and guidance in a topsy-turvy world ... for this reason, the clever atmosphere of chronic uncertainty and incipient crisis in order to maintain his audience's susceptibility to propaganda".*

Government ownership and control of the media have showed political purposes as detected by the government in power, broadcast contents have in many ways showed outright propaganda in the service of interests of the government of the day and the party in power. Further, in reinforcing absolute control of the broadcast media, government sometimes sacrifice professionalism in place of sycophancy in appointing people to positions of authority in broadcast organizations.

In addition, professional broadcast journalists due to greed compromised the ethics and supported some leaders who sought perpetual relevance to power and conspired in the delay of the evolution of peaceful process of political succession. Government's bitter experiences with the Nigerian press over the years brought about their refusal to allow private ownership of the media as a section of the Nigerian press failed to realize that freedom should go with responsibility and that individual and group freedom need to be checked especially when the collective interests of the society are jeopardized.

All these show that government ownership and control of the broadcast media has been counter-productive as it defeats the objectives of the national development as well as engendering muzzling of independent thought which is the major vehicle of social, economic, political and cultural development. The national security, peace and stability are better advanced through a free media with in-built regulatory machinery that is inherently oppressive or suppressive.

Government control and influence on news contents have not in any way been advantageous rather it has promoted cynicism and rumour mongering. Government exclusive ownership and control of the media can do serious havoc on mobility of information system that ensures balance.

2. Employer – Employee Relations (EERS)

In the process of recruiting, the opportunity is limited to people whose loyalty to the government could be guaranteed. In discharging their duties, such employees who have been trained to serve for a peculiar purpose must always do same to protect their stay as employees of the establishment. Okoro (2003:41) writes on financial control, appointment of principal staff and government legislations and decrees. He further said, the government controls the media by their decision to invest. Also, Ndu (2007) discovers that *"the government, in a bid to ensure loyalty refuses to grant regular subventions to media thereby making the funding faulty"*. Only the principal officers could have something to benefit. This is a divide and rule strategy to keep the employees loyal. In the developing countries, the press functions within the whims and caprices of the government in power. Decrees, banning, seizures of printing facilities, prohibitions and restrictions, expulsions and outright dismissals, arrest and imprisonment and evils of ownership and influence in the government owned media (Okoro, 2003:38). Programmes are designed to sing praises of the government especially non-performing government. Some of such programmes include "sponsored" and a times "government induced" news commentaries, congratulatory messages to the governor and other paid and unpaid public announcements. As a propaganda machinery, for the management of the media for power purposes. Buttressing this, Bereson and Janowitz (1999:378) added that, *"propaganda is especially strong where the information comes from the government"*. These have contributed to the misuse of information by those in the political class who control politics and media of the state.

As noted by Aiyetan (2002:210), *some public office holders believe they can do anything and get away with it as long as they can control media, or get a good journalist to do the dirty job of lying with facts*. Though in an ideal society, such could bring misunderstanding and conflict of interest. This is what Temakur (2003:236) in Nwankwo (1987:55) saw when he described the Nigerian media as "government media" used by the government to reflect the will and interests of the class that controls the existing mode of production, power bloc and political machinery in their media outfits. In the Nigerian government owned media, journalists are propagandists. They use all known propaganda devices to achieve the aim of their pay-matters. For instance, illustrating government media report on the CONFAB 2005 of Nigeria (FRCN) Enugu National Station on its major newscast reported on Monday 21st February 2005, that the long awaited National Political Reform Conference had been constituted at Abuja. Other follow-up clarifications were on the success of the National confab.

By 3pm, when the station does its print review, there was no report on the grievance of Gani Fahwemi. Also, no report about how Anthony Enahoro – the chairman of the PRONACO turned down Obasanjo's delegation offer. PRONACO – Pro National Conference is an earlier established human right organization that is concerned about Nigerian political reform. Other complaints such as the partial selection of the delegates, mixed views on the national political conference, and the travesty of legislative duty were not mentioned.

The report of the FRCN Enugu on the confab was somehow peripheral and selective purposefully not to hurt the image of the government. Rather private broadcasting outfits such as COSMO FM Enugu (105.5fm) reported that delegates disagreed with Obasanjo.

2.1 Its Threats to Democracy

By democracy we mean a popular view and essentially the best form of government, and though by extension, the type that would ordinarily cater for the interests of the greatest number of people than the other forms of government. Generally referred as the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracy is seen as the most amenable form of government, where equity, fairness, natural justice and man's inalienable rights are guaranteed without hassles.

For those who due to long years of military dictatorship were denied the positive dividends of

democracy, the yearning for it is usually akin to dreams of an entirely new world to come where poverty, hunger, starvation, homelessness, unemployment, disease and misery are non-existent.

Not quite a few people are ready to pay the supreme sacrifice for democracy. Nigerian's experience in the recent past was a clear testimony to the extent that, people are ready to go, to ensure that democracy is institutionalized. We have had our own heroes of democracy, people whose lives were terminated prematurely as a result of their unrelenting and uncompromising fight for the enthronement of democracy in Nigeria's body politic. There were yet others who scarified all they had in their fight for democracy. What about those who were incarcerated and who languished in prison under unspeakable and inhuman conditions, experiencing in the process, insufferable agony and unimaginable mental torture. For the sake of democracy in Nigeria, they were psychologically devastated and emotionally wrecked. Yet some of them remained steadfast and unflinching in their inflexible determination to fight military dictatorship.

Today, after almost sixteen years of democratic rule, Nigerians seem to be more disappointed than ever. The long awaited democracy dividends are yet to be found. The people's hopes and aspirations seem to have been scuttled. There is gloom, hopelessness, disenchantment, hunger, disillusion, starvation and misery everywhere in Nigeria. What a shame. The government seems to have made two steps forward and eight steps backwards. Nigerians are indeed wondering what has happened to their dreams of an entirely new world to come with the ushering in of democracy. Everywhere people are complaining. The prices of staple food stuffs, gas, fuel, etc, have continued to rise so astronomically and no longer within the reach of the so-called middle class, talkless of the poor. As the naira slides irretrievably, the exchange rate is now at its worse ever. Electricity and NITEL are not doing any better and who knows what life would be like in Nigeria whenever the downstream oil sector is deregulated.

The political landscape has never been at par and consistent with the spirit and the later by which democracy is run in most developed countries. Journalists going about their lawful duties are so harassed, molested, battering and near-murder, beaten into a state of coma among others.

3. Implication/Problems of Ownership Dictation of Media Reportage and the Society (IPODMRS)

Government-owned establishment are usually less viable, poorly run and managed. Okoro (2003) succinctly puts, "it is obviously true that mass media owners exert a lot of threatening control over the press". Even when such corporation is manned by the board of directors appointed by private owners on public corporation established by the government, the corporation has policy led down by the board.

These are so many adverse effects that inhibit the viability of government owned media in Nigeria. They include the following:

(a) Bureaucracy: A reasonable level of independence in judgment and decision making is what a broadcasting establishment needs. Therefore, with trusted and reliable staff, there should attract some independence in their operation and management. Broadcasting is a living business, and requires dedicated and highly intelligent and committed staff that can deliver at anytime and anywhere. Such committed staff can take instant decisions on regular occasion to arrest and hook the interest of the audience. But a situation where had policies are made losses credibility. For once a medium loses its believability because of sycophancy, propaganda, media wave or partisanship, such medium becomes buck ship to the audience that do not utilize its message.

(b) Overstaffing: Employment is politicized because media houses are regarded as a means for political patronage. State legislators at one time or the other send notes to the chief executive of the broadcasting houses to employ their candidates. Also, such similar notes from the governors to the state commissioners, director general, etc, not considering the overhead costs as a result of over employments. The chief executive of the broadcasting house would ignore such notes at his own risk.

Ironically, the same government is unable to pay worker's salaries and eventually threaten the broadcasting houses with the withdrawal of subventions because they failed to operate profitably. Each year state budget announcement is always anchored with threats of shorting down unviable state owned organizations with no government subvention. Staff are not paid regularly due to lack of independence in staff recruitment.

(c) Frequent changes of management staff: Broadcast media require some level of consistency in staff tenure especially at the managerial level. Frequent changes of members of staff have the implications of engendering inconsistency in the management policies and broad guidelines. This results from the leadership crisis of the larger Nigerian spectrum but debatable of outright sacking of the management staff of key government agencies and parastatals has yielded any positive effect in guaranteeing loyalty and efficiency.

(d) Media Dysfunction: Media do not offer what are expected of them; rather they reserve their expected duties. This amounts to misinformation, disinformation and mal-information. This could also be very disastrous to the society since they have no access to the real information they need. For instance, in the year 2001, May 31, it was a pitiable sight watching the then Minister of information Prof. Jerry Gana during the NTA network news on the media event after the Federal Executive Council meeting, Jerry Gana was over-prepared with visuals, figures, graphs, and video clips of projects supposedly accomplished by the Federal Government within two

years, some still underway, the foreign investments government were involved in, goodwill achievement, among others. He tried very hard and very angrily to convince Nigerians that the government of which he is the information minister was being unduly criticized. Nigerians told him, "Facts Don't Lie".

The headlines of most of the Nigerian dailies from May 27 to June 1, 2001, all expressed the opinion that, with about N40 trillion spent then by the different tiers of government, had nothing to show for it. This angered the minister that he wanted the opinions and editorials rewritten to suit his own views.

Immediately after the elections, a former president of America, Jimmy Carter who was in Nigeria then as an international observer expressed reservations about the manner of the election but was optimistic that democracy would flourish and that the country would move forward under the leadership of Obasanjo. But by the time he made another visit about a year later, he cautioned that, "The nascent democracy was being threatened".

Democracy comes with these important components-political parties, free and fair elections, an independent judiciary and an assembly of the people's representatives – the National Assembly. Nigerian government has never shown any respect for any of these, neither has it done anything deliberate to enhance their viability since then. Rather, the executive has tried to impede the efficacious operation of the other arms in order to give themselves absolute powers. The national Assembly has been muscled by the executive into a situation where the national budget can be passed without debate because the executive wishes are final.

(e) **Equipment Acquisition/Maintenance:** Acquisition of obsolete and substandard equipment at the price of new ones is sinquum with the government owned media organizations. Some corrupt top government officials collaborate with some dubious contractors to steal. Maintenance is equally a problem. Regular break in transmission in media houses which sometimes last for days, usually results from knocked down spares and scarcity of spares among other problems. The fraudulent practices among staff hinders the effective and profitable operation. The fraud is mostly witnessed at the top management levels inspire by job insecurity. Everybody wants to grab all he could before a new government comes taking over and sacking them. This results from the so-called "Nigerian factor", signifies corruption and sharp practices of generating revenue in the government owned media that ends in the private pockets of the individuals. Fraud is a major impediment to effective and profitable operation of public media house.

(f) **Poor Programming:** In broadcasting, good and quality programming are the major factors that determine audience preferences among competing radio and television stations. A radio or television channels enjoys wider audience preference when it is able to design a programme schedule and quality of production that meet the taste and expectations of the audiences within its radius of coverage. The problem of poor quality programming is more evident among television stations. In Nigeria, television culture is always very poor as a result of poor programming. This causes low and poor audience preference among the competing radio and television stations. This also discourages the programme departments being creative and effective.

When people lack the interest to watch television because our local televisions have nothing to offer, the average Nigerian then goes for foreign cable satellite television channels for entertainment and relaxation. The major challenge being getting more and more enmeshed in cultural intrusion of the Western World.

(g) **Indebtedness:** Government-owned media houses are always indebted by their major client's advertisers such as the advertising agencies. Advertising agencies are given credit facilities with a promise to pay within a given time. In real life situation, such pledges are hardly honoured and redeemed. This has been the cause of loss of confidence by some advertisers in their advertising agencies who collect money from their clients for adverts on the media but failed to deliver. Sometimes the media houses are forced to blacklist such erring agencies. Blacklisting erring advertising agencies to compel payment for services rendered sometimes affect the innocent advertisers.

(h) **Government Meddlesomeness:** Some level of creativity, talent and measured adventure are expected for efficient and effective media operation and management. Quality concept and experimentation are required and not the over-politicization of the media houses. Government recurrent interference and straight jacketed policies have constituted serious problems in the face of quality operations. State chief executives and their commissioners and top civil servants and political allies, send in advertisements, announcements or programmes and never paid for them. Then how would the same government expect the stations to survive and sustain its clients – audience. Public media houses need some independence while ensuring that government interests are not in any way undermined.

4. Broadcast Media Contents and Propaganda (BMCAP)

Government exclusive ownership and excessive control of the media purely served political purposes and as dictated by the government in power. Broadcast contents showed outright propaganda in the service of the interests of the government and the party in power. Programme contents were designed, tailored and doctored to toe the line of the government, perception and characterization of the so called "national building" and "national interest", to avoid subversion.

Successive governments live in fear and sensitivity to the political power of the privately-owned media, given the assured influence of broadcast media on public opinion, attitude formation and mass action. In an attempt to avoid disseminating programmes or news that would showcase poverty among the citizens as a result of misrule, political and economic hardships, unstable governments are known to engage in deliberate or desperate misinformation and under-information of the people. The masses on their part became unrelentingly suspicious of the news and programmes from the government owned and controlled media. Government control and influence of news contents has promoted cynicism, fear, and rumour mongering, mass disenchantment and loss of confidence in government. Such action also, mar mobility of information system that ensures balance for destructive rumour mongering is embraced by the citizens. This has turned our television stations to function more as a relay stations for foreign programmes than an output of our society. The country has witnessed high concentration of foreign programmes (wrestling matches), violent films and musical entertainments on our local stations without corresponding efforts to use radio programming to revive, revitalize and project our cultural norms and values, enhance social development and motivate individuals to enhance better aspirations, creativity, entrepreneurial conditioning, initiative, etc, for audience empathy, social stability, security and economic development. Programme contents must be designed and packaged to meet the needs of the entire target audiences of each radio and television stations and rural communities.

The government fear of a liberalized broadcast system should be dispelled. To achieve enduring democracy in Nigeria and the evolution of peaceful processes of political succession of social, economic and cultural development, a free and competitive media is imperative. There must be a platform for regulation designed to check excesses and abuse of power. Democracy is about choice; the freedom to choose among so many alternatives candidates, policies, programmes, among others. For choice to be said to be free, there must be objectivity in the presentation of other alternative choices from where people can make their choices. This includes education, information, entertainment, motivation, etc, on available alternatives. Siepmann, (1950) wrote; "The glory of the democratic way of life deprive precisely from the fact that, as collective members of society we commit ourselves to face all facts and to entertain all ideas that may be canvassed. Because we govern ourselves, we must have full and unrestricted access to all facts and all ideas. Democracy is the most dangerous of all social experiments because it condemns us to make decisions in full knowledge of all available facts and ideas".

Nigeria needs a free media to build a politically enlightened and responsible citizenry. To promote political participation, and building the evolution of positive cultural and individual identity. Government has never been successful in reaching the grassroots that make up almost ninety percent (90%) of the population of Nigeria. It is really unfortunate Nigeria is still unable to show or give effective broadcast media to ensure effective national coverage from the sources. This challenge moved one of the Africa's most honoured citizen Julius Nyerere to say that; "While some nations are going for the moon and other planets, African nations are still trying to reach the villages".

A deregulated and liberalized broadcast media will aid the government to achieve an effective nationwide coverage and further identify national objectives and aspirations. This can be achieved without hurting the interest of the government in power or the larger national interest. Also, indigenous culture if properly projected shall enhance local programming. Therefore, government need not fear the possibility of abuse as it can enact law to regulate the establishment and operation of private broadcast media. When they violate such statutory restriction, they must face the wrath of the law. And government must ensure available airwaves frequencies are spread among various channels, among different establishments. Each station shall be restricted in coverage to a section of the population of the country. That expression of divergent opinions on different channels will cancel each other, or will not constitute any danger to the government and to the nation at large.

Government rather than licence the different media organizations to cover specific areas in the country, they allow a few private organizations with powerful owners to establish private networks across the country. This is a dangerous precedent set by government. Incumbent governments may be persuaded by transient selfish, personal or party interests by allowing these networks. The implication is that such private nationwide networks may become so powerful as to be capable of destabilizing future governments and even the entire nation. This policy must be reversed in the national interests. Government should grant licences to different interested organizations in Nigeria and each restricted and limited to a given area. Such licenced stations can then have an arrangement to agree to form a network while each retains its corporate identify.

On the other hand, broadcast journalists should realize the constructive and destructive power of the broadcast media. They should resist the temptation to misuse their professional ethics and avoid sensationalism.

Conclusion

Journalism in Nigeria is presently undergoing unpardonable ordeals, since the inception of the NTA claiming to be the largest television network in Africa, window to the world, among others names, and the Federal Radio

Corporation (FRCN) is received transnationally. Many Nigerian media including newspapers, magazines and broadcast media are received internationally, our reporters and correspondents now perfect as investigative writers and reporters just like what we see with the foreign journalists with the CNN, Aljazeera, BBC, etc. Their skills are commendable but despite all these improvements, the viewers, listeners, audience and the Nigerians at large are disappointed. This is as a result of failed expectations from the news programmes. The challenges Nigerian journalism are undergoing is cosmetic reportage. The news coverage is based on the interest, and biases of the news medium. The media are tied to the apron string of its overlords who dictate what to cover and disseminate.

Media ownership and media content in Nigeria duly affected journalism practice and ready to break because the media proprietors employ their loyalists to run their media outfits in such a way that only their interests are protected. These employees for the fear of being sacked always succumb and this has been detrimental to journalism practice in Nigeria.

The government exercise upper hand in censoring the press in Nigeria. This has caused many journalists to meet their untimely death in the cause to give unbiased news reports. Such as the case of Dele Giwa who was killed through a letter bomb in 1986. In 1999 constitution section 39 where the freedom of information is said to have been enshrined, makes it had for journalists to rely on the provision of that portion of the constitution. Nigerian government took this as a weapon against any “overzealous” journalists. The government gave such license to themselves and only issue such to a private operator as specified by the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) decree no. 38 of 1992, they only look for government loyalist who cannot step on their toes through their reportage.

The dominant ownership of broadcast media by government at the Federal and State levels does not portend well for the country's democracy. The present administrator, General Muhammad Buhari to start a process that can transfer ownership away from government to professionals to practice true democracy.

Akinfeleye, (2015) at the World press Freedom Day with the theme, *Let Journalism Thrive*, organized by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Lagos, maintains that, “democracy is threatened without a strong media and with the government owning over 70 percent of the broadcast stations, Nigeria's democracy is under threat. The Federal and State governments still monopolize the broadcast media and this is not acceptable in a democracy”. He further believed that the process of having the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) going to the president for approval after processing broadcast licenses application should be discontinued insisting that the NBC should start and finish the process of licensing new media organizations.

This is why the present process has over 2000 applications still waiting for approval. Nigerians must renew efforts to end impunity and promote safety of journalists. For the freedom of expression and press freedom are the components of good governance and sustainable development. Buttressing this point Irina Bokova in Ban Ki-moon (2015) notes, “for peace to be lasting and development to be sustainable, human rights must be respected and everyone must be free to seek, receive, and impart knowledge and information on all media, online and offline”.

In 2015, states are accelerating to reach the Millennium Development Goals and shaping a new global sustainable development agenda. Freedom of expression and press freedom are essential to success at every level. Quality journalism enables citizens to make informed decisions about their society's development. It equally works to expose injustice, corruption and the abuse of power.

With this, journalism must thrive in an enabling environment in which they can work independently and without undue interference and in conditions of safety. The world has recently witnessed horrendous attacks against journalists, at least one journalist killed each week, in conflict and non-conflict zones. The world must redouble efforts to enhance the safety of journalists and put an end to impunity, and this is the goal of the UN plan of Action on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, spearheaded by the UNESCO and supported by other UN entries (Kayanja, 2015). Kayanja further stated that; there is need to make every voice to speak out and be heard, especially those of women noting that twenty years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, women remain under represented throughout the media and at decision-making level. We cannot let this stand. Men and Women must participate equally in making and sharing the news. Freedom of expression and press freedom are luxury attributes that can wait until sustainable development has been achieved. It is an enabler for the enjoinder of all human rights and therefore, vital to good governance and the rule of law.

In furtherance to this, Oso, L. (2015) argues that “the media cannot be democratized without the democratization of the society. And if Journalism does not guarantee diversity then there is no need for journalism.

Also, the implementation of the freedom of information (FOI) in Nigeria has been so problematic principally because the process is being incapacitated by the politicians and civil servants, who have so much to hide. Journalism should be allowed to thrive through ethical standard.

Also, towards a better digital safety for journalists and their sources, some classification of professional social media users based on their terms of pattern of use, attitude and knowledge must be

encouraged.

Electronic communication of news media, critical bloggers and citizens journalists need be a target by state based actors and third parties. Listing some of the target areas include;

- Hacking of data and disruptive attacks on websites and computer systems of journalists and media houses.
- E-mailed and cyber death threats.
- Bombing of media offices and printing press.
- Launching of Denial of service attack to bring down a media website.
- Killing of media actors for their online journalism as reported by committee to protect journalists (between 2011 – 2013 alone, 276 killing recorded).
- Evolving issues on privacy and freedom of expression (Cell phone-linked goelocation that exposes journalists' movement, visibility of personal lives in the social media and mining of communications meta-data).

Finally, to ensure that merits of internet are not overshadowed by its risks generic relevance, a call for collaborative efforts among the media stakeholders must be uphold.

These in authority should strip themselves of any privileges, and as benefactors of the people's trust, being agents contracted to work for the good of people, in their utterance, conduct and complete allegiance to the country's constitution.

The governed (the people) should see themselves as beneficiaries of that invisible legitimacy of all democratic institutions and systems on ground and obeying the laws of the land without any fear or rancor. This is a collective responsibility where no one is left behind as every true citizen has a personal role the play in upholding and advancing this cause for it to be seen as democracy, whether it is political or economic democracy. It is in this same spirit that votes count, elections are contested and won on merit, people exercise their liberty of freedom, opportunities are created and the people come first on any policy agenda set forward for implementation.

The democratic dispensation must be sustained to advance the welfare of the citizens. Through having a sense of belonging, and right of every citizen political affiliation and continue to develop that spirit of oneness in our homes, schools, churches, traditional spheres and various workplaces. Though opinions may differ, our ideologies must stand on the freedom, equity and tolerance as a way to achieve democracy in our country. These are the roots of our sovereignty and democratic greatness as a nation in this 21st century.

With these precepts, our survival from the great threats to true democracy is guaranteed, especially among the young populace, who are susceptible to manipulative and extremist intolerant views. We are witnesses to what the middle East Crusade, targeted at opposing beliefs, is generating, even in the developed countries and also what the present terrorist threats in the North Eastern part of the country has cost us and our fledgling democracy.

Government must allow the management of public broadcasting stations to exercise some level of independence in recruiting professionals. Minimum number of such staff are required for effective running of the stations. Experienced professional engineers should also be recruited to man the equipment.

Programmes departments of broadcasting stations should be encouraged to show creativity, come together, join their resources and undertake joint production of good and quality programmes.

The members of staff should be well paid and on time to avoid defrauding the stations. A monitoring team should be established and answerably only to the chief executive of the broadcasting house.

Government should adopt the policy of retaining management staff for long unless such a staff is found wanting. Such member of staff must sign an undertaking to be loyal and may have the option to voluntarily resign. There should be a law compelling the government to appoint top officials from the management staff of the stations, according to the hierarchy of management staff.

Finally, the government must make a choice either to go purely commercial with profit motives or public financed or government service broadcasting. If government goes fully public service, it either finances the stations solely through subventions, or charges broadcast license fees on all radio and television sets within its area of jurisdiction. It will then rely less on advertising and minimize the threats to its stations to withdraw subventions if profit is not made.

When the world information order places to in a position of being the most important tool in the home, fear was that radio will become irrelevant. Surprisingly, radio survived in the developed technologies where the convergence of communication and broadcasting is strongest. Many believed the old means of communication would die. When radio came up, the fear was that, the print media will go oblivion, surprisingly, it survived. All these forms of media have survived till date, mutually supportive, complementing and supplementing each other. Each has its own unique forms and functions.

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