

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF BROADCAST JOURNALISM IN RESHAPING THE POLITICAL TERRAIN IN NIGERIA

Abstract

Over the years the Nigerian political environment has been tagged dirty, as a result of this those who may want to venture into politics with genuine interest might be discouraged because of this trend. Regrettably, the political environment in Nigeria is generally based on tribal or regional identity rather than ideology and this has continued to hinder the progress of the political system in Nigeria. Hence, this paper looked at the various roles broadcast medium as a powerful tool of change has played or can play in reshaping the political terrain in Nigeria. The authors have been able to show the relationship that exists between broadcast journalism and politics in Nigeria and how it is indispensable in reshaping the political environment.

Keywords: Broadcast Journalism, Democracy, Politics, Political Environment, Media

Introduction

The role of broadcast journalism in a political setting cannot be overemphasized. It will be difficult to talk about how far politics have progress overtime in Nigeria without talking about broadcast journalism. Unlike the print journalism broadcast journalism with its simplicity and easy accessibility has attracted a good number of people to it, hence, one of the major reasons politicians and other political stakeholders leverage on it to score political points. Perhaps, politics would have still been in the dark if not for the publicity it gets from broadcast journalism. Hence, accessing political information through electronic medium is associated with higher civic engagement and voting (Pasek, Kenski, Romer, & Jamieson, 2006; Rooij & Green, 2017). The mainstream media, particularly radio, have powerful roles in political mobilization and participation in a country (Muhingi, Agonga, Mainye, Mong'are, & Maranga, 2015;

Omwoha, 2016). Also, Srinivasan and Diepeveen (2018) noted that through the traditional broadcast media a lot of people now participate in political discourse which then increase their sense of efficacy and validate their perspectives in politics.

It is important to note that in Nigeria broadcast journalism has proven to be a strong force to reckon with in political development and that is why Olusegun (2009), averred that radio and television are potential catalysts of development in any social or political setting. The ability of radio to reach millions simultaneously, the unique attribute of television to present pictorial messages, makes them a useful tool for political development.

Nigeria boasts one of the most robust and diverse media landscape in Africa (Daramola, 2017). Since the deregulation of broadcast media in 1992, the media sector has expanded and features close to 300 radio stations and multiple television stations, of which about 100 are owned by state (Nwulu, Adekanbi, Oranugo, & Adewale, 2010). While the state retains ownership of a portion of broadcast channels, the private channels are critical of government, and influential in setting the agenda for political discourse despite intimidation and incessant attacks on press freedom (Freedom House, 2016).

Hanson (2017) observed that Nigeria has made progress since its return to democracy in 1999. But its political system has been crippled by corruption and dogged by ethnic tensions that threaten to derail the country from its path toward good governance.

In recent years, the political environment in Nigeria is generally based on tribal or regional identity rather than ideology (Nordea, 2020). According to Pew research center (2019), few Nigerians are satisfied with the state of their democracy. Only 39% of Nigerians are satisfied with the way democracy is working in their country, while 60% say they are not satisfied.

The Nigeria political environment that has been characterized by tribalism, nepotism, ethnicity, corruption among other negative factors are unarguably responsible for the daunting growth of the political system that cannot be compared to what is obtainable in the western world in recent times. It is the dissatisfaction Nigerians get from the political system that is responsible for their low interest in political activities in the country. Be that as it may, the broadcast journalism has a great role to play in influencing positive change in the political environment in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop this paper sought to x-ray the role broadcast journalism play in reshaping the political terrain in Nigeria.

Positive Correlation between Broadcast Media and Politics in Nigeria

Broadcast journalism and politics in Nigeria are inextricably linked. Since their inception, the broadcast media in Nigeria have been vital, indispensable links between those governing and those who are governed. The broadcast media and our political system in the country are involved in an intricate nexus of relationship, cooperation and complementary activities. The relationship between the broadcast media and politics in Nigeria has two extremes. There are the positive relationship and the negative relationship. However, there are both geared towards promoting individual and collective interest of the society.

The following are the positive, advantageous relationships between the broadcast media and politics in Nigeria.

Broadcast journalism in Nigeria is a product of political rivalry

The foremost relationship on the broadcast media and politics in Nigeria is that the broadcast media as well as broadcast journalism as we see it today was started as a result of political rivalry. History has it that the first television station Nigeria and the entire black Africa was

started because of political rivalry. Kur and Nyekwere (2015) assert that Chief Obafemi Awolow, the leader of Action Group (AG), was accused of “perfidy” – an attempt to destabilise the government. This accusation was made by the Governor-General, Sir Macpherson on the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) established by the central government in 1951. When Chief Obafemi Awolow contacted NBS, he was denied air-time to respond to the accusation. Therefore, AG led by Chief Awolowo came up with a legislation to empower regional governments to establish and own broadcast stations too.

In 1959, the legislation was successfully considered. The Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) was established in Ibadan. This bold initiative amidst political rivalry led to the establishment of other broadcast stations – Eastern Nigeria Broadcast Service, Radio – Television Kaduna and the Nigeria Television Service (NTS) among others (Akinfeleye, 2003; Kur and Nyekwere, 2015). In the words of Kur and Nyekwere (2015, p.120), “Political rivalry among the three regional governments contributed significantly to the expansion of television broadcasting”.

Broadcast journalism provides the platform for political debates and opinion sharing

Kur and Nyekwere (2015, p.117) opine that “television is intended in a democratic setting to provide space that mediates between civil societies and the realms of power.” This space provided by the broadcast media (television and radio) allows political players and stakeholder to engage in open discussions of issues of public concerns. Such open discussions opposing parties argue to win the hearts of the electorate. They share thoughts and strategies for the betterment of society and the masses. Opening up these forums and debate platforms is necessary to encourage

political participation in a democratic system as ours. The broadcast media provides platforms for political discourse and participation. It provides a display place for political players and stakeholders to present their diversity of ideas and political opinion. Through this medium, the broadcast media shape and encourage public opinions (Gainaka, Alsagoffs & Ghazali, 2020).

Broadcast journalism monitors political stakeholders to ensure conformity with public interest

Broadcast journalism serves as an umpire in the political sphere of nations. In the combat between political opponents seeking to acquire power, the broadcast media, as asserted by Kur and Nyekwere (2015) ensure that the various competing political parties and stakeholders conduct themselves in a matter that is in conformity with the general interest of the public. The media publicly justifies the actions and inactions that are good or bad for the process of democratisation of the country. The broadcast media, according to Shardow and Asare (2016, as cited in Gainaka, Alsagoffs & Ghazali, 2020) is fundamental to democratisation as well as political processes. Therefore, it is an important institution that serves as a beacon of freedom, a check on authorities and a driver of agenda for development and progress. This is an important role the broadcast media plays in a democratic process.

They further explain that, “as watchdogs, the media perform a guardian and monitorial function for the public. The effective performance of this role has seen the media especially in developed countries like the USA prevent abuse of public trust even before it happens as well as expose wrongdoings and deter other people from engaging in it” (p. 480). This makes the broadcast media, as well as other mass media, the market place of political ideas, as Santas and Ogochi (2016) call it. Santas and Ogochi categorically state that “it is an indispensable fact that the mass media (which includes the broadcast media) is the watchdog of any society” (p. 77).

According to them, this task has been constitutionally assigned to the media. “The 1999 constitution gives a charge in chapter ii section 22 which categorically states that, ‘the press, radio, television, and other agencies of the mass media shall at all time be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government of the people’. It is against the backdrop of this provision that the mass media, such as radio and television, can monitor the government.” (p. 78)

Broadcast journalism is a voice of advocacy for collective good in political situations

In as much as the broadcast media is expected to watch as well as monitor the political terrain of the country, it is not enough to merely monitor or play the watchdog function; broadcast journalism can also serve as a tool for political advocacy. It can be a voice of advocacy for the collective good of society. According to Dukor (1998) as cited by Kur and Nyekwere (2015, p. 118), the broadcast media “should not only be a mirror that reflects the face of democracy, it should also be a voice of advocacy for the collective good of society.”

Broadcast journalism promotes pressure group activities in political situations

According to Kur and Nyekwere (2015), broadcast journalism promotes the activities of pressure groups in political situations. Pressure groups are

Pressure groups as the name implies tend to put pressure on the political institution for the best performance in politics and democracy. Aligning with pressure groups helps broadcast journalists to harness the proper functioning of the democratic process or the political process in the country.

Broadcast journalism facilitates the entrenchment of democracy

Just like the print media, the broadcast media plays an important role in entrenching democracy in politics. In Nigeria, the nationalists that founded the broadcast media deployed them as tools

for political agitation and demanded for outright independence and democracy for the country. Therefore, the struggle to entrench democracy in Nigeria was and is strongly been shouldered by the mass media. According to Santas and Ogochi (2016), the broadcast media has been one of the leading actors in the national politics in the country. They opined that the broadcast media was fashioned as a unified political entity to entrench democracy in the Nigeria political system. Galadima and Asemah (2012, as cited by Santas & Ogochi ,2016) opine that “the mass media is the driver’s force that fascinates the entrenchment of democracy in any political system. This is because democracy depends on a knowledgeable citizenry, whose access to broad range of information enables them to participate fully in public life and the governance of the society” (p. 75).

Broadcast journalism stimulates political transparency

Broadcast journalism, like print journalism, helps in stimulating political transparency, Balkin (1998, as cited in Ende, 2013) argues. Balkin holds the belief that without the mass media, openness and accountability is impossible within the nation’s political sphere. To him, the media give great assistance to citizens to understand the operations of the government; and it also hold the government accountable to the people it governs.

Broadcast journalism mobilises/ educates/ informs the people for political participation

The broadcast media, according to Santas and Ogochi (2016) are expected to mobilise the people to participate in political activities. For example, immediately after the Abdulsalami Abubakar lead government instituted the transition program that ushered in a new democracy; the broadcast journalism was very instrumental in creating awareness on the electoral process. The broadcast media was used to educate the voters on the need to participate in the process. Ciboh (2010) said that it is he media that helps the masses to define and sort out the complexities that

come with political processes. This clarification, done by the media, helps the citizen to meaningfully participate in politics, elections, and democratic processes. The broadcast media along side with other mass media ensure that citizens are well informed about political processes and development in society. Political programmes and platforms such as “Inside the senate”, “Democracy today” and “Radio links” are broadcast programmes fashioned to educate the citizens on political issues (Ciboh, 2010; Santas & Ogochi, 2016).

Challenges of the Nigerian Broadcast Media and political engagement

The inclusion of political exercises in the Nigerian broadcast media is detectable to the pre-autonomy/frontier period when Thomas Chamax spearheaded the radio redistribution administration during the 1930s. A few researchers declare that radio and other media of mass correspondence came to Nigeria with regards to imperialism (Ekwuazi, 1991; Okome, 1997). Thus, communicating under the English frontier rule in Nigeria served propagandistic finishes. At the end of the day, the English specialists sent the communicate media to program Nigerians to indiscriminately support and advance the radical approaches of the English Realm. The most critical occasion of this period was the institution of a law building up the Nigerian Telecom Administration (NBS) in 1951, which later transformed into the Nigerian Telecom Enterprise (NBC 2).

The protected turn of events and political elements that proclaimed the autonomy of Nigeria additionally influenced the telecom circle. Ibagere (2009) states, however in a somewhat extraordinary setting, that the way correspondence works in any general public is constantly controlled by the social and political elements of that specific culture on the grounds that such elements decide the parity of the general public. In supporting the previous, Croteau and Hoynes

(2000) keep up that, "To all the more likely get media, we have to comprehend the world of politics wherein they work". Thus in Nigeria, various radio and TV slots developed between late 1950s and late 1970s, starting with the foundation of the Western Nigerian Telecom Administration - TV (WNBSTV) in Ibadan in 1959 (Ogunsuyi, 2007). The late savvy, Boss Obafemi Awolowo, who was then chief of the western locale, felt overshadowed by the focal government through the instrumentality of the bureaucratic communicate media and persuaded himself that for him to ventilate his own perspectives which he was not permitted to do on the wireless transmissions his administration expected to glide its own communicate media outfit. This particular activity of one man in 1959 snowballed into the setting up of various radio and TV benefits across Nigeria by both the bureaucratic and state governments in the following twenty years or thereabouts. Eguavoen (2002) opines that the law setting up the NBC2 was altered in 1961 to permit the government priest of data to be vested with the ability to give explicit orders to the organization. Curiously, that force despite everything remains alive in the laws of the Government Radio Organization of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian TV Authority (NTA) just as in many decrees building up state broadcasting administrations where such force is vested in the state magistrates of data.

Politicking on the broadcast medium in the initial four years of Nigeria's freedom reached a critical stage in 1964 when the then focal government through orders, in a similar way as the colonialists, provided deception by means of the communicate media in a frantic endeavor to break a national laborers' strike. This earned the Nigerian communicate media a quick open judgment and resulting inconveniences of validity and agreeableness by the Nigerian work power. This was against the background of a moderately energetic political reportage going on in the print media even into the system of the main military junta in Nigeria which started in

January 1966. The military cancelled whatever constitution that was in power and governed with announcements and fiats for a long time before surrendering capacity to regular citizens in 1979. This prompted the drafting of the Second Republic Constitution by which the non military personnel organization took over government in 1979. In the middle of these long stretches of military (interregnums since military principle is an abnormality and outsider to vote based ethos), Nigeria saw a common war which saw the Radio Biafra (RB) going ahead board to serve the purposeful publicity interests of the Biafrans while the NBC2 was a multipurpose political apparatus in the hands of the legislature during and after the Nigerian common war.

Somewhere in the range of 1979 and 1983, the Nigerian communicate media got involved in claims of partisanship, particularly in their inclusion of political exercises in the 1979 change to regular citizen rule. The NTA and FRCN were affirmed of being the focal government's publicity machines (at that point comprised of individuals from the decision party, National Gathering of Nigeria, NPN). Contingent upon the gathering administering a specific express, the communicate media outfits claimed by such state were esteemed to have a place with such gatherings. The national radio and TV media would in general be from – NPN while the vast majority of the state radio and TV slots upheld any gathering to which any of the state governments had a place (Maduka, 1987). This circumstance is, pretty much, still the case today as Darah (2010) as of late saw that the owners of the media associations have their political affiliations; they effectively shield and well-spoken the positions and yearnings of their group and ethno-national areas of the nation.

Some different examinations have demonstrated that the Nigerian communicate media during the subsequent republic committed a large portion of their inclusion to the opposition

between the political up-and-comers instead of giving a clarification of issues and the candidates\' positions on them. Anxious to pull in watchers/audience members, telecasters focussed on emotional minutes that feature candidates\' botches, assaults on rivals and recommendations of outrage or issues even where they don't exist. Truth be told, numerous analysts and other sharp eyewitnesses of the communicate business in Nigeria (Tony Momoh, Elo Ibagere, Ralph Akinfeleye, Mike Ozekome, Fedelis Amantokwu, Wole Soyinka, Biodun Jeyifo, Omo Omoruyi, among others) have charged the Nigerian broad communications with inclination for their controllers. As indicated by Eguavoen (2002) and Ibagere (2009) the significant charges against the broad communications, particularly during the subsequent republic included partisanship, ethnic, and strict hawkishness, coercion of some political applicants, bending of the real world, debasement, and the distortion of the North-South polarity. At any rate, it is deplorable that these are grave charges against an industry which should satisfy its duties and commitments in and to the Nigerian country as cherished in the Nigerian constitution. In particular, area 22 of the 1999 constitution doles out to the media the job to screen administration and maintain transparency and responsibility in government.

In the midst of the political dirty tricks that played themselves out during the subsequent republic, Nigeria saw the second influx of military interregnums which began in 1983 and went on for the following seventeen years with episodes of majority rule affectations to a great extent by one most extreme ruler or the other. Radio and TV media were under the stranglehold of military juntas which constantly badgering, detained, or killed "difficult" or "failing" media men or ladies and now and then shut down "blundering" stations by military fiats.

Contingent upon the states of mind of the military tyrants some communicate columnists were co-picked into their systems to quell their illegal homes. Maduka (1987) and Eguavoen (2002) attest that telecom under the military principle was viewed as a willing apparatus in the hands of progressive systems, which utilized it differently to sedative, scare, or bamboozle the masses to fall in accordance with shrouded political interests and plan of the administration in power. Omoruyi (2001) further affirms, though in a somewhat extraordinary setting that the military from 1966 was essentially engrossed with the administration of the tripod utilizing the assets, human and normal to assuage, first the Hausa/Fulani and afterward to partition the Yoruba into for and against business as usual and underestimate the Ibo as a vanquished people. This maybe catches the enduring political test the military foisted on Nigeria which they used to fortify their political stranglehold on Nigeria. For example, the unfortunate political occurrences previously, during and after the June 12, 1993 political race led by the military government in Nigeria and the job radio and TV slots played will perpetually stay an irritated perspective in the archives of political inclusion in the Nigerian communicate media.

Nonetheless, the communicate media family additionally saw an achievement accomplishment with the deregulation of the business to permit private people or consortia to claim and work communicate stations. High expectations and desires proclaimed the over-guideline of the communicate business, the same number of individuals were at that point burnt out on the boring programming of the administration run radio and TV slots and their ability to kowtow to the legislature of the day. In any case, these expectations and desires were run as the days passed by, attributable to the hanky-panky of a portion of the proprietors of the private communicate media worries concerning moral issues and gauges. At any rate, the deregulation provoked the setting up of the National Telecom Commission (NBC1) in 1992 by

Pronouncement No. 38 (Presently Act No.38) by the Ibrahim Babangida military system. As an administrative body set up by law, the NBC1 is vested with the ability to permit and screen the activity of the whole communicating industry in Nigeria. It has forces to authorize failing stations, lead the path in issues of communicate strategies, and set the pace for important telecom in the Nigerian media-scape (Okhakhu & Omoera, 2010). Yet, so far the NBC1 has been prevailing in it is declared strategic an issue for another conversation.

Nigeria re-accomplished majority rule administration in 1999 and around eleven years not far off, apparently the nation is a long way from political Eldorado and the communicate media industry is truly involved in this untoward turn of events. Nigerian communicate media are progressively being blamed for biasness and partisanship jokes by government officials, the scholarly network, the common freedom associations and different partners in the Nigerian task. By and large, the different political inclusion and battles on radio and TV slots by ideological groups and their hopeful competitors have been ideologically suspected. This is relied on the way that the competitors that have discovered their approach to political workplaces, both elective and non elective at the nearby, state, and government levels in 1999, 2003, and 2007 races, have done pretty much nothing or nothing to coordinate their words with activities. This is clearly in light of the fact that crucial markers of national life in Nigeria, for example, power gracefully, business, social insurance conveyance, instruction, and security of life and property, among others, have not been obviously enhanced (Omoera, 2009).

Political inclusion in the communicate media in the fifty years or so of Nigeria's checked presence would surely vitalize a corpus of genuine inquires about on the socio-political development of Nigeria yet as prior noticed, this paper is, pretty much, a conversation whose

point is to goad proficient "radio wires", sharpen proficient aptitudes and conceivably award media experts and others partners a couple of exercises for the street in their expert interests. It is in acknowledgment of this reality; that we will turn the radar of the talk to the code of moral direct expected of communicate media outfits and their experts in Nigeria.

Ways Broadcast Journalism can Promote Positive Politics

The Nigeria political arena has been tagged “dirty” in recent times, and as such, a lot of people have been discouraged from venturing into it because of fear of the unknown. A political environment engulf with so much negativity can hardly attract people with genuine political interest who have strong desire to advance the socio-economic and political sectors of the country. In such an environment the broadcast media have a role to play in changing the negative perception of people through its programmes without fear or favour. No wonder, Howard (2019, p.11), observed that “without the freedom to question and report on the actions of government, journalism risks becoming a tool to advance the agenda of those in power”. Unarguably, when the media become the instrument to advance the agenda of those political actors who see politics as a do or die thing, the polity will continue to be under intense heat where no one would want to delve into. In view of this assertion, Olusegun (2009) noted that the broadcast media owe their audiences the duty of informing them on the happenings in the political environment. However, when the media tilt their support in favour of certain players at the detriment of others, they lead the audience into a state of uncertainty. In a situation of heated polity characterized by negativity, broadcast journalism should not be part of it, instead it should be a platform to promote positive politics and encourage tremendous political growth.

Blumler and Gurevitch (1995, as cited in Adaja, 2017), state that journalists have the responsibility to scrutinize politicians' conduct and unraveling the real story politicians may want to conceal. Holders of political powers have the potentials and tendencies if not carefully watched, to abuse power, exceed their mandate and commit blunders.

As the fourth estate, the media have enormous responsibility in checkmating excesses in government and in the political arena. To this end, Howard (2019, p.13) has this to say "even today, the press is tasked with communicating the policies of the government to inform the public and scrutinizing the government's decisions with informed analysis as part of its job as a watchdog of power." As watchdog of the society, when the broadcast media keep some of these political actors on their toes through constructive criticism they will be left with no option than to act appropriately. More so, broadcast journalism can be use to promote positive politics through political education. Through it, political gladiators will be made to see reasons why positive politics should be practice. Not only that, but it will give the electorate the opportunity to make informed choices in the political environment. It is also interesting to note that, broadcast journalism help political actors to be enlightened about new political trends and policies which are adoptable and practicable in the world of politics, which when adopted in their locality could solve political problem. Other way broadcast journalism can promote positive politics is by providing political researchers and scientists political information to advance the political culture and thereby encourage healthy political environment devoid of negativity even from the political actors.

Conclusion

It will be so difficult to talk about how the politics has evolved in Nigeria without mentioning the role broadcast journalism has played. The authors have been able to show the relationship

between broadcast journalism and politics in Nigeria and how it is indispensable in reshaping the political environment. No doubt the broadcast media have been doing a lot through its programmes to encourage positive political development and this explain why most of these political actors want to identify with them because of the power they wield in causing change.

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