

A Conceptual Review Of Mass Media And Political Violence In Nigeria Between 1999 And 2013

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploratory study that examines the interplay between political violence and the role of the mass media in addressing this with a focus on the period between 1999 to date in Nigeria. Violence becomes political when it is intended to disrupt the immediate and future political process. Political violence may involve a process of perpetuating an existing government in power and eliminating perceived opponents or it could be a response to frustrating circumstances and an inability of those in government to fulfill their campaign promises to the people. As the fourth estate of the realm, serving as the watchdog of the three arms of government, the media has often been hijacked by political office holders to manipulate and create falsehood including acts of political propaganda. Ideally, the media ought to be for information, education and entertainment. This role has often been circumvented by those at the helm of affairs especially the political class, as he who pays the piper calls the tune. Has the media exercised the right professionalism and work ethics needed in the execution of their task? Has the reporting of news items by the media resulted in acts of political violence or in its reduction? To what extent has lack of press freedom affected the correct reporting of events by the media? Based on the Normative and Marxist theories, this study tries to uncover these critical questions with a view to finding appropriate solutions to the lingering political violence in Nigeria

KEY WORDS: Mass media; Political office holders; Political propaganda; Political violence and Professionalism

Introduction

On a daily basis, acts of political violence take place across the world for a variety of motives, which include political fanaticism, ethnic hatred, religious extremism and ideological causes. Such incidents of violence have been at the centre of political awareness because they have explicit or implicit political motivation. Political violence has existed for many years; what distinguishes current political violence is the disturbing frequency and variety of events and the expanded opportunities available to the perpetrators of such violent acts in the political system (Alanamu, 2005). Political violence can be seen as all forms of collective attack within a political system. In fact, as espoused by Anifowose (1982), political violence is the use of threat or physical act carried out by an individual or group of individuals within a political system against another individual or individuals, and/or property, with the intent to cause injury or death to persons and/or damage or destruction to property; and whose objective, choice of targets or victims, surrounding circumstances, implementation and effects have political significance which tends to modify the behaviour of others in the existing arrangement of a power structure that has some consequences for the political system.

As a geopolitical entity, Nigeria has historically been characterized by series of altercations and social eruptions that more often than not threaten its corporate existence. It is often taunted that the 1914 amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates by Lord Fredrick Lugard was a mistake or a grand error of a sort, which needs to be revisited (Oladesu, 2002). The problems that ignite the prevalent and persistent crises often range from the real to the superficial, depending on the ethnic divide one belongs to. However, as a matter of fact, issues that border on marginalization, resource control and allocation, religious and ethnic sentiments, political rivalry and domination, misrule or abuse of power have always had violent consequences of great proportion (Adedimeji, 2005).

Since the first legislative elections in Nigeria in 1922, the mass media has always taken a keen interest, and played a key role in the politics of the Nigerian state. The media refers to the totality of organizations and agencies that provide information for the members of the public. Otherwise known as mass media or mass communication, it is described as "the art of transmitting ideas, opinions, words and attitudes from one person or some persons to the masses" (Akinfeleye, 1988:85). The media also comprises both print and electronic such as

newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the internet. The role of the media lies in making information a common knowledge or facilitating effective communication of ideas.

Violence has been a feature of the country's electoral process since the colonial era. But during colonial rule, it was easily curtailed due to the nature and scope of participation, characteristics of the politicians and electorates and the nature of colonial domination. However, after independence, electoral violence became intense as struggle for power among politicians intensified.

Successive elections in Nigeria since the colonial period lacked the essential ingredients of democratic electoral process, which are transparency, fairness and freeness. Instead, elections in the country were characterized by:

- i. manipulation of the decisions and activities at the various stages of electoral process by the governments and politicians;
- ii. corruption of officials and electorates,
- iii. violence during campaigns, polling and collation;
- iv. rigging through the stuffing, snatching and destruction of ballot boxes and falsification of results, and
- v. ineffective electoral dispute resolution mechanisms.

According to Alemika (2011), violence, corruption and lack of transparency are embedded in the aims and strategies of Nigerian political parties and politicians. Past elections in Nigeria were characterized by both psychological and physical violence. Generally, violence involves the threat or use of physical force with the intention of injuring, killing and intimidating another person. It also involves destruction of property with a view to inflicting emotional or psychological injury and economic loss on another person.

According to Chiluwa (2011), sociopolitical crises have been frequent in Nigeria while the much anticipated recovery associated with democracy has so far eluded the country. The media provides a critical platform for evaluating the state of affairs in a nation. It occupies a prominent position in contemporary social systems while its relevance to the study of political and sociocultural change is not in doubt.

Statement of the Problem

The dislocations in the sociopolitical environment directly affect journalists, but more importantly, journalists could also become victims in the context of a politics of acrimony (Abati, 2006). The media has always been involved in the politics of Nigeria and often at a great cost. It has always defended the people and championed their aspirations. But it can also be manipulated to serve interests that can prove counter-productive. This manipulation of the media through ownership control contributed most negatively to the ethnic crisis in Nigeria because the media ended up at various times playing ethnic politics. The implication of the kind of power politics experienced in Nigeria is that the media often ends up, particularly during moments of sociopolitical transition, in a very vulnerable situation such that the lives of journalists are often at serious risks and sometimes a lot of compromises are made including corrupt practices, all of which negate media professionalism.

According to Abati (2006), in the emergent power equations and in the face of the gross violation of national interest by successive governments, the media is drawn into a competition for power. Suppressing, gagging and intimidating the media and the rest of civil society have proven to be a necessary condition for the achievement of this agenda. Restrictive laws and anti-media mechanisms have proven to be most convenient, the general purpose of which has been direct assault on press freedom.

The mass media sometimes instigated conflict through biased reporting, deliberate distortions, criminal partisanship and unprofessionalism confounded by influences of tribalism. Thus, as the fourth estate of the realm whose job is to maintain the highest level of professionalism by acting as a watchdog over the three arms of government which include the legislature, executive and the judiciary, this paper examines media reporting of how those in authority try to perpetuate themselves in power; and how they try to eliminate perceived enemies including their inability to fulfill campaign promises. In addition to this, there are issues concerning the hijacking of the media by political office holders to create falsehood and political propaganda while also circumventing the ideals and work ethics of the media thereby compromising press freedom.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to critically evaluate the relationship between mass media activities and political violence in Nigeria. In terms of the objectives of the study, they include:

- i. To examine the interplay between political violence and news reporting by the mass media in Nigeria. In this wise, the study will examine how issues of political violence are reported and to what extent they can escalate due to improper reporting or acts of exaggeration by the media perhaps because sensational news sells fast.
- ii. To examine the history and variations of political violence in Nigeria.
- iii. To examine the ideal role of the mass media and why this is often circumvented by political office holders in Nigeria.
- iv. To examine whether lack of press freedom has affected the correct reporting of events by the media in Nigeria.
- v. To proffer appropriate solutions that will help address the lingering political violence in Nigeria.

Methods of the Study

This is an exploratory study that utilizes qualitative research techniques in trying to critically evaluate issues concerning the relationship between mass media activities and political violence in Nigeria. To this end, secondary sources of data such as textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers and internet sources have been used by the authors.

Literature Review

History of Political Violence and Mass Media Activities in Nigeria

The history of violence in the Nigerian polity dates back to the colonial era. The first major violence of political import was the Kano riot of 1953 where Northerners and Southerners (Yoruba and Igbo) engaged in bloody clashes as a result of strained relationship among their leaders regarding the actual date to attain self-rule. Adedimeji (2005) reports that political violence was to envelope the nation, especially the Western Region very soon after independence. Personality conflicts and political rivalry between Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Chief S. L. Akintola degenerated to an all-out bloody and violent engagement among their supporters in 1962. Hardly had this, referred to as Action Group Crisis, doused, at least temporarily with the incarceration of Awolowo and his supporters, than the federal election crises of 1964 erupted.

Elections have been a source of violent political, ethnic, religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria since the late 1940s when limited elections were introduced. This problem deteriorated in the elections conducted immediately after independence in the 1960s. In the Western Region, violent political conflicts were recorded from 1964 to 1965 following both federal and regional elections as well as a rift between Awolowo and Akintola. There were also violent conflicts in some parts of the Northern Region, especially between supporters of the Northern People's Congress (NPC) and supporters of other parties, mainly the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Action Group.

The national election conducted in 1983 witnessed massive post-election violence following the declared landslide victory of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in Oyo and Ondo states considered to be the stronghold of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN). Several persons lost their lives and large-scale destruction of property was recorded. There is substantial similarity between the post-election violence recorded in 1983 and the post-election violence recorded after the presidential election on April 16, 2011 in which hundreds of people were reportedly killed and property worth billions of naira was destroyed or looted. The main difference between the 1983 and 2011 election violence was the ethnic and religious dimensions that were introduced at the latter stages of the 2011 post-presidential election riots. Notwithstanding this difference, they both reflected anger primarily targeted at people considered collaborators with the ruling national party to undermine local interests. Both cases also demonstrated the helplessness of the police in containing serious political violence due to lack and non-utilization of relevant intelligence and other forms of institutional weaknesses.

Abati (2006) contends that there had been reports of political violence ahead of the 2007 elections in Nigeria. Politicians and their associates had been killed in different parts of the country with the most recent incidents recorded in Lagos and Ekiti states involving the murder of Engineer Funsho Williams (Lagos) and Dr Ayo Daramola (Ekiti). In Ekiti, the Governor and his Deputy were fighting the battle of their lives with the state House of Assembly threatening to impeach the duo and effect a new order in that state. In Abuja, the fight between the President and his Deputy remained messy. State governors were jittery because the EFCC had promised to send many of them to jail. The same men that the media used to project as role models had suddenly

become suspects or villains in the eye of the public. There was the clear and present threat of more bloodbaths in the air.

In addition, Abati (2006) affirmed that the point to be taken from this was that the media could be both a pathfinder and a victim in the process of monitoring the power-negotiation process. The point had been made variously that the media shared part of the blame for the failure of Nigeria's First, Second and Third Republics. The reference to the Second Republic should be underlined. Dare Babarinsa, in a book entitled *House of War* in which he examined the politics and failure of the Second Republic, offered a telling and disturbing picture of how the mass media could become a divisive factor in electoral politics. Babarinsa, then a correspondent of the National Concord in Ondo State between 1979 and 1983, reported that in the course of the violence that followed, the 1983 Gubernatorial elections between Akin Omoboriowo and Chief Adekunle Ajasin, the two radio stations in the state capital, the Ondo State Broadcasting Corporation (OSBC) and the FRCN, Akure, openly stood on opposing sides of the political divide and disseminated inflammatory broadcast material.

According to Abati (2006), government-owned Nigerian Television Authority with nationwide branches was particularly notorious. Newscasters were openly sycophantic. State governors whose states had no television or radio stations prior to their assumption of office, immediately set up their own stations. In the print media, government-controlled organs, notably the Daily Times and the New Nigerian became mouthpieces of the ruling NPN. Editors and managers who tried to insist on ethics and professionalism were quickly reassigned, retired or fired. The Tribune served Chief Obafemi Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria. The Concord Press owned by the late Chief M.K.O. Abiola was set up originally to promote the interests of the NPN and check the overriding influence of The Tribune and the Sketch newspapers. One of the early stories published in The National Concord was about an alleged Maroko land deal involving Chief Obafemi Awolowo. When, as it happened, Chief M.K.O. Abiola parted ways with the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the politics of the Concord Press was adjusted to match the proprietor's new preferences.

Elections since 1999 have been particularly characterized by the instrumental use of violence. The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) – a coalition of 170 NGOs in Nigeria - issued its final report on the 2003 elections under the title *'Do votes Count'* (HRW, 2004). The Report indicated that the votes of citizens in that election did not count as the elections were characterized by violence, corruption and fraud, including the falsification of results. Similarly, the same Transition Monitoring Group entitled its final report on 2007 poll as *'Elections Programmed to Fail'* due to the monumental violence, corruption, fraud and manipulations that were observed by voters as well as by foreign and national election monitors. The elections conducted in 1999, 2003 and especially 2007 were characterized by widespread malpractices such as violence, corruption and falsification of results. After the 2007 election, there was widespread disenchantment with the electoral process.

Elections were successfully held in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011. However, these elections were affected by many instances of electoral misbehavior. Most observers have described these elections as being far from free and fair. To focus on the April 2007 national elections which covered all federal (presidential, senate, and Federal House of Representatives) and state-level political bodies (governorship and state assemblies), the presidential election, for instance, was highly anticipated because it marked the first transfer of power from one civilian to another. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo was stepping down as president due to a two-term limit. The main presidential contestants were Umaru Yar'Adua from the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Muhammadu Buhari from the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and Atiku Abubakar from the Action Congress (AC).

Yar'Adua was seen as a protégé of Obasanjo, and was clearly the front-runner due to the overwhelming influence of the PDP as the ruling party. Buhari had been the main challenger in 2003, was strongly associated with the Muslim north, and had an anti-corruption track record. Abubakar, the Vice-President of Obasanjo, was a former customs officer with controversial sources of wealth, and was very much on the news because of corruption accusations that almost impeded him from running. He had to switch to AC due to a conflict with Obasanjo, the incumbent president. The PDP won the 2007 elections as Yar'Adua secured 70 percent of the total votes counted, and PDP candidates won 28 out of the 36 gubernatorial races. The elections were seriously marred by ballot-fraud and violence. Electoral observers, most notably the European Union mission and the Transition Monitoring Group (which deployed 50,000 observers), were unanimous in underlining numerous irregularities in the voting process. Both stated that the elections were not credible and fell far short of basic international standards.

The elections held in 2003 and 2007 were preceded by widespread intra-party and inter-party violence that continued on to the polling days. In a report released in 2004, the Human Rights Watch observed that: Both Nigeria's federal and state elections in 2003 and local government elections in 2004 were marred by serious incidents of violence, which left scores dead and many others injured. In April and May 2003, at least one hundred people were killed and many more injured. Majority of serious abuses were perpetrated by members or supporters of the ruling party, i.e. the People's Democratic Party (PDP). In a number of locations, elections simply did not take place as groups of armed thugs linked to political parties and candidates intimidated and threatened voters in order to falsify results. One year later, local government elections took place across Nigeria on March 27, 2004. These elections too were characterized by serious violence and intimidation, as well as widespread fraud and rigging. There were reports of dozens of people killed before, during and after the local government elections (HRW, 2004).

Press Freedom and the Role of the Media in Reporting Acts of Political Violence

The first elected Executive President of Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, acknowledged the press' responsibility while speaking on media and national integration. He saw members of the *fourth estate of the realm* as having sacred *responsibilities* towards the nation. He remarked that on their shoulders lay the duty of fostering national cohesion and engendering a sense of belonging in our people. He also considered the press as occupying a very unique position in that it possesses an enormous power that could either destroy or build (Nigeria, 1980). The power is deadly as well as redeeming. In reality, journalists in Nigeria have over the years demonstrated these two-pronged powers of the press.

The Nigerian mass media and its practitioners are often confronted with the problem of freedom, restrictive regulations, legal limitations, decrees, and a host of other ways of gagging the media and till date, the freedom of information bill is yet to be passed. From the colonial era to the independence period, military interregna and successive civilian republics, the Nigerian political system has employed various measures to curb the political communication activities of the media. These include subsidies to manipulable publishers, favoritism in the allocation of tightly controlled paper stocks and newsprint, manipulation of access to news, limitation to what may be published or broadcast, threats of incarceration and proscription, the frequent use of treason and sedition laws to control media output, the shielding of sensitive government proceedings, and the protection of what are regarded as individual reputations and privacy.

The Nigerian media evolved as a means of registering sociopolitical disaffection within the dynamics of the colonial administration. According to Oso (1997), Nigerian journalism was created by anti-colonial protest and baptized in the waters of nationalistic propaganda. The media is thus a powerful, determined and focused institution committed to the promotion of a peaceful and egalitarian society (Imhonopi & Urim, 2004; Imhonopi, 2012). The primary role of the media is to report accurately and objectively and wherever possible seek out the truth (Jason, 1997). To a large extent, the Nigerian Media has shown a lot of commitment in this regard, especially in relation to cases of violence.

There have also been situations where the media had sensationalized or exaggerated acts of violence either for commercial considerations as 'bad news sells most' or for social control thereby spurring authorities into taking decisive actions. For instance, Tell (2003) screams with the banner headline: "War in the East as Politicians turn Igboland to Killing Fields". Also, the April 7, 2003 edition of the magazine equally equates violence with war in the Niger Delta area as it reports: "Looming war in the oilfields". What this implies is that, whenever any segment of the media engages in false or biased reporting, ethnic solidarity, subjective analysis and parochial presentations of issues would escalate and generate violence rather than curb it.

The mass media is expected to advance national interest and promote certain key values and behavioral patterns within a given society. According to Ekeanyanwu (2007), the media exists as an organ of information sourcing and dissemination, educational promotion, surveillance, social enlightenment and mobilization. These functions set the media apart as an important link/factor in the relationship between the government and the governed and make them a sine qua non to societal growth and development.

Despite the transition from military to civilian rule in 1999, clampdown, assault, beatings, unfair arrests and police raids against producers of print media have continued. Between June 2002 and September 2003 alone, Media Rights Agenda (MRA), a Lagos-based nongovernmental organization which promotes press freedom and

freedom of expression, recorded more than fifty cases of reported abuses against journalists and other violations of freedom of expression.

On Saturday, April 24, 2010, Edo-Ugbagwu, a judicial correspondent of The Nation newspapers was murdered in Lagos. Also, Godwin Agbroko and Abayomi Ogundeji of Thisday newspapers, Omololu Falabi and Bayo Ohu of The Guardian were all brutally killed in Lagos by unknown gun men recently. According to Okonkwo (2010), all these killings and issues surrounding the Freedom of Information Bill Act, have further raised the question of press freedom once more in Nigeria's democracy. The assault on the press is a fundamental breach on democratic norms. Proponents of free press believe it is uncalled for and serves to remind Nigerians of the dark days of impunity during the military era. When Channels Television was closed in 2008, the CEO John Momoh apologized to the government but the initial suspension of its license over a story on the purported plan of President Umaru Yar'Adua's resignation is a sign of an unspoken threshold beyond which criticism is not tolerated in Nigeria.

Nigeria is operating now as a democracy, so the freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions, receive and impart ideas without interference should be a fundamental right guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the African Charter On Human and Peoples Rights, (ACHPR), the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and other regional and international treaties to which Nigeria is a party. Moreover, Section 39 (1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that: "Every person shall be entitled to freedom to hold opinions and impart ideas and information without interference" (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999).

If politics is about development and the ultimate goal of any political system is to ensure the improvement of the security and welfare of the citizenry, then the resort to assault on the media negates fundamental rights and the rule of law. It merely demonstrates impunity, and intolerance to alternatives views. The brutal murder of Dele Giwa, Editor and Founder of The Newswatch magazine is still shrouded in secrecy. It should be noted that the media in Nigeria is also tainted with corruption with many journalists expecting to receive payments what is humorously termed 'brown envelope' before agreeing to report or not to report an event. Deals are struck with politicians as in many other countries on whether or how to report an event. The result of these is that government still interferes with how the media presents information to the public.

Theoretical Framework

Two theories have been used in this study in an attempt to understand the relationship between political violence and the role of the mass media. These theories are the Normative and Marxist theories.

Normative Theory

The Normative theory seeks to locate media structure and performance within the social milieu in which it operates. Normative Theory helps to explain the ways in which societal communication rules impinge on mass media structure, conventions and performance, and highlights the consequences of non-convergence between societal communication principles and mass communication principles. The Authoritarian Media Theory is an aspect of the Normative Theory and it is the oldest of the press theories and dates back to the 16th century. Kunczick (1988) states that it is derived from the state philosophy of absolutism, in which "Recognition of the truth was entrusted to only a small number of 'sages' able to exercise "leadership" in a kind of top-down approach. Whether the ownership was private or public, authoritarian media existed to service the government in power, and were forbidden to criticize the government or its functionaries. The degree of authoritarianism with reference to press control tends to vary inversely with the level of a country's liberal democracy but directly with the level of primitive genius of the leadership to acquire and hold on to power (Folarin, 2002).

Another aspect of the Normative theory is the libertarian or free press theory which prescribes that an individual should be free to publish what he or she likes and to hold and express opinions freely (exercise of fundamental human rights). The theory flourished most in the earlier half of the 19th Century, during which reference to the Press as *the fourth estate of the realm* became common. This freedom does not include freedom to defame, to indulge in unbridled obscenity, to violate individual privacy or to commit sedition. It does not advocate press immunity to the rule of law and the canons of civilized social conduct.

Marxist Theory

Conflict is inherent in all human relationship. According to Karl Marx (1937) in the "Communist Manifesto", he stated that "the history of all existing society is the history of class struggle". This implies that whether it is at the traditional, feudal or the modern capitalist society, conflict is constant because of class differences though with variations in the magnitude of hatred, jealousy, hostility and violence that may occur due to such relationship. Karl Marx based his argument on the idea that there are two classes of people in all societies. These are the classes that govern and the governed. He postulated that the former perform political functions, they monopolize

power and also enjoy the benefits that such power brings (Haralambos and Heald, 1988). This inequality generates conflicts especially when there are perceived acts of injustice, misrule and corruption including electoral manipulations by the masses and those in opposition against those in political positions as they often use state apparatuses to achieve their selfish interest.

Conflict according to Marx (1937) is perennial and an ingredient towards the actualization of individual and group objectives. According to Otite (1999), conflict is a natural announcement of an impending re-classification of a society with changed characteristics and goals and with new circumstances of survival and continuity. Also, conflicts generally entail struggle, competition, rivalry for objects to which individuals and groups attach value. These objects can be material (scarce resources, land, employment, positions) in public service, creation of a new state or locality. Indeed, in the contributions of Coser (1966), conflicts perform some services to the society as it helps to prevent social stagnation. He espoused that conflict involves a struggle over value on claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the groups in conflict are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals.

Discussion of Findings

Every society gets the kind of media it deserves. This has been espoused by the normative theory of mass communication. There has always been a conflict of interest between the generality of society and the government. In Nigeria, most radio and television stations are part of the civil service and so operate as such, for it is said that he who pays the piper calls the tune. Ugboajah (1985) stated that in Nigeria, most journalists rely too much on information handouts with less work done on investigative journalism. Indeed, at independence in 1960, the expectation was that the mass media would lead the pathway towards progress and development by helping to spread information and awareness on how to end poverty, ignorance and disease.

Like other segments of society, the mass media reflects the population of the people. Nigeria has over 250 different ethnic groups with a population of over 160 million people. Tribalism/ethnic rivalry is so sensitive an issue in Nigeria as this also affects the media and what is reported and how it is reported. Sometimes, issues are intentionally inexact so as not to ignite controversy. With various changes in government, sometimes under violent and intimidating circumstances, the voice of the media has been so affected as events have shown that in some cases newspapers, radio, television and magazine operators were proscribed entirely due to their criticism of government authorities, while some news reporters and editors were either arrested or eliminated by political office holders.

Although the press was intended to be a watchdog for the country, similar to its role in such developed countries as the United States and United Kingdom, it has had difficulty fulfilling that role due to the demands of the various competing special interest groups. The large number of different voices created something of a marketplace of ideas although some of the ideas resulted in violence.

One unique feature of the Nigerian state is its unity in diversity in spite of its very visible language, physical, environmental and cultural differences. Unfortunately, this diversity is often the source of political, ethnic and religious violence. These conflicts are often shaped and determined by disparity rather than similarity among the people. What has therefore been observed from this study is that in Nigeria, political violence has to some extent been a response to frustrating circumstances since politics has become a game of promises without fulfillment. The implication is that certain individuals, groups and communities have had their aspirations and expectations raised without the possibility of their being fulfilled.

Also observed is the fact that political violence has emanated through the breakdown of consensual norms, political alienation and the cohesiveness of the ruling group. In Nigeria, the possession of political power leads directly to economic power, hence power seekers can do anything to achieve political power basically to improve their economic status and wellbeing. However, when individuals and groups are unable to achieve their objectives through the normal democratic political processes and given the stifling of electoral competition and the forced entrenchment of the ruling elites in power, the prospects of realizing their goals and aspirations through non-violent means often seem increasingly unattainable, hence the resort to violent means.

It is evident that Nigerian political parties have failed to possess certain essential features of political parties such as strong political culture, clear ideology, party manifesto, like-minded people as well as viable opposition. Rather, all political parties are constantly engaged in intra-party conflict instead of focusing on programmes that will benefit the masses. They engage in undemocratic conducts such as candidate's imposition, unclear manifestos, including acts of murder, arson and assassination against real and perceived opponents and enemies. What can also be deduced from the study is that various reasons have been given as the root cause of violence across the nation. Among these are the multidimensional, multicultural personality of Nigeria, corruption, poor

governance, unemployment, mismanagement of diversity and conflict issues in the country. However, since 2009 the Jamaatu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad Islamic sect otherwise known as Boko Haram has brought another dimension to the threats to life in Nigeria through terrorism. With a strong aversion to western education and persistence on instituting Sharia law in the Northern states of the country, the group went into a killing spree and suddenly states like Borno, Bauchi, Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, Yobe, Kano Adamawa, Kaduna, Kogi and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) became insecure at varying degrees. This, with other incidents of kidnapping in the southeast and south-south parts of Nigeria, has heightened the level of violence in Nigeria.

Recommendations and Conclusion

A number of recommendations have been put forward in this study and they include:

Political parties should evolve as instruments of democratic governance rather than serving as an organised criminal enterprise used for seeking, gaining and retaining power in order to rob public treasury.

The mass media, both print and electronic, have important roles to play in enlightening the politicians and citizens, exposing miscreants – no matter how well or highly placed - who will not respect the laws of the land and the sovereignty of the citizens; set agendas for politicians and parties to address in their campaigns, and to enlighten the citizens to make good electoral choices, and to impartially report the activities of parties

The ownership of the mass media in Nigeria must desist from determining how they are used, especially during political activities in the country. Thus, there should be a precise way of understanding and investigating the role of the press in political stability or instability, national integration or disintegration.

Responsible journalism, devoid of contents capable of heating up the polity and the society in general, should be avoided. As Orhewere and Kur (2001) observed, responsible media practice in times of conflict suggest that the media do not carry inaccuracies, distortions, conflict, confusion and errors of facts in their reports.

The welfare of journalists should be given serious attention, especially the provision of insurance package which would encourage them to engage in dare-devil conflict reporting in the interest of the public. A journalist, whose take-home pay is nothing to write home about, coupled with the irregular nature of the pay, may not have the zeal to engage in investigations he feels constitutes a risk to his life.

Also, regular workshops on conflict reporting, journalism ethics, mass media in a multi-cultural society should also be undertaken.

Conclusion

The role of the mass media in political communications and their effects on national issues, election campaigns in particular, is not confined to Nigeria. Anywhere in the world, the press has always been involved in politics, formation of public opinion, perception of images of candidates for political offices, the definition of social reality and social norms, the education, information, enlightenment and entertainment of the public, as well as the presentation and clarification of issues, values, goals and changes in culture and society.

While media gatekeepers also discharge their assignments, it is evident that so many conflicting issues have consistently occurred which have affected the duties of the media as the fourth estate of the realm. Some of these are infringements on their professional duties by those in control of the media whether at the state or federal level or whether they are privately owned. Also, those in government have often exercised their power of incumbency and the paraphernalia of office to manipulate the media for selfish political gains. Politics is no longer a game of numbers where the electorates have the final say, but a zero-sum game where the winner takes it all and where the clique one belongs to determines how successful one becomes. Hence the killings and assassinations of perceived enemies including members of the press who may publish news articles contrary to the desires of members of the political class have continued infinitely. This has been the unfortunate situation in Nigeria where political violence has persisted with the media contributing to either check or escalate the situation.

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