

ELECTIONS IN DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION:
THE CHALLENGE OF THE NIGERIAN MEDIA

By

Ebere Ahanihu, BSc

(University of Lagos)

A thesis submitted to

the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Journalism

School of Journalism and Communication

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

April 27, 2010

© copyright

2010, Ebere Ahanihu



Library and Archives
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-68666-9
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-68666-9

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

ABSTRACT

Using the 2008 Jos-north election crisis as a case study, this thesis examines the role of the newspaper press in the reproduction of ethnicity in Nigeria and its implications for participatory democracy and democratic elections in the country. It begins with the understanding that media reform and democratic transition are linked and that it is possible to determine co-variation between them. It argues that democracy cannot be sustained without an independent media system. The findings in the study support the proposition that in Nigeria, the ethnic nationality of the publisher influences the editorial direction of a newspaper. It was also found that a newspaper will ignore, discredit or problematize other ethnic groups, while endorsing the ideology of the publisher's group. In fact, once a situation is defined along ethnic lines, the implication for the survival of the democratic process is unwelcomed.

Acknowledgements

I thank my supervisor, Prof. Paul Adams, whose guidance in the course of this work was a continuous source of encouragement and inspiration. His meticulous approach to the issues and prompt response to draft copies kept me constantly on my toes and, more than any other factor, helped to bring the effort to a timely fruition.

I thank members of both faculty and staff of the School of Journalism and Communication for their understanding and assistance, particularly Prof. Kirsten Kozolanka who did not only see to the conception and nurturing of the idea, but also helped in providing materials and encouragement that proved invaluable in bringing it to life.

I am also grateful to Prof. Linda Freeman of the university's Political Science Department, whose efforts to help me think like a scholar proved to be crucial in the writing of this thesis. Getting to know her was the icing on the cake.

To my daughter, Nneka, and son, Obinna, I am grateful for showing understanding and perseverance and for keeping me on course in the face of the most trying time in the life of the family.

Yet, as most writers are wont to say at this juncture, I take responsibility for any mistakes, by omission or commission, which may have been made in the presentation of this work.

Dedication

To my wife,

Bisi -

My encouragement and stamina.

Table of Contents

Contents	v
List of tables	viii
Chapter One:	
Introduction	1
Chapter Two:	
Ethnic politics in context	21
Chapter Three:	
Theoretical framework.....	35
Chapter Four:	
Democratization and media reform.....	48
Chapter Five:	
Research methodology	70
Chapter Six:	
Meaning and ideology	86
Chapter Seven:	
Conclusion	98

References	103
-------------------------	-----

List of tables

Table 1 Distribution according to the direction of stories	77
Table 2 Distribution according to the direction of combined stories	77

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Purpose and objective of the thesis

This thesis uses a case study approach to discuss the role of ethnicity in shaping the Nigerian media, and how the phenomenon challenges journalists in elections coverage in the country. The thesis assesses the role of the media in general, and the newspaper press in particular, in the reproduction of ethnicity in the coverage of the 27 November 2008 Jos-north local government election and the crisis that arose in its wake. The strategy is to use the newspaper coverage of the crisis to explore more broadly the implication of an ethnically-based press for participatory democracy and democratic elections in the country.

Statement of problem

Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, the fourth attempt in 39 years of independence. Of all the factors militating against the growth of democracy in the country, Mercy Ette (2000: p. 69) has identified ethnic conflict as “the most far-reaching.” Going back in time, Ette traces the origin to “the forging of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups into one big unit during the British imperialist ventures,” regardless of the prodigious variety of historical political units, social orders, economies and cultures. As a result, ethnicity became what William Graf (cited in Ette, 2000: p. 69) describes as “the ideological mortar” which holds the disparate elements together.

To understand the background of political instability in Nigeria, the inquirer should be acquainted with the issues that led to the emergence of ethnicity in the country, particularly the relations among the three major ethnic groups – namely, the Igbo in the South-East, the Yoruba in the South-West, and the Hausa-Fulani in the North. The struggle to maintain a dominant position among the ethnic groups is at the core of the divisive and destructive politics practised in the country (Okwudiba Nnoli, 1978: p. 8) and remains an intractable problem (Ayo Olukoyun, 2004: p. 70).

The struggle for dominance among the ethnic groups, indicates the International Crisis Group (2006: p. 5), fosters an environment in which politicians resort to electoral fraud, as ethnically-based parties attempt to preserve “their regional control” and challenge the dominance of other competing ethnic groups at the centre.

As Graf (1988: p. 13) puts it,

Wherever the Nigerian political system has most dramatically experienced breakdowns – constitutional crises, political immobilism, *coups d'état*, civil war, etc. – this has always occurred within a context of inter-ethnic controversy. The phenomenon of *ethnicity*, *ethno-nationalism* ... is thus a focal point of national politics.

Thus, ethnic conflicts underlie the inability of Nigeria to consolidate democratic rule since independence in 1960. Between 1960 and the latest attempt at restarting democratic rule in 1999, the country has experienced six successful and numerous failed military *coups d'état*, a civil war that cost about a million lives, three inconclusive transitions to democracy and recurrent factional violence (International Crisis Group, 2006; p. and Graf, 1988: p. 43).

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, the electoral system has performed below par. Widespread corruption and electoral malpractices continue to punctuate

the electoral process. In the 1999 election, it was ‘competitive rigging’ – where political parties engaged in vote-rigging, a situation Graf (1988: p. 108) describes as “universal rigging”. In 2003, the use of thugs and the manipulation of party congresses and elections became more brazen. By 2007, the electoral process deteriorated from ‘competitive rigging’ to ‘coercive rigging’ (Alexandra Gillies, 2007: p. 577; and Michael Watts, 2007: p. 656), where rigging was enforced by security forces and party thugs.

Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, electoral fraud has drastically reduced the people’s confidence in the nascent democratic system. Surveys conducted within the period showed that “the assessment of relatively ‘honesty’ in the preceding elections” dropped from 76% in 2000, to 44% in 2003. By 2005, about two-thirds of the people believed that “elections were not effective mechanisms for selecting leaders” (Peter Lewis, 2006: p. 9). The trust in the electoral commission slipped from 66% in 2000 to 46% in 2003 (Peter Lewis and Alemika Etannibi, 2005: p. vii).

The surveys also showed that the proportion of people who said they were satisfied with “the way democracy works” fell drastically, to 35% in 2003, from 57% in 2001 and 84% in 2000. The drop of nearly 50 percentage points indicates widespread discontent with the character and direction of the political process. The implication for the nascent democracy is succinctly captured by Lewis (2006: p. 13):

A credible, peaceful electoral process is likely to reinforce confidence in the basic institutions and to restore a measure of patience with the democratic system. On the other hand, a highly flawed and unstable election exercise could further discourage voters and undermine the foundations of democratic rule.

The principal distinguishing mark of a democratic polity is free and competitive elections. As Ergun Ozbudun (1989: p. 237) would argue, a free and competitive election presupposes universal adult suffrage; fairness of voting and “the absence of a significant degree of electoral fraud, violence, or intimidation.” While it is true that free and competitive elections are as important as what happens between the elections (Alina Rocha Menocal, Verena Fritz, and Lise Rakner, 2008: p. 31; and Barack Obama, 2009), this thesis argues that electoral systems which limit the power of party leaders to manipulate elections produce more responsive, responsible and caring representatives. Graf explains:

Because elected officials were effectively beholden to their party, rather than the electorate, whose consent could be bought, coerced or rigged by the dominant party in any case, and since only party position ensured access to state largesse, the principle of ‘democratic responsibility’ became responsibility towards the ‘big man’ of the party. The ‘national interest’ was converted into party interests (1988: p. 109).

An independent media system is the bulwark of free and competitive elections. As Ette (2000: p. 71) writes, the information provided by the media has “the potential to empower the electorate to make informed choices” about political parties and the politicians who are seeking public office. Thus, the goal of the media in elections should be “one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interest” (USAID, 1999: p. 3). In Beata Rozumilowicz’s words,

A free media exist within a structure which is effectively demonopolised of the control of any concentrated social groups or forces and in which access is both equally and effectively guaranteed (cited in Patrick J. McConnell and Lee B. Becker, 2002: p. 4).

In Nigeria, Peter Enahoro, a distinguished journalist and foremost politician, paints a different picture in his characterization of the newspaper press:

[M]any of today's so-called national newspapers ... are in fact regional publications, whose loyalties are to the personalities and causes espoused by the apparent majority of the people of that area. It is tantamount to a monopoly of a vital resource with crucial bearing on the democratic process (cited in Olukoyun, 2004: p. 77).

The implication of an ethnically-based media for participatory democracy and democratic elections in the country is the question this thesis sets out to explore, using, as a case study, the newspapers' coverage of the Jos-north 2008 local government election crisis, in the city of Jos, the capital of Plateau State, in North Central Nigeria.

Genesis of the Jos crisis

The conflict between the Hausa-Fulani and indigenous ethnic groups in Jos is about the control of power and resources. At different times in the history of the city, the hostility between the two sides has found expression in clashes, either as a result of land access and use, or the creation and control of a local government administration, or political appointments (Victor A. O. Adetula, 2005: p. 226) or, as in the case of the 2008 crisis under review, the result of electoral contest. As Adetula sums it, land questions and a perception of the lack of representation feature prominently in political conflicts in Jos (see also Billy J. Dudley, 1968: p. 237).

Situated in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, the city of Jos is located on the Jos Plateau, about 4,000 feet above sea level, and lies close to the geographical center of the Northern Region. Prior to British occupation, the area was inhabited by the Birom, the Anaguta (Naraguta), the Afisare (Jarawa) and other smaller ethnic groups. Dudley has noted that these groups are indigenous to Jos "as the Hausa-Fulani are to

the Sokoto-Kano-Zaria areas” (1968: p. 234). But in making the claims to Jos, the Hausa-Fulani argue that their forebears founded the city when they came to work in the tin mines at the turn of the 20th Century (Adetula, 2005: p. 217).

The Hausa-Fulani refer collectively to the Hausa and Fulani people. The Hausa are indigenous to the Northern part of Nigeria, while the Fulani are believed to be “the outcrop of the union of Arabs, Judaizancy, Berbers and Tuareg tribes, who, in the Roman era, inhabited today’s Mauritania” (Adewale Adeoye, 2010). Sociologists, noted Adeoye, speak of them as “dynamic transporters of culture, greatly assimilating those of the environs wherever they settle ... both in language and customs and as large mixers.” The history of both the Hausa and Fulani intermingled after the 1804 Jihad, during which the Fulani defeated the Hausa and assimilated their culture as well as language.

As the Fulani spread Islam, using jihad as a tool of conquest in the Northern part of what became known as Nigeria, the religion grew in influence, and so also did the influence of the jihadists. From the North, the religion was spread towards the Southern part of the country. At the foot of “the hilly Jos Plateau areas,” the Fulani expansion was stopped as they were “fiercely and successfully resisted” by the natives (Umar Habila Danfulani and Sati U. Fwatshak, 2002: p. 245). Territories the jihadists conquered along the way were ruled by emirs. By 1831, there were 14 Muslim emirates in Nigeria, with a total of 180,000 square miles (Adeoye, 2010).

As Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002: p. 245) have noted, an insignificant number of Jos Plateau people were converted to Islam before the coming of Christianity in the

area in 1904. Danfulani and Fwatshak argue that the attempt to spread Islam by conquest influenced the people's acceptance of Christianity and "simultaneously laid the foundation for the mutual resentment between the two groups." Citing J. G. Davies, they further argue that "the few indigenous persons who embraced Islam in the early stages did so because of their quest for certain social status and, by implication, economic and political gains."

Although Christianity was comparatively late in coming to Jos Plateau, by the early 1950s, the religion was overwhelmingly influential among the people. According to the regional Census for 1952, Jos Township accounted for the highest percentage of Christians in the Northern Region. The census figures showed that Christians constituted 84.5% of the population, followed by Muslims, 12%, and animists, 3.5% (Leonard Plotnicov, 1967: p. 28; and Danfulani and Fwatshak, 2002: p. 243). In the words of Plotnicov, the fact that there were "three major Christian missions headquartered in the Township ... and that there [were] also several minor missions" reflects the wide spread of Christianity in the area.

The discovery of tin and subsequent mining activities at the beginning of the 20th Century changed the pre-colonial outlook of Jos Plateau. According to Plotnicov (1967: p. 33), a series of military campaigns by the British "to pacify the hostile local tribes" was begun in 1902. In 1905, the mines were secured and mining activities began in the tin fields. Raids by the natives, however, continued, obstructing mining works and the routes along which processed tin was transported. Between 1906 and 1907, "punitive campaigns" were mounted, which finally broke the back of the natives' resistance.

By 1909, European prospectors and mining engineers were attracted to the Jos tin fields (Plotnicov, 1967: p. 35). By 1910, there were over 50 syndicates “with declared aggregate capital of at least £2,500,000 registered for mining operations.” At independence in 1960, the country was the sixth largest producer of tin in the world. Plotnicov has argued that, while Jos owed its initial development to the mining industry, the “revenue and economic stability from transportation and other commercial activities” made the city economically independent of the mining industry.

Given the hostility of the natives to mining activities, the British went to Sokoto, Kano, Katsina, Lere, Zaria, and Bauchi to recruit Hausa-Fulani labourers to work in the mines at the beginning of the 20th Century. But because these labourers “lacked skill and tended to leave the mines after working for a couple of weeks,” the British turned to Southerners, mainly the Igbo, “to provide the base of stable workers” for the mines. The shortage of labourers and medium skilled workers for the expanding mining industry resulted in inflated wage rate which, in turn, attracted more workers from the four corners of the country.

In the calculation of Plotnicov, Jos “was officially founded about 1915”, but by 1912 there were enough residents “to warrant the designation ‘Hausa Settlement, Jos’ (1967: p. 41). From the beginning, noted Plotnicov, the policy of the colonial administration kept “culturally dissimilar ethnic groups separate.” Thus, the urban centre of the area was divided into two separate administrative units: a Native Town and the Township, where Asians and Europeans settled. According to Plotnicov,

“eight blocks, with a total of 150 house plots, were also laid out creating a separate township for non-Northern African clerks and traders.”

The Hausa-Fulani, according to Plotnicov, were then moved to the Native Town. One of the reasons for moving them was, as he put it, “to establish residential, administrative, and social segregation between Southern and Northern Nigerians, for Southerners had earlier received Western education and training in modern occupational skills, while Northerners were still backward in these respects” (1967: p. 41). The administration’s efforts to maintain separate ethnic identities extended to the courts of law. For instance, by 1920, an Alkali Court was established in the Native Town, “despite the loud protests of non-Muslims” (1967: p. 43).

Plotnicov also noted that the persistence of the use of the term ‘Hausa Settlement’ reflected inconsistency in the policy of the colonial administration. The British, he argued, regarded the Native Town as Muslim, “despite the fact that neither the traditional religion of the indigenous people nor that of most of the population of Jos itself was Muslim.” In line with this concept of a Muslim area, the administration went as far as restricting the sale of alcohol in the Native Town. In the words of Plotnicov, “this type of British protectionism” of the Hausa-Fulani people “amounted to paternalism” (1967: p. 44).

The colonial administration’s policy of maintaining distinct ethnic lines among the inhabitants of Jos, Plotnicov pointed out, “encouraged a system of civic participation by residential wards in the Native Town.” The various ethnic communities were represented by their ‘tribesmen’, who held unofficial titles of *Sarkin Yorubawa*

(Chief of the Yoruba People), *Sarkin Igboawa* (Chief of the Igbo People). The Hausa-Fulani representative was called *Sarkin Jos*. This title, Chief of Jos, noted Plotnicov, referred to the Native Town and not to Jos, “which it later came to be associated with” (1967: p. 46).

According to the Plateau Province Annual Report for 1921, the colonial administration considered the Hausa-Fulani settlement as “purely alien enclaves having no sort of authority over the pagans [the native peoples of the Jos Plateau].” The administration referred to the land as “the pagans” and acknowledged that their rights were “jealously guarded” (cited in Plotnicov, 1967: p. 41). But by allowing the *Sarkin Jos* or Chief of the Hausa-Fulani community to sit in the Jos Town Council as its vice-president and to assume the title of *Magajin Garin Jos* (Town Administrator) a tradition was established to which the Hausa-Fulani community would cling tenaciously to rule Jos until 1947.

With the “control over the native population” vested in the Hausa-Fulani, argued Dudley (1968: p. 236), mutual hostility developed between the Hausa-Fulani and the indigenous ethnic groups, which was expressed often and in many ways. In the words of Dudley,

Both the economy and the local administrative machinery were thus in the hands of non-indigenous settlers whilst the indigenous Birom remained ‘subject’, landless peasants as more and more of the fertile alluvial plains were handed over by concessionary leases to the mining companies.

For the Birom, the struggle became how to extricate themselves from the overlord of the Hausa-Fulani. As Adetula (2005: p. 214) noted, the Birom Progressive Union was one of the early ethnic associations through which they made “representations to

the government.” Organized in 1945, the union set out “to foster pan-Birom unity” and agitate for compensation “for the use of their lands by British tin-mining companies.” In 1949, the Northern Nigeria Non-Muslim League was formed, which demonstrated “the influence of Christian religion in the identity formation of the indigenous groups” (Adetula, 2005: p. 214).

The descendants of Hausa-Fulani tin-miners, now known as the Jasawa in Jos, responded with the formation of the Jasawa Development Association, to provide the Hausa-Fulani community with a forum from which “to articulate its positions vis-à-vis the other groups, as well as to mobilize its members for political action.” Islam, noted Adetula, was the instrument of mobilization for political and social activism among the Hausa-Fulani.

While the Jasawa community consolidated the use of Islam to mobilize the Hausa-Fulani, the use of Christianity in the struggle of the indigenous groups to reassert themselves in the scheme of things in Jos found its way into some churches in the city, “especially those with a high concentration of Birom, Anaguta and Afisare” congregation (Adetula, 2005: p. 217). According to Adetula, as the crisis became frequent in the course of time, many Christian organizations in Jos became more vocal and active in the city’s politics “in the tradition of the ‘liberation theology’.”

To ease the tension between the Hausa-Fulani and indigenous ethnic groups, in 1947, the colonial administration appointed a Birom as the Chief of Jos, with the title of Gwong Gwon Jos (2005: p. 223). The Chief of Jos chaired the Jos Town Council, the highest policy-making organ in the area. The chairmen of the council’s committees

wielded a lot of discretionary powers. For Dudley, ethnic rivalry between the Hausa-Fulani and the indigenous groups in the city over the years became the competition to control the committees (1968: p. 237).

The first major crisis, precipitated by the appointment of a Hausa-Fulani as the Management Committee Chairman of Jos-north local government council, occurred on 12 April 1994. The appointment was resisted by the indigenous ethnic groups: the Anaguta, the Afisere and the Birom, who insisted that they would not accept a non-indigene as a local council chairman in their land. The aggrieved, according to Reuben Abati (2008), seized the council headquarters and, in the outbreak of violence that followed, the Jos market was burnt down and casualties were recorded.

According to the Whitepaper on the Hon. Justice J. Aribiton Fiberesima Commission of Enquiry set up to investigate the crisis, “the most discernible cause of the riots was the recurrent friction for many years between the Birom, Anaguta, and Afisare tribes, on the one hand, and the Hausa-Fulani tribes, on the other hand” (cited in Taiwo Olawale, 2010). Each party, the report noted, “lays claim to Jos.”

According to Olawale, an uneasy calm reigned until 7 September 2001 when violence erupted. This time “the riots took a more frightening dimension.” The crisis, which lasted for five days, was precipitated by the appointment of another Hausa-Fulani as the Jos-north Local Government Director of the Federal Government’s Poverty Alleviation Program. Again, the indigenes insisted that they would not accept a non-indigene in that position. As Abati (2008) observed, “the exchange of

hot words of hate between both parties eventually resulted in the breakdown of law and order.”

On 28 November 2008, another clash occurred. Its immediate cause, as will be discussed below, was the result of the chairmanship election held the previous day in the Jos-north local government. Since the 2008 crisis, the city has witnessed more bloody crises. On 17 January 2010, crisis erupted after the attack of a man said to have returned to rebuild his house destroyed in the 2008 crisis. At least 20 people were killed in the conflict. On 7 March 2010, in what was described as a retaliatory attack, women and children were woken from sleep and cut to pieces. When the final death toll was counted, human rights groups, according to *The Guardian* newspaper editorial of 15 March 2010, put the figure at 500.

Jos-north 2008 local government election crisis

Local politics in Jos are based on ethnic and religious loyalty. The people consider ethnic representation as “a necessary measure for the protection of their ethnic communities” (Plotnicov, 1967: p. 49). Skirmishes between ethnically-based political parties, Plotnicov pointed out, became periodical “from the early 1950s to the present.”

As Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002: p. 247) have noted, the Jasawa “constitute a powerful political group in Jos-north local government where majority of them are concentrated.” However, their frustration, as Danfulani and Fwatshak put it, emanates from the fact that they have not been able to win the position of the chairman of the local government.

There are 14 wards in Jos-north local government. In the 1999 election, the Jasawa won six wards, the Igbo won two, the Yoruba, two; while the indigenous ethnic groups won four wards. The six predominantly Muslim electoral wards in the local government have “an average of only 4,000 voters each,” noted Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002: p. 247), while “the other eight predominantly Christian wards have an average population of over 12,000 voters.”

In an election in which religion determined the outcome, the Igbo, Yoruba and indigenous ethnic groups used their combined numerical strength to elect a Christian of Anaguta stock as the local government chairman in 1999. The numerical advantage of Christians over Muslims in Jos-north local government leads Danfulani and Fwatshak (2002: p. 247) to conclude that it will be impossible for a Muslim to win elections to the local government chairmanship, as long as voters continue to cast votes along ethno-religious line.

This scenario played out in the 27 November 2008 local government chairmanship election. The contestants represented both the two ethnic and religious divides. Aminu Baba, the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) candidate, is a Hausa-Fulani Muslim. Timothy Buba of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP), is a Birom Christian (Abati, 2008).

As reported in the *Daily Trust* newspaper edition of 24 March 2009, under the headline ‘How Jos Crisis Erupted, By Reps Committee,’ the crisis began during the state primaries, where the state PDP allegedly imposed Buba as candidate despite the allegation that he was from Jos-south local government area. Added to that was the

nomination of a Christian as Buba's running mate. Muslim members of the PDP were said to have expressed disaffection with the arrangement and threatened to join the opposition in the events of the party actualizing the plans.

The failure of the PDP to respond to the intra-party protests was said to have laid the foundation for the crisis. The state PDP's decision to field a Birom flag-bearer and a running mate from Anaguta, both Christians, introduced an ethno-religious dimension to the political atmosphere in the local government election. Members of the Hausa-Fulani, irrespective of party leanings, resolved to vote for the opposition Muslim ANPP candidate.

On 28 November, suspecting that the PDP, in concert with the state electoral commission, was manipulating the election results, some ANPP supporters went on a rampage. In the crisis that ensued, 600 people were killed, hundreds hospitalized, about 10,000 displaced, 14 schools destroyed, mosques and churches burnt, as well as 600 cars, 27 fire trucks, 800 residential buildings, 200 stores and five market places. It was the country's worst unrest for years (Randi Fabi, 2008).

In its report, the commission of inquiry chaired by the former Attorney General of the Federation, Prince Bola Ajibola, which was set up by the Plateau State Government to investigate the crisis, blamed the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community for initiating the acts of violence that led to the crisis. The panel noted that "despite the coincidence of time, the local government election of 2008 was not the immediate cause of the unrest, but the feeling that the Hausa-Fulani had lost the election and had by that token lost access to one of the major opportunities for

economic domination and advancement amongst their people, which pushed them to violence."

Role of the media

The argument has often been made that freedom of expression and of the press is essential for democracy to thrive. Without these basic freedoms, it is further argued, totalitarian and other undemocratic societies cannot become democratic. For instance, free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require "a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner" (USAID, 1999: p. 3).

Against this background, Ette has expressed doubt as to the role of the Nigerian press in promoting democracy. As far as Ette is concerned, it is not even clear whether the press has "a common understanding of how it should serve the cause of democracy." In a study, she found that "the editorial direction and presentation of key political actors" during military-mediated transitions "were more likely to consolidate military rule than to facilitate democratic transformation" (2000: p. 67).

On the other hand, there are scholars who praise the Nigerian press as the pillar of democracy in the country, crediting it with setting "the tone and tenor" of the democratization process (Tokunbo Ojo, 2007); highlighting its role as the watchdog in the polity (Ayo Olutokun and Dele Seteolu, 2001; and Emmanuel O. Ojo, 2003); and for championing accountability (Olukoyun, 2004) in the nascent democracy.

Evidently missing in the debate between scholars, such as Ette, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who have praised the media's role in the democratic process,

is the role of the media in the electoral process, on which the pursuit of democracy is predicated. The assumption of this thesis is that democracy cannot be sustained without a reliable, free and fair electoral process.

Therefore, the contribution of this thesis in the dialogue is to step into the void by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the media in the coverage of elections, with the aim of facilitating a holistic understanding of the relationship between the media and the democratic process. It attempts to create a benchmark by which future studies on the role of the Nigerian media in the reproduction of ethnic prejudices can be gauged.

Research methods

Using the Jos-north 2008 local government election crisis as a case study, the thesis seeks to answer the following questions:

- To what extent does the editorial direction of a newspaper depend on the ethnic nationality of the publisher?
- To what extent does the attention given to specific reports in a newspaper depend on the ethnic nationality of the publisher?

In dealing with these questions, the thesis uses a combination of qualitative discourse analysis and quantitative content analysis. A detailed discussion of these analytical methods will follow in Chapter Five, but suffice it to say that all the articles analyzed in this study were sourced from the on-line archives of the three newspapers selected for the study – *Daily Sun*, *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Compass*.

One of the problems encountered in the course of this research was in data collection. Given my inability to travel to Nigeria due to circumstances leading to my coming to Canada, a researcher was hired in the country to visit the libraries of the selected newspapers for the purposes of putting together relevant cuttings. The job was poorly done. Most of the photo-copies were illegible. In most cases, even the dates of publication were also missing from the copies.

As a result of these shortcomings, attention was turned to the on-line archival materials of the newspapers under review. However, the reliance on e-materials also posed a major problem. It was not possible to determine the leading articles or categorize articles according to pagination. It is regrettable that this information was left out in the analysis of the data. It is regrettable because pagination is vital in the determination of the importance and prominence attached to an article by a newspaper organization. Comparatively, however, the e-materials proved to be more reliable.

The articles were coded for a number of standard properties, such as the name and ownership of the newspapers as well as the story genre (news reports, features and opinions), and the overall subject-matter – that is, ethnicity. Finally, a necessarily ‘subjective summary’ of the major topics was discussed using three forms of frames – namely ‘Deviance’, ‘Us and Them’, and ‘Power’ to unravel the ideological framework of the newspapers’ reportage.

Presentation of chapters

Chapter 1 has drawn attention to the purpose and objective of this thesis. It laid out the problem-statement and provided the historical context. It also presented a brief discussion of the research methodology. **Chapter 2** discusses the genesis of ethnic politics in Nigeria, and provides a framework for understanding the ‘ethnicization’ of the media. The chapter answers the question as to the emergence of ethnicity, its persistence and growth.

Chapter 3 explains the relationship between the media and the democratic process as one that is interlinked, using the ‘stage-ist’ theoretical framework to study four country-cases. The aim is to understand the position of Nigeria’s political transition along the continuum of the transition stages. **Chapter 4** steps back to offer a historical background to the evolution of the Nigerian media. The chapter assesses significant developments in the emergence, growth and activities of the newspaper press to better appreciate the country’s political transition.

Chapter 5 covers the methodology used in the study, and performs the analysis of the newspaper reports. The quantitative method was used to make a comparative analysis of what each of the newspapers made of the 2008 Jos-north local government election crisis from their institutional, political, and cultural standpoints.

Chapter 6 uses a qualitative discourse analysis to offer a summary of the major topics in the crisis. It uses three frames – ‘Deviance’, ‘Us and Them’, and ‘Power’ – to unravel the ideological framework of the newspaper reportage.

Chapter 7 concludes the study, pointing out that the pattern of newspaper messages during elections is slanted to reflect ownership. It argues that unless the media give equal access to contesting views, free and fair elections will remain elusive and so also the possibility of consolidating democratic rule.

CHAPTER TWO

Ethnic Politics in Context

Historical background

This chapter contextualizes ethnic politics in Nigeria. It explores how ethnicity found its way into the heart of the country's political and party system and how it has affected attempts to nurture democratic rule. As Okwudiba Nnoli (1978: p. 20) would argue, the elucidation of the historical origins and manifestation of ethnic politics begins with the investigation of the connection between the present and past political societies. Essentially, the goal of this chapter is to draw attention to the nature of the political structures of the society on the emergence and persistence of ethnicity.

Ethnicity remains one of the most pernicious problems of Nigerian society. To scholars such as Nnoli, the phenomenon has a colonial origin and its function is tied to the nature and purpose of colonialism. As Nnoli argues, ethnicity cannot be fully comprehended "without an adequate understanding of its historical origin and objective socio-economic basis." As "the offspring of colonial racism," he argues, the emergence of ethnicity explains "the objective basis of alienation" as a means of exploitation (1978: p. 21).

In trying to understand the nature of ethnicity in Nigeria, scholars have searched in vain for equivalent concepts in the local languages (Nnoli, 1978: p. 35). In pre-

colonial times, writes William D. Graf (1988: p. 22), relations among ethnic groups were regulated and the people “dwelt in relatively harmonious interaction.” Prior to the arrival of Europeans, there were large and developed systems of indigenous polities, according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010).

In the North, developed pre-colonial political systems were found in the Hausa states of Kano, Katsina, Zaria, and Gobir; Kanem-Borno; and the Jukun states of Kwararafa, Kona, Pinduga, and Wukari (Graf, 1988: p. 3). If the North was open, uniform and homogeneous, the South was a “picture of diversity, variegation and heterogeneity.” In the South-West, there were the Yoruba states of Ife and Oyo, as well as the Edo state of Benin. In the decentralized Igbo society in the South-East, lineages were organized in federations of village communities, with societies of elders and age-grade associations sharing governmental functions.

On arrival in Benin Kingdom in the 15th Century, Portuguese explorers found a monarchy dating back to centuries. With European contact, slavery, hitherto intra- and inter-communal, became a transatlantic trade (Rex Niven, 1965: p. 9). By the 17th and 18th centuries, the delta city-states were outlets of slave trade. The effect of the trade on the society and the economy was felt in terms of loss of population, suffered mostly by the non-centralized peoples of the Middle Belt. Slave trade was the cause of severe economic and political dislocations, inter-communal wars, and forced migrations.

With the abolition of transatlantic slave trade in the 19th Century, large numbers of West African people were brought together “to create a new society under British

patronage” (Fred A. Omu, 1978: p. 5). As H. S. Scott (cited in Nnoli, 1978: p. 43) noted, the aim was colonialism – “one of exploitation and development” for the British economy (see also Gerald Caplan, 2008: p. 29). In its formulation, it was justified by the conviction of “god-given racial superiority” (Caplan, 2008: p. 20). To Nnoli, this attitude planted the seed “of the myth of the inferior ‘native’.”

According to Nnoli (1978: p. 4), an extension of this racism was evident in the tendency of the colonizer to regard certain African language groups as superior or inferior to others, depending on “the similarity of their socio-political organization to that of the colonizer.” For example, Nnoli cited the cases of the Dogon, Bambara, and Senufo of Mali; the Bete of Ivory Coast; the pygmies of Zaire; the Masai of East Africa; and the Karamojong of Uganda, who were regarded as more ‘primitive’ than their compatriots.

Thus, as Nnoli argued, the contemporary ethnic relationship in Nigeria is not “the result of the mere agglomeration of disparate linguistic and cultural groups.” In fact, as he further argued, “the social boundaries of the various language groups drastically changed from its pre-colonial character to its colonial form.” People who did not share a common ethnic identity in pre-colonial times began to do so during the colonial period (1978: p. 97).

The new ethnic boundaries, Nnoli went on to argue, were “associated with the insecurity arising from the scarcity and inequality of colonial order,” as illustrated, in his view, by the effect of the Depression and the Second World War on ethnicity in Nigeria. The relevant ethnic identification became “salient and significant” between

1928 and 1948. In his words, this period “constituted the gestation period of ethnic identity and, therefore, the birth period of contemporary ethnic politics in Nigeria.”

With the development of roads, railways, postal communications, and other media of communication, individuals from one linguistic group could more easily migrate to another. Initially, the socio-economic competition between the migrants and their hosts was not sharp. Citing J. A. Sofola, Nnoli noted that in some places interactions between the migrants and the hosts “were so positive that intergroup marriage was fairly common.”

When migrants became many and socio-economic competition with the hosts became more distinct, relations were strained. In reaction, according to Nnoli, “both migrants and hosts organized themselves along communal lines in order to safeguard their interests in the struggle for the scarce and unequally distributed resources.” During the 1920s, Nnoli noted, kinship and communal unions sprang up in urban centres of Nigeria.

Insecurity encouraged destructive competition. Unable to compete against the colonizer for economic resources, the people “turned their competitive energies” against each other (Nnoli, 1978: p. 98). Once members of a particular ethnic group occupied job positions, they used their positions to find jobs for members of their ethnic group or pass on information of job opportunities to them. Those who were unsuccessful “found it easy and convenient to blame their plight on advantages possessed by members of other groups.”

As more and more people came face to face with socio-economic insecurity, they opted for membership in ethnic-based organizations. According to David Carment,

From the perspective of rational choice, ethnic identification often is created or maintained as a basis for collective action when there are clear competitive advantages attached to such an identity (1994: p. 558).

Kinship and communal unions sprang up in urban centres. Nnoli estimates that between 1928 and 1948, the number of such organizations grew about six-fold and membership increased more than ten-fold (1978: p. 102). The functions of the communal associations met the individuals' needs to adapt to insecure urban life, leading Nnoli to argue that "ethnic (linguistic) associations were as important as the government and probably more relevant" in their function of providing social services to members (1978: p. 105).

Some ethnic associations operated as 'tribal unions,' 'hometown associations,' 'development union,' or 'progressive associations,' which, in addition to helping their members adjust to urban life, served "as a link between the urban and the rural, for the benefits of the home communities (usually the home town)" (Victor A. O. Adetula, 2005: p. 207). According to Adetula,

In some cases, the associations or unions are, in practice, 'regional' or 'state' associations made up of communities of people from the same region or province. Usually, these are local populations of people who belong to different social classes, but are bound together by common cultural, ethnic or language identity, which they emphasize and exaggerate.

In post-colonial Nigeria, not much has changed "in the nature and character of the state as well as its relationship with society" (Adetula, 2005: p. 210). Thus, the role perception of these organizations remains largely unchanged. As Nnoli (1978: p. 106) has argued, the "transfer of responsibility for socio-economic welfare from the

government to the communal unions ... contributed significantly to the emergence of ethnicity and the creation of ethnic identity.”

As Adetula has suggested, this situation may explain why ethnic associations have persisted in contemporary Nigeria: the Yoruba are associated with Afenifere, the Igbo with Ohaneze and Hausa-Fulani with Arewa, all playing the roles similar to those of the ethnic and region-based associations of the colonial era. But as will become clear in the following discussion, it was the emergence of ethnicity in regional politics that gave the phenomenon a self-fulfilling and self-sustaining life of its own.

Regionalism and ethnic politics

In Nigeria, the modality of colonialism was designed by the British as indirect rule, “styled as an optimal division of labour,” to overcome the problem of shortage of personnel and minimize administrative costs (Graf 1988: p. 7). On the eve of the Second World War, “only 1,300 British officials” controlled 20 million Nigerians (Caplan, 2008: p. 26). As a two-level government – the foreign and the indigenous – indirect rule depended on indigenous political structures, where the local leader was subject to the colonial administrator.

Indirect rule was first introduced in Northern Nigeria. The system favoured the conservative elements of the Fulani aristocrats, who were “more concerned with their prerogatives than social progress.” In the South, the system ran into difficulties (Nnoli, 1978: p. 115). Among the Yoruba in the South-West, the oba (king) was less autocratic than the emir in the North and, therefore, “could not pacify his people for

colonialism the way the emirs did.” Among the Igbo in the South-East, where the pre-colonial polity was radically different, the introduction of indirect rule was even more turbulent than in the South-West.

On the introduction of indirect rule in Southern Nigeria, there was resistance among the educated elites. They criticized the system as “inconceivable and dangerous.” In 1909, the Lagos-based *Standard* newspaper described its introduction as “the incompatibility of the democratic industrious and peaceful South with the autocratic, hectoring, rough and ready systems of the North and the moral darkness that pervaded the place of despotism” (cited in Omu, 1978: p. 205).

The feudal system in the North was more amenable to indirect rule. To the colonial administration, the system was “a more advanced and centralized form of political organization” and Islam “a more sophisticated and respectable religion than the polytheistic beliefs of the South.” Attempts were, therefore, made by the colonial administration to strengthen the status quo and shield the “hierarchies” in the North from Christian missionaries and western education “advancing from the South.”

Thus, the policy created different circumstances between the North and South. In 1947, secondary school enrolment in the North was 2.5% of the national total, although the area contained 54% of the population. Throughout the 1950s, secondary schools in the South outnumbered those in the North by 20 to one. By 1980, the average literacy levels in the South-West, South-East, and the North were 44.2%, 58% and 23.4% respectively (Ebenezer O. Aka, Jr., 1994: p. 158; Nnoli, 1978: p. 117; and International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4).

A 2007 Central Bank of Nigeria report (cited in Abdul Raufu Mustapha, 2009) put the outcome of the regional differences in perspective. According to the report, poverty is more pronounced among states in the North than in the South. The ten poorest states in the country are in the North. Between 1980 and 2004, poverty increased from averages of 13% to 35% in all the states in the South. But when contrasted with the increase among states in the North, where poverty increased from averages of 37% in 1980 to 72% in 2004, the two regions are set wide apart.

The collaboration between the colonial government and the Hausa-Fulani Islamic aristocracy in the North laid the foundation for the political significance of Islam in post-colonial Nigeria. Despite the importance of missionary activities in the South, Christianity was kept out of the administrative structure of the colonial state in the North (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4). In the South, “drawing on the concepts of ‘Western education’ and ‘enlightenment’, the authority and missionary organizations ... that had penetrated into the South-West as early as the middle of the 19th Century – supported one another.”

By keeping Muslim theocratic elite in power in the North, the long-term consequence was “the invention of a politically unified, though not ethnically homogeneous North that had never existed before.” The arrangement benefitted the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy politically, as they took control “of areas in the Middle Belt they had been unable to conquer” (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4). Argues Olufemi Vaughan:

... British administrators transformed the fluid structures of local governance in the 19th Century into rigid institutions of native authority under colonial rule in the

20th century (and established the framework under which the Hausa-Fulani aristocracy would legitimize its domination) in the ethno-regional political framework that unfolded during the transitional phase of decolonization (cited in International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4).

In 1939, the country was carved into three regions with different ethnic compositions, “superseding the North-South divides with a new tripartite administrative structure” (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4). Each ethnic group dominated a region: Hausa-Fulani in the North; the Yoruba in the West; and the Igbo in the East. With national independence in sight, the stage was set for a ‘do or die’ competition among the ethnic groups for political dominance.

Ethnic Politics and the media in post-colonial Nigeria

By an act of the British Parliament, Nigeria became an independent country within the Commonwealth on 1 October 1960. Independence was ushered in “under ethnically-based leaders” (Caplan, 2008: p. 33). The prospect of self-rule led to the struggle for succession to colonial power and privilege, “the right to replace one elite with another, rather than, say, a struggle for socio-economic transformation” (Graf, 1988: p. 17).

The aim of the political elites during the colonial period was to arouse consciousness in the mind of the people, irrespective of region and ethnicity. Mobilized and politicized during the struggle for independence, the masses would be “depoliticized or re-politicized” in the service of elite domination in post-colonial Nigeria. As Graf noted, “one way of accomplishing this ... was to employ the – colonially generated – spectre of ethnicity.”

At independence, the political elites gravitated towards the political centre. Since economic power was perceived as “a function of government office,” post-independent politics centred around competition for top positions, as a means of gaining access “to state power and the allocation of revenue and the patronage connected with it” (Graf, 1988: p. 18). Ethnicity was “the most effective and readily available ideological appeal to mobilize and retain as many of one’s constituents as possible.”

Thus, political elites came to represent the agencies for the assertion of regional interests, and set in motion the process of regionalization of ethnicity. As Richard Sandbrook (cited in Graf, 1988: p. 20) noted, the success of a politician came to depend on how appropriate cultural symbols were manipulated and how the ethnic group’s aspirations were articulated and advanced. The elite kept in touch with the ethnic base “partly through patronage ... partly through charisma and personalization of politics ..., but primarily through calculated ethno-nationalist appeals” (Graf, 1988: p. 20).

Ethnic associations were utilized to advance the interests of the political elites. According to Graf (1988: p. 31), from the Jam’iyyar Mutanen Arewa (a Hausa-Fulani cultural organization) emerged the Nigerian People’s Congress (NPC) as the dominant Northern political party. The Federated Igbo State Union gave rise to the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the East. And the Yoruba socio-cultural organization, Egbe Omo Oduduwa, was instrumental in the emergence of the major Western party, the Action Group (AG) (see also International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 4; Nnoli, 1978: p. 158; and Adigun A. B. Agbaje, 1992: p. 45).

Each region was dominated by a single party, which in turn was dominated by an ethnic group. As Graf (1988, p. 34) observed, intra-regional consensus was enforced “by the manipulation of the constitutional machinery to favour the most powerful interests and party in each region.” As a result, “charges of election-rigging, thuggery and intimidation” marked the history of the First Republic, particularly in its final phase.” Writes Graf:

In a very real sense, then, the First Republic was locked, from the first elections onward, into a structural framework of practically unmitigated regionalism and winner-take-all politics ... The results demonstrated that no party was able to transcend in any substantial way its ethno-regional social bases.

The results of the federal election leading to independence in 1960 were predicated on the basis of demography. In the Westminster model of parliamentary government bequeathed to the country at independence, representation in the federal legislature was allotted on the basis of regional population. In the national census conducted in 1952, the Northern Region accounted for 54% of the country’s population, which gave the NPC a dominant position in the National Assembly, and made it possible for one of the party’s leaders, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to become the prime minister in 1960 (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 5).

Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Yoruba-based AG, ascended to the Western Region premiership, while Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, a pioneer of nationalism, founder of The West African Pilot group of newspapers and leader of the Igbo-dominated NCNC, became premier of the Eastern Region. At the federal level, “political competition meant rivalry among the three leading regional parties.” Throughout the late colonial period and the initial years of independence, they “sought to fend off opposition from

regional minorities while contending nationally” (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 5).

The media were mobilized to articulate the views of the dominant parties in each of the regions. In the Western Region, the government was in control of the Western Nigeria Television Service, set up in 1959. The *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper, established by Awolowo in 1949, and the *Daily Sketch* newspaper, established in 1960, served the political interest of the region and the owner, now in government in the region and the leader of opposition at the Federal Parliament (Mohammed Musa and Jubril Mohammed, 2004: p. 241).

The NCNC, in government in the Eastern Region, founded the Eastern Nigerian Television Service in 1960 and established some newspapers, in addition to the West African Pilot Group of newspapers, privately owned by the party leader. The NPC, in government at both the Northern Region and at the federal level, founded the Radio Television Kaduna, and controlled the *New Nigeria* newspaper, established by the colonial administration (Musa and Mohammed, 2004: p. 242).

The quest for independence “organically unified the pre-independence political groupings” and the media. In the post-colony, the struggle among the three regional power groupings for “the spoils of office in the regions and at the centre,” involved the media as the megaphones of political and other partisan interests (Musa and Mohammed, 2004: p. 241). As Musa and Mohammed observed,

... [T]he virulent anti-colonial press succumbed to the successful incorporation of their hitherto militant and anti-colonial owners into post-colonial state and soon after became pro-establishment media rooted either as arms of regional power

centres or mouthpieces of reformed fractions of the 'national' bourgeoisie (2004: p. 245).

The NPC maintained the control of the federal executive through selective alliances with and exclusion of rival parties. Ethnic mistrust was rife and difficult to overcome. Even the appointment of Azikiwe as ceremonial president after the proclamation of a constitutional republic in 1963, could not "diminish fears that the dominant position of the Northern Hausa-Fulani elite in the federal government would result in the political exclusion of other major groups" (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 5).

Cracks appeared in the new government during the general elections of 1964. This time, election malpractices were more flagrant, and "bribery and corruption were literally flaunted in the open" (Graf, 1988: p. 39). The situation degenerated into anarchy. The inability of the government to restore law and order prompted a *coup d'état* in 1966, which signalled the collapse of the country's first attempt at democracy – "a victim of political opportunism, ethnic demagoguery and military intrusion" (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 6).

The *coup d'état* was bloody and the conspirators were primarily officers of Igbo origin. The prime minister and some Hausa-Fulani political leaders, as well as a number of prominent army officers were killed in the putsch (Graf, 1988: p. 39). The highest-ranking surviving military officer, Gen. John Aguiyi Ironsi, also an Igbo, took over the control of the government. The circumstances of the coup intensified ethnic enmities, particularly when Ironsi's government declared a unitary state, "a move many perceived as an attempt by the Igbo to entrench their position" (International Crisis Group, 2006: p.6).

A counter *coup d'état* by Hausa-Fulani elements took place six months later. Gen. Ironsi was assassinated and people of Igbo origin were purged from the government and the military. Pogroms against Igbo enclaves in the North prompted a mass exodus. Led by Col. Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the Igbo declared the secession of the Republic of Biafra. The 30-month civil war, which began in 1967, drew the Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba groups against the Igbo (International Crisis Group, 2006: p. 7). It was, in the words of Eghosa E. Osaghea (2003: p. 59) “an epochal event which marked a watershed in ethnic relations in the country.”

After the war in 1970 – except for the less than three years regime of General Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba – the Hausa-Fulani ruled Nigeria till 1999. They were involved in almost all the military coups (Sunny Awhefeada, 2009). The military governments reflected the ethnic and social tensions plaguing the country. As Graf (1988: p. 45) noted, once the initial putsch was executed, the precedent of “violent military action” as an extension of ethnic politics was “established” and “legitimated.” In the words of Martin Dent (cited in Graf, 1988: 45), military officers came to represent armed wings of ethnic political groups.

How this trend affected the political transition and the reform of the media in post-independence Nigeria will be the subject of the next chapter. The ‘stage-ist’ theoretical framework will form the analytical tool in making an explanation regarding the problems confronted by the country’s media reform and political transition.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

To understand the relationship between the media and the democratic process, two approaches have been identified. The one, the macro-level approach, looks at the media system and its effects on politics. The other, the micro-level approach, examines the effect of the media on the individual, such as during elections (Patrick J. McConnell and Lee B. Becker, 2002: p. 2). Although there is no common ground between the approaches, what is not in dispute, as indicated by McConnell and Becker, is the importance of free and open communication to a democratic society.

The contention between the approaches is whether the media lead or follow change, mirror or mould society, or whether they are agents of change or of the status quo. While some scholars are non-committal regarding the question, arguing that “the matter is yet to be resolved,” others say the media follow rather than lead, arguing that

the power of the mass media to advance collective ends is latent and is exercised sporadically and selectively for two reasons: the goals of the media organization take primacy over other social goals; and the media are generally instruments of social forces rather than primary social actors (McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 2).

Beyond the debate, however, the overriding question is whether the function of the media is beneficial to the democratization process. Citing the work of Abraham F. Lowenthal, McConnell and Becker (2002: p. 6) express the view that, just as some media are beneficial, others are not. In Spain, for instance, the media aided in the

transition to a consolidated democracy “by helping to legitimate the new regime and by contributing to the socialization of the public in ways of democratic behaviour” (McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 3). On the other hand, Mercy Ette (2000: p. 67) has found that in Nigeria, the pattern of media coverage during military-mediated transitions “did not promote democratization.”

The media are the connective tissue of democracy (Anthony Mughan and Richard Gunther, 2000: p. 1) and the prospects of the two institutions are intertwined (Minabere Ibelema and Tanja Bosch, 2004: p. 332). As Mughan and Gunther have observed, democracy “is strengthened and its integrity ensured” by the free flow of information, articulating “a variety of political viewpoints to educate the public and allow it to make informed choices, particularly at election time.” Quoting Delli Carpini, Michael X., and Scott Keeter, they argue,

The media, through the information they convey to the mass public, serve as key guarantors of elite accountability and popular control of government in democracies, since ‘a broadly and equitably informed citizenry helps assure a democracy that is both responsive and responsible’ (2000: p. 4).

It, therefore, follows that in nondemocratic regimes, the media operate in a way that they promote unpopular and unaccountable governments. As Richard Gunther, Jose Ramon Montero, and Jose Ignacio Wert (2000: p. 30) argue, totalitarian and authoritarian regimes do not differ with regard to the control of the media. In both regimes, the media are a propaganda tool “in the service of the state,” characterized by censorship, repression of journalists, and heavy-handed effort to structure the flow of information to the public.

The potency of the mass media is never in doubt, either in the hands of the ruling elite or as an instrument for an ideology, pressure group, economic class, or ethnic group. As John C. Merrill figures it, “somebody or some group with special powers and influence uses the media for its own purposes everywhere in the world.” In terms of media reform, Merrill draws a line between a media system that is free and one that is controlled:

If the owners and directors of the press system are using the media for their own purposes then the system is said to be free. If, on the other hand, the government or some non-press entity is using the press for its own ends, then the system is said to be unfree, or controlled (2004: p. 16).

Who has control is a critical question in the determination of whether the media are free and independent, writes Beata Rozumilowicz (cited in McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 4). As the independence of the media is the outcome of a process of reform, a media system, Rozumilowicz posits, should progress “ever nearer to an ideal of freedom and independence and away from dependence and control.” As she argues,

A media structure that is free of interference from government, business, or dominant social groups is better able to maintain and support the competitive and participative elements that define the concept of democracy and the related process of democratization.

The process of media reform does not always move in a single direction (McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 6). Countries progress “in starts and stops, with regression at least somewhat common.” In the introduction to ‘Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state,’ Gunther *et al* demonstrated how to measure “the impact of political transitions on media structures and the impact of media structures on political reform” using the method of comparative analysis, as encompassed in the ‘stage-ist’ analytical framework.

The attraction of the 'stage-ist' analytical framework is that it helps in the determination of whether a country is progressing towards or regressing from media reform and yields "both robust findings and useful levels of generalization." It gives the researcher an "optimal view that will permit him [or her] to draw reliable and rigorous conclusions." In addition, it allows for "meaningful examination among cases with vastly divergent historical backgrounds, levels of development, political institutionalizations, and social, cultural, and ethnic structures." As a result, any commonality found among cases is believed to hold generally.

The assumption of the analytical framework is that media freedom and democratization are linked and that it is possible to determine co-variation between them at a given point in time in the transition process. In other words, media freedom can be seen "as varying (progressing) from pre-transition, to primary transition, to secondary stage, to late or mature" stage, just as democracy can be seen "as varying from pre-transition, to transition, to consolidated, to mature democracy" (McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 13).

The stage-ist analytical framework is not in the nature of a linear theory. As Monroe E. Price and Beata Rozumilowicz have indicated, "there is no inevitability about moving from one stage to another in a linear fashion, and 'backsliding' is not only possible, but also frequent" (2002: p. 260).

Explanation of the 'stage-ist' approach

Four case-studies have been chosen, each representing a country at the point of each of the transition stages – namely pre-transition, primary transition, secondary

transition and late or mature transition – to explain the ‘stage-ist’ theoretical framework. Each of the country-cases was selected both by its previous regime type and by its placement within the larger context of the four stages of political transition. Emphasis is put on the previous regime-type because, as Gunther *et al* cautioned,

It is ... reasonable to assume that the tasks and paths open for the establishment of free and independent media could also be highly dependent upon the previous regime of a country in transition.

Pre-transition stage:

Notwithstanding the regime-type, in the pre-transition stage, the country has elements that bring it “within the borders of transition.” As Lutfulla Kabirov and Scott Smith (2002: p. 47) found in Uzbekistan, the process of democratization was shaped by the country’s Central Asian heritage, and 70 years of Soviet rule. The totalitarian state did not aspire to democracy but rather inherited independence as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union (2002: p. 47).

The ‘opening’ was initiated in 1985 by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s reforms of perestroika, or ‘restructuring’, which offered the media varying levels of freedom. In the Soviet system, the media in Uzbekistan were tied to the dominant power structures and controlled with instruments of censorship. Newspapers were funded and controlled by government organs. In the late 1980s, when the reforms began to occur, the country’s local party functionaries continued to abridge freedom of speech, despite the acceptance of glasnost, or openness.

As Gorbachev's 'restructuring' policy progressed, people were able to organize public demonstrations and discussions. Opposition newspapers emerged and began to print opinions other than the ones passed down from government organs. In 1989, the Communist Party lost authority and control over the media. Between 1988 and the year of independence in 1991, the number of newspapers and magazines tripled from 196. At the same time, the circulation of uncensored independent newspapers increased.

The period was also marked by the appearance of extremist publications, some of which were calling for the overthrow of the existing order. As Lance W. Benneth (cited in McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 10) has indicated, without conscious efforts at this stage of transition "to engineer some fit between new communication forms and emerging social institutions, a free press can actually do more harm than good" to the transition process.

Despite setbacks, the transition process continued. Journalists were released from the grips of the totalitarian system and legal resources developed for the media. International contacts between journalists increased as organizations worked to assist in the reform process. However, as Kabirov and Smith (2002: p. 47) have cautioned, these changes do not mean that democracy, itself, has been achieved.

The means of developing the media vary according to the particular characteristics of a country's pre-transition period. In other words, as Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan argued, "the paths to democracy" and "the task that must be faced" vary "according to the prior regime-type" (cited in McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 7). Once the

regime agrees to some measure of power-sharing, the country is expected to move on to the next stage of development – primary transition.

Primary transition stage:

The beginning of the primary transition stage is characterized by the regime's willingness to change. In Jordan, transition occurred when problems emerged drawing international attention. As Naomi Sakr (2002: p. 107) has noted, the changing status of the West Bank, the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty of 1994, the history of unstable Jordanian-Palestinian leaderships' relations "form a backdrop to the struggle over Jordanian media reform" and the pacts between the authoritarian regime and opposition forces.

Jordan's is a constitutional monarchy and the scope for political participation is limited by the king's extensive powers. Respect for freedom of expression is not binding on the executive, the legislature, or the judiciary. According to Sakr, the closest the country has come to endorsing sentiments in favour of free and public dialogue are those contained in the National Charter, part of which requires the state to ensure that citizens and social and political groups have the right to "use the national mass media to state their opinion" (2002: p. 111).

The first parliamentary elections in Jordan took place half a century ago (Sakr, 2002: p. 107). Political participation was reached in 1952, while the king retained the right to dissolve parliament and appoint prime ministers. After the 1956 general election, and "in response to events in the wider Arab world," the king dismissed the country's

first democratically elected government, declared martial law, banned political parties and ordered foreign radio stations jammed.

A fresh attempt at political liberalization occurred in the early 1960s. Party politics resumed, expressing opposition to domestic repression and the government's reluctance to make "common cause" with other Arab states. In 1970, the eruption of civil war between the Jordanian authorities and Palestinian guerrilla groups led to the tightening of martial law. The king's only gesture toward political participation was the creation of a National Union – which he headed – as the country's sole legal political organization.

A combination of political and economic factors, both internal and external, led to public dissatisfaction in the 1980s (Sakr, 2002: p. 109). In November 1989, parliamentary elections were held. The general election in 1993 set a precedent as the first multi-party election since the 1967 Arab-Israel war. In 1997, with the approach of the general election, the government put the democratization process into reverse. Opposition groups protested the reversal and rioting flared up in 1998.

King Abdullah's accession after the death of his father improved the political climate. According to Sakr, by 2000 the country enjoyed the longest continuous period of political opening in its history. However, the state maintained its dominant ownership of the press in the wake of press law changes in 1998-1999, in which the most widely distributed national dailies, *Al-Ra'i*, and the English-language *Jordan Times*, were 62% state-owned. The government's stake in the daily, *Al-Destour*, stood at 35%.

In Sakr's words, Jordan's transition to democracy has barely begun. As Rozumilowicz (2002: p. 19) has pointed out, this form of transition is theorized to be less stable "because parties only agree on short-term solutions." Pacts are made only when political actors lack other options or "when they experience undue external pressures." According to Rozumilowicz, once such external pressure is removed or options arise, "the pact ceases to constrain." This form of transition is prone to backsliding.

For a successful transition to the secondary stage, Jordan needs a comprehensive legal change for media law reform. As Sakr rightly pointed out, democratization depends on laws that allow freedom of association and of information alongside freedom of expression. For as long as the government maintains a dominant position in the media, a successful transition to the secondary stage may remain a distant prospect.

Secondary transition stage:

The secondary transition stage focuses on what Rozumilowicz (2002: p. 21) describes as "the fine-tuning of the media legislative framework." In this transition stage, Rozumilowicz identifies three logical possibilities that are likely to occur – namely, immediate consolidation, authoritarian backlash, or institutional revision. In Uganda, for instance, there was authoritarian backlash as the reforming regime abandoned the process and returned to a period of authoritarian rule.

Writing on the reform process in Uganda, Ronald David Kayanja (2002: p. 155) noted that, though the country made the political transition from a previously

authoritarian regime, elements of the past continued to influence the media reform process. The most detrimental factor to the process was the country's post-colonial history, marked by the effects of arbitrary rule, ethnic violence, numerous *coups d'état*, military excesses, disappearances, and economic turmoil.

Legislative development was turned towards non-democratic ends by the elite, resulting in the failure to consolidate. The new legal, political, economic, and social structures bore the scars of the autocratic colonial regime, which survival was based on the use of tough sanctions. The colonial press laws were stringent and forbade dissent against policies.

The post-independence governments deployed the colonial laws against the press. The Newspaper Act of 1963 created the press censorship board. In 1972, a decree was issued, which gave government officials the right to "prohibit the publication of any newspaper for a specified or indefinite period" if the official "is satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so" (Kayanja, 2002: p. 157). According to Kayanja, the decree remained in force until 1995 and was used to ban newspapers.

Following a protracted five-year civil war, a new government emerged in 1986 and instituted a period of democratic transition. Elections were held at all levels, and a new constitution was ratified by a constituent assembly in 1995. The constitution guaranteed freedom of expression. As Kayanja (2002: p. 158) noted, for the first time in the history of the country, a president was elected by universal adult suffrage and "a relatively independent parliament was in place."

The Press and Journalists Statute came into force in July 1995. It repealed restrictive laws, specifically the Newspaper and Publications Act and the Press Censorship and Correction Act. Bonds required before the establishment of media outlets and censorship requirements for publications were abolished. It also simplified the process of newspaper registration. As a result, observed Kayanja, “there are currently no legal provisions in Uganda under which a newspaper can be banned.”

Although the principles of the 1995 constitution are not faithfully observed, argued Kayanja, some progress has been made in media reform. Freedom of expression and the press is now codified in the nation’s basic law. The new Press and Journalists Statute “eased entry by new publications and eliminated some significant censorious practices.” Most importantly, maintained Kayanja, the law removed the legal justification for banning media publications (2002: p. 161).

This stage of the transition presents obstacles. Linz and Stepan have noted that the most important element that must be in place “is a strong, working state that is fully committed to the democratic process” and, in doing so, gains “the confidence of its citizens.” It means that,

For a state to make the transition to democracy and, more importantly, to consolidate a lasting democracy, democracy must become ‘the only game in town’ behaviourally, attitudinally, and constitutionally ... [It means that] democracy is deeply ingrained in society in ‘social, institutional and even psychological life’ (cited in McConnell and Becker, 2002: p. 8).

Late or mature transition stage:

Even at the late stage of transition, argued Rozumilowicz (2002: p. 23), the threat of renewed authoritarianism remains. This situation can be avoided, as in the case of

India, if the 'fine-tuning' process continued for a lengthy period of time to achieve consensus on its form, content, and application. As the transitional system approached a late or mature stage in India, it became defined by the emergence of a coherent system that needed to be addressed in order to safeguard the system from backsliding.

Since India's independence in 1947, legal and constitutional rights have been suspended only once, and that was during the state of emergency declared in 1975-1977 (Nilanjana Gupta, 2002: p. 181). The state of emergency suspended fundamental constitutional rights, such as the freedom of expression. Broadcasting systems were used for government propaganda. That this period was brought to an end within two years by a general election is, to Gupta, "an indication of the strength of democracy in India" (2002: p. 182).

Post-independence media reform in India was based on the framework set down by the British. The 1949 constitution made no mention of the rights, privileges, or responsibilities of the press. Citizens were guaranteed the "liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship" and this provision was considered to apply equally to the press. The "freedom of speech" was, however, qualified in a clause covering eight areas: the sovereignty and integrity of India; the security of the state; friendly relations with foreign states; public order; decency and morality; contempt of court; defamation; and incitement to an offence (Gupta, 2002: p. 185).

The clause gained significance when the government attempted to exploit it to muzzle the press. In the 1980s, attempts were made at various levels to impose press

editorial censorship. Some of them included the Special Powers (Press) Bill in Jammu and Kashmir and the Defamation (Press) Bill intended to fight the surge of secessionist region-based terrorist activities in the country, but failed in the face of strong opposition from political parties and pressure groups. According to Gupta, since then, no cohesive nationwide press act has been passed to date.

The media sector is a thriving part of Indian democracy. But the lack of a responsive legal structure or framework, according to Gupta, decreases levels of oversight. As Rozumilowicz sees it, legal and institutional questions have to be addressed to make most actors who impact on the media to feel comfortable operating within the newly established norms. The real task, maintains Rozumilowicz, “is to consolidate commitment to this new system while drawing ever larger segments of society into the forum.”

As has been discussed, in the ‘stage-ist’ model, distinct strategies and approaches are discernible at different stages of the media reform process and within the process of democratization in general (Rozimulowicz, 2002: p. 24). In the case of Nigeria, the general model of media reform will be made clear as the thesis explores the country’s process of media reform and its relationship to democratization.

CHAPTER FOUR

Democratization and Media Reform

The media in colonial Nigeria

Fred I. A. Omu's outstanding account remains the most referenced work in the study of the Nigerian newspaper press. It tells the story of the evolution from 1880 to 1937, and acknowledges the pioneering role of Christian missionaries. The development of the newspaper press in the country would later receive a boost with the arrival of freed slaves from America and the West Indies in Lagos in the 19th Century. The returning ex-slaves stimulated the inauguration of popular newspaper activity in the country and made it "an important influence on ideas, attitudes and outlook" (1978: p. 8).

The thrust of Christian missionary activities in the 19th Century was two-pronged: 'proselytization' and 'literary drive' (Adigun A.B. Agbaje, 1992: p. 140). The printing press was an indispensable tool in achieving both ends. In 1846, the Presbyterian Mission arrived in Calabar, in the South-East, with the first printing press in the country. In 1854, Rev. Henry Townsend of the Christian Missionary Society set up a printing press in Abeokuta, in the South-West. In 1859, Townsend founded *Iwe Irohin*, a Yoruba-language fortnightly newspaper, which became bilingual with the addition of an English language supplement in 1860 (see also Roselynde Ainslie, 1966: p. 22).

The second half of the 19th Century saw the return of the freed slaves from America and the West Indies. English-speaking and, in many cases well educated, “they brought their experience of political struggle in the Americas, technical knowledge, and a certain amount of capital” (Ainslie, 1966: p. 21). According to Ainslie, these Afro-Americans, their sons and grandsons, who bore Anglo-Saxon names, “acted as leaven in all sorts of enterprises up and down the West African coast from Lagos in the south to Monrovia in the north.”

In 1863, Robert Campbell founded the *Anglo-African* newspaper in Lagos (Omu 1978: 19). Campbell, a Kingston, Jamaican-born schoolteacher, migrated to the United States in 1855 and joined the Institute of Colored Youth at Philadelphia as a ‘scientific teacher’. From the United States, he joined the ‘back-to-Africa’ movement of the West Indians and Afro-Americans and arrived in Lagos in 1862. According to Omu (1978: p. 20), in the next 22 years, Campbell distinguished himself as a journalist, intellectual, manufacturer, merchant and administrator.

Anglo-African was an “assortment of scraps culled from a variety of sources.” Campbell’s aim was “to exploit the growing interest in Western education and enlightenment in the 1860s, by providing cheap and accessible materials that would educate, inform and entertain its readers.” The venture failed because “the literary matter interested only a few subscribers” and “sales did not exceed about 30-50 copies a week.” In Omu’s opinion, *Anglo-African* was not part of the newspaper movement “except as a source of inspiration” (1978: p. 19).

The founding of the indigenous press took place in the late 1880s (Omu, 1978: p. 21). The stage was set with the “growing circulation of learning and the eruption of nationalist and intellectual fervour.” Added to that was the talk-of-the-day partition-of-Africa “wave of European expansion.” While the partition received the applause of missionaries, it was viewed by the indigenous people as a contradiction of “the principles of Christianity and democracy” (see also Agbaje, 1992: p. 140). These developments led to the need for an indigenous newspaper press “for the effective ventilation of social and political grievances and for the inculcation of nationalist sentiment.” Writes Omu:

With the inauguration of the indigenous press in Lagos, a new era was to open in the history of Nigeria. Conflict between African opinion and the colonial administration would characterize political development and an impetus would be given to the evolution of a pioneer African industrial enterprise (1978: p. 23).

The newspapers of the 1880s were run by men without training, to whom journalism was an occupation secondary to business, politics, or the law (Omu, 1978: p. 26; Ainslie, 1966: p. 32; and Lloyd Sommerlad, 1966: p. 25). Between 1880 and 1937, a total of 51 newspapers were established. These newspapers, excepting 15 provincial weeklies, were published in Lagos, now “the centre of sophistication [and] the fountain of enlightened values and tastes.” Between 1921 and 1937, provincial newspapers were established in nine cities in Southern Nigeria (Omu, 1978: p. 26-27).

The black émigré press was joined by those of “persons of full or part Nigerian parenthood” towards the end of the 19th Century (Agbaje, 1992: p. 141). *Lagos Times* blazed the trail in 1880, followed by *Lagos Observer* in 1882. In terms of life-span, *Lagos Observer* was more successful. Unlike *Lagos Times*, “which made every effort

to balance radicalism with decorum”, *Lagos Observer* emerged as the symbol of “the intellectual aggression which characterized political developments in the first two decades of the 19th Century” (Omu, 1978: p. 29-30).

Newspapers disappeared as fast as they appeared. In the words of Ainslie (1966: p. 22), “each one that died [was] replaced by another and another.” The mortality rate shows that 33% died before they were one year old; 23% died in their third year; 4% in their fifth year; and 10% in their seventh year (Omu, 1978: p. 77). Writing the forward in Sommerlad’s ‘The Press In Developing Countries’, Wilbur Schramm recalled that the proprietors of these newspapers were “mired in frustration – inability to get news, inability to get paper, inability to get a staff, inability to get readers, inability to get advertising – and all these in the face of the most manifest and recognised need for a newspaper.”

Sales were low and it was difficult to break even. According to Omu, up to the middle of 1919, no newspaper “realised as much as £500 from sales”. The highest circulation figure was 700 a week. At three pence a copy, “this fetched £65 a year.” Literacy and readership go hand-in-hand. By 1913, “only one in every 180 children of school age ‘had any sort of education whatever’.” In addition, the apathy of the educated class towards reading newspapers “was a phenomenon to which newspaper proprietors alluded from time to time” (1978: p. 82).

Besides sales and advertisements, there were two other ways by which newspapers were financed. According to Omu, one was through donations, sometimes anonymous. The newspaper-recipient would give publicity to such “patriotic

gesture” and “appealed to readers to emulate the example.” Sometimes, the “editors took the initiative and openly campaigned for what was known as Sustentation Fund.” The other source of revenue was “job-printing”. In Omu’s account, “jobbing brought sizable revenue to the newspapers” (1978: p. 80).

The introduction of press regulation and control in the first decade of the 20th Century made the newspaper business a precarious venture (Omu, 1978: p. 172). The first press law was a replica of the one passed in Trinidad in 1894 “for regulating the printing and publishing of newspapers.” It required owners, publishers and printers of newspapers to be registered. Proprietors were to deposit £200 “caution money” as “a guarantee for the payment of fines or damages.” In Trinidad, the law killed the *Tobago News* “because the owner was unable to furnish the amount of the bond” (1978: p. 176).

The introduction of the Seditious Offences Ordinance in 1909 reflected the extent to which the colonial administration found newspaper activities intolerable (1978: p. 182). It originated from India, where it was found to be “sweeping and severe.” In India, it was known as the Penal Code of 1860 and carried the penalty “of transportation for life.” In Nigeria, the draft was accepted as “quite suitable” to the local conditions and was published in the *Gazette* on 22 September 1909.

As Omu (1978: p. 132) has observed, the “critical temper [of the newspaper press was] a positive expression of the sense of frustration experienced by Nigerians in their relationship with the colonial government.” For being excluded from “the colonial executive council, repressed in the legislature, [and] frustrated in the

bureaucracy and commerce,” they turned to newspapers as the avenue “for decisive ‘counter-hegemonic’ campaigns within the colonial order” (Mohammed Musa and Jubril Mohammed, 2004: p. 236 -237).

Constitutional concessions came with “restricted” elections in Lagos and Calabar between 1923 and 1947 (Agbaje, 1992: p. 143). The development added a new dimension to the role of newspapers as “outlets for electoral policies and propaganda” (Omu, 1978: p. 60). Newspapers became a means “to give effective expression” to political opinions. *Nigerian Spectator*, founded in 1923, was meant to further the political ambition of the proprietor in the election to the new legislative council. The establishment of *Nigerian Advocate* the same year was “inspired largely by the commercial possibilities of electioneering readership.”

With elections came electioneering campaigns, which brought about a split within the ranks of the black community between the émigrés and “the indigenous Nigerian stock” (Agbaje, 1992: p. 143). The émigrés were labelled as ‘foreigners’. By the 1940s, noted Agbaje, this campaign of exclusivity succeeded and became the harbinger of the use of ethnic symbols in Nigerian politics. The “federal principle of 1954”, in which the country was divided into three regions, gave it a breath of life.

Each region “identified with particular ethnic groups and particular parties” – the West with the Yoruba and the Action Group (AG); the East with the Igbo and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC); and the North with the Hausa-Fulani and the Nigerian People’s Congress (NPC). On the effect of this division on the mass media, Agbaje writes:

The fact that at this period, the political leaders were also invariably newspaper publishers meant that the newspaper press had invariably become a mouthpiece for political rivalry couched in ethnic terms. This, essentially, was the picture inherited at independence (1992: p. 144).

As independence approached, the newspaper press, which was the “principle medium of agitational politics” under colonial rule, “took on extra roles ... for the recruitment of most literate Africans into the political arena.” Agbaje further writes:

In the process, the press became so enmeshed in the struggle for political power [and] found it virtually an uphill task to rise above the personal, political and ethnic acrimonies ... In fact, the press became so immersed in politics that political organizations ‘had grown up around the press, rather than around organized membership’... The influence and prestige of politicians were thence gauged in terms of how many papers they owned.

The involvement of the press in the power struggle contributed to the collapse of the First Republic. The press failed to prepare the people for political challenges in the post-colonial government and, instead, became part of the impediment to the transition process. Peter Enahoro was unquestioningly right when he noted that “whoever and whatever ruined our First Republic did so with the active collaboration and connivance of the greater part of the Nigerian press” (cited in Agbaje, 1992: p. 228).

The media in post-colonial Nigeria

The popularization of the newspaper press in Nigeria continued in the post-Second World War years. For the first time, observed Ainslie (1966: p. 35), the reading public was no longer limited within “a privileged coastal intelligentsia,” but extended to “a relatively wide cross-section of the population.” Gone were the days of the amateurs, the lawyers and politicians who ran newspapers “on the side.” Gone also was “the era of the editor-printer” (Ainslie, 1966: p. 55), especially those who, in the

words of Agbaje, “could not secure the benevolence of political mentors in control of one government or the other.”

It was the exception that proved the rule to see leading politicians or political parties not in control of newspaper chains which had now replaced the earlier small-scale enterprise of a single newspaper run by the editor-publisher (1992: p. 144).

The NCNC blazed the trail in setting up newspaper chains in Nigeria. The leader of the party, Nnamdi Azikiwe, educated in the United States where he distinguished himself “as a university professor, publicist and journalist,” returned to Nigeria in 1937 (Musa and Mohammed, 2004: p. 238). As a student, Azikiwe witnessed the growth of “a militant Negro press, and ... a new political consciousness” (Ainslie 1966: p. 33). As Omu put it, he “brought into Nigeria a new idealism of nationalism as well as new techniques of political and journalistic propaganda” (1978: p. 69).

Azikiwe arrived in Nigeria at the right time, noted Ainslie (1966: p. 34). The period coincided with the emergence of political parties and the beginning of mass political awareness. *West African Pilot* newspaper, which he founded, was “one of the principal formers of this new consciousness.” Aware of the importance of “local issues to a popular newspaper,” Azikiwe embarked on the creation of a chain of newspapers, “the first indigenously owned and run groups on the continent” (Ainslie, 1966: p. 55) which embraced “the main centres of all the three regions of Nigeria” (1966: p. 35).

The Azikiwe group was joined by the government-sponsored Gaskiya Corporation, an outgrowth of the Northern Literature Bureau established to promote “Northern regional vernacular languages and literature.” It began publishing a Hausa weekly,

Gaskiya ta fi Kwado, in 1939. The English-language weekly, the *Nigerian Citizen*, was launched in 1948. In 1966, *Nigerian Citizen* was renamed *New Nigeria*. Both *Gaskiya ta fi Kwado* and *New Nigeria* “were issued at the instance of the colonial government and, to this day, retained their pro-government posture” (Musa and Mohammed, 2004: 239).

In the West, *Daily Service* newspaper became the mouthpiece of the AG. With the establishment of *Nigerian Tribune* in Ibadan in 1949 by the leader of the political party, Obafemi Awolowo, *Daily Service* formed the Amalgamated Press of Nigeria. By 1958, the Amalgamated Press was transformed into the Allied Press Limited, publishing “a string of small provincial dailies, so that it now grouped a whole network of papers covering all the regions” (Ainslie, 19966: p. 56).

Thus, Nigeria developed three major newspaper chains, “one government-run, [and] the other two financed by local private capital” (Ainslie, 1966: p. 56). Each of the newspaper chains was owned by one of the three dominant ethnic groups. At independence, therefore, the country inherited “a highly politicized press” which “depended on political mentors for survival and growth” (Agbaje, 1992: p. 146).

According to Agbaje,

The logic of the situation implied the sacrificing of professional ethics and standards informed by visions of the liberal order. The audience had also been significantly segmented and readership narrowed down largely to political fellow-travellers.

The first few years of independence in 1960 saw few changes “in the political style of the newspapers” (Omu, 1978: p. 248). The struggle for power among the politicians assumed “a new fury and the competing party newspapers advertised their

fanaticism.” In the major events that followed independence in 1960, the newspaper press, according to Omu, “provided a remarkable example of over-zealous and irresponsible partisanship and recklessness.”

Citing I. Coker, Agbaje (1992: p. 161) noted that, prior to independence, Nigerians were accustomed to blaming the government for all society ills, failures and setbacks. The colonial administrator was seen as the representative of British imperialism and, therefore, “an assault on the government ... amounted to an assault on imperialism.” With independence, however, the “old attitude of the people toward government remained unchanged.” According to Coker,

It is this attitude which was being successfully exploited by sections of the Nigerian Press in dealing with public affairs as they related to the Federal Government ... One Newspaper group, for example, started off bang from their maiden issue with an onslaught on everything the government ever did. In season and out of season, it ridiculed the people by every journalistic artifice to make a laughing-stock of their own freely elected representatives. No allowance was made for honest mistakes and the severely limited experience of the new rulers as compared with other advanced countries.

According to F. Barton, the Prime Minister was particularly upset with the lack of support and understanding “among the Lagos-based newspapers” (cited in Agbaje, 1992: p. 160). For instance, a general strike by the labour union in 1964 was seen by the NPC and its press “as partly a result of AG-NCNC machinations” (Agbaje, 1992: p. 165). Northern political leaders in the NPC were aware of these problems. In 1964, the Northern Region government announced its plan “to replace and absorb the bi-weekly *Nigerian Citizen* with a new daily newspaper published by a new company.”

As Agbaje noted, by the time the newspaper, *New Nigeria*, came out on New Year's Day in January 1966, its import as the "champion" of "Northern interests" was beyond question. The paper's flag editorial on the front page of its maiden issue, title 'The principles by which we stand – or fail,' was unequivocal:

The *New Nigeria* makes its bow in troubled times. A few weeks ago a leading daily newspaper was closed down. Another faces a ban on sales in two regions of the federation. For a time at least the bigots have had their way. Where stands the *New Nigeria*? ... As a Northern newspaper we shall seek to identify ourselves with the North and its peoples; their interests and aspirations. For that we offer no apology (cited in Agbaje, 1992: p. 172).

Two weeks after the take-off of *New Nigeria*, the 1966 *coup d'état* occurred. The coup was all that the newspaper needed to make its points. As Agbaje noted, the coup "was construed as pro-South, essentially Igbo-engineered and anti-North, in that several Northern political and military leaders were killed by the coup plotters." As he put it, the coup "served to enhance" *New Nigeria*'s "professional quality." Quoting John D. Chick, he remarked,

The military coup served its embarrassing links with the old regime and provided it with a magnificent scoop of which it took full advantage. Pictures of blood-stained walls, accounts of Sir Ahmadu Bello's execution, and interviews with the rebel leaders pushed the circulation [of *New Nigeria*] up ... (1992: p. 173).

In the words of Agbaje (1992: p. 152), the *New Nigeria* became "a mouthpiece of Northern revanchism."

As Nigeria moved into the second half of the 1960s, all the steps taken to avert the impending civil war failed to achieve results. Igbo journalists based in other parts of the country returned to the East, just as other Igbo people residing in the West and North. Ethnic fissures, noted Agbaje, loomed large in the press reports of events during the count-down to the war (1992: p. 218). Before the civil war started, the

press war was already under way. It was not surprising, Agbaje argued, that “the slide into civil war stretched the ‘professional bonds’ of journalists and other media workers” (1992: p. 221).

The sides in the war consolidated their propaganda machines. For the editor of *New Nigeria*, the Northern political elite appointed somebody who was “closer to the thinking of mainstream Northern leadership.” On its part, the Eastern Nigerian Government launched the *Eastern Nigeria Spotlight*, a weekly newspaper published in English and French for a wider international readership (Agbaje, 1992: p. 222). In their bid to prove their loyalty to either the federal or the secessionist cause, operators of the mass media sought to be “more Catholic than the Pope” (1992: p. 224).

At the end of the civil war in 1970, the call for an end to military rule became loud. The military government promised to hand over to elected civilians by October 1976. The failure to keep to the handover date created a schism between the press and the government. As the press became highly critical, the government bared its fangs. As Agbaje put it,

[T]he military administration down to 1979 showed a preference for ‘administrative’ handling of journalists and media houses, including detention of ‘recalcitrant’ journalists without trial, raids and laying of siege in the premises of erring newspaper houses, dissolution of boards of government-owned newspapers whenever necessary, and outright proscription (1992: p. 230).

Under the military government, press criticisms and anti-government demonstrations came to be seen as “seditious acts meant to undermine the administration.” Series of arrests and harassment further fuelled tension (Agbaje, 1992: p. 232). On 29 July 1975, people woke up to the news of a military *coup d’état*. The new administration

announced a program for transition to civilian rule by 1979. According to Agbaje, the press “was virtually unanimous” in welcoming the sacking of the last administration (1992: p. 239).

The new military government’s presence became preponderant in press ownership. Barely a month in office, the government took over controlling shares in the *Daily Times* Group and acquired the *New Nigeria* Group from Northern state governments. State governments established their own newspapers. As Agbaje noted, the pattern in government-owned newspapers “was for the posting of new military governors to be followed by changes in the management of newspapers owned by the various state governments” (1992: p. 246). By 1975, only few privately-owned newspapers were still in existence (1992: p. 260).

In October 1979, the Second Republic was inaugurated with the handing over of the reigns of government to democratically elected civilians. As Agbaje indicated, just as in the First Republic, the “linkage between intra-media and extra-media factors and forces” reflected and affected issues of the day in a partisan manner “dictated largely by the interests of the press barons and their constituencies” (1992: p. 262). On 31 December 1983, the demise of the Second Republic in yet another *coup d’état* was announced. Again, the coup received support from the public and the press.

Again, Agbaje noted that the initial press and public support for this *coup d’état* and the regime soon began to dwindle, “thanks largely to its draconian laws, including detention and press control legislations, its unenviable record of human rights abuses and the apparent anti-Southern and anti-Christian biases in the manner in which it

conducted appointments into high public office which appeared to have led to a higher representation of Northern, Muslim interests in federal organs” (1992: p. 263). At the height of public disenchantment, a palace coup was announced, which brought another army general, also a Northerner, to power in 1985. The new military government promised, “to public applause,” to return the country to democratic rule by 1992.

Again, the initial public support for the new government began to wane and sections of the press became critical of the regime. According to Agbaje, the regime’s economic reform package was hurting “the more vulnerable segments of the population,” while creating “a new corps of *nouveaux riches* vending access to state power.” Public perception of the government as corrupt led to mass revolts, “which increasingly made government to turn to draconian measures, including closing down media houses for publishing items considered to be government secret, to maintain order.”

Like the regime before it, the military government exhibited in public appointments and the distribution of resources a pattern that did not satisfy powerful geo-ethnic and religious groups. With the gradual removal of federal ministers and military officers from the South and Christian areas and their replacement by Muslim Northern interests, and increasing fears by Southern minorities in the oil-producing areas and among Northern minorities in the Middle Belt, “the press again became bifurcated along geo-political and ethno-religious lines.” While Northern newspapers rose in defence of the government, privately owned Southern newspapers were

harassed by state security agencies for being critical of the government (Agbaje, 1992: p. 264).

In this context, on 22 April 1990, Agbaje noted, a military *coup d'état* was attempted by middle-rank military officers, drawn mainly from the oil-producing Southern minorities and Christian Northern minorities. The coup, though foiled by loyal troops, mirrored the deep-seated frustration of minority groups in the country. As the officers indicated on network radio, the coup was

conceived, planned and executed for the marginalized, oppressed and enslaved people of the Middle Belt and the South with a view of freeing ourselves and our children yet unborn from eternal slavery and colonization by a clique of this country (cited in Agbaje, 1992: p. 264).

The military government kept shifting the date for handover of the reign of power to a democratically elected government. Another deadline was scheduled to culminate with a presidential election on 12 June 1993. The final transition date was designated to begin on 27 August, to mark the eight anniversary of the *coup d'état* that brought the government to power. Repeated delays had begun to fuel suspicion about the government's commitment to hand over power to a democratically elected government.

The presidential election on 12 June 1993 came after two aborted attempts. The military government constantly changed the electoral rules at will, intimidated the politicians, introduced new rules, and re-interpreted existing ones to suit its whims (Ajayi Ola Rotimi and Julius O. Ihonvbere, 1994: p. 671). After eight years of this political rigmarole, many people "were more interested in seeing the military leave the scene than in the two candidates" who contested the election, while others, as

Paul Adams noted, regarded “the transition to democracy with detachment and an air of resignation” (cited in Rotimi and Ihonvbere, 1994: p. 672).

Many people were disillusioned and saw the possibility of democracy in the country as far-fetched. The presidential campaign, between the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, Moshood Abiola, a Yoruba Muslim from the South and the National Republican Convention (NRC) candidate, Bashir Tofa, a Hausa-Fulani Muslim from the North, was lacklustre. According to International Crisis Group (2006: p. 12), only 35% of the electorate turned out to vote and there was little evidence of organized fraud or vote-rigging and no violence. The election turned out to be, as observers adjudged it, “the most free and fair in Nigeria’s political history” (Rotimi and Ihonvbere, 1994: p. 672).

The results of the election were about to be announced by the electoral commission when it was annulled by the military government. The figures leaked to the media indicated that the Yoruba candidate won the election with 58% of the votes. With annulment of the elections followed the suspension of the electoral commission. The annulment was not only seen as ethnic exclusion by the Northern establishment, but was also interpreted by Southern Nigerians as a desire “to sustain the hegemonic power structure in favour of the Hausa-Fulani tribe” (Rotimi and Ihonvbere, 1994: p. 677).

Following the announcement of the cancellation of the election, rioting erupted in Lagos and other South-Western cities. Pro-democracy movements called out their members to protest against it. Rotimi and Ihonvbere noted that the media, especially

those in the South, took a firm stand for democracy and called on the government to reverse “its unwise decision.” The government responded “by proscribing the newspapers based in the West,” and threw “the pro-democracy leaders into jail without trial” (1994: p. 680).

In late August 1993, the government worked out what Rotimi and Ihonvbere described as “an unusual arrangement,” which led to the installation of an interim government headed by a Yoruba. After just 82 days, on 17 December 1993, a Northern ex-chief of staff in the army forced the interim government to resign. According to the International Crisis Group (2006: 12), the military leader “dissolved the parties and intensified repression of dissent.” To the International Crisis Group, it “was Nigeria’s most repressive rule to date.” The combination of personalized power, obscene corruption and raw authoritarianism “was without precedent even by comparison with the already sad record of governance.”

In reporting the annulment and the crisis that came in its wake, the government-owned newspapers, according to Ette (2000: p. 78), “were like conveyor belts, simply relaying information from the military without any attempt to frame or disdain the views put across.” A week before the annulment, the government-owned Northern-based *New Nigeria* published an editorial, suggesting that the election was not credible and that “it did not offer any hope for democracy in Nigeria.” The paper argued that “no genuine leadership, or credible democratic process [could] be installed or nurtured’ through the poor turnout that marked the election.”

On the same day, another government-owned Southern-based newspaper, *Daily Times*, also carried an editorial on the election cancellation. The newspaper asserted that “the election called for celebration because it showed that Nigerians were ready to bid farewell to the military and through the ballot box had delivered ‘a sacred verdict’ on the reality of a return to civil rule.” Though Ette was not sure why the two government-owned newspapers took such opposite positions, she, however, suggested that the military may have directed the papers to take such stands to give the impression that it was not interfering with their editorial thrusts.

The privately-owned newspapers took a different approach, focusing attention “on public reaction” in addition to reporting “the official explanations for the action.”

Writes Ette:

There was manifest diversity in the coverage of the political crisis that ensued, but this was due to the different influences that were brought to bear on the press. For the government-owned newspapers, it was the pressure to put across the military’s point of view, while the privately-owned papers had the interests of their owners to protect.

At the time Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, military dictatorship had dominated the government for 28 years in 39 years of independence. What emerged was a picture of a complicated relationship between the political system and the media structure. The contribution of the media to the democratic process was undermined by a deep division expressed in ethnic interpretation of politics. Thus, the media, which could have served as an intermediary between conflicting groups, were, in the words of Ette (2000: p. 83), caught up in the conflicts.

The ‘stage-ist’ framework and reform process in Nigeria

Following the ‘stage-ist’ framework, Nigeria can be generalized to be at the secondary stage of media reform and democratic transition. The foregoing analysis shows discernible similarities between the trends in Nigeria and that of Uganda, as discussed in the preceding chapter. In both countries, the processes have not moved in a single direction. Both countries have progressed ‘in starts and stops,’ and showed signs of regression since the respective transition programs began at independence.

Incidentally, both countries shared similar pre-independence experience, having come under British colonial rule, from which they both obtained independence in the early 1960s. In both cases, the pre-transition stage culminated in independence under constitutions that provided for parliamentary governments. Shortly after independence, there were backslides in the reform process as one military regime after another took over control of the government, abandoned the democratic process and returned to a period of authoritarian rule.

As in Uganda, the post-independence government in Nigeria was based on the framework set down by the British. In both constitutions, the citizens were guaranteed the “freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.” There was no explicit mention of the rights, privileges, or responsibilities of the press, but these provisions were considered to apply equally to the press.

Similar to the experience in Uganda, the most detrimental factor to the reform process in Nigeria's post-colonial history was arbitrary rule, ethnic violence, numerous *coups d'état*, military excesses, and political turmoil. In both cases, the post-independence legal, political, economic, and social structures bore the scars of the autocratic colonial regimes and development was turned towards non-democratic ends by the elite, resulting in failure to consolidate democratic rule.

Both countries went through ethnic conflicts, civil wars and military governments that were punctuated by brief periods of civilian governments. Since restarting the nascent democracy, new constitutions have come to life in both countries proclaiming freedom of expression for every person. In both constitutions, citizens are now "entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions."

As Rozumilowicz (2002: p. 21) has indicated, the problem most likely to be faced during the secondary transition stage is that of "elite capture of various institutional branches or functions" which, she argued, could "stifle legal functioning or turn legislative development toward non-democratic ends." As she noted, the two specific problems that may exist at this stage of reform are inappropriate structuring and inappropriate utilization.

Where the problem is inappropriate structuring, Rozumilowicz (2002: p. 22) argued that the new legal, political, economic, and social structures may be incomplete or may bear the scars of the previous regime. In this case, she advocated for what she

called “rebalancing and reformulation.” To this end, she made the following suggestions:

- the constraining of defamation legislation so as to ensure that government does not overuse it detrimentally;
- the curtailing of executive rule by decree in order to allow the media breathing space;
- the removal of harmful remnants of the previous system from the new institutional structures.

Where the problem is inappropriate utilization, Rozumilowicz argued that the new legal, political, economic, and social structures may be complete and unscarred, but implemented by dominant groups “in a manner inappropriate to their reformist design.” She suggests that, in this case, options open to media reform include the following strategies:

- seminars and training conferences for both politicians and journalists to explain and clarify the new institutional and legal order as well as its intended functioning and rationale;
- roundtables that bring together media professionals and policy makers to establish personal contacts and to discuss grievances and seek problem solutions;
- network of media professionals that may lead to more systematized and institutionalized cooperation between those working in similar fields;
- seminars that train media professionals in investigative and responsible journalism, addressing the distinction between uncovering the truth and

fabricating it, and establishing a mind frame within which objectivity is stressed and partisan coverage is downplayed;

- encouraged foreign investment to bring a measure of independence to various media sectors that suffer from an inadequate domestic economic base.

Where democratic norms and principles are not accepted as structuring mechanism “in the new game of politics,” Rozumilowicz hypothesized the return to backsliding. On the other hand, she argued, “various external stimuli such as international pressure, internal educational programs both for political actors and for society in general, as well as positive feedback loops that encourage compliance may enable a country to progress to the [late or mature] stage in the democratization process.”

CHAPTER FIVE

Research Methodology

Content analysis as a research tool

Content analysis is used as the research tool in this study. As Klaus Krippendorff (1980: p. 21) has noted, the requirement of any research technique “to be objective and systematic” is its “replicability” (1980: p. 21). Thus, for any research tool to meet this objective, the rules that govern the process must be explicit and applicable equally to all units of analysis. In other words, the units of analysis should be defined “so precisely that different analysts can apply them to the same body of content and secure the same results” (Bernard Berelson, 1952: p. 16).

As a research technique, content analysis is ideal “for the systematic classification and description of communication content,” organised according to “certain usually predetermined categories” (Arthur Asa Berger 1998: p. 22). This definition underlines the fact that content analysis “may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis, or both.” Although the technique may not provide direct data “about the nature of the communicator, audience, or effects,” nevertheless, it is useful for the purposes of “classification, description, and analysis of the manifest content of the communication.”

In his definition of content analysis, Krippendorff (1980: p. 22) takes note of “two connotations” that content analysis should avoid. First, in content analysis, “messages do not have a single meaning” that needs to be “unwrapped.” The data

can always be looked at from numerous perspectives, especially when they are “symbolic in nature.” Second, “meanings need not be shared.” As he argues, “meanings are always relative to a communicator.”

The requirement of quantification is “the most distinctive feature of content analysis” (Berelson, 1952: p. 17). This characteristic goes farthest “toward distinguishing the procedure from ordinary reading.” The procedure is based on “counting and/or measuring,” and “the findings are given in numerical form,” which makes them amenable to replication (Berger 1998: p. 26). It “does not necessarily demand the assignment of ‘numerical’ values to the analytic categories.” As Berger puts it,

Sometimes it takes the form of quantitative words like ‘more’ or ‘always’ or ‘increases’ or ‘often.’ Although results of this kind may be appropriate for certain studies, it should be recognized that such terms are just as ‘quantitative’ as the terms 37 or 52%; they are only less exact and precise.

While quantification is important in content analysis, writes Krippendorff (1980: p. 22), “qualitative methods have proven successful” as a means of discourse analysis. In the preface to ‘*Racism and the Press*’, Teun A. van Dijk argues that the strength of the discourse analytical approach lies in its emphasis on the major levels of news discourse structure, such as topics, overall schematic forms, local meaning, style and rhetoric, as well as their relations with cognitive processes of production and understanding, and their socio-cultural and political contexts.

Discourse analysis is a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of language-use and communication “in their socio-cultural contexts” (Dijk, 1991: p. 44). It specifically aims to show how the cognitive, social, historical, cultural, or political contexts of language-use and communication “impinge on the contents, meanings, structures, or

strategies of text or dialogue, and vice versa,” as well as “how discourse itself is an integral part of and contributes to the structures of these contexts.” Therefore, writes Dijk,

For the analysis of news in the Press, this means, among other things, that we show how social or political structures are also manifest in the meanings or organization of news reports, and how such news reports may in turn contribute to the formation or change of social cognitions of the readers or the reproduction or legitimation of power elites (1991: p. 45).

Materials and research procedures

The objective of this study is to ascertain the role of ethnicity in the making of the Nigerian media and how the media in turn reproduce and sustain it, especially during elections. The notion of ‘reproduction’ as used here is in the sense Dijk defines it, as “the dialectical interaction of general principles and actual practices that underlie the historical continuity of a social system” (1991: p. 33). In other words, prejudices are historically reproduced when the general principles remain more or less the same over time “despite possible changes or variations in the actual historical or contextual manifestations or realizations of the system.”

Thus, to analyze the reproduction of ethnic prejudices in the newspaper press, this study attempts to reconstruct the dominant interpretation framework for ethnic affairs among reporters and editors, using the newspaper coverage of the 27 November 2008 Jos-north local government election crisis as a case study. The Jos-north election crisis is chosen for the following reasons:

- the candidates in the election represent the two ethnic and religious groups in Jos;

- the event has a datable beginning and end; and
- the event mirrors the problem posed by ethnicity in the country's political transition.

The mass media in this study are restricted to daily newspapers: In making the choice, consideration was given to the fact that, in Nigeria, newspapers have “a long life span and change hands extensively, up to ten times” (Mercy Ette, 2000: p. 73). Newspapers also “exercise considerable influence on policymaking” (Ayo Olukoyun, 2004: p. 71) and “set the agenda of political discourse” (Minabere Ibelema and Tanja Bosch, 2004: p. 318). In the forward to E. Lloyd Summerland's ‘The Press in Developing Countries,’ Wilbur Schramm enumerates the advantages of the newspaper press over other forms of the mass media:

For one thing, because it is capable of doing an incomparably more complete job of covering the news ... than any radio or television service in a developing country has ever been able to do. In the second place, because it stands still to be read ... and thus makes an effective instrument to stimulate the discussion of public affairs or new developments.

There are over 30 newspapers in circulation at any time in Nigeria (Ette, 2000: p. 72). The numbers vary in between elections and are subject to the vagaries of the economy (Ibelema and Bosch, 2009: p. 320). A detailed analysis of all the newspapers for this study will be virtually impossible and self-defeating, unless it is applied to representative selections among them, based on their coverage of political issues, regional location, readership spread and ethnic ownership. As Ette (2000: p. 72) has eloquently argued, national, ethnic and religious influences shape newspaper editorial directions and determine their news coverage.

Daily Trust, one of the three newspapers selected for this study, is located in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory in the Northern part of the country, and owned by Kabiru Mohammed, a Hausa-Fulani/Muslim. The other two – *Daily Sun* and *Nigerian Compass* – are based in Lagos, the country’s economic nerve centre in the South, and are respectively owned by Orji Uzor Kanu, an Igbo/Christian who, from 1999 to 2007, was the governor of Abia, a state in the South-East; and Gbenga Daniel, a Yoruba/Christian, who became the Governor of Ogun State in the South-West in 2003 and is currently running for his second term in office.

The time period of investigation extends from 28 November 2008 to 31 January 2009. The reason for choosing this period is that outside the dates, newspapers made little mention of the crisis. But on most of the dates between these limits, the interest was high. The materials were retrieved from the on-line archives of the newspapers between 26 and 29 July 2009. Although the crisis started on 28 November 2008, the earliest reports found in the newspapers’ on-line archives were dated 1 December (for *Nigerian Compass* and *Daily Sun*), and 11 December (for *Daily Trust*).

The primary data are news reports, as well as opinion and feature articles. Opinion and feature articles are included as they, in the words of Ette (2000: p. 73), explore issues “from a historical angle” and “provide context that is not possible in news reports.”

The issues that emerge from the newspaper reports of the election crisis will be crucial, as they are capable of influencing the perception of the country’s political transition. The ripples caused by the Jos-north election crisis, spread across the

country. As Ette (2000: p. 74) insightfully noted, there is no better time to test the commitment of the press to democratization than during political crisis.

To measure the prevalence and distribution of the properties of ethnic affairs reporting, references are interpreted and coded as 'Political', 'Ethnicity/Religion', and 'Mixed'. The direction of a story is considered 'political' if themes and words in a report assert that the crisis was political – for example, if the report asserts that the crisis resulted from the rigging of the election. On the other hand, 'ethnicity/religion' direction is signalled by themes and words presenting the crisis as an ethno-religious conflict. Representation of events and referents are coded 'mixed' where the report indicates that both the first two factors triggered the crisis.

Data presentation and analysis

Of the 103 reports obtained from the on-line archives of the newspapers, *Daily Sun* yielded 35, *Daily Trust*, 24, and *Nigerian Compass*, 44. Following the coding of the stories and distribution according to the columns of 'Political', 'Ethnicity/Religion', and 'Mixed', Table 1 (below) shows that, of the 35 reports published by *Daily Sun*, 34.29% falls under the column of 'political', 37.14% 'ethnicity/religion', and 28.57% 'mixed'. For *Daily Trust*, the 24 reports show 8.33% of them under 'political', 54.17% 'ethnicity/religion' and 37.50% 'mixed'. Of the 44 stories by *Nigerian Compass*, 18.18% falls under 'political', 36.36% 'ethnicity/religion' and 45.46% 'mixed'.

There are considerable differences among the newspapers. More than half of the stories published in *Daily Trust* reported the crisis as ethno-religious. About one-in-

three reports generated by *Nigerian Compass* and *Daily Sun* reported the crisis as ethno-religious. What this means is that, among the newspapers, politics – that is, the ‘rigging’ of the election – was the least considered factor leading to the crisis. The same result is reached when the average in the combined frequency of all the newspapers under each column is calculated to show that the category of ethnic/religion reports is highest at 42.56%, followed by mixed reports (37.18%) and political reports (20.27%).

To understand the contribution of news reports, as well as feature and opinion articles to the reproduction of ethnic prejudices during the political crisis, Table 2 (below) shows that all the opinion articles published in the newspapers attributed the crisis to ethno-religion, followed by feature articles (40%) and news stories (37.78%). Again, the frequency average of all the stories in each column shows that ethno-religious stories are the most prevalent at 59.26%, followed by political (21.11%) and mixed (19.63%).

The analysis of the direction of reports on the Jos-north election crisis within the period under review confirms the assumption of this study that the Nigerian media contribute to the reproduction of ethno-religious prejudices during elections. It also shows that newspapers report events along ethno-religious lines and confirms the argument that the ethnic nationality of the publisher of the newspaper influences the direction of the newspaper reports and editorial policy.

NEWS-PAPERS	POLITICAL		ETHNICITY/ RELIGION		MIXED		Total Reports
	FRE- QUE- NCY	% of Total	FRE- QUE- NCY	% Of Total	FRE- QUE- NCY	% Of Total	
DAILY SUN	12	34.29	13	37.14	10	28.57	35
DAILY TRUST	02	08.33	13	54.17	09	37.50	24
NIGERIAN COMPASS	08	18.18	16	36.36	20	45.46	44

Table 1: Distribution according to the direction of stories published by the *Daily Sun*, *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Compass* newspapers from 28 November 2008 to 31 January 2009.

STORY CLASSIFICATION	POLITICAL		ETHNICITY/ RELIGION		MIXED		Total Reports
	FRE- QUE- NCY	% of Total	FRE- QUE- NCY	% Of Total	FRE- QUE- NCY	% Of Total	
NEWS STORY	21	23.33	34	37.78	35	38.89	90
FEAT- URES	02	40.00	02	40.00	01	20.00	05
OPINION	00	00.00	08	100.00	00	00.00	08

Table 2: Distribution according to the direction of combined stories of the *Daily Sun*, *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Compass* newspapers.

Topics in the newspapers:

To discuss the most prominent themes or what Dijk (1991: p. 90) describes as the “meaning structures” of the coverage of ethnic affairs in the election crisis, some major topic clusters, representing the major stories of the crisis have been selected.

The analysis will answer the question as to what represented the most important topical information. It will also highlight those topics that tended to be played down, concealed, or omitted.

The issues on the crisis are divided into the following clusters:

- (1) What happened?
- (2) Causes.
- (3) Inquiries into the crisis.
- (4) Claims and counter-claims.

Whereas the accounts of the events themselves were concentrated on a few days after the crisis, the other issue clusters continued to appear long after the crisis. Discussions about inquiries into the crisis have been on-going one year after the crisis, while the claim and counter-claim of Jos ownership remains an age-long and a never-ending debate.

The events:

It is not surprising that the major topics summarising the events feature fighting, attacks, killing, looting, burning and the usual actors, such as crowds, mobs, and youths identified as Muslims, on the one hand, and Christians, on the other hand.

Thus, the events were summarised in terms of the burning of churches and mosques, the killing of people, as well as the destruction of businesses. Typical topics were expressed by the following thematic news headlines:

‘Groom, family members killed’ (*Nigerian Compass*, 2 December 2008)

‘My 2 brothers were hacked to death – Woman’ (*Daily Sun*, 2 December 2008)

‘Jos and Epidemic of Insanity’ (*Daily Trust*, 12 December 2008).

The whole point of this topic is that it explains the causes of the Jos election crisis in terms of ethno-religion, along the indigene/settler dichotomy, and not as a political protest or the expression of anger and frustration over the alleged rigging of the election.

The causes:

With the killing, burning and looting over, attention turned to their causes, which were discussed in the weeks that followed the crisis. The tone was set by a columnist in *Daily Trust*, the former Managing Director of the Northern-based *New Nigeria* newspaper, Mohammed Haruna, who defined and explained the crisis as “genocide against the so-called settler community.” He would blame Plateau State Governor Jonah Jang for harbouring a “deep hatred for the Hausa-Fulani who are predominantly Muslim.”

To *Daily Sun*, the “immediate cause of the violence” was a “contentious electoral contest which pits the Hausa Muslim community against the Christians.” In another report, the newspaper quoted an Igbo organization, the Awka Development Union of

Nigeria, as saying that the “crisis has nothing to do with politics... This was a crisis that was premeditated by a particular group of people.”

Nigerian Compass, quoting the leader of the Oodua People’s Congress, a Yoruba organization, was not sure “whether to pin the blame [for the crisis] on ethnic, religious or political causes.” Another report published in the newspaper said “the mayhem began as a protest against the results of a local government council election ... but snowballed into an ethnic and religious conflagration.”

Explanations in terms of the alleged rigging of the election and the possible culpability of the electoral commission were made superfluous to the discussion. Instead, the pervasive tactic of blaming ‘them’ and presenting ‘us’ as victims in the primary definitions of the crisis was consistently applied in most of the newspaper reports. Thus, the political explanation of the crisis was systematically swept under the carpet. If mentioned at all, it seldom reached topic status.

The consequences:

After the disturbances, the topic shifted to the consequences of the crisis. The question, therefore, was how to prevent the reoccurrence of the crisis. The discussion boiled down to who, between the federal government and the state government, should set up a panel that would look into the causes of the crisis and proffer solutions. This sparked up controversy between the state and the federal governments. Here, again, ethno-religious sentiments played out in the newspaper reports.

Governor Jonah Jang took up President Umaru Yar’adua, insisting that the crisis was a state matter. The Plateau State Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice argued that it was an affront on the state and the people to suggest that the federal government should set up the panel to investigate the crisis. On its part, the federal government argued that “in view of the sophistication in the arms used by both parties, only a panel with a federal might could unravel the immediate and remote causes of the crisis, and proffer a lasting solution.”

Legal luminaries in the country were divided on the issue. While some backed the position of the state government, others supported the presidency. As the discussion progressed, the federal government went ahead to set up a panel to be headed by a retired army general. The state government took the matter to the court to adjudicate on what it described as the “legal and constitutional” issue “bothering on our federation which cannot be ignored.”

The federal government would later seek an out of court settlement with the state government. Eventually, the federal government panel, billed to sit in Abuja, did not conduct a single hearing and died a natural death. Meanwhile, the state government appointed a seven-member Commission of Inquiry headed by a former Attorney General of the Federation, Prince Bola Ajibola, to, among other terms of reference,

- establish the remote and immediate causes of the November 28, 2008 Jos unrest; identify individuals, groups of persons and institutions directly or indirectly responsible for the unrest and their roles in precipitating the unrest and recommend appropriate sanctions.

- ascertain the extent of loss of lives and damage to property; recommend ways of avoiding recurrence of such violent unrest in future, and make any or other recommendation incidental to the commission's terms of reference.

To *Daily Trust*, the fact that Governor Jang filed a suit to stop the federal government from investigating the crisis “is an indication that (he) has something to hide.” Quoting the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, the newspaper described the panel set up by the state government – in which there were five Christians and two Muslims – as not equitably constituted “and so far gave no indication of being fair or just to Muslims in the state.” According to the newspaper, the council urged Muslims, including Muslim-members of the panel, to stay away from the probe “as the composition is lopsided and flawed.”

Daily Sun, on its part, published an interview with a former federal minister, an indigene of Plateau State, who questioned the right of the federal government to set up a panel of inquiry on the crisis. The newspaper quoted the former minister as saying that the constitution “was very clear on the issue,” and that the state should set up the panel. In another report published in the newspaper, the Northern Christian Elders Forum “openly accused” the president of bias. The group, according to the newspaper, said the president was taking sides “with Muslims in the crisis” and was “shielding the sponsors ... from prosecution.”

Nigerian Compass published a report in which the Christian Association of Nigeria had asked its members not to appear before the panel of inquiry that was being set up by the federal government. According to the newspaper, the association argued that

by setting up the panel without consulting the Plateau State government, President Yar'adua demonstrated that he had “vested interest in it.” Since Muslims decided they were not going to appear before the panel set up by the state government, the newspaper quoted the association as arguing that the Christians would not appear before the one set up by the President “since it is lop-sided.”

Once the crisis was defined along ethno-religious lines, the continued relevance of the political reasons was unwelcomed for the newspapers. The ways and means of investigating the crisis and coming up with lasting solutions became verbal activities among groups or between the federal and state governments. Thus, prevention through political measures was overshadowed as a topic.

The claims and counter-claims:

The indigene-settler politics was among the most prominent news media subjects in the Jos-north election crisis. The topic dealt with the rights of ‘settlers’ and the domination of Jos politics by Hausa-Fulani/Muslims. The discussion was underlined by the question regarding the ownership of Jos. The account of the newspapers followed the same ideologically framed ‘indigene-settler script’. In one opinion article published in *Daily Trust* newspaper, the author asserted,

[I]n denying Hausa-Fulani their civil rights in Jos, some of the Plateau elites often asked whether any Birom man could go to Sokoto and ask for any rights ... First, it should be pointed out that there is really no equivalence here; because it is not just the case of any Hausa-Fulani from Kano or Sokoto or anywhere for that matter going to Jos to make a claim. The claim is being made by Hausa-Fulani whose grandparents founded Jos.

In an interview with Senator Gyang Dalyop Dantong, representing Plateau North Senatorial District, allusion was made regarding the question of who, between the

'settler' Hausa-Fulani and the 'indigene' ethnic groups, owns Jos. The senator addressed the question when *Daily Trust* asked him to review the lessons learnt from the crisis:

[I]f you come to a place, you need to know about the place, you need to assimilate the norms and the values of the people. You should also respect the people, and not lord it over them because they will not allow you to lead them. This is what Nigerians ought to learn. Let us learn to respect and love one another, let us not say because we are so many, we can do anything and go with it.

A feature article in *Daily Sun* was unambiguous as to who, between the 'indigene' and the 'settler', owns Jos. As the writer put it,

It is the religion of the Fulani Jihadists from the far north who once plundered the Middle Belt for slaves and subsequently dominated hundreds of ethnic minority groups in the area. Stories of wars with Hausa-Fulani Muslim invaders and of people taking refuge in the hills endure in the cultural memory of many Middle Belt tribes.

Nigerian Compass discussed the 'settler-indigene' dichotomy as the machination of the political elite. According to a report published in the newspaper, the youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria described the indigene/settler dichotomy as the handiwork of old politicians who use it to divide and rule the people for their personal gains. According to the newspaper, the association called for a change of guard:

A new dawn would be born in Nigeria if a new generation of youthful leaders are given the opportunity to govern us instead of mediocre, political cheats, tribalists, sectionalists and those who use religion to divide us.

In conclusion, therefore, the general rule held. Events seen as most problematic or threatening to the interest of any ethnic group, tended to be most prominent in the representative newspaper. Consequently, ethnic affairs coverage of the Jos-north

local government election crisis closely reproduced, confirmed, and legitimated prevailing ethnic ideologies as well as the power relations based on them.

Chapter Six

Meaning and Ideology

News as cultural narrative

There is more to written news accounts than objectivity, fairness, impartiality, balance, reflection of reality and true representation. Written news accounts do not necessarily spring anew from the facts of the event being reported. As anthropologists would argue, news accounts are shaped by “cultural conventions.” In other words, what appears as objective reporting is a “formulaic narrative construction” (S. Elizabeth Bird and Robert W. Dardenne, 1997: p. 67).

News story represents a body of work that is “a continuing story of human activity” and, as individual stories, “contributes to the continuing one.” Though the facts, names, and details of the stories “change almost daily,” the frame into which they fit, the “symbolic system,” is more enduring (Bird and Dardenne, 1997: p. 69). As an enduring system, therefore, the totality of the news ‘teaches’ audiences more than any of its component parts.

Each individual story of an event is written against a backdrop of other stories of that particular event, drawing, in the words of Bird and Dardenne, “from them and adding to them.” The stories become part of a larger “story or myth” of that event. News becomes a mythological narrative with “symbolic codes” that are recognised by the audience. People know when they read or hear a news story that they are in a

particular “narrative situation” that “requires a particular kind of stance to be understood.”

The journalist uses “culturally embedded story values, taking them from the culture and representing them to the culture” (Bird and Dardenne, 1997: p. 80). In this sense, the journalist assumes the role of a folk storyteller who operates in a “communal matrix” vis-à-vis the audience. S/he not only uses “culturally determined definition,” but also fits “new situations into old definitions.” This way, the journalist exercises the power “to place people and events into the existing categories of hero, villain, good and bad.”

The power of the media lies in declaring a situation to be true and providing “the forms in which the declarations will appear” (Bird and Dardenne, 1997: p. 81). The “ideological effect” comes into play when the journalist, using existing narrative conventions and “maps of meaning,” constructs reality to conform to those maps, and assigns meanings to new realities. Such media-shaped perceptions become “part of the common cultural framework, to be drawn on again by journalists in a continuing dialectical process.”

Nigerian media, meaning and ideology

As C.S. Momoh (cited in Kate Omenugha, 2004: p. 65) has indicated, the formation and resultant culture of the newspaper press in Nigeria “is a colonial legacy.” First, the press imbibed “the propagandist nature of the colonial press.” Second, the educated elite saw “salvation and relevance” in newspaper ownership and publication “with foundations of primordial ethnic and regional loyalties as bulwarks

of personal political programs and ambitions.” The result, Omenugha points out, is “the creation of a ‘nationalist’ press” which exists in the absence of “a national culture and tradition” in its professional outlook, practice and philosophy.

This legacy, argues Omenugha, encouraged partisanship in the Nigerian press. Since independence, she further argues, the press “remains an advocacy press” where political groups establish newspapers to advocate their causes, where ethnic groups demand to be heard through their own newspapers, the government press becomes only its master’s voice and wealthy individuals create their own media in which to propagate their ideology. Writes Omenugha:

The newspapers in Nigeria are often offspring of political and ethnic tussles, created to give voice to sectional interests that gave them birth. Thus, embracing an ‘agenda of homogeneity’ is, to say the least, an uphill task (2004: p. 65).

Communication among people can only be possible to the extent that they share common frameworks of interpretation. As Paul Hartmann and Charles Husband (1973: p. 270) have indicated, people need to have “similar meanings for the same symbols, and a way of thinking about things in common” before they can communicate. For example, communication regarding ethno-religious affairs is interpreted within the framework of meanings that serves to define the situation within any social group (Hartmann and Husband, 1973: p. 273).

Seen in this light, the assumption here is that *Daily Trust* is likely to publish stories that will serve the interest of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim in the North, while *Daily Sun* and *Nigerian Compass* will serve the interest of the Christian South, but more specifically those of the Igbo in the South-East and the Yoruba in the South-West respectively.

Framing and Ideology

To understand how the newspapers covered the 27 November 2008 Jos-north election crisis and, therefore, unravel the underlying ideological framework, three forms of frames are used in the analysis: 'Deviance' frame, 'Us and Them' frame, and 'Power' frame.

A frame, according to P. Norris (cited in Fred Vultee, 2006: p. 321), is "an interpretive structure that sets particular events within a broader context." The study of framing, therefore, gives insight into how journalists work with news frames to simplify, prioritize, and structure the narrative flow of events. In the words of Vultee, "frames are central to the process of attribution, in which contextual cues are used to build an explanation of perceived behaviour."

'Deviance' Frame:

The analysis of the news stories in the last chapter provided the dominant definition of the Jos-north election crisis as a clash between two ethnic/religious groups: the 'settler' Hausa-Fulani/Muslim and the 'indigene' Birom/Christian. The state Governor Jonah Jang, a Birom/Christian, was accused of harbouring a "deep hatred for the Hausa-Fulani." Consequently, terms were used by *Daily Trust* to describe the governor as a deviant. The description of the governor's activities and utterances during and after the crisis apparently stimulated the lexical inventiveness of the newspaper reports.

The following are examples:

- [Governor Jonah Jang] took the irresponsible decision to inaugurate the local administrations which were the outcome of the fraud (*Daily Trust*, 11 December 2008)
- The current governor of Plateau State, Jonah Jang ... has shown that he is incapable of governing the state ... His alleged involvement in the violence ... is a pointer to the fact that the governor is a bad leader (*Daily Trust*, 12 January 2009)
- [T]he governor ordered the killing of our people ... (*Daily Trust*, 16 January 2009)
- Governor Jang wants to chase [us] out of the Party and the entire Jos-north and he instructed for the killing of our members (*Daily Trust*, 16 January 2009)
- This shows that the [Plateau State] government has no respect for human life (*Daily Trust*, 22 January 2009).

An analysis of these examples shows that the invectives tended to be chosen from specific style registers, those of a deviance, of mental illness and irrationality, as well as political and ideological intolerance and oppression. This method could be a witness to the phenomenon of reversal – that is, the use of epithets that can be used against the group of those making the allegations.

Governor Jang's insistence on swearing in the officials elected in the disputed election against the opposition of the Hausa-Fulani Muslim community raised the ante of *Daily Trust's* criticism of the governor as a deviant. On 11 December 2008, a columnist in the newspaper, Is'haq Modibo, in a story titled 'Jos Killings – Failure of politics and leadership,' called for the removal of Jang as the state governor. As he put it,

In a very sane society, [Governor] David Jonah would never have been allowed access to leadership, because of his vicious ethnic chauvinism, derived from that peculiarly crude reading of the historical process.

In another article in the newspaper on 12 December 2008, titled 'Jos and epidemic of insanity,' the author, Adamu Adamu, expressed surprised that President Yar'adua did not declare a state of emergency in Plateau State:

In any country, an emergency would have been declared and the government of Jang removed. Why had nothing been done in Nigeria? Was it because the president is a Muslim and he feared that Christians would say that he had favoured his religion? If so, this would have amounted to an unpardonable failure of leadership and gross unfairness to the Muslim victims of a pogrom.

President Yar'adua was consistently prodded by the North, spear-headed by the Supreme Council for Sharia, to declare "a state of emergency in the state" (*Nigerian Compass*, 16 January 2009: 'Sharia Council orders Muslims to shun Jang's panel').

The call for the removal of Governor Jang continued to make headlines in *Daily Trust* reports. To the newspaper, as expressed in an opinion article on 12 January 2009, titled 'Governor Jang and the politicization of Jos crisis,' Governor Jang was "incapable of governing the state," as he "has proven his incompetence in the manner he handled the political ethno-religious crisis ..."

These examples show the structures and strategies that are used to deny, mitigate, excuse, or to blame the victims. In the words of van Dijk, the "implications, suggestions, presuppositions and other implicit, indirect or vague means of expressing underlying meanings or opinions may be used to persuade readers to the point of view of the newspaper" (1991: p. 198).

'Us and Them' Frame:

The 'us and them' frame is a technique of persuasion in news narratives that emphasizes on differences by classification. It functions to simplify and signify events. Common to 'them'-groups is that they are 'different' from 'us'. They look differently, think differently, and act differently. The technique taps into 'symbolic codes' familiar to the in-group. Consistent negative evaluations place a group under the 'them' category and "the more negative the evaluations, the larger the socio-cognitive distance from 'us'" (Teun A. van Dijk, 1991: p. 143).

The schema of 'us' and 'them' are used to construct the positions of the actors as they appear in the published reports of the newspapers. They represent an abstraction of the editor's world-view. The distinctions of 'difference' are, in the words of van Dijk, "marked or signalled in the text by the amount, nature, or distribution of evaluative statements or the style and rhetoric of actor description" (1991: p. 147).

In the Jos crisis, each group attempted to portray itself as the victim and the other as the aggressor. Thus, the victim/aggressor image dominated the media discourse. The contrast between (good) 'us' and (bad) 'them' was implicit in the reports by the newspapers as it is generally the case in biased discourse about out-groups (van Dijk, 1991: p. 197).

Calling on the federal government to go beyond "high sounding and pious pronouncement" and address "the root cause of the sectarian crisis," the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria, Malam Nafiu Baba (*Daily*

Sun, 3 December 2008, 'Crisis not religious – CAN ... SCSN calls for probe') presented the Hausa-Fulani/Muslim as the victim in the "brazen acts of genocide":

We [Hausa-Fulani Muslims] believe that unless the Federal Government takes a firm and decisive action to put an end to this trend, Muslims will no longer accept to turn [the] other cheek to such brazen acts of genocide, nor will they be mollified by political rhetoric or circus panel of inquiries.

Writing on 'The media and the genocide in Jos' in his *Daily Trust*'s column on 3 December 2008, Mohammed Haruna accused the media in the Southern part of the country of biased reporting on the "genocide against the so-called settler community of Jos." According to Haruna:

Clearly, what has informed the editorial judgement of most of these newspapers is their prejudice against the 'Hausa'. The reports were also clearly informed by the assumption that the so-called settler community have no right to aspire to political leadership outside their ancestral homes.

Writing along this line in the *Daily Trust* edition of 12 December 2008, Adamu Adamu, in an opinion article titled 'Jos and epidemic insanity,' was unsparing of 'Christian journalists':

A Christian journalist who cannot and will not report, or a Christian writer who cannot tell the truth and condemn atrocities by Christians is neither [a] journalist nor true Christian; and the newspaper ... is a liability to society and will remain an obstacle to peaceful co-existence.

Southern-based newspapers generally represented the views of Christians in their reports. On 18 December 2008, *Nigerian Compass*, in a report titled 'CAN raises alarm over alleged plans to free mercenaries,' quoted a statement by the Christian Association of Nigeria that contrasted between (good) 'us' and (bad) 'them'. The association, according to the newspaper, wondered why "a purely political disagreement would translate into the killings of Christians, including six pastors and the destruction of churches."

The CAN statement, as was reported in *Nigerian Compass*, created the image of Christians in the aftermath of the crisis as one of victims and a marginalised group.

The statement went further:

We are also shocked and dismayed with the sudden transfer of the Christian Commissioner of Police, appointing a new Muslim Commissioner of Police, leaving the Muslim SSS [State Security Service] Director and appointment of a Muslim military intelligence officer to investigate the Jos crisis.

In another report, *Nigerian Compass*, on 4 December 2008, in a report titled 'FG, army indicted over Jos crisis,' questioned the role of the Federal Government and the military in the crisis. Quoting the Plateau State chapter of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, the newspaper conveyed the idea that even federal government agents lent support to 'them' against 'us' during the crisis. The newspaper reported the group as saying,

Can the presidency, the Chief of Army Staff and the Inspector General of Police explain to the world how police and army uniform, and ammunition got into the hands of the teenagers recruited to carry out such dastardly act against fellow citizens?

The use of 'us and them' frame was put into good effect by the Northern Christian leaders in a report published in *Daily Sun* of 12 January 2009, titled '...You are biased, Northern Christian leaders tell Yar'adua'. While speaking of what they perceived as the federal government's sympathy towards the Hausa-Fulani/Muslim in the crisis, the newspaper quoted the Christian leaders as saying:

Virtually all the federal government officials who visited Jos, all of whom are Muslims including the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Danbazzau and the wife of the President, Hajia Turai Yar'adua only visited the Central Mosque and places where displaced Muslims were ... camped in Jos without visiting displaced Christians in their camps.

The use of ‘us and them’ framing technique may be translated into a persuasive set of popular appeals based on an ideology of commonsense interpretations and evaluations of the ethnic situation. The technique works against consensus and there is no doubt about the real message: ethno-religious prejudice is divisive.

‘Power’ Frame:

The ‘power’ frame discusses the cultural drive behind the ‘deviance’ and the ‘us and them’ techniques. It proposes that events are reported as they are determined by the ‘ideological’ or ‘symbolic’ access a group has to a media organization (van Dijk, 1991: p. 153). As van Dijk (1991: p. 147) put it, “the way the press presents and represents social actors is part of a broader ideological structure of values.”

The right to constitute the panel that would investigate the Jos-north election crisis was made a topical issue, in which President Yar’adua and Governor Jang were presented to be in loggerheads. In the 12 January 2009 edition of *Daily Trust*, under the headline ‘Governor Jang and the politicization of Jos crisis,’ the governor’s audacity “to challenge the President’s powers to investigate the crisis,” was questioned. According to the article,

It is nebulous why Governor Jang of Plateau State would file a suit against the Federal Government questioning her right to investigate the recent crisis in Jos ...

‘Much ado about probe panels,’ a feature article published in the *Daily Sun* edition of 4 January 2009, sought the views of lawyers and politicians on the debate. Those interviewed in the report included Prof. Itsa Sagay, a respected legal luminary, who, according to the newspaper, was “unequivocal that the federal government does not have the constitutional right to set up a commission of inquiry to investigate the

recent crisis in Jos, Plateau State.” In the article, the newspaper quoted Sagay as saying,

It is not right for the Federal Government to have done what it did because it is a state matter ... What the Federal Government is trying to do is illegal and unconstitutional. It is a straight forward matter, which the Supreme Court has on several occasions decided in the past.

Daily Sun also portrayed the Governors’ Forum, a body of governors elected on the platform of the PDP, as divided over the matter. On 14 January 2009, the newspaper, under the headline, ‘Yar’adua-Jang face-off: PDP govts divided,’ reported,

[W]hile some governors at the meeting argued that the entire scenario playing out in the case between the Federal and Plateau State governments was healthy in a civilian government whose sing-song was adherence to the rule of law, some of their colleagues felt the action of Governor Jang amounted to a challenge of the President.

On 12 January 2009, under the headline, ‘I’m disappointed in Plateau Govt – Yar’adua,’ *Daily Sun* reported President Yar’adua’s disappointment over the Plateau State government’s opposition. The newspaper quoted the president’s Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, as saying that the president “was not only on solid legal ground in the setting up of the panel, but also consulted widely before taking the action.” The newspaper quoted Adeniyi as saying:

The belligerent posture of the Plateau State government is rather unfortunate but the president is more interested in the course of peace than in trading words with anybody. The president believes that in situations like this, leaders have to be very sober and responsible so as not to inflame passion. That is why he has directed that nobody should respond to all the provocative statements from the Plateau State government.

In the same report by *Daily Sun*, an aide to Governor Jang was quoted as saying that the state government was “averse” to any attempt to run the affairs of the state “in furtherance of certain sectional interest.” In other words, the sincerity of President Yar’adua was the issue in question. Viewed in this light, Jang’s resistance may be

motivated by the fear that being Hausa-Fulani Muslim, the president may be working on an agenda to satisfy 'certain sectional interest'.

On 15 January 2009, while inaugurating the commission of inquiry to probe the crisis, *Nigerian Compass* (16 January 2009, 'Jang inaugurates commission of inquiry') quoted Jang as saying:

When I took my Oath of Office, I swore to uphold the constitution. It is this constitution that has given me the power to set up a Commission of Inquiry on the matter at hand. Since there was a disagreement on this, the civilized thing to do is to seek legal interpretation in court on who [between the state government and the federal government] can set up a panel to investigate the whole gamut of the crisis ... We are, therefore, not in anyway confronting the federal government.

The face-off between President Yar'adua and Governor Jang reasserted the existence of a basic set of shared assumptions and interests among the groups and the respective newspapers. Second, it clarified the nature of 'consensus' by pointing to concrete examples of what it is not. Both these elements – the celebration of consensus and the denigration of dissent – are indispensable to the process through which power is legitimised.

When the media contribute to the shared elements that define the ethnic situation and change the ideological framework used by one ethnic group or the other to control events and relations, they provide specially selected 'facts' and pre-formulate preferred meanings and opinions. If an ethnically-based newspaper endorses the ideology that legitimates the dominance of one group or another, it may be expected that it will ignore, discredit, marginalize, or problematize other groups.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Assuming that ethnicity is the centre of gravity of Nigerian politics, this thesis set out to explore its role in the making of the media and how the media in turn reproduce and sustain it, especially during elections. The 2008 Jos-north election crisis provided the ingredients in the examination of the implication of the phenomenon for the media in the country's nascent democratic process.

The assumptions made at the beginning of the thesis appear to be true. One, the direction taken by a newspaper in its reportage was found to correspond to the interest of the ethnic nationality of the publisher. Two, the perspective that represents the interest of the publisher's ethnic nationality receives more prominence. It was found that a newspaper would ignore, discredit or problematize other ethnic groups, while endorsing the ideology of the publisher's group.

In Nigeria, as this study shows, the ownership of a newspaper is the critical question in understanding its editorial direction. The newspapers examined for this study reported events along ethno-religious lines. Events were presented in terms of either 'them' or 'us'. The reports blamed 'them' and presented 'us' as victims. Once the situation was defined along these lines, the relevance of the implication for the survival of the democratic process was unwelcomed.

Space was readily granted by the newspapers to politicians or religious leaders who championed ethnic or religious identity. In the words of Kate Azuka Omenugha

(2004: p. 72), these people were used “as tropes of difference representing ethnic ‘inclusiveness’ to the ‘exclusivity’ of ‘others’.” This way, the newspapers undermined their role in the socialization of the public in ways of democratic behaviour. By failing to educate and inspire the people, the newspapers appeared to be working against the democratic process.

In November 2009, for example, the country was thrown into a debate as to whether the vice-president should act for the president who was away in Saudi Arabia to seek medical treatment and whether the ailing president should resign on grounds of incapacitation. The president did not hand over to the vice-president before the trip. While he was away, he left a vacuum in the country’s leadership. Because the president is a Hausa-Fulani Muslim from the North, and the vice-president an Ijaw Christian from the South, newspapers reconstructed and reaffirmed ethnic positions and identities on the issue.

While the media in the North were against the call for the president’s resignation, those in the South supported it. The whole argument was anchored on the old debate between the South and North. The political opinions of the newspapers in the South were signalled by the following story headlines:

War drums in N’Delta over Jonathan (*Daily Sun*, 29 November 2009)

South-South’ll secede if VP resigns – Militants (*Nigerian Tribune*, 30 November 2009)

Force Jonathan to resign, invite trouble – OPC (*Daily Sun*, 6 December 2009)

Kill Jonathan, face break up – Pastor Bakare explodes (*Nigerian Tribune*, 7

December 2009)

From the North came the following headlines:

... I'm not under pressure to resign – vice president (*Daily Trust*, 28 November 2009)

Yar'adua: Abuja NBA chapter dares national body (*Daily Trust*, 4 December 2009)

VP will not take over presidential powers (*Daily Trust*, 5 December 2009)

Shagari condemns calls for Yar'adua's resignation (*Daily Trust*, 7 December 2009)

While the debate lasted, salience was not given to what the power vacuum created by the continued absence of the president could mean for the survival of the nascent democracy. Once the issue was defined in terms of ethno-religion, the survival of democracy became irrelevant. The implication is that the newspapers placed emphasis on the opinion of ethnic political backers rather than the survival of the nation. When ownership influence is brought to bear on a newspaper's editorial direction, editorial independence flies out of the window.

Ethnic ideology has been shown to be the surest way of mobilizing and retaining constituents and the platform on which elections are won or lost. It places emphasis on differences rather than on commonalities, and ultimately engenders mutual distrusts. Among the people, it engenders a failure to see commitment to the nation as a sacred duty that should rise above ethnic and primordial affiliations. According to Jon Stratton and Ien Ang,

The nation can assume symbolic force precisely in so far as it is represented as a unity; yet national unity is always ultimately impossible precisely because it can be represented as such only through a suppression and repression, symbolic or otherwise, of difference (cited in Omenugha, 2004: p. 74).

The country's inability to conduct a free and fair election 50 years after independence is the manifestation of these shortcomings. In the absence of a credible, peaceful electoral process, the country's political progress has been punctuated by starts and stops. As the leaders politicize ethnicity for personal gains, the result is that the people are hindered from exercising their rights to elect responsive, responsible and caring representatives.

To achieve a democracy that is both responsive and responsible, the media must be independent enough as to be able to hold the ruling elite accountable and help to keep the electorate informed about political parties and the politicians. As has been argued in this thesis, it is only when a media system is independent that it is able to maintain the elements that define democracy.

The process of political transition and media reform in Nigeria has witnessed regressions. There have been backlashes as the reforming regimes keep returning to authoritarian rule. To safeguard the nascent democratic process from backsliding, therefore, the country has to move away from being one of ethnic nationalities into one that has a sense of being one – of being Nigeria, more than Igbo, Yoruba or Hausa-Fulani.

To avoid events that led to past regressions, the country should identify its own values and cultures, not as individual ethnic nationalities, but as a nation as a whole. The media's role should be one that is constantly educating the people about

democracy, its values, its possibilities and its practice by selecting and transmitting information that presents democracy as an achievable goal.

The task of protecting the nascent democracy requires that media professionals should be able to distinguish between uncovering what is true and what is fabrication. As has been argued in this thesis, media professionals should establish a mind frame within which objectivity is stressed and partisan coverage is downplayed, particularly during elections.

On the whole, this thesis attempted to set a benchmark for measuring the reproduction of ethnicity by the media in Nigeria. Based on the results obtained in the study, it will be possible for future research studies to evaluate the direction of the media reform process. Whether the reform progresses or regresses, the direction will be determined by the media's ability to acquire a national outlook in both practice and philosophy.

References:

- Abati, Reuben (2008) 'Politics and the devil's parking space in Jos.' *The Guardian*, 5 December.
- Adeoye, Adewale (2010) 'The Jihad and the Hausa-Fulani Dynasty.' *The Nation*, 31 January.
- Adetula, Victor A. O. (2005) 'Ethnicity and the dynamics of city politics: The case of Jos.' In *Urban Africa: Changing contours of survival in the city*. Eds. Abdou Maliq Simone and Abouhane Abdelghani, London: Zed Books.
- Agbaje, Adigun A. B. (1992) *The Nigerian Press, Hegemony, and the Social Construction of Legitimacy 1960-1983*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen.
- Ainslie, Rosalynde (1966) *The Press in Africa: Communications past and present*. London, Gallancz.
- Aka, Jr., Ebenezer O. (1994) 'Regional disparities in the process of the development of Nigeria: A historical perspective.' *Review of Urban and Regional Development Studies*, Vol. 6: pp. 150- 166.
- Awhefeada, Sunny (2009) 'The Northernization of Nigeria.' *The Guardian*, 29 June 2009.
- Berelson, Bernard (1952) *Content analysis in communication research*. Glencoe, Ill., Free Press.
- Berger, Arthur Asa (1998) *Media Research Technique*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Bird, Elizabeth S. and Dardenne, Robert W. (1997) 'Myth, Chronicle, and Story: Exploring the narrative Qualities of news.' In *Social Meanings of News: A text-reader*. Ed. Dan Berkowitz, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Caplan, Gerald (2008) *The betrayal of Africa*. Toronto: Greenwood.
- Carment, David (1994) 'The ethnic dimension in world politics: theory, policy and early warning.' *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4: pp. 551-582.
- Dudley, Billy J. (1968) *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*. London: Cass.
- Danfulani, Umar Habila Dadem and Fwatshak, Sati U. (2002) 'Briefing: The

- September 2001 Events in Jos, Nigeria.' *African Affairs*, Vol. 101: pp. 243-255.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica (2010) 'Kingdoms and empires of pre-colonial Nigeria'
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/414840/Nigeria/55309/Kingdoms-and-empires-of-precolonial-Nigeria> Accessed 12 February 2010.
- Ette, Mercy (2000) 'Agent of Change or Stability? The Nigerian Press Undermines Democracy.' *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, Vol. 5, No.3: pp. 67-86.
- Fabi, Randy (2008) 'Death toll in Nigeria rises, army restores calm,' *Reuters*, 30 November, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LU183405.htm>, accessed 29 June 2009.
- Gillies, Alexandra (2007) 'Obasanjo, the Donor Community and Reform Implementation in Nigeria.' *The Round Table* 96.392: pp. 569-586.
- Graf, William D. (1988) *The Nigerian State*. London: Currey.
- Gunther, Richard, Jose Ramon Montero, and Jose Ignacio Wert (2000) 'The Media and Politics in Spain: From Dictatorship to Democracy Democratic and Nondemocratic Regimes.' In *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*. Eds. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Gupta, Nilanjana (2002) 'The disenfranchised voter: Silences and exclusions in India media.' In *Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London; New York: Routledge.
- Hartmann, Paul and Husband, Charles (1973) 'The mass media and racial conflict.' In *The manufacture of news; social problems, deviance and the mass media*. Eds. Stanley Cohen and Jock Young, London: Constable.
- Ibelema, Minabere and Bosch, Tanja (2004) 'Sub-Saharan Africa.' In *Global Journalism: Topical issues and media systems*. Eds Arnolds S. de Beer and John C. Merrill, Boston: Pearson.
- International Crisis Group (2006) 'Nigeria: Want in the Midst of Plenty.' *Africa Report*,

No 113, pp. 1-33,
http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/west_africa/113_nigeria_want_in_the_midst_of_plenty.pdf, accessed 12 November 2008.

Kabirova, Lutfulla and Scott Smith (2002) 'Uzbekistan.' In *Media Reform:*

Democratizing the media, democratizing the state. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London; New York: Routledge.

Kayanja, Ronald David (2002) 'The current state of media reform in Uganda.' In

Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London; New York: Routledge.

Kew, Darren (2004) 'The 2003 Elections: Hardly Credible, but Acceptable.' In *Crafting the New Nigeria: Confronting the Challenges.* Ed. Robert I. Rotberg, London: Boulder.

Krippendorff, Klaus (1980) *Content Analysis: An introduction to its methodology.* Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Lewis, Peter (2006) 'Performance and Legitimacy in Nigeria's New Democracy.' *Afrobarometer Briefing Paper No. 46:* pp. 1-14.

Lewis, Peter and Etannibi, Alemika (2005) 'Seeking the Democratic Dividend: Public Attitudes and Reform in Nigeria.' *Afrobarometer Working Paper No. 52.*

McConnell, Patrick J. and Becker, Lee B. (2002) 'The Role of the Media in Democratisation.' Paper presented to the Political Communication Section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research at the Barcelona Conference, July.

Menocal, Alina Rocha; Fritz, Verena; with Rakner, Lise (2008) 'Hybrid regimes and the challenges of deepening and sustaining democracy in developing countries.' *South African Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 15, No. 1: pp. 29-40.

Merrill, John C. (2004) 'Global Press Philosophies.' In *Global Journalism: Topical issues and media systems.* Eds Arnolds S. de Beer and John C. Merrill, Boston: Pearson.

- Mughan, Anthony and Gunther, Richard (2000) 'The Media in Democratic and Nondemocratic Regimes: A Multilevel Perspective.' In *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Perspective*. Eds. Richard Gunther and Anthony Mughan. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Muhammad, Rakiya A. (2009) 'Shagari condemns calls for Yar'adua's resignation.' *Daily Trust*, 7 December.
- Musa, Mohammed, and Mohammed, Jubril (2004) 'The Political Economy of Media Ownership in Nigeria.' In *Who owns the media?: Global trends and local resistances*. Ed. Pradip N. Thomas and Zaharom Nain, London: World Association for Christian Communication.
- Mustapha, Abdul Raufu (2009) 'Caught between *Boko Haram* and 'Governance *Haram*.' *The Guardian*. 10 August.
- Niven, Rex (1965) *A Short History of Nigeria*. Nigeria: Longmans.
- Nnoli, Okwudiba (1978) *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Obama, Barack (2009) Speech delivered before the Ghanaian Parliament, in Accra, Ghana, 11 July.
- Ojo, Emmanuel O. (2003) 'The Mass Media and the Challenges of Sustainable Democratic Values in Nigeria: Possibilities and Limitations.' *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 25, No. 6: pp. 821-840.
- Ojo, Tokunbo (2007) 'The Nigerian Media and the Process of Democratisation.' *Journalism*, Vol. 8, No. 5: pp. 545-550.
- Olawale, Taiwo (2010) 'Jos: From tin city to massacre city.' *ThisDay*, 8 March.
- Olukoyun, Ayo (2004) 'Media Accountability and Democracy in Nigeria, 1999-2003.' *African Studies Review*, Vol. 47, No. 3: pp. 69-90.
- Olutokun, Ayo and Seteolu, Dele (2001) 'The Media and Democratic Rule in Nigeria.' *Development Policy Management Network Bulletin*, Vol. 13, No. 3.
- Omenugha, Kate Azuka (2004) 'The Nigerian Press and the Politics of Difference.' In *Continuity and Transformation in Culture and Politics*. Ed. Joss Hands and

- Eugenia Siapera, Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Omu, Fred I. A. (1978) *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880 – 1937*. London: Longman.
- Osaghea, Eghosa E. (2003) 'Explaining the changing patterns of ethnic politics in Nigeria.' *National and Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 9, No. 3: pp. 54-73.
- Ozbudun, Ergun (1989) 'Studies on Comparative Elections,' *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2: pp. 237-247.
- Plotnicov, Leonard (1967) *Strangers to the city: Urban man in Jos, Nigeria*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Price, Monroe E. and Rozumilowicz, Beata (2002) 'Conclusion.' In *Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London ; New York : Routledge.
- Rotimi, Ajayi Ola and Ihonvbere, Julius O. (1994) 'Democratic impasse: Remilitarisation in Nigeria' *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4: pp. 669-689.
- Rosalynde, Ainslie (1966) *The Press in Africa: Communications past and present*. London: Gollancz.
- Rozumilowicz, Beata (2002) 'Democratic change: a theoretical perspective.' In *Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London ; New York : Routledge.
- Sakr, Naomi (2002) 'Media Reform in Jordan: The stop-go transition.' In *Media Reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. Eds Monroe E. Price, Beata Rozumilowicz and Stefaan G. Verhulst. London ; New York : Routledge.
- Sommerlad, E. Lloyd (1966) *The Press in Developing Countries*. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- USAID (1999) 'The Role of media in democracy: A strategic approach,' *Technical Publication Series*: pp. 1-35.
- van Dijk, Teun A. (1991) *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.
- Vultee, Fred (2006) "'Fatwa on the Bonny": News Language and the Creation of Meaning about the Middle East.' *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 4: pp. 319-336.

Watts, Michael (2007) 'Petro-Insurgency or Criminal Syndicate? Conflict & Violence in the Niger Delta. *Review of African Political Economy*, No114: pp. 637-660.