The media, National Security and Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria

C. Okoroafor, Ejike, O. Okoro, Joseph and U. Tayo-Garbson, Sheba

School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Nigeria

Abstract: The place of the media in ensuring the promotion of national security need not be over-emphasized nor misplaced. The media as a social institution in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world, is a powerful tool of reportage and education of society and therefore quite instrumental for the pursuit of the security of life, property, national interests and the actualization of positive social and economic transformation. The paper explores the link between the media, promotion of national security and the attainment of socio-economic development in the Nigerian state. It identifies some of the measures that can be adopted by the Nigerian media to foster security of life and property as well as national interests such as poverty alleviation and improvement of living condition of Nigerians etc, such include among others, anti-religious conflict programmes, sensitizing community/rural dwellers, reinforcing democratic principles, objective and constructive reportage, intensifying value re-orientation campaigns and providing information to relevant law enforcement agencies.

Key words: Media, National Security, Socio-Economic Development, Conflict

INTRODUCTION

Since the establishment of the first newspaper in Nigeria which was published in 1859 and the radio and television in 1932 and 1959 respectively, the Nigerian media has continued to develop and wax stronger in many frontiers. While many Nigerians will agree that Nigerian media has somehow “come of age”, there is no doubt that it is facing some challenges that are presently undermining its effort at pursuing the demands of true journalism within the domain of professional ethics and noble societal expectations. The media is known to have contributed and is still contributing towards the reduction of many social problems and vices. The media played a tremendous role towards the stoppage of the practice of killing of twins and their mothers and towards the increasing acceptance by local farmers of fertilizer and new techniques in agricultural production [1]. In recent times, the media has continued to create awareness about bio-technology, the “OSU Caste” system, human trafficking, child abuse, child labor, under-aged marriage and the upsurge in crimes etc. Nigerian media is also facing new challenges in these days of heightened insecurity and crimes. The importance of the media in the Nigerian society considering the above statements is quite effective and notable.

The paper considers the role of Nigerian media in promoting national security in the face of increasing insecurity in the country; witnessed in the incessant terrorist attacks, bombings (in which This day Newspapers House in Abuja was also bombed), Kidnapping and armed robbery etc. It also explores the link between the media, promotion of national security and the actualization of appreciable degree of socio-economic development in Nigeria. It is the view of the paper that, Nigerian media can reposition itself by undergoing some reforms in terms of its programmes, agenda and media policy that can adequately help Nigeria to attain a good status on national security and socio-economic development. Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to explore: 1) the link between the media and promotion of national security, 2) the interaction between the media, national security and socio-economic development in Nigeria and 3) sustainable measures through which the media can promote national security and engender socio-economic development in Nigeria.

The Media Conceptualized: In today’s world, the modern media has influenced and is still influencing our society and the world in general in many different ways. The media sometimes referred to as the press or mass media is actually the fourth estate of the realm in any society or nation. Nigerian media from its heyday has been on the path of growth and development, considering...
its present status and antecedents. Nigerian media has continued to play significant role in the overall development of the nation. However, the media like many other social institutions in Nigeria has been bedeviled by a number of challenges and problems. To conceptualize the media, let us consider some of its definitions. In the literature [2] defines media as, “alternative plural of medium”. This simple definition of the word media refers to means of doing something. Hornby [3] defines media as, “the main ways that large numbers of people receive information and entertainment that is television, radio, newspapers and the internet ....” defines media as, “all organizations, such as television, radio and the newspapers, that provide information for the public”. The media is a formidable tool for communication in all human society. What the media does is to make communication between individuals, groups, institutions, nations and other social networks possible and effective. This is the fundamental task of the media that makes it exceptionally important and instrumental in social organizations. The media is the instrument of mass communication that can make or mar any society in the modern world. The central task of the media can be captured in one word, that is, communication. Merrill [4] states that, “communication is necessary not only for all aspects of a person’s development but for all aspects of a nation’s development”. The above statement clearly expresses the importance of communication in socio-economic development and the well-being of a nation.

There can be no development without communication and therefore no development without the media because it constitutes the means of disseminating information, education, enlightenment and entertainment with the widest coverage and impact in history. Development of any kind in any nation can be meaningfully achieved only through well-planned and executed social interaction of the social system as a gathering force, bringing together people of diverse cultures. It is therefore a potent force of integration when effective. It plays an important role in the education and socialization of individuals in the society. The media disseminates information and this helps to shape our perception of the world in which we live [5]. In the present circumstances in Nigeria in which we are increasingly witnessing a new trend of social disorder and unrest orchestrated by the incessant terrorist attacks, bombings, armed robbery and social vices as well as the potential of this status quo to undermine socio-economic development of the nation, the repositioning and efficiency of the Nigerian media becomes imperative. This brings us to the need to consider using the media in new ways to promote national security and socio-economic development in Nigeria. But first, what is national security?

Concept of National Security: The concept of national security can be widely interpreted to mean many similar things or situations by different scholars and analysts. The issue of national security is a very important one to any nation. This is because a nation’s state in terms of her peoples’ well-being economically, socially, politically, internationally and so on is greatly influenced by her status on national security. The citizens, groups, institutions, corporate organizations and the country in entirety are security conscious. It is in the nature of man to always try to safeguard his physical body, property and even his interests because he needs to do so in order to remain alive, be significant and also protect his acquisitions etc. A nation, on the other hand, also needs to protect itself from both internal and external forces that try to undermine or harm its collective interests, sovereignty, independence, integrity, as well as its citizens wherever they may be in the world. This is why nations cannot afford to be indifferent or uninterested in issues bothering on their national interest, particularly national security. To understand the meaning of the phrase national security, the paper will prefer to examine the meaning of the two words that constitute “national security”. First, the word national is defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (1995), as “related to a whole nation, relation as opposed to other nations, someone who is a citizen of a particular country but living in another country”. Again, Funk and Wagnall’s [6] is more explicit and defines national as, “of, belonging to, or representative of a nation as a whole; characteristic of or peculiar to a nation”. Among the above definitions, the latter is relevant and apt to the definition of national security in the paper. On the other hand, the latter dictionary defines security as, “the state of being secure; freedom from danger, poverty, etc”. Hornby [3] defines security as, “protection-the activities involved in protecting a country, building, or person against attack, danger etc. It also in a simple and short way, defines national security as, “the defense of a country”.

Bringing the words “national” and “security” together for a more comprehensive description is attainable. National security can then be described as the sum of the efforts, energy, intelligence, commitment and the use of institutions (and their products) to enforce and ensure adequate protection of interests, people and properties of a nation. It also involves the overall
that fails to place priority on its national security will suffer. No doubt, the police have failed in their duty to promote democracy (particularly growth of press freedom) and in time foster good governance (which brings socio-economic development) in a nation. A nation that fails to place priority on its national security will eventually become a failed state. However, below is a look at the current state of insecurity in Nigeria.

National security of a nation when ensured, protected or properly safeguarded, is a veritable advantage to the ability of that nation to move forward in terms of development and progress. When a nation provides adequate security for her citizens and properties, sovereignty and maintains good national image and integrity; it helps to ensure a peaceful atmosphere, viable environment and encourages foreign interest that can make things happen in that nation. People are free, happy and willing to go about their businesses without fear of attack, intimidation, danger or loss of property etc. It creates room for investors to come to do business in that country. The nation itself will enjoy harmony and tranquility among its citizens, institutions and organizations etc. The nation’s development plans, structures and people will practically be the beneficiaries. National security is one element that can adequately help to promote democracy (particularly growth of press freedom) and in time foster good governance (which brings socio-economic development) in a nation. A nation that fails to place priority on its national security will eventually become a failed state. However, below is a look at the current state of insecurity in Nigeria.

**Current State of Insecurity in Nigeria: 2010-2012:**

A look at any of the daily newspapers, news from radio, television, or the Internet in Nigeria, sends enough signals that create national panic. Newspaper headlines, such as “SSS Uncovers Bombs Factory”, “The Abuja Satanic Bombing”, “Tight Security in Jos after Violence”, “UN House Attack: Nigeria on Trail of Al-Qaeda agents”, “Bombings Scare Foreign Investors”, “Take Military action against kidnappers” etc, are everyday news in Nigeria since 2010. The state of bombings and socio-political unrests in parts of the country appear to be impacting negatively on every aspect of the Nigerian society. The bombings are now so strategically planned and executed on special days, places, events or occasions and with ruthless intensity. The Nigerian police headquarters in Abuja, the UN office in Abuja, the Independence celebration bombing close to Eagle Square in Abuja, Suleja bombings, Gombe and Maiduguri Bombings and so on, leave Nigerians in a state of shock, disbelief and terrifying fear and anxiety. Many Nigerians believe that the government has not been firm enough in dealing with the terrorists’ threat to the nation’s peace and stability. That Nigeria is in a state of security crisis is highlighted in this statement, “hitting the U.N office in Nigeria which houses about 26 different organs within it has been conjectured to be more political than religious advocacy because Nigeria is at peace and has existed over the past 50 years as an established secular state, without such deep-seated extremist religious tendencies” [3].

Moreover, incessant armed robberies that take place day and night; have made sleeping with both eyes closed elusive to Nigerians. Of recent, there has been a resurgence of the menace across the country. The menace of armed robbery among citizens and banks has been on the increase. To worsen the situation in the country are also cases of kidnapping, occasional rise of violence and conflicts in Jos, Maiduguri and Niger Delta etc. Ugochukwu [7] comments on the worsening security in the nation in these words, “The situation is precarious. Nigeria’s situation is like a man who climbed a tree to avoid being devoured by a lion only to be confronted on the tree by a deadly snake and he runs to the river only to behold a hungry crocodile”. He further states that “if you run away from Boko Haram, kidnappers are waiting; if you escape Boko Haram and kidnappers, armed robbers are waiting. No doubt, the police have failed in their responsibility” as mentioned in literature [3]. In support, Agekameh [8] also believes that “by and large, it is clear
Beyond any reasonable doubt that there are some people in Nigeria today who are averse to peace in the country” [4]. All these put together, establishes the fact that the Nigerian nation is under siege in terms of insecurity. The issue of national security in the country becomes a question and a national challenge. The effect of this prevalent status quo in the country is tremendous. It negatively impacts on the economy (increasing poverty), socio-cultural and political development, national image and even citizens’ mental and psychological well-being etc. It is obviously a panic situation that needs immediate arrest for the nation to be on the path of true democracy and also to experience appreciable socio-economic development.

Media and National Security: The Link: The paper has emphasized communication as the main task of the media. Put simply, “communication is the act of transmitting information, ideas and attitudes from one person to another” [9]. More elaborately, communication can be seen as the process of an organism eliciting a response from another organism, such response of which results from the occurrence of transmitting and receiving symbols. However, in recent times, the definition of the word communication has shifted emphasis from the word transmission to the word exchange. This may be based on the fact that exchange can be seen as encompassing much more than just transmission of ideas and information between sender and receiver. Exchange here, involves transmission and sharing of ideas and information between individuals, groups and organizations. Communication in form of exchange of ideas, information and knowledge is more suitable for the definition of the concept of communication considering the innovations that have taken place in human communication in the past two decades. Also, the increasing growth of Information Communication Technology (I.C.T) and the phenomenon of globalization have influenced and are still influencing the exchange of information immensely. The role of the social media (Facebook, Twitter and Internet), in the drift towards unlimited exchange of information has resulted in increased social relationships, social networks, social revolutions and even crimes across the world. However, we must acknowledge the fact that due to the level of illiteracy, “sluggish” acquisition and appreciation of computer knowledge among Nigerians, communication in this part of the world seems to be more of transmission of ideas and information between the media and populace than real exchange of ideas and information between senders and receivers.

If communication is the act of conveying meaning and eliciting exchange of response between persons, organisms and on a wider scope groups or nations, then the media has the basic function of not just transmitting but sharing information, ideas and attitudes from one or more persons to a large set of people or audience. The function of communicating enemas falls on the shoulders of professional mass communicators, that is, the media. The fourth-estate of the realm is to an extent, more powerful than any of the three arms of government when one considers the impact they can inflict on the society. The media wield powers as a result of its control and access to the tools of communication. The world today is driven by the technology of information and communication, with the control of this, the media makes tremendous impact on individuals, groups, institutions and societies. Graber [10] summarizes the significance of the media in this sentence, “not only are the media the chief source of most people’s views of the world, but they are also the fastest way known to dispense information throughout any entire society”.

The media as an institution, by its nature and functions, liaise between the government and the governed. It acts as the watchdog of the society which confers on it the function of surveillance and report of security concerns of the society in the interest of pursuing peace, harmony and stability of society. This is the meeting point between the media and national security of any nation. National security of any nation covers that nation’s total posture and condition in terms of the state of well-being of its people, their assets, national interests and existence as a sovereign entity. The status of any nation’s security profile can greatly be influenced by the way and manner the media discharges its functions. Apart from the fact that the media, like other social institutions in society, requires a relatively calm and chaos-free society to be able to develop, grow stronger and become more effective, it is also a principal agent in the pursuit of social order, political stability, religious harmony and general peace and tranquility in any nation. The functions of the media relate to the issue of national security in many ramifications.

One, the media not only see themselves as the people’s eyes, ears and mouthpiece, without whom the people will lose their way or direction but also there to make available explanations and interpret government’s actions and policies to the people. This singular function when effectively carried-out, helps to create awareness and understanding of government’s intentions and efforts which also engenders polity stability in many ways, thereby promoting national security. Two, the media
checks the pulse of the people for the benefit of the government and its agenda. It monitors and reports the people's views, ideas, feelings and expectations from government which also helps government’s understanding, think-tank and development plans. This, again, goes a long way to further create better relationship between the governed and the government, which invariably strengthens national security because the citizenry are gaining socio-political awareness, education and germane information that are capable of cooling nerves, building understanding and co-operation among peoples of Nigeria and also inculcating into them the spirit of patriotism and nationalism in high measures.

National security may not thrive in an undemocratic system of government because the people will lack freedom, respect for human rights, rule of law, participation in governance and the freedom of free press. This connects the media with the issue of national security as it pertains to Nigeria at the moment. The state of affairs in Nigeria has degenerated into lawlessness, chaos, uproar, conflicts, social disorder as a result of the bombings and attacks on innocent civilians, worshippers, government offices, establishments and most recently the press (the attack on this day Newspapers head office in Abuja and a conglomeration of newspaper companies at Kaduna). This goes to show that the state of insecurity in Nigeria today has resulted in national panic. The populace is in a state of fear and anxiety. As a nation, Nigeria is currently under siege when you look at its status on national security. There is apparently insecurity issues for the government to resolve and return Nigerian society to normalcy and on the path that can continue to promote the security of life and property across the nation. Grabber [10] states that, “the media not only bring matters to public attention; they also can doom people and events to obscurity by inattention”. It is time for the Nigerian media to refocus and reposition itself for the challenges of national security in Nigeria. It has to become real and strong agent of messages and information that can adequately create enough awareness and understanding among the various peoples in Nigeria, such that can redirect the actions, attitudes and minds of our people towards peace, love, harmony and other attributes of nation building. That is exactly what Nigeria expects from the media in the present state of the nation.

**Media, National Security and Socio-Economic Development: The Interaction:** The popular concept of socio-economic development is particularly about development that impacts on the life of people in terms of their social relationship and economic activities. To grasp the meaning of socio-economic development better, one can start with understanding what the word development means. The term development is a dynamic concept that has continued to receive diverse interpretations and explanations among scholars and researchers particularly in the less developed countries, whose development plans are largely under crisis situation. Rodney [11] conceives development, as a phenomenon which is inherent in all societies. He states that every part of the world, including Africa, was infecting developing before the coming of the white man with his colonialism. He maintains that it does not matter whether a society is primitive or modern provided that society is in a position to creatively harness and utilize the objects of nature at its disposal to improve its living conditions on a sustainable basis.

Development in human society is a many sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being. At the level of social groups, development implies an increasing capacity to regulate both internal and external relationships. However, a society or a nation like Nigeria is said to be developing socio-economically when its members jointly increase their capacity to deal with their environment profitably. This capacity for dealing with the environment is dependent on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools (technology) and on the manner in which work is organized. In a nutshell, socio-economic development is a holistic form of development that encompasses all dimensions of the social life of the people and the capacity to harness their human and environmental potentials towards better living standard for themselves. Socio-economic development as a prerequisite for the progress and advancement of any country has been a nagging problem in Nigeria for more than three decades. For significant socio-economic development to occur in Nigeria, it will require among other things, that the media become more effective in the discharge of its functions particularly towards the promotion of national security in Nigeria. This is no doubt an uphill task before the Nigerian media at this time of heightened insecurity and economic downturn.

The media as powerful medium of mass communication can adequately help Nigeria in many ways towards safeguarding the citizens, groups, organizations, institutions (including itself) and the entire nation and by so doing help to create the necessary conducive environment that can facilitate the prevalence of effective social and economic changes that will better the living
condition of Nigerians. A number of issues in Nigeria have continued to propagate poverty and hunger, unemployment, youth restiveness, religious conflicts, political instability, crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping and most dangerously, the ugly phenomenon of periodic bombings and terrorist incursions that have left the nation in a state of embarrassment, bloodshed and panic. There is every reason to believe that these social problems are partly consequences of issues that are either unattended to or not adequately and constructively attended to by the leadership and the relevant social institutions, particularly the media. Doris Graber [10] says that the media not only brings matters to public attention but also can doom people and events to obscurity by inattention come to mind at this juncture. A very important question emerges at this point. Is the Nigerian media doing enough towards the promotion of good morals, peace and harmony among the ethnic groups, religious tolerance and tranquility with the intent to discourage fanaticism and religious bigotry as well as general, meaningful change of attitude and behavior of Nigerians? This may be a big question that requires a simple answer. The answer to this question can provide great insight to many of what the media can do to improve Nigeria’s state of insecurity and prosperity national security status. This on its own is very essential for appreciable positive socio-economic transformation to take place in Nigeria.

The media, national security and socio-economic development are linked because they possess the potential to mutually reinforce one another in many ways. The media can help to promote the security of life and property, national interests and national integrity which fosters national security and any meaningful development both socio-economic and cultural etc. The promotion of adequate security of a nation’s citizens, sovereignty and national interests can also be instrumental to the efficiency, growth and development of that nation’s media houses and practitioners by providing the required public co-operation, civil liberty, peace and harmony of all the stakeholders in the Nigeria project, or more preferably, in the building of Nigeria. The interaction between the media, promotion of national security and attainment of a reasonable degree of positive socio-economic changes in Nigeria can simply be seen in the context of a powerful social institution and what it can be able to do in the realm of providing security in the areas of provision of good roads, good schools, better healthcare, food security, employment and reduction in crimes and social ills. In all these, information dissemination, that is, effective and positive communication of events, ideas, knowledge and happenings to the people of Nigeria comes paramount. The development of adequate security of life and property and pursuit of positive social and economic returns for Nigeria brings to mind the fact that development and communication interact much more than people think. Improving national security and socio-economic status of Nigeria is particularly about developing means of safeguarding Nigerians and their interests, betterment of the living condition of Nigerians and therefore purely a development issue. For whatever group development is planned, communication is indispensable in achieving it. Communication is the function of the media which it can use more effectively at this stage of Nigeria’s search for true national identity, national security and socio-economic changes that can move Nigerians and Nigeria forward in the face of today’s challenges. In view of this, the paper posits a conclusion and some measures to be employed by the media to adequately promote national security and positive socio-economic transformation in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The media is a powerful mass messenger of information, ideas, education and must endeavor to utilize this potential in Nigeria to help her out of this terrible state of insecurity and underdevelopment. The Nigerian media must refocus and reposition itself through its programmes and other reforms, to reach Nigerians whether poor or rich, literate or illiterate, misguided or guided, exploited or unexploited, endangered or un-endangered, at home or in the diaspora in order to liberate our people from obscurity, stupidity, ignorance, fanaticism, illiteracy and unpatriotism. These are fundamental issues and problems that the media can effectively use its power of mass communication to reduce to minimal level and impact. This will help in promoting national security to the level that the required peaceful and conducive space for socio-economic development in Nigeria will be adequately guaranteed. Nigeria needs this now more than anything else.

The promotion of security of Nigerians and Nigeria’s interests which include her efforts at actualizing some appreciable degree of positive socio-economic transformation will require the attention and repositioning of the nation’s media in the following ramifications.

Anti-Religious Conflict Programmes: Nigerian media has come to the stage in Nigeria’s history when it must take the bull by the horn. It is time in the life of the nation when the media must not only continue to preach religious tolerance but also try to be more proactive and
effective through its numerous programmes by developing anti-religious conflict programmes. More of its programmes, advertisements and concepts should emphasize that religion is a practice that should be driven by conviction for peace, love and tranquility and not by compulsion for violence, fanaticism, bigotry and senseless destruction of life and property. The media should use all its tools to enforce understanding, cooperation and harmony among all religions, particularly Muslims and Christians in Nigeria.

Sensitizing Community/Rural Dwellers: With the increasing state of insecurity and Nigeria’s desire to ensure grassroots development, the media has a big challenge ahead. Nigerian media is considerably widespread in terms of coverage but seem to focus more on programmes that are urbanized than those meant for rural dwellers. Recent reports show that many crimes and evil plans are hatched in the rural areas away from the search light of security operatives. This is partly because of the quiet, secretive, less policed scenario that these areas provide. Nigerian media must undertake to develop programmes, campaigns, that can increase community dwellers’ awareness and socio-political consciousness so that they can know who is working against their interest and unity of the nation and report what they notice or feel to the appropriate quarters and authorities.

Entrenching Democratic Principles: Democratic values and principles are people-oriented elements that continually change societies positively if applied in governance. Democratic principles such as rule of law, freedom of press, speech, association and religion; equality, fairness and justice, accountability and peaceful co-existence etc are eloquent factors of social change that need adequate advertisement and reinforcement for citizens to develop attachment to them and gradually imbibe them as ways of life. The task of inculcating democratic principles in any democracy lies partly on the shoulders of the media. Nigerian media must endeavor through its programmes and activities to teach Nigerians that these principles are not only laudable but pragmatic elements that make individuals and societies integrate and progress towards concrete social, cultural, political and economic development.

Objective and Constructive Reportage: The issue of objective, unbiased and constructive reportage of events, problems and happenings has continued to be a major challenge to the Nigerian media. There have been accusations of corruption in the media, such that, some journalists have been bribed to disseminate false information and even publish articles and reports that generate controversies and tension in Nigeria. At this point in time, Nigeria needs all the peace and unity that can usher in the right atmosphere for true development to occur. The media must reposition itself, by urging its practitioners to employ the ethics of the profession to the fullest and always carry out their functions in a fair, just, objective and constructive manner that can help to engender peace and unity in Nigeria.

Intensifying Value-Reorientation Campaign: Nigerian media must intensify its efforts towards helping the present government led by President Goodluck Jonathan in its transformation agenda through effective value reorientation campaigns. The media through its various programmes must embark on value transformation which should be the core of the present transformation agenda in Nigeria. Some Nigerians have serious “value-choice” issue, a problem that has contributed to the high level of violence, crimes and conflicts we are witnessing presently in the country. The media must refocus Nigerians by re-orientating them to receive and imbibe the good values of humanity. This step will augur well for national security and development in Nigeria.

Providing Information to Relevant Law Enforcement Agencies: There has been and will continue to be the general call by the law-enforcement agencies in Nigeria for information from the public that can be useful towards reducing crime, corruption, social vices and particularly the new wave of terrorist attacks and bombings across the northern part of the nation. Many individuals for fear of exposure and harm prefer not to reveal useful information that can help the police and other security agencies. Nigerian media as corporate organizations can receive information from the public and present them to the law enforcement agencies, thereby saving individuals from exposure as the source of information. The media can also give little stipend to individuals who offer authentic and useful information that help to enforce security of life and property. The media should also make effective use of Freedom of Information Law to regularly bring to the notice of the populace critical information about government’s activities.

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