



## MEDIA REPORTAGE AND THE PROMOTION OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM MEDIA REPORTAGE

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### Abstract

*This paper elucidates how to promote good governance through quality media reportage, separation of power, intra-party democracy and quality representation as the tripod upon which a progressive democracy stands. The paper a conceptualization of these terms, the lessons for Nigeria and the way forward. It adopts the development media theory to give the work a theoretical base. The study concluded that good welfare package, effective training of journalists, and the use of modern investigative techniques could go a long way in helping the media play its role in promoting collegiality in governance in Nigeria. It is recommended that the mass media be socially and politically responsible in reporting government related issues to promote good governance in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Development Communication, Separation of Power Democracy and History.

### Introduction

However, opinions as to the definition of history are as varied as they are diverse because history is much more than a study of past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation and interpretation of information about these events. One glaring fact

about history and its study whichever way looks at it, is its sole as a connecting rod between the past and present as it projects towards the future. And this is where literature comes in as a moderator commentary on history. George Santayana's evergreen quote would be relevant here; "those who cannot remember the past (in the present) are condemned to repeat it in the future". In other words, as time inexorably advances, history past and history present will eventually show up in future as history with the only variability being the actions on inactions of the action; consequently, it is in one's best interest to pay attention to and address present and event pass history if one wants to determine the results of future happenstances. T.S Eliot resonates this idea in his poem "Burnt Norton" when he muses that;

***Time present and time past are both perhaps in time future and time future contained a time present.***

The foundation of history is important to further argue that a slight differentiation between what is the past and what is history might help make clearer the relationship between history and literature.

Indeed, defining as a study of the past subtly alludes to the fact that history and the past are not exactly coterminous terms. According to this line of thoughts the past would be a clear, unambiguous reference to a one-happened-factual verifiable event in the life of an individual, group of people, place or institution. Their history becomes the organisation of such happenstances into a coherent and cohesive narrative by way of documentation and/or introspection and interpretation. Consequently, as our later findings that reveal, history draws from the past the same way literature draws from history; without the other may not stand or be engrossing enough to attract and sustain our attention.

It is also a fact that, there cannot be sustainable collegiality in governance without an effective role of the media. The place of the Mass Media in the life of any nation cannot be denounced because the duty, which the Mass Media performs in providing information correlating parts of the society, educating and entertaining are of inestimable value to the survival and development of every Nation. Limar (2008) notes that the Mass Media perform vital and indispensable functions in any given country and hold a significant impact on the society. Beyond the three arms of government the media comes in as the fourth estate of the realm where it plays a pivotal role of covering and reporting the activities of three arms of government with a view to bringing about effectiveness, efficiency and watchdog function for a stable polity.

## **The context of separation of power**

The principle of separation of power means that specific functions, duties and responsibilities are allocated to distinctive institutions with a defined means of competence and jurisdiction (Mojapelo, 2010). According to Chalusedi (2006), separation of power implies that, the three functions of government should be performed by different bodies of persons; each department (The Legislature, The Executive and Judiciary) is limited to its own sphere of action, and within that sphere should be independent and supreme.

Locke (1632) in Mojapelo (2020) reiterates that's, it may be too great a temptation for The humane frailty, apt to grasp at power, for the same persons who have power of making laws, to have also in their hands the power to execute them, whereby they exempt themselves from the law, both in its making and execution to their private advantage.

According to Oshio (2008), in Nigeria, the three arms of government came into existence of the same time of by the same act of creation under the 1999 constitution. They are 'triplets' born on the same day are deemed to be so, by virtue of section 4, 5, & 6 of the constitution section 4 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria vest the legislative powers of the federal republic Nigeria in the legislative (The National Assembly). Section 5 deposits the executive

powers of the federation in the President of the federal level and the executive powers in a state in the government of the state. Furthermore, Section 6 vests the judicial powers of the federation and a state therein in the judiciary consisting of the courts established for the federation and the states by virtue of the provisions of the constitution. After understanding the concept of separation of power it is apt to look at power and its applicability, with effect from 1999 to date. The challenge with this principle, especially in this part of the world, is that of checks and balances as elucidated by Fumilayo (2019).

The presidency issues executive orders that read more like legislation, the National Assembly — under the guise of investigation carried out under section 88 of the constitution, issues directives to heads of ministries and agencies of government that are under the executive arm. Who might, however, have crossed the line this time with the court restraining the national assembly, albeit temporarily from amending an Act. In interpreting the scenario above there seems to be mutual disrespect among the three arms of government. The implication of this is obvious, For instance, just as witnessed in the past, where the executive sent a proposed

budget to the National Assembly and there seemed to be no compromise regarding some gray areas and the passage of the budget was stalled. Who pays the price? The innocent civil servant, whose salary may be delayed because of the malfeasance and will be unable to patronize a trader who in turn needs the money to feed his family and pay school fees. In other words, everyone in the society suffers. The vicious cycle continues as the trader in turn also suffers lack of patronage.

### **Intra-party democracy**

It is important that we begin by understanding what a political party is. Moshjan (2000) provides us with an excellent definition when he observes that a political party can best be described as an association of people who hold similar values and views about what should be a community's social and economic priorities and come together to establish these priorities by gaining control of the machinery of a government, (Kwasgu, 2012).

Thus, the common theme about the above definitions is that by their very nature, political parties are representative institutions that endow regimes with legitimacy by providing ideologies that represent social, economic and political interests. They produce leaders who, through democratic elections, form the machinery of a government. (Kwasgu, 2012). Internal democracy refers to the level and methods of including party members in the decision making and deliberation within the party structure. Intraparty democracy is usually known to nurture citizens' political competences and/or producing more capable representatives, which initiative ensures that the party produces better policies and political programmes. Sam (2014) avers that intra-party politics refers to the extent to which the conduct of internal party affairs embodies the principles of selectivity, accountability, transparency, inclusivity, participation and representation.

According to Norris (2004) one of the issues in intraparty democracy is the party nomination process. Intra-party politics is indispensable if political parties are to fulfill their roles as legitimate and credible agents of democratization. In other words, there can be no

meaningful democracy without intra-party politics, while democracy and intraparty politics are not just connected but inseparable. The functioning of every democratic system depends, on the nature, character and composition, organization, treats and institutionalization of political parties and party politics. Kwasou (2012) opines that intra-party politics can be seen as struggle for power and relevance among members within a political party in order to effectively enhance party institutionalization, candidates selection methods, leadership nomination procedure, decision making and other activities of party affairs and enforce the transparency and accountability of the office bearers to its rules of government.

What is seen in today's political parties in Nigeria is outright dictatorship. A situation where party members are often not allowed to choose who their party flag-bearers should be, is a situation that is very likely to favour the big and rich, whose purpose is to buy election to serve their personal interest with no respect whatsoever, to the party's known ideology, (Gbadegesun, 2018). The above scenario gives a clear picture of what is responsible for the huge members of political crisis experienced in Nigeria today.

### **Quality representation**

The concept of constituent representation embodied in the legislature is an important and indispensable principle of any democratic state (Bishin, 2018). This is because, the legislature is the primary mechanism of democracy that provides for the representation in government, of the diverse interests in a multicultural and sub-national society via carefully demarcated constituencies, in performing the role of representation, the legislature serves as a vital link between the government and the governed, the elected and the electorate, the rulers and the ruled (Okoosi-Simbire, 2010).

Jewel (1997) identifies two features that distinguish the legislature from all branches of government. The first feature, according to him, is that the legislature possesses formal authority to make laws, and secondly, members are normally elected to represent various elements in the population. Minsbridge (2003), on the other hand, identifies four different forms of representation in modern democracy.

The first according to him, is the promissory representation which is the one in which the representatives focus on what they promised their constituents before they were elected.

He states the second form, of representation as the anticipation representations, that is, the type in which the representatives focus on what they think constituents will approve in the next elections.

The third form he explains is the gyrosopic representation, a type in which the representatives look within their personal background to derive interest and principles, without external incentives.

The fourth and final he says it is type of representation according to Manspbridge is the sorrogative representation. In this form of representation, the representatives tend to represent individuals, groups, party or institution outside their particular constituency. Example of this form of representation is the monetary surrogacy which occurs when citizens with high income contribute to the electoral success of the representatives outside their district or party, and who, as a result acquire a sort of power over then (Sacchett, 2008).

### **Perceive challenges in nigeria's democracy**

About seventeen (17) years into the uninterrupted democratic rule in Nigeria, our 'young' democracy went through a lot of challenges. Some of these problems include but not limited to the following:

#### **A) Socio-economic and political in balance**

This is one problem that seems to have persisted in our democracy over time. It is more like the proverbial clade that thê rich get richer while the poor get poorer. According to Ohinasey, (2016), in contrast to other countries where their aspiration is to advance their democracy to benefit the generality of their people, Nigeria's type of democracy is a government of a few by the few and for the socio-economic benefit of the few; a perfect illustration of social insecurity. There is also inequality in the distribution of the natural resources and democratic dividend.

#### **B) Tribalism**

In Nigeria today, our democracy is not a matter of what the contestant has to offer but where he comes from. It is not issue-based but the tribe the person contesting comes from. It is an advancement of democracy made in Nigeria where people vote candidates based on sentiments. Sometimes one wonders why our massive ethnic strength is not maximized for our common good. "Then you knight an tribalism and sectionalism together you end up with

a menace", nepotism and favoritism speak volumes in Nigeria's democratic process (Muiz, 2018). Once an elective post is declared, it is immediately possible to predict which tribe to be given the position. Politicians often hide under the guise of equity or zoning formula to deny some tribes certain positions.

### **C) Godfatherism**

It is not out of place for a young politician to look up to the older ones for mentorship and guidance. According to Muiz (2018:9) Nigeria runs a democratic system of government in power should be the sole reflection of the Nigerian citizen alone through election. However, this has changed, due to the over bearing influence of the political godfathers on political office seekers, the later are robbed of their independence, they become mere surrogates and are conditioned in such a way that they become totally subservient to their godfather instead of the Nigerian citizens.

God-fatherism has simply enslaved good minds that would have brought fresh ideas into Nigerian politics. It has simply turned young, vibrant and fire brand politicians into political vegetables. What usually results from the kind of situation described above is the imposition of candidates on the electorate, which leads to misrepresentation. This may be called god-fatherism instead of democracy. Godfathers are weapons to Nigeria's nascent democracy. They constitute a blockade to it.

### **D) Religion**

Religion has become a tool in the hands of desperate politicians who want power by all mean. Even the country religious leaders have, more often than not, ignorantly allowed themselves to be used to project religious intolerance than their sacred calling. Since religion is said to be an opium of the masses, it difficult to raise sincere and important questions of development

### **Improving Nigeria's democary**

Nigeria holds not only an important, but strategic place in Africa with a population of about 207 million peoples.

### **Strategies for improving Nigeria' s democratic process**

Nigeria holds not only an important, but strategic place in Africa. With a population of about 207 million (NPC, 2019) nobody can ignore her important place in the continent. Despite all her

seeming challenges, her democracy has all the potentials to survive and become a model to many. Below are suggested ways to improve Nigeria's democracy.

- a) For smooth relationship after proper separations of powers, the three (3) arms of government must respect each other, and work within their constitutional powers in their over-sight functions.
- b) For intra-party democracy, it is suggested that a bottom-up approach in the building of the party structures in a manner that ensures internal distribution of power delegation authority at different levels and decentralization of powers. To measure or ascertain intra-party democracy, Salih (2006) observes that, there are three indicators to look out for. These include equal participation, inclusiveness in decision making and party institutionalization
- c) Strengthening legal framework by revisiting the electoral bill will help all political actors and players to abide strictly to laid down guidelines.
- d) The independent National Electoral commission (INEC) should try to live up to its nomenclature 'Independent'. This, however, can only be done if the body is legally empowered to monitor and enforce the practice of internal party democracy as spelt out in the constitution. The body should be properly funded to give no room for excuses or failure. Equally, the electoral body must strive to earn the confidence and trust of the people. People must be assured that their vote will and must always count.
- e) Ikponmowasa's (2017) recommendation in terms of proper orientation of citizens remains apt. Nigerians have the right to know, and be adequately educated about every step in the electoral process. They must be properly oriented on the role they will play in the entire process. More importantly, as we practice democracy, Mediocracy is recommended. As propounded by Philips (1974), mediocracy is a rule by the media. This doesn 't mean the owners of the media or journalist should take over political power but they should be actively involved in the sustenance of democracy and development of the society.
- f) As Amodu (2013) puts it, the mass media are often seen as fulfilling the vitally important role of the fourth estate, the guardians of democracy and defenders of the public interest. The media is able to frame, prime and set the agenda for democracy and development.

As former American president, Thomas Jefferson (1787) concedes; ..the basis of our government being the oplmon of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and where it is left to me to decide whether we should have a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter but I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them.

### **The Role of Media In Promoting Good Governance**

While there are agencies and institutions in Nigeria such as EFCC, ICPC, the Judiciary which are saddled with the responsibilities of contributing to good Governance in different aspects, the media, which is seen as the fourth estate of the realm, remains a key stakeholder (actor) in the issue of promoting collegiality in governance. These roles can be achieved through a number of ways;

- a) Agenda setting function
- b) Investigative Journalism
- c) Adherence to professional ethics Agenda setting function:
- g) This is the process, on the part of the mass media, of sifting out (from among many) certain issues which the media considers very important to society and focusing special and constant attention on these issues with the aim of getting the public to discuss them (Moemeka, 2002). The media must design programs to highlight how good governance can be achieved, and the importance of achieving set goals and objectives among the arms of Government for the common good of the nation.

The media must rise up to the task of publicizing corruption cases (whistle blowing) in all the arms of the government in Nigeria and draw the attention of the anticorruption agencies, the government and security operatives so as to nip it in the bud. The power of the media to decide what the people should read, see or hear has never been in doubt. What has been at the Centre of controversy is the capacity if those in whose hands reside such enormous powers to use Judiciously and in public interest (Ali, 2013). More of this role is needed of the media in promoting collegiality in governance in Nigeria. Investigative Journalism:

This is the surveillance /watchdog role of the media. Journalists must be well knitted with adequate investigative journalism skills in order to navigate the complex web of highly sophisticated activities of the arms of governance (Alowode, 2005).

Also, Ali (2013) observes that "the media functions as watchdog capable of blowing the whistle to call to attention to serious national issues." This implies that the media plays an important role in issues of collegiality in governance.

Adherence to professional ethics: This has to do with standards or principles of good practice as applicable to the specific challenges faced by journalists in carrying out their functions. It is called "Code of Conduct" or "canons of journalism". These professional codes should guide journalists in performing their civic duty especially in sourcing and reporting government related matters. Adherence to professional ethics gives credibility and trust to news stories.

Ethical Journalism network summarizes the professional ethics into five core ethical principles:

- a) Truth and Accuracy (Getting facts right and verifying such facts)
- b) Independence (Not acting on behalf of any special interest whether political or social)
- c) Fairness and Impartiality (Balancing every side of a story and being objective)
- d) Humanity (Impact of words and images on the lives of people)
- e) Accountability (Being responsible in reporting news stories especially corruption issues).

### **Theoretical framework**

For the purpose of this paper, the development media theory is adopted. Theory explains the power of media to bring sustainable development to the society.

The development media theory according to Asema (2011), seeks to explain the normative behavior of the press in countries that are conventionally classified as developing countries to which Nigeria belongs. The theory posits that the journalist's responsibility is apt in developing a nation hence journalism is considered as a good information transmitted and is thus, accountable not only to those controlling the media, but ultimately to the public at large, including various social interests.

According to the development media theory, the media is used to serve the general good of the nation. This, the media can do by functioning as government instruments for achieving economic, political, social and cultural development and social change in my society, thus, the theory says that the media should be used to complement government' s efforts by carrying out

programmes that will lead to positive development of every nation because the goal of every nation is to achieve development.

The theory is often seen as the combination of the libertarian and social responsibility theories where the media is seen as a reliable tool that can champion social, economic, political, educational and cultural development. In simple terms, the theory is all about positive usage of the media in national development for the autonomy and cohesion in governance and the citizens (McQuail 2010). The development media theory is relevant to the study in that the media brings to light the activities of the various arms of government; executive, legislature and judiciary and ensures that check and balances are observed for the common good of sustainable governance.

## **Conclusion**

Good welfare package, effective training of journalist and modern investigative techniques could go a long way in helping the media play a role in promoting collegiality in governance Nigeria. Here is a paraphrased version of your text:

The Nigerian media has historically played a significant role in promoting and sustaining good governance by serving as a voice for the people and highlighting their concerns. During the struggle for independence, the media was instrumental in mobilising support and advocating for national freedom. Good governance in Nigeria can be achieved and maintained if the media continues to effectively carry out its responsibilities. However, both the government and the citizens also have a duty to make proper use of the various media platforms available to them. Furthermore, efforts should be made to ensure that government activities remain transparent, accountable, and accessible to the public through the media.

## **Recommendations**

Having taken a look at promoting good governance through quality media reportage, this paper proposes the following recommendations:

1. Journalist should be given a free hand to operate. The world anticorruption watchdog, the transparency International, reported in its handbook that a free and independent

media is one of the principal vehicles for informing the public about government activities (Alawode,2008).

2. Also, for the media to effectively play its role of promoting good governance in Nigeria, there must be improved welfare package, adequate training and insurance cover for journalists to enable them report issues of public interest and with national interest at heart.
3. Anti — corruption institutions must work closely with the media for effective reportage. Periodic workshop, symposiums, public lectures and seminars should be organized on how to report to promote good governance to keep journalist up to date with modern trend in reportage.
4. Nigeria should adhere strictly to journalistic ethics highlighted above and resist the urge to accept "Brown Envelop" for effective reportage of corruption cases.

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