Press and National Integration: Analysis of the Role of the Nigerian Press in the Promotion of Nigerian National Identity

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This thesis is submitted to Cardiff University in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late Mother, Madam Amenaghawon Omoigui Aimufua, my late elder Sister, Mrs Odion Uyiekpen Aimufua Omoruyi and my late Father Mr Uyiekpen Aimufua

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The thought of doing a research PhD on the role of the Nigerian press in Nigeria's quest for national integration wasn't really sharpened until after my programme at Wolfson College, Cambridge University in 1996. As the programme was made possible through the scholarship I got from the Nuffield Foundation, I therefore owe it a duty, to right from the onset; express my profound gratitude to them for the opportunity to study for higher education in the United Kingdom.

Apparently, it's been a long time since this research commenced but not without justifiable reasons. This is not the place to delve into such. But it suffices to say that without the understanding and sympathetic attitude of some special people, I could have been consumed in the rough and tumble that trailed it and would almost certainly have abandoned it. For this, a special thanks to my supervisor and Head of School, Professor Terry Threadgold. How can I ever forget her? Through her acute understanding of my predicament, I was tolerated for so long by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies. There were also Professor John Hartley and Professor John Tulloch before her. And the fact that the School was also responsible for paying half of my school fees, after my first year of enrolment, also makes its contribution towards the realisation of this research, not only invaluable but second to none. Over the years, staff within the School has been quite helpful: Joanne Marshall; Julie Stephens; Rebecca Harris, Stephanie Ward and, Hannah Peters etc. There isn't enough space to name them all. But to all, past and present, members of staff, many, many thanks.

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sad that the other one, Mrs Odion Uyiekpen Aimufua Omoruyi and our mother, Madam Amenaghawon Omoigui Aimufua, both died just few weeks after this project was completed. May their kind souls rest in peace

Abstract

The issue of national integration and unity has occupied the apex of national discourse in Nigeria since it secured political independence from Britain in 1960. The Nigerian state's solution to this fundamental issue is rooted in its basic constitutional principle which espouses "unity within diversity". As the Nigerian nation is made up of over 250 ethnic and nationality groups, the issue has always been how to make a "Nigeria" out of these Nigerians. This study seeks to examine the way that Nigeria's constitutional aspirations are reflected (or not) in the Nigerian press.

The narrative is told against the backdrop of the Nigerian context, which is a major factor in the press' activities, starting from the historical emancipatory role they played during the colonial period. The study employs qualitative content analysis to examine how newspapers promote any sense of collective Nigerian national identity amongst Nigeria's constituent nationality groups and sectional interests. The period under scrutiny is 1983-1993, a period that saw both civilian and military rule, and press coverage from a wide spectrum of newspapers is analysed – particularly in terms of the variety of newspaper ownership. This is augmented by intensive/in-depth interviews with experts on the Nigerian press, who reflect on how and why the press behave in the way they do. The intensive interviews expose that the success of any press is often dependent on its ability to promote nationality interests as a basis for ensuring a pan-Nigerian national cohesion, though there are issues or interests that unite the Nigerian state which become clearly delineated, articulated and promoted. The major findings from this examination of the press confirm that, within the Nigerian context, these are international issues that are essentially non-contentious and therefore do not contradict the interests of each of the groups within the state.

The study finds clear evidence of problems confronting the press in Nigeria, primarily in terms of ownership, control, and lack of professionalism among journalists, reinforced by the Lagos-Ibadan axis (which sees a concentration of the press in the South-west) that supports a specific 'worldview'.

This study nonetheless concludes by contending that, firstly, the Nigerian press that promotes nationality and sectional interests can still contribute to national integration, and secondly, the press' success in instilling any sense of collective Nigerian national identity in Nigeria's multi-cultural entities is directly related to how it employs momentous events involving Nigeria to 'flag' the state.

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List of Abbreviations

AFCA	Armed Forces Consultative Council
AFRC	Armed Forces Ruling Council
AG	Action Group
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CLO	Civil Liberties Organisation
CSSR	Centre for Socio-legal Studies and Research
DFRRI	Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure
DTN	Daily Times of Nigeria
ECOMOG	Ecowas Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FEDECO	Federal Electoral Commission
FESTAC	Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture
FG	Federal Government
FIFA	Federation of International Football Association
FMG	Federal Military Government
FRAN	Free Readers Association of Nigeria
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
GNPP	Great Nigeria Peoples Party
IBB	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board
LASG	Lagos State Government
LG	Local Government
MP	Member of Parliament

NAN	News Agency of Nigeria
NAP	Nigerian Advanced Party
NBC	Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and Camerouns
NCS	National Council of State
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NEPU	Northern Elements Progressive Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NICON	National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria
NIPSS	National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies
NLC	Nigerian Labour Congress
NNA	Nigerian National Alliance
NNDP	Nigerian National Democratic Party
NNL	New Nigerian Newspapers Limited
NNPC	Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation
NNSL	Nigerian National Shipping Line
NPA	Nigerian Ports Authority
NPAN	Newspaper Proprietor Association of Nigeria
NPC	Nigerian Press Council
NPC	Northern Peoples Congress
NPN	National Party of Nigeria
NPP	Nigerian Peoples Party
NRA	Newspapers Readers Association
NRC	National Republican Convention
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority

NUC	National Universities Commission
NUJ	Nigerian Union of Journalist
NWICO	New World Information and Communication Order
NYM	Nigerian Youth Movement
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
ODA	Okun Development Association
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Conference
PPA	Progressive Party Alliance
PPA	Progressive Peoples Alliance
PRP	Peoples Redemption Party
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SFEM	Second tier Foreign Exchange Market
SNC	Sovereign National conference
SSS	State Security Services
UACN	United Africa Company of Nigeria
UMBC	United Middle Belt Congress
UNCTAD	United Nations Committee on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNIP	United Independent Party
UPGA	United Progressive Grand Alliance
UPN	Unity Party of Nigeria
VP	Vice President

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Nigerian integration and the Nigerian press

My choice of this topic has everything to do with my experience as a print journalist. For about ten years (1986-1996), I witnessed from the inside the intrigues and politics of the press vis-à-vis the delicate nature of the Nigerian state. But it was clear to me that such a powerful medium of communication could do much to help resolve the Nigerian crisis, depending on the way it goes about exercising its power. One way it could do this successfully, given the socio-economic and political realities of Nigeria, would be by recognising such and also appreciating why the realities exist and how they came about and within that context promote a Nigerian national identity amongst the various groups that constitute the Nigerian state.

This research is therefore about the role of the Nigerian press in promoting a collective Nigerian national identity and how that impacts on the whole question of national integration and unity in Nigeria. It examines the history and context of the press, the content of the press and, how the press uses its coverage of specific issues and events to foster a collective Nigerian national identity. For instance, it raises the question: What do we know about the relationship between press and issues of national integration in Nigeria on the one hand and the ways that the press promotes national identity in a multi-cultural society like Nigeria on the other? The press' role in these endeavours can be questioned with regard to: the cultural variables embedded in the Nigerian society which threaten national integration; the way the owners of the press manipulate these issues and how such manipulations impact on national integration and unity; and, how the press, through its activities, is able to mobilise the culturally diverse Nigerian society towards identifying with Nigeria. For instance, Dr. Rod Brookes (1999: 250), using as his case study, the British press' coverage of the BSE/CJD[1] crisis of 1996 in the UK, analysed "how the textual organisation of newspapers assumes identification with the nation as the naturalized form of

[1] Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy/Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

collective identity."

Significantly, the Nigerian constitution has a role spelt out for the media in general, of which the press is a major part. The obligation of the mass media, as spelt out in Chapter II, reads:

> The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this Chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999: Chapter II, no. 22).

The ultimate objective in this endeavour is the promotion of a united Nigeria.[2] The press is expected to fulfil these roles within the Nigerian context which is post-colonial (see Chapter two, below), with all the consequences of political and socio-economic instability that have been created as a result. Studies on the African media show that its nature is directly linked with the colonial heritage of the African states (see, for instance, Williams 1963: 243).

This research seeks to determine the way the nature and character of the Nigerian state have shaped the press and the role that it is now playing within it. Grosberg et al (1998) have argued that the study of mass media must be done together with other institutions and other dimensions of social life as each shape and define the other. In effect, to understand media, there is the need to relate them to their institutional, economic, social, cultural and historical contexts. Consequently, recognising that the character of the Nigerian press is a direct consequence of colonialism, in general, and the nature of the Nigerian state, in particular, is crucial to understanding and appreciating the way that the press conducts its activities within the state. To look at the press this way is to be informed by its history which is closely linked with the evolution of the Nigerian state and the fact of its heroic involvement in that struggle. In effect the strand of arguments that runs through the entire thesis point to the legacy of colonialism, which undoubtedly created the Nigerian state's linkage to the global context[3].

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[2] See Kirk-Greene (1988: 158-172)

[3] Nigeria is a post-colonial state and when it secured political independence from Britain in 1960, it inherited the state institutions vacated by the colonialists. These are usually referred to as neo-colonial

The crux of the argument here is that such a linkage and the susceptibility of the Nigerian state to the events within it have continued to define the direction and activities of all institutions of the Nigerian state, including the Nigerian press.[4]. But it would seem that the literature on the Nigerian press has ignored this as they are replete with such concepts and epithets as "tribalistic", "regionalism", "sectional", "divisive", "harbinger of crisis", "destructive", "irresponsible" and, "parochial", in describing the role and activities of the press. More importantly, they also contend that there is no Nigerian press[5] and what exists instead is a press[6] that represents 'sectional', 'nationality' and 'parochial' interests and is therefore incapable of playing a unifying and an integrative role in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society like Nigeria.

The history of the Nigerian press shows that it has been used and has continued to be used to promote regional, ethnic or sectional interests (Uche, 1989). But to say that its ability to play a unifying or an integrative role is diminished as a result, is simply ignoring the Nigerian context within which the press operates. The issue of unifying and integrating all the different nationalities that constitute the Nigerian state is a rather complex one. For instance, does unity and integration mean making all the different ethnic or nationality groups become one? Or does it mean recognising diversity within the context of one Nigerian state.[7] The latter is what the Nigerian constitution is based on. In such a context, what role should the press play and what effect would such a role have on national integration and unity in Nigeria?

The aim is to understand how the press, within a multi-cultural context, can represent nationality, regional or sectional interests and at the same time promote a collective national identity. In other words, how can the press promote and reinforce a hybrid of

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structures and are the links through which western values and ideals are sustained and perpetuated within such a state as Nigeria.

[4] See also Smith, A. 1991: 111-112; Smith, A. 1980:; Segal, A. 1968: 13-15; O'Connell, J. 1967: 186; Ayandele, E.A. 1966.

[5] Read views of interviewees on pp.162-163

[6] For the purpose of this research, the Nigerian press refers to the presses in Nigeria, privately and government owned, local and national, as well as those owned by political parties or business concerns which record and cover the day to day events within and outside Nigeria. Also see Adebanwi, W., 2002: 207

[7] See *Newsweek*, LXXIV, 1969:52-53.

cultures and interests without necessarily promoting disintegration within a multi-cultural state like Nigeria and consequently promote a Nigerian national identity?

These are the major aspects that are discussed and which are also identified as contentious. And necessarily some of these will be raised under a different section of this thesis and therefore may appear repetitive because they are complex and cannot always be neatly dealt with in one go.

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will set out how this task is going to be undertaken. This delineates the scope of this research and the fundamental issues within the Nigerian nation which have made the question of a Nigerian national identity imperative. This will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework. The Literature Review is dealt with in Chapter Two, as I engage with the mass media in the African context. Additionally, a detailed analysis of the context within which the Nigerian press operates is given. In Chapter Three, the focus is on the social context and mission statements of the newspapers sampled for this research. A discussion of the research methodology follows in Chapter Four, while the explanations and ideas arising from the interviews are offered in Chapter Five. Chapters Six, Seven, Eight, Nine and Ten chronologically examine the coverage of the Nigerian press. The aim of this part of the research is not only to analyse the disparate editorial positions that the newspapers adopted over the periods examined (1983; 1985; 1987; 1989; 1991; and 1993), spanning both civilian and military administrations, but also to assess how such positions impacted on the press' constitutional role vis-à-vis its ability to promote a Nigerian national identity. Chapter Eleven is the concluding chapter which seeks to evaluate the findings of the research.

1.2 Scope of the research

To fully understand the scope of this research, it is vital that we focus on some pertinent questions such as: What is the historical development of the Nigerian mass media in general and the press, in particular; Does this have any significance for the press' ability to promote national integration and unity?; Do the characteristics of the Nigerian press negate or promote the press' performance vis-à-vis its expected role in

society?; What are the peculiar characteristics of the Nigerian society that are likely to affect the press in the task of promoting national integration and unity?; Is the press in a position to promote national integration and therefore a Nigerian national identity amongst the different nationalities that form the Nigerian state?; What was the pattern of press ownership in Nigeria before independence? Have there been changes since? If yes, why the changes? In what ways have the changes impacted on the press' role in national integration and unity?; What role did the public and private press play in the pre- and post-independence era till 1983?; Does the ethnic origin of the owner affect the way a newspaper attends to issues that would have either positive or negative implications for national integration and unity?

Additionally, other questions that would make the scope of this research clearer relates to the following: Have government policies in any way impeded or hindered the press' ability to promote national integration and unity? What are these policies? What role does the constitution assign to the press? Has this always been adhered to? If not, what have been the obstacles and consequences?; Do changes in the socio-economic and political milieu affect the way the press react to the question of national integration?; What are the issues that make the question of national integration such a cause for concern in Nigeria and how have the press responded to these?; How does the press promote Nigerian national identity and therefore national integration and unity?

To provide adequate answers to these issues, our point of departure traces the history of the mass media in general (radio, television and newspaper) in Nigeria. Such an exercise would make it possible to understand how individuals and regional and federal governments used the mass media institution and the consequences of such usage for national integration and unity. However, because the press is the main focus, given the heroic role it played in the Nationalists' fight for independence and the impact it has continued to have on the Nigerian society, a comprehensive analysis of the mass media will not be attempted here as this has been effectively dealt with by others.[8]

[8] See Duyile, 1979; Igbarumah, 1990; Ladele et al., 1979; Mackay, 1964; Omu, 1978; Uche, 1989.

But it suffices to say that when, for instance, immediately before and after independence, there emerged regional broadcasting systems in Nigeria, some notable experts on the mass media institutions in Nigeria noted that this development dealt a serious blow to the concept of national integration and unity, as each region used their respective stations to promote sectional interests (Enwenwa, 1989: 76-77).[9] Although there was a national radio station established by the Ministry of Information and Culture,[10] they added that this was not enough to discourage regional stations as regional governments saw the stations as powerful political instruments (Ibid, 85).

Indeed, according to Professor Luke Uka Uche:

> The reason given for the emergence of regional media that were independent of any Federal Government control was dissatisfaction with the NBC. Each region felt that its own views were not being properly represented by the NBC. Some accused the NBC of partiality and partisanship. Some of these allegations were real and [others] imagined. But still we cannot deny the fact that it was the regional integration of the media with state politics that triggered off a chain of political crisis in Nigeria. (1989: 41)

Ian MacKay, another respected authority on the development of the mass media in Nigeria, aptly corroborates Uche's submission. In his book, *Broadcasting in Nigeria*, he states:

> The sole responsibility of regional broadcasting is to radiate a regional image and that cannot encourage the artistic endeavours of Nigeria as a nation. The setting up of regional corporations does not bring about true competition. That can only be achieved by setting up a number of corporations having national coverage and offering a range of programmes, which would benefit the whole country. There is no sign of that in Nigeria. Whatever the benefits - and there are benefits - the cost is too high and the danger exists that divided control in a developing society may promote regional feeling instead of encouraging the desire to live together and act together (1964: 2).[11]

And according to Dr Ikechukwu Enwenwa (1989: 85-93), the establishment of television also followed a similar pattern and was used for the same purpose.

But this research challenges these views as expressed above because none has taken

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[9] See also (Uche, 1989).
[10] The Ministry of Communication Acts of 1956 and 1961 established the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC),
[11] Also see Ladele, O. et al, 1979.

into account how the Nigerian context impacts on the overall behaviour of the media institution. Such would have sought to know in what ways the press, a product of its environment, can contribute to national cohesion. Such an inquiry would have raised a question such as: Do the mass media that promote regional or ethnic tendencies necessarily breed national disintegration and disunity? The practice of promoting nationality / sectional interests and ethnic loyalty was the hallmark of the press prior to Nigeria's political independence in 1960 and between 1960 and 1966. Curiously enough, it was after that period in 1966 that the Nigerian civil war, which lasted three years, erupted. But there is a school of thought which supports the role played by the Nigerian press prior to that period. Basically, the argument is that the way forward for the Nigerian state towards the fundamental objective of national integration and unity is the promotion of federalism/regionalism to cater for the needs of nationality groups.[12] This is the reasoning behind the recent calls for the convening of a sovereign national conference in Nigeria.[13]. These are some of the issues that are put to the test in this research.

1.3 The research period and its significance

This research covers only the activities of the Nigerian press during the period 1983-1993. The aim is to use this period as a case study to determine what role the press played in promoting a collective Nigerian national identity. The question then is why is this period important? I have chosen this period because it is also unique in Nigeria's history. During most of this period, for instance, 1984-1993, Nigeria was under a military administration. The civilian administration which was democratically elected to office in 1979 to usher in Nigeria's second republic was still in office until December 31, 1983. The military regime that terminated the civilian administration was itself overthrown on August 27, 1985 by the General Ibrahim Babangida-led military coup. The resultant military administration subjected Nigerians to more than eight years of political engineering (Olagunju et al: 1993);[14] to create an atmosphere to ensure that theirs "will be the last military coup in Nigeria".

[12] See Saro-Wiwa, 1994: 527-534.
[13] See Madunagu, 2000b; Sklar, 2004.
[14] See Oyovbaire and Olagunju, 1990.

This created a unique situation on December 8, 1990 when political elections were held at the state levels. So, while the military still controlled the central government, the civilians ruled at the state government level, subject, of course, to the control of the military-controlled central government. However, the Presidential elections of June 12, 1993, which was supposed to disengage the military from power, ended in a debacle, as the election, widely believed[15] to have been won by the late Chief Abiola was annulled and Nigeria was plunged into a political crisis, with all the implications that that had and has continued to have on Nigeria.

More importantly, it was an era that so affected Nigerians that many now question the rationale for the continued existence of the Nigerian state. Professor Peter. Ekeh, in his paper titled: "Urhobo and the Nigerian federation: Whither Nigeria?" touched on this issue when he stated:

> It is an indication of the stress and turbulence of our times that Nigerians are everywhere re-examining the purpose of the Nigerian state and the relationship between their groups and the Nigerian federation. There has been no other occasion in our history when men and women, otherwise engaged in professions far removed from politics and public affairs, have been so concerned about the future of their ethnic groupings and about the purpose of their country's political arrangements. (2001: 1).[16].

This was the atmosphere within which the private and public press operated. Although, going by the mass media narratives relating to the history of the media (radio, television, newspapers), there is nothing that recommends the press as far as its role in promoting national cohesion is concerned, there were some noticeable changes towards the notion of a Nigerian state during the period that followed after the civil war in 1970 (Onoh 1991: 31).[17] The pivotal role that the press could play in mobilising the state for national development was duly acknowledged in Nigeria's second national development plan (1970-1974), which set out the media objectives, after the civil war ended in 1970, to include the provision of "viable media of information to achieve the ends of fostering reconciliation after the civil war and mobilising support for effective national development and presenting balanced

[15] Representatives of main international bodies like the United Nations (UN) and the Commonwealth who monitored the elections agreed that the election was free and fair and was therefore opposed to its annulment by the military.
[16] Also see Falae, 2000; Garba, 2000.
[17] See also, for instance, Dare 1985; Momoh 1985

information about the conditions of the country" (Mailafiya, 1989: 134).

Coincidentally, the period between 1970 and 1983 witnessed a new era in Nigerian journalism, when every Nigerian, despite some occasional hiccups in the socio-political landscape, still felt a sense of Nigerian-ness as the Nigerian state attained some modest economic prosperity although this was largely brought about by sales from oil (Omu, 1996: 10-11).[18]

But this has not stopped the disquiet about the effectiveness of the current socio-economic and political structures that are in place in Nigeria to propel the Nigerian state towards national integration and unity. This concern is well outlined by Emeritus Professor Ade Ajayi who has categorised the Nigerian crises into the political, the constitutional and the civil/military. Accordingly, there is for instance, to put it in his own words:

> ... the failure to find an equitable manner of allocating power and resources among the different Nigerian peoples and interest groups; the failure to evolve a machinery to regulate the allocation of power and resources in such a way as to produce legitimacy in a government which could be renewed or replaced by the electoral process, peacefully and voluntarily; and the hijacking of government by the military and keeping it by force for 30 years out of 40 years of independence, thus establishing a culture of authoritarian rule and preventing the political class from maturing in the art of government and politics (Ajayi 1996: p. 1).[19]

These are basically the issues that have left Nigerians highly politicised. Consequently, there has been a phenomenal growth in the expression of ethnic nationalism in Nigeria today and the question being asked is: What is the best way to resolve the issue and which institution in society is best suited to carry out this objective? This is one fundamental issue that has pre-occupied the various entities that make up the Nigerian state. Indeed, after a new civilian administration was inaugurated in May 1999, Nigeria witnessed an unprecedented growth in the number of nationalist ethnic groupings calling for a fundamental restructuring of the nation.(Madunagu, 2000a&b).

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[18] See also Lukman, 1994: 191-197; Hussain, 1987: 1

[19] These points were made by Professor J.F. Ade Ajayi, Emeritus Professor, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, in a paper titled: "The Nigerian Crisis and Higher Education" at the Workshop on Britain's Role in Contemporary Nigeria, organised by the Nigerian Society, Cambridge University, in collaboration with the African Studies Centre, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK, in May, 1996.

The role that the Nigerian press played to promote Nigerian integration and unity under such a context, within the research period, is what this thesis is about. But first the analysis of the core issues that need to be known in order to aid the understanding of the fundamental Nigerian question of integration and unity.

1.4 National integration in Nigeria: Some fundamental issues

Almost every issue in Nigeria has been politicised since 1983. This has, in effect, vitiated the activities of the press in relation to its constitutional role, as spelt out in Chapter Two of the Nigerian constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). So more than ever before in Nigeria's history, some issues have become so sensitive that they have made the question of national integration a major cause for concern. For the purposes of this research, some of the issues are listed as follows:

The national question - What is Nigeria? This is a fundamental question that many Nigerians have asked (Mahadi et al, 1994: 219-253).[20] .In responding to this, Ekeh (2001: 1-10) alluded to the purpose of the nation-state which, according to him, in its ideal form exists to adequately perform its responsibilities to its component communities. He then noted that when there are problems in these areas, the citizens always tend to raise questions about the purpose and meaning of the state. As a result there have been consistent calls for the convening of a sovereign national conference (SNC) to decide the future of Nigeria.[21]

Religion / Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) – Religious issues have tended over the years to create tension within the Nigerian state. Indeed, questions have been raised as to whether Nigeria is still a secular state since Nigeria allegedly became a member of the OIC in 1986 (Kukah 1994: 445-458).[22]

Ethnicity - Nigeria is made up of over 250 ethnic groups, but the concern has always

[20] See Mustapha, 1986: 81-96.
[21] Also see: Momoh and Adejumobi (eds), 2001; *The Guardian* [Nigerian] 21/06/01; Madunagu 2000a: 27/01/00; Madunagu 2000b: 16/03/00.
[22] See also Williams and Falola 1995; Ilesanmi 1970; Adegbesan 1987; Agi 1987

been what best arrangement would ensure that every group identifies with the Nigerian state (Nnoli, O., 1995).[23]

Colonial legacy - More than forty-six years after gaining political independence from Britain, the devastating effects of the colonial enterprise have endured (O'Connell, 1967: 186).[24]

Military administration - Until they handed over power to a democratically elected civilian government on May 29, 1999, the military have ruled Nigeria for 29 years out of 42 years after the nation's political independence. There is a general feeling among Nigerians that the military's incursion into the nation's body politic has done irreparable damage (Oyedele, E., 1994: 514-526).[25]

The civil war - Has there been full reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation? For instance, the Ibos, one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and who fought and lost a war to secede from Nigeria between 1967 and 1970, have always felt that since then, they have continued to be marginalised in almost all affairs of the Nigerian state (Achebe, 1983: 56-64).[26]

Government policies - What impact do they have on all the groups and institutions in Nigeria? This issue became more pronounced during the era of military administration because its policy of centralisation caused alienation among the component parts that make up Nigeria (Ezomon 2001).

Revenue Allocation formula – This is another very contentious issue, particularly as it relates to the share that should be given to the areas that produce the wealth of the Nigerian state. This has left the oil producing Niger-Delta area of Nigeria, politically, economically and socially volatile.[27]

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[23] Also see Nnoli, 1989 & 1978; Amuzuo, C., 2002; *Vanguard* newspapers, 8/12/02; Primila I., 1968: 46-47

[24] Segal, A., 1968: 13-15; Rothchild, D.S., 1966: 292; Sale, J.K., 1969).

[25] Adekanye, J.J., 1987; Lloyd, P.C., 1970: 1-13; Nwabueze, B.O., 1992.

[26] See also *The Guardian*, 26/07/01; Ekwe-Ekwe, 1991; Nzimiro 1982; Awolowo 1981

[27] See Na'allah, ed., 1998

Politicisation of the census - This is an issue that has always been alleged to have been manipulated for political reasons. The result has been a lack of credible census figures for Nigeria, particularly as many believe that because some degree of revenue allocation is tied to population, some parts of Nigeria have tended to inflate their numbers. The latest census conducted in Nigeria in 2006 also ended in controversy for the same reason (Abati, 2006).[28].

Absence of the rule of law - Blatant disregard for constitutional provisions by the leadership and therefore the negative effects that these have engendered on the psyche of Nigerians. For instance, *The Guardian* newspaper[29] in an editorial titled "That Warning By The Army" notes as follows:

> The concept of the rule of law, implying the exclusion of the arbitrary exercise of power by the government and deriving from individuals' rights as declared by the Constitution, the existing laws of the land and the courts, as well as the concept of the due process of the law, implying the basic rights of a defendant in criminal proceedings and the requisites for a fair trial, all of which are indispensable to the practice of democracy, have in the past six years, been honoured more in the breach, than in the observance.[30].

Political leadership - An analysis of Nigeria's history clearly shows that political leadership has been dominated by what most Nigerians refer to as the "Northern oligarchy." This has predictably created tension and acrimony. But it should be added that many Northerners regard this assertion as a myth rather than the true situation (Tukur 1994: 249-250).[31].

The June 12, 1993 presidential election - This was annulled by the military and the Nigerian state has yet to recover from the debilitating ripples it generated.[32]).

These are some of the issues that threaten the corporate existence of the Nigerian state. It is not an exaggeration to say that its survival would depend on the extent to

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[28] Also see Bamiduro, 1985.
[29] See the online edition of The Guardian (Nigerian) on 29/01/06.
[30] See also : "Soyinka, Odumegwu-Ojukwu, others insist on rule of law", *The Guardian* (Nigerian) newspaper published in the online edition on 14/04/07
[31] See also Adeniyi, *The Guardian* (Nigerian) newspaper online edition on 24/03/00
[32] See "Democracy in Nigeria: the June 12 mandate": public meetings organised by the Nigeria Research and Information Bureau and the New Nigeria Forum, in London on 14 August 1993, edited by Olu Oguibe

which some of these, if not all, are resolved. The way the media in general and the press in particular, handle these issues is crucial given its unique position in the Nigerian set-up. Indeed, it could be said that the current situation in Nigeria is largely attributable to the fact that the press' constitutional role has remained unfulfilled within a non-conducive Nigeria's socio-political and economic terrain.

1.5 Nigerian media in national integration

Some studies on the role of the Nigerian media and their contribution to national integration have been carried out. However, none has specifically focussed on the role of the press in the promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity.

For instance, Ademola Ogunade (1982: 22-32) focussed on how relevant the press would be in the pursuit of the goal of national integration in Nigeria. In his article titled: "Mass Media and National Integration in Nigeria", Ogunade argued that "any understanding of the utilisation of the mass media to promote national integration in a multi-ethnic nation such as Nigeria, must be founded on an understanding of the ideological orientation of that country's political culture"[33]. Although Ogunade also touched on the role of newspapers in the Nigerian crisis of 1967-70, he did not delineate how the press helps to "promote identification within the nation as the dominant form of cultural identity" (Tomlinson, 1991: 83).[34]

In his article, titled: "The Nigerian Press and National Integration", John Chick (1971: 115-133)[35] focused on "the influence of the Nigerian press on internal divisiveness". According to him, "the press tends to be virulent in expression, but regional and socio-political limitations modify its national influence and effectiveness", adding that "Nigerian newspapers are further limited by a shortage of funds and by transportation difficulties". Although this article is useful for highlighting the limitations of the press, it again does not touch on the role of the press in the promotion of Nigerian national identity.

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[33] See Ogbondah, 1990: 76
[34] Quoted in Brookes, 1999: 250
[35] See Ibid, 34

In an article published in the *West Africa* magazine, (1980, no.3305: 2357-2359), and titled: "What the Papers Say", a correspondent of the weekly magazine reported on how the press in Nigeria covered the country's twentieth independence anniversary and the first anniversary of the second republic. It noted that the "press editorials on the anniversary reflected [the] party loyalties of newspapers".[36] This highlights the partisan nature of the Nigerian press, but it tends to suggest that such a press would do damage to the national goal of unity and integration. One of the aims of this research is to challenge that assertion.

David's Edeani's article, "Ownership and Control of the Press in Africa" (1970: 55-66),[37] examines "ownership and control patterns of the Press in Africa", and "provides some background on the Nigerian press both from historical and philosophical points of view". He believes that "mass media in private hands in Africa, including Nigeria, could fail to serve the public interest, especially in a developing society unfamiliar with the intricacies of modern democracy" (ibid).[38]

Marcia Grant (1971: 95-114) writes that Nigerian newspaper's effectiveness "is limited by geographical, economic, social and political parochialism" in an article titled: "Nigerian Newspaper Types", he also identifies "tribal loyalties" as providing "the most difficult obstacle to overcome in the establishment of a truly national newspaper." in Nigeria. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that "despite these problems, the press has generally survived internal disruptions, including the civil war as well as regional and political pressures" (in Ogbonda, 1990: 51).

As acknowledged above, what is common to most of the narratives on the Nigerian press is a focus on how handicapped it is when it comes to issues relating to Nigeria's constitutional aim for national integration and unity. But the question facing the Nigerian state today is how to mould a Nigerian out of a multiplicity of ethnic identities within the state (Kirk-Greene, 1988: 158-172).[39] What is needed is a critical and comprehensive evaluation of the press' role vis-à-vis the multi-cultural and multi-

[36] See Ibid, 26
[37] See Gazette, Vol. 16. no. 1, 1970: 55-66
[38] *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies,* vol. 9, no. 2.
[39] See also Newsweek, LXXIV, Nov. 3, 1969; Carter (ed.) 1966; Ijomah, 1973; Segal, 1968: 13-15; Nigeria, Eastern, 1966; *World Today*, XXII, 1966; Lewis, 1968; Historical Society of Nigeria: 1-36; Otite, 1990; Tella, 1989; Ezenwa, 1987: 87-98; Nnamdi, 1964: 1-37.

nationality context within which it operates and try to establish whether or not such roles can promote a collective Nigerian national identity.

However, what is the role of the press in promoting a sense of collective Nigerian national identity? How does the press do it? Is national identity the same thing as national integration? Is the press that promotes sectionalism, or nationality interests capable of promoting national integration? How does national identity compare, for instance, with other forms of identity-religious, ethnic, linguistic, etc?

In doing this research, I recognise the fact that there are other forms of identity within the Nigerian context, which, as noted above, is the legacy of colonialism. The crucial question is how can these other forms of identity flourish within the Nigerian context, without jeopardising the concept of a collective Nigerian national identity or one Nigerian state? (Lewis, 1968: 46-47).[40] My theoretical position here, informed by the study done by Fitzgerald (1991: 211),[41], is that a collective national identity supersedes other forms of identity at that level where those other forms of identities recognise that they are allowed to flourish within the context of a state or a community that accords them that recognition.. This is the point at which integration and unity would flourish.

How does the press influence that process? The task here then is to find out how the press has, through its activities, contributed to the realisation of the Nigerian state's fundamental objective of national integration and unity (as propounded in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). Therefore, beyond expert witnesses, the research will be focussed on the content of the press and the issues raised there related to this integration and unity. In order to do this, I will employ intensive/in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis of the coverage which are argued as an appropriate combination to unearth the problems explored in a socio-political context like Nigeria's.[42] While analysis of the coverage seeks to uncover how the nation is promoted or reproduced (whether seen as a sub-group or as a pan-Nigerian entity), the interviews bring out information not available elsewhere,

[40] Okere (ed.) 1996; Jibrin 1994: 459-466; Tella 1989; Kirk-Green 1988: 158-172; *Newsweek*, 1969; Akiwowo 1972.
[41] Also see Schlessinger, 1991a: 191.
[42] See Nnaemeka et al. (eds) 1989a: 408; Hansen et al 1998: 260; Robertson 1985.

particularly addressing why the coverage is as it is.

Four questions are then central to this work:

(1) What is the overarching need for Nigerian unity?
(2) What is national identity?
(3) How feasible will the theoretical debate about national identity be, when applied to the Nigerian context? And,
(4) What is the role of the media, or the press in particular, in the promotion of national identity?

But why are Nigerian unity and a collective Nigerian national identity necessary? The answers are what form part of the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review 1

2.1 The imperatives of Nigerian unity and Nigerian national identity

Since the birth of the Nigerian state in 1914 (Kirk-Greene, 1968), the question of forging a national identity amongst the multi-cultural groups that make up the state has engaged Nigerians. With over 250 ethnic groups, the task of building a nation-state has been daunting (Ayida 1990[43]), more so as the British objective in bringing together these multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-cultural groups that lived around the Niger area,[44] was not to promote socio-cultural cohesion and political unity among them but for an administrative union to solve administrative problems (Sale, 1967: 12-14).[45] The consequences soon manifested themselves after the country gained political independence in 1960.

Although the nationalists that fought for independence envisioned a united, stable and prosperous Nigeria, they hardly envisaged the fissiparous tendencies that have continued to overwhelm and threaten the corporate existence of Nigeria. The result has been more ethnic cleavages, a 30 month civil war and intermittent military interventions in governance. In order to redress these issues, Nigerian leadership has always given recognition to Nigeria's diversity. However, although the Nigerian constitution aims to promote unity in diversity, the reality of contemporary Nigerian society betrays the tendency of the various entities to go in the opposite direction, thereby jeopardising that constitutional aim.[46].

The issue now then is how to achieve national integration in Nigeria, and therefore create a sense of national identity amongst the various groups that make up the Nigerian state. Various ideas, ranging from federalism/regionalism (see Sklar, 2004), the federal character principle, and a rotational presidency, etc. (Ajayi, 1984)[47] have at

[43] See also Ogunsakin, 2001; Okeke et al (eds) 1998.
[44] See Usman, Y.B., 1994: 39.
[45] See also Crowther, 1966.
[46] See Ogunsakin, 2001; Ojo-Ade, 2001; Okeke et al, (eds)1998.
[47] See Amuwo et al. (eds.) 1998; Obasanjo 1989; Okere 1996; Osaghae 1987: 63-73; Ekeh & Osaghae

different times been suggested and also implemented. Given the problems this issue has generated, many Nigerians have now come to the conclusion that in order to promote Nigerian integration/unity, there is the need to convene a sovereign national conference, where all groups in Nigeria will be represented to discuss the issues, create a just and humane social order, a sound economic management, distributional justice and guaranteed minimum economic support, as well as to redress existing imbalances in the national distribution of political, economic, educational and employment opportunities in the Nigerian state (Coomasie, A. 1994: 263-269).[48]

But the issue of how best to resolve the question of unity in Nigeria was first raised in 1957 when the Willink's Commission was set up to address the fears of minorities as Nigeria's nationalist leaders were engaged in negotiations for independence. There was the fear that unless measures were put in place to protect the minority groups in Nigeria, their welfare could be decided within an independent Nigeria by the whims and caprices of the majority groups. The Commission's report was published in 1958[49] and it provided the basis for all the subsequent measures to address the Nigerian question after the state gained political independence in 1960.

For instance, starting from 1954, the Lyttleton constitution[50] created the federal

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1989; Otite 1990; Ezenwa 1987: 87-98; Tella 1989: 1-30; Carter (ed.) 1966.

[48] See also Nkom, S. 1994: 430-443; Mahadi, A. et al. 1994: 538-540.

[49] See Sklar, 1983: 138-140, 349, 354.

[50] For a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's constitutional developments, under colonial rule, read Ezera, 1964 and Sklar, 1983. The British administration in the area that is now called Nigeria. effectively commenced in 1861 when the British colonialist set up one in Lagos. But before Nigeria's political independence in 1960, the British led the colony through various phases of constitutional and political developments. In 1914, Lord Lugard was appointed the Governor-General after the southern and northern protectorates of the Niger area was amalgamated to form Nigeria. From then on a system of democracy was gradually introduced into the area through a series of constitutional conferences that culminated in the federal election of 1959 which preceded the granting of political independence to Nigeria in 1960. The first constitution that came into effect in 1923 made provisions for a legislative council in the Lagos area. After the second world war, the British saw the need to accommodate the nationalists' agitation for self-determination. So about twenty-three years after the first constitution, three more constitutions were ratified between 1946 and 1954. The 1946 constitution created the first all-Nigerian legislative council. The 1951 constitution made provisions for the appointment of "African Ministers in both the regional and central governments". The 1954 constitution made provisions for the introduction of the federal system of government in Nigeria with the creation of three regions: east; west and north. In 1957, following another constitutional conference to revise the 1954 constitution, a new constitution was introduced. This brought about self-government for the eastern and western regions with the northern region's coming into effect in 1959. The 1957 constitution was unique in the sense that it created the office of the Prime-Minister of the Nigerian federation. The leader of the majority party in federal house of representative became Prime-Minister after he formed a national government involving all the major parties "which lasted until the federal election of 1959". And this happened after the constitutional conference of 1958 which saw the colonial government announcing

system of government in colonial Nigeria and was made up of three regions: western, eastern and northern. This arrangement lasted until 1963, when the Midwest region was created, three years after Nigeria gained political independence in 1960. However, the failure to address the nationality questions and therefore Nigerian unity by the civilian administrations that were in place afterwards, led to the first military coup in 1966. Several steps have been taken by subsequent military governments to address the nationality question within the Nigerian federation (see Sklar, 2004[51]). Sklar has identified three distinct components of this question, which are "(1) How shall the constituent units of the federation be demarcated and how many of them shall be there? (2) What shall be the relationship between the government of the federation and the government of its constituent parts? (3) What shall be the relationship between Nigerian citizens and the national government?" (Ibid).

Some of these issues were dealt with, for instance, by the military government headed by General Yakubu Gowon (1966-1975). It was the grievances held by the Ibo nationality group that led them to attempt seceding from Nigeria in 1966[52]. But in order to keep Nigeria a united entity, the Gowon's administration needed to put in place, measures that would make such attempt worthless. One of the steps it took in 1966, was to create 12 states, six each in the southern and northern parts of Nigeria. This was done not only to protect the minorities who craved local autonomy, for instance, in the eastern region that attempted secession, but also minorities in other parts of the Nigerian federation. Other Nigerian military governments have since responded to more demands for local autonomy by increasing the number of states to 19 in 1976, 21 in 1987, 30 in 1991, and 36 in 1996[53].

Despite these arrangements, the debate about how to meet the needs of the various Nigerian nationality groups has continued. This was particularly intensified after the military government's annulment of the presidential election of June 12, 1993, deemed to have been won by the late Chief Abiola. The aftermath of that annulment was the explosion in the growth of ethnic minority groups and ethnic nationality

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that if Nigeria's next federal parliament push through a resolution for independence, the British government would approve and grant independence on October 1st 1960 (See Sklar 1983: 16-19).

[51] Under the title: "The Federal Question".

[52] See Smith, 1991: 133

[53] See Sklar, 2004

leaders as well as prominent Nigerians, calling for the convening of a sovereign national conference to chart a cause for the Nigerian state. This position has its roots in the Nigerian realities, which are aptly described by Chief Otitoju,[54] thus:

> The truth of the Nigerian situation is that we have been from the beginning, and we still are, a divided people ... divided along ethnic lines, divided along regional lines, divided along the North / South line and divided along the East / West line ... (2000: 1).

It is such a concern that has triggered the questions: Is there an overarching need to maintain the Nigerian state as one single entity? Why does Nigeria have to remain one? If there are so many problems created as a result of the fact of the different nationality groups living together, why can't each of them go their separate ways?

At the heart of this debate are two arguments namely (1) Those that believe in maintaining the current federal structure, with the central government playing a major role, and (2) Those that advocate a confederation of loose states where the central government will have very minimal impact.

But how could the Nigerian realities, as expressed by Chief Otitoju, be addressed? Would Nigerian unity be guaranteed through a federal or a confederal structure? On these issues, Sklar's argument about the Nigerian question is apposite. To him:

> A change from federation to confederation...(would imply) growing weakness of ties that bind the regions and might foreshadow an eventual dissolution of the Nigerian union, a perilous prospect that would be very difficult, if not impossible to accomplish peaceably. Military intervention and civil warfare would result in the displacement of populations and the creation of a multitude of external as well as internal refugees. In short, a break-up of the union could produce a humanitarian disaster on a massive scale.[55]

But there are those that believe that the debate about the break-up of Nigeria will not be as a result of the non-workability of the state as now constituted. That, rather, it would be because some political forces within the nation would exploit the grievances of the masses caused by the failure of government's political and economic policies

[54] Chief Otitoju is the leader of the Okun Development Association (ODA), a pan-Okun Yoruba socio-political group.
[55] See Sklar, 2004, under the title: "The Federal Question"

with devastating consequences on the masses. This is the position of Nigerian social commentator, Madunagu. He reasons that Nigeria could remain a single entity through popular democratic means which will improve the plight of the Nigerian masses and therefore forestall the diabolical intentions of selfish forces capable of dismembering the nation. As Madunagu put it::

> The fundamental internal threat to the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria is the suffering and deprivation which the Nigerian masses across the land actually see, feel and experience...(and although) there exists a national (or rather, ethnic nationality) question in Nigeria...the solution cannot be found along ethnic lines...(because) ethnic nationality boundaries have disappeared in most parts of the country; and ethnically speaking, Nigeria's population distribution is, today...mixed...(so) the ethnic nationality question which is real in Nigeria has to be resolved within a popular democratic context...(otherwise it) could be opportunistically seized upon by the ruling classes to seek ethno-religious solutions in their own selfish interest.[56]

This argument is echoed by the likes of Chief Anthony Enahoro, one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists, who believes that:

> It is not enough to keep repeating that we do not want to be like Yugoslavia. We must ask ourselves why did Yugoslavia broke up, why the Tamils and Kashmiris have once again become so active, why the Scots and the Welsh want their separate national assemblies when they have been united with England for centuries, why the Irish problem persists, why Czechoslovakia is now two separate countries, why the Kurds want their own homeland, why the...USSR has disintegrated, why Sudan cannot be united. The answer is of course that there is a revolution of ethnic nationalism sweeping across the globe and it could arrive at our shores at anytime. We can anticipate it and provide systems and structures to contain it or we can foolishly ignore the threat, trusting not in reason and negotiation and accommodation, but in the blood and thunder, to keep the danger at bay.[57]

What Chief Enahoro seems to be suggesting is that within the present Nigerian state structure, unity can be achieved. What should be emphasised then is that all the grievances should be debated and addressed. This point is echoed by Sklar (Ibid[58])

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[56] Dr Madunagu's views are expressed in the article: "The politics of Nigerian history", published in the online edition of *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 20/05/05 (http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/editorial_opinion/article02).

[57] This quote was taken from the paper titled: "Once more unto the Breach...!" which, Chief Anthony Enahoro delivered at the Conference on Nigeria, organised by the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO), in London on Saturday, June 15th, 1996.

[58] Under the title: "Conclusion"

who has noted that in Nigeria "for the time being, nationality questions are ...debated in relation to the aim of comprehensive multinational inclusion within common institutions rather than proposals for regional separatism or a more explicitly ethnic form of federation."[59]

This trend is being encouraged because there are Nigerians who have always believed that there is much to be gained from Nigeria remaining as one entity. This they reckon will not be to Nigerians only but also to the entire West African sub-region in particular and the African continent in general. Among them is the late Dr. Usman (1994: 49-50), who reasoned that Nigeria should take steps to strengthen the ECOWAS[60] and work towards the unity of the Nigerian state as a prelude to the unification of the sub-regional group. Usman's analysis also indicate that the argument to maintain Nigeria as a single entity is closely aligned with the economic basis that led the British colonialists to create the Nigerian state in 1914 by amalgamating the entities around the Niger area.. As he explained it:

> The British were driven into these series of amalgamation which produced the Nigerian colonial entity by the simple logic of why they wanted to colonise this part of the world in the first place. They wanted cheap and secure raw materials for their industries; a market for their manufactured goods; a source for generating capital resources for investing in Britain and strengthening the sterling against other currencies; a manpower reserve for economic and military purposes; port, waterways, roads, railways, airports, and airspaces for their transport and imperial communication systems. They found that the logic of economic, political, military, cultural and ideological networks which had developed in this corner of West Africa made it more efficient and secure for them to amalgamate the various colonial entities than to leave them separate." (Ibid, 39)

This is what Nigeria, as an entity secures for the people of the area. And given the fact that current global trends encourage moves towards particularly regional or continental economic unions, which might subsequently lead to political unions,[61] what then is the point dismembering a Nigerian state that could be the precursor of a West African Union and possibly an African Union that would enhance global peace and stability?

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[59] This is along the line of the conclusions reached by Schlessinger, 1991a, on the study he did on the European Union project.
[60] Economic Community of West African States
[61] Typical example is the European Union

The New York Times could not agree more as its editorial opinion of 27/02/06 titled: "Danger signs in Nigeria", argued along this line and part of it reads:

> But the world needs a stable Nigeria.... Nigeria is crucial to all of West Africa, having often provided the military troops and negotiating forums to quell civil war and related violence in neighbouring countries. Nigeria is also important to counter terrorism efforts, both as it tries to monitor and defuse an encroaching fundamentalism among its own Moslems and in cooperating with international efforts to secure the strategically vital Gulf of Guinea.

In reference to the different views held by Nigerians on this question of unity, Sklar[62] opined that:

> Whether or not a regionalist constitution would endanger the unity of Nigeria, it would almost certainly ensure a diminution of the nation's role in both West African and continental politics. Nigerians might then be happier, and the regional entities, each in its own way, could become more democratic than the existing centralized federation. But Nigeria would be less likely to evolve as a continental power, comparable to South Africa, where a big tent political party presides over the effort to mobilize human resources for national development. One may wonder whether Nigerian intellectuals in general are prepared to abandon the idea of *high politics* in the form of continental power for the sake of *low politics* in the form of regional autonomy (original emphasis).

Based on the foregoing arguments, one of the best ways to ensure Nigerian unity is through institutions that have the capacity to instil a sense of collective national identity in Nigerians. This would necessarily involve how to harness and nurture the diverse groups within Nigeria to feel being part of the Nigerian State. It is therefore relevant that we know what constitutes that State in order to understand the ways and methods by which it can be perpetrated by drawing on the theories of the State.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2a The State/Nation

Writers have applied various interpretations to the concept of the state and of its nature. In his discussion of the state, Tony Barnett (1997: 27) sees it as "the existence

[62] See Sklar, 2004, under the heading: "Conclusion"

of a system of permanent administration and finance, demarcated territory, control of military and civil power through a social and cultural apparatus" and as "a cultural concept describing a political idea, a myth within which people live their lives as though it were 'natural'."

While it could be said that there is no unanimity as to what constitutes a state, it suffices to say that many writers hold the traditional model view of the sovereign state. Characteristically therefore, they see the state as an institutional form of governance within a defined boundary over which it exercises monopoly over the means of violence..[63] Although one could hardly devalue the significance of this model, particularly as it applies to western societies of Europe and the United States of America, its relevance diminishes when applied against the backdrop of how states in non-western societies came about. For instance, the main characteristics of the state in Western societies are quite different from those of their counterparts' in developing or less developed areas mostly in Africa, Asia, Latin-America and the Middle East. But even then, within these areas there are differences due to different historical experiences.

Anthony Smith (1983: 122-123) has however, identified four patterns of state formation on a global scale. Significantly, the corpus of his argument brings into sharper relief what accounts for the differences between states in the less developed areas and their European counterparts. Whereas European states evolved over a period of centuries, most of the states in the less developed areas particularly in Africa, only came into being through the deliberate policies of the European colonialists in the last century.

On a general level, though, Smith (2000: 3)[64] defines a nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members." Although his position does not completely deviate from that older tradition of the thinking about the nation, he nevertheless acknowledges its modern phenomena in so far as they (a) Require a unified legal code of common rights and duties, with

[63] See Anthony Giddens, 1985: 120; Max Weber, 1948: 78.
[64] See also 1991: 14.

citizenship rights where the nation is independent (b) Are based on a unified economy with a single division of labour, and mobility of goods and persons throughout the national territory; they need a fairly compact territory, preferably with 'natural' defensible frontiers, in a world of similar compact nations (c) They require a single 'political culture' and public, mass education and media systems, to socialise future generations to be citizens of the new nation (1991: 69).

Apart from distinguishing the growth of what he called the "old, continuous nations of the West from the more deliberate creations of nations in Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa" (ibid); Smith also identifies the characteristics of the entities that initiated the processes of forming nations as (a) Those that were formed from their aristocratic base and in this instance "the state is suffused by an aristocratic culture and traditions, often permeated with religious and priestly influences (b) Those that were formed through the inclusion of significant ethnic minorities. Some empires like Russia, Ethiopia, Ottoman Turkey, for example, included many large minorities (c) That others also came into being as a result of "the modernising character of their bureaucratic states" in which case "a dominant ethnic core and ruling class" consolidates "over subordinate ethnies and classes" (d) Another process was through the use of 'official' and institutional nationalism. That is "in order to consolidate their hold and homogenize the population into a compact nation, the ruling class seeks to assimilate ethnic minorities through an educational programme of nationalism, backed by major institutions. To this end, they promote official, establishment ideas and images of the nation, to which everyone must conform and which preclude the rise of any other ideas, symbols or imagery (Ibid, 101-102).

But how do the former colonies of Western European powers fit into these categories? This has been the dilemma of most of these non-Western states as they lack the identities to form coherent and stable polities - and the groups that constitute these nations have little or nothing in common. Indeed if there is anything common among them at all, it is the fact of their association with the former colonialists, yet they have to carry out the task of nation-building. Smith put this point poignantly in his thesis on "constructing the nation" when he stated::

> In the African and Asian cases however, the time span is quite different, and

> so is the ideological context. Given the geopolitical situation, regimes in the new states are under considerable and immediate pressure to create nations such as exist in Europe and America, if only to be able to compete in the international arena. Besides, ideologically, they are committed to 'nation-building', which in practice means state-building combined with national integration and mobilisation; this too requires the formation of a national, cultural and political identity that clearly differentiates it from its neighbours (Ibid, 111-112).

Indeed developments within the contemporary global society reveal three social entities that could also provide the basis for explaining the crisis within it today. These are the state, the nation and the nation-state. Anthony Giddens (1981: 13) makes a distinction between the 'nation', the 'nation-state' and 'nationalism' and in essence provides us with a useful tool in explaining the differences that exist in different areas of the globe. An important aspect of his analysis is that there are less schisms in societies that have attained the status of a 'nation-state', as opposed to the new emergent nations of non-western societies. As he put it:

> What makes the 'nation' a necessary element of the 'nation-state'... is not the existence of sentiments of nationalism (however strong these may be) but the unification of an administrative apparatus whose power stretches over precisely territorial bounds. 'Nationalism' by contrast may be understood as symbols or beliefs which attribute a communality of experience to the members of a particular regional, ethnic or linguistic category - which may or may not be convergent with the demarcation of a nation-state (Ibid,).[65]

Indeed, most of the nations in crisis today are comparatively recently formed phenomena which were created in the last century and are mainly found in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and in the former socialist Eastern Europe. Arguably, the crises in every area of the world today have a pattern which may be traceable to how these entities came into being and how they are being sustained. So whereas the nations in the more advanced societies of the West have been able to put structures in place to deal with any nationalistic fervour of the diverse groups that make up those societies, this is hardly the case in the less developed areas of the world.

Tony Barnett's idea of the state gives us a hint as to why this disparity in the management of disaffection exists between these two societies. According to him,

[65] Cited in Schlesinger, 1985: 116

"for most of the world's people in the last decade of the twentieth century", the state assumed a commitment to "national identity" and provided "the main base of identity ..." (1997: 27-28). But then he also notes that in many of the states of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and to a lesser extent Latin America, the state does not constitute the main base of identity. Yet in the same breath he acknowledges that the idea of the 'natural' state is crumbling in European states. For instance, when the Soviet Union and its satellite states and Yugoslavia disintegrated, it became clear that these states no longer always form firm bases for identity. Events in the Caucasus, in Canada, and in the United Kingdom are clear indications that there are no stable entities in the world today because of the aspiration for self-determination by ethnic groups. Barnett said this should not surprise us because, he believes, following Bourdieu and Passerons' submission (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977)[66] that states are not 'natural' as "we live in a world of social invention" (Barnett,, 1997: 27-28).

Nowhere else in the world does this description become more relevant than in most of the states in the less developed areas, which were the creations of the Western European states. In effect they cannot fit into the classical theories of the state and those theories cannot also be employed to properly explain events within them.[67] . Though as has already been indicated, no country in the world today is free from ethnic minority problems, this global reality became very apparent following the collapse of Communism and the fervour with which the promotion of the free market economy on a global scale has been pursued. All these have implications for the non-European contemporary states in general and the former European colonies of Africa in particular, who are faced with, among other issues, the daunting task of creating a united entity out of the structures the nationalists inherited from the colonial administrators (Smith, 1991: Ch. 5). The overriding ambition in a state like Nigeria has been how to rectify this anomalous situation brought about by the colonial enterprise.

2.2b Nationalism

The rise in nationalists' agitation for rights and recognition in Nigeria cannot be

[66] Cited in Barnett, T., 1997: 28
[67] See Golden and Harris (eds), 1997

adequately explained without reference to the general and theoretical debate about nationalism worldwide. Nationalism shot into the forefront of contemporary global discourse particularly in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist system it represented.[68] Since then the world has witnessed cataclysmic eruptions that have shaken and continued to shake the very foundations of once stable polities. Although, this was usually the characteristic associated with non-western societies, events in the last two decades have shown that no society today is immune from nationalist sentiments. But it is also clear that there is no uniformity in the way that these sentiments are being expressed worldwide, which, itself, is a reflection of how developments within the contexts in which such sentiments take place affect the course of nationalism.

However, there is the view that the concept has both a political and a cultural dimension (Smith 1971: Ch. 7). This tallies with the contentions of those that have been described as the "founding fathers" of nationalism, like Rousseau, Herder, Fichte, Korais, and Mazzini. From their perspectives, three themes and ideals underpin the notion of nationalism and which nationalists, irrespective of their contexts, have often associated with. They are autonomy, unity, and identity (Hutchinson and Smith [eds.] 1994a: 3-13).

What seems to also separate nationalists the world over is that their level of achievement is defined by the contexts in which they operate.[69] But more importantly, there are also others, who see nationalism as a positive force, particularly at the international level (Horowitz, 1985;[70] Mayall, 1990).[71] In this respect reference is often made to the benefits brought about by post-modernity, which emphasises a world not defined by sovereign nation-states, each pursuing selfish national interests, but one linked together by common interests and values and therefore a diminution of nationalism (see, for instance, Billig, M., 1995: 128-153). But a counterpoint is that the world is still wreaked by sometimes disruptive and violent nationalism and that nationalists are continuing to use the effects generated by post-modernity (new

[68] See, for instance, Billig, 1995
[69] For instance, read Hutchinson and Smith (1994: 5 and 70-76), where they cited the views of Miroslav Hroch and Tom Nairn.
[70] See Ibid, 261-269
[71] See Ibid, 269-280

channels of mass communication and indeed the ever persistent inter-state rivalries) to legitimise their cause (Richmond, 1984;[72] Hobsbawn, 1990[73]).

Elie Kedourie, in his treatment of the issue, premised his thoughts on Renan's idea that "the nation is a daily plebiscite" which in effect means that in the conduct of its affairs it is susceptible to all kinds of argument that could have a beneficial or a deleterious effect on it. He hinges his thought on the significance of ideas and the effect that they could bring to bear on societies. In his own words:

> Renan's ... metaphor is felicitous, if only because it indicates so well that nationalism is ultimately based on will, and shows how inadequate the doctrine is in describing the political process, for a political community which conducts daily plebiscites must soon fall into querulous anarchy, or hypnotic obedience (1960: 81).

Yet Kedourie's concern is that, for such a society to maintain stability, it must be amenable to new learning and ideas. To him then:

> National self-determination is, in the final analysis, a determination of the will; and nationalism is, in the first place, a method of teaching the right determination of the will ... and it is no accident that nationalism was at its most intense where and when institutions had little resilience and were ill-prepared to withstand the powerful attacks to which they became exposed (Ibid, 101)..

Kedourie's submission is that nationalism is a product of its social milieu and therefore a response to the issues generated therein (Ibid).

Smith (1991: 73, 80) also touches on the three themes of nationalism in his analysis. He defines it as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation". He supports the 'contextualist' approach to nationalism which argues that "nationalism exhibits a diversity within unity ... [that pinpoints] the main kind of ideology and movement in terms of historical period, geographical area, level of economic development, philosophical assumptions, class context, cultural milieu or political aspirations."

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[72] See Ibid, 289-300
[73] See Ibid, 101-111

Smith (1991: 82) then proceeds to identify two main types of nationalism: territorial and ethnic further subdividing each into pre-independence and post-independence nationalism. Basically the aim of the nationalists in these endeavours is to first of all eject outside rulers from their territories and then forge unity among their people. To achieve these objectives, Smith discusses the levels at which nationalism operates. At the political level, he says:

> Nationalism as an ideology is a doctrine of the units of political power and a set of prescriptions about the nature of power holders. It is also a doctrine of the legitimate global relations of such units ... [and at an economic level] nationalism ideally prescribes a self-sufficiency of resources and purity of lifestyle in line with its commitment to autonomy and authenticity; failing that, nationalists strive for maximum control over their homeland and its resources. Beyond that, nationalism operates at the social level by prescribing the mobilisation of the people, their legal equality as citizens and their participation in public life for the national good. Seeing the nation as a family writ large, it seeks to inspire a spirit of national solidarity and brotherhood in the members of the nation; hence it preaches the social unity of each nation. At the broadest level, nationalism must be seen as a form of historicist culture and civic education, one that overlays or replaces the older mode of religious culture and familial education (1991: 91-92).

But Smith is also aware of what he calls 'separatist ethno-nationalism', which as current cases show; "whatever their origins, seek autonomy or secession from relatively new states whose boundaries and raison d'être are part of the colonial legacy. The primary source of their disaffection lies in the plural nature and fragile legitimacy of the post-colonial state itself." He then sees economic grievances as more often providing the 'catalyst of rebellion', since these new states generally fail to bring about their promises or because they favour "certain ethnic communities or categories at the expense of others, it is the very nature of the post-colonial state that creates the underlying conditions for the possibility of a resort to secession" (1991: 133).

What then is the solution? How do we avoid the resultant debilitating ethnic cleavages, especially in the newly created states of Africa in particular and the less developed areas in general? Smith offers an insight into the causes and then the solutions when he states:

> Because social classes are less developed and ethnic ties more pronounced,

> especially in conditions of urban competition, the political constituencies of leaders and parties are much more likely to be composed of one or more ethnic community or category, distinguished as such in the parties slogans and programmes. [In effect] fierce political competition between ethnically defined constituencies tends to harden the boundaries and promote the self-awareness of ethnies and ethnic categories; moreover, failure in that competition, particularly if repeated, may drive the defeated community to contemplate secession, especially where its leaders have internalised negative stereotypes or where, as in the Biafran case, such stereotypes help to create conditions of terror and massacre (Ibid: 1).

The only way to avoid this, according to Smith, is for leaders of new states to "take active measures to defuse ethnic cleavages through economic and administrative measures ..." (Ibid).

Although nationalism is often associated with groups striving to express their distinctiveness and therefore prepared to fight for autonomy in order to achieve that objective (Smith, 2000: 1-26), Michael Billig, in his contribution to the debate, introduces a socio-psychological angle to the concept, with emphasis on how it is helping to reproduce the already developed Western nations. Linking nationalism therefore to the nation-state, he sees a certain 'naturalness' in the way nationalism is being expressed in these societies. This is the 'banal' variety of nationalism. He rationalises his position thus:

> The term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced ... these are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily the nation is indicated, or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition (1995: 6)

There is a reason for this, as Billig suggests:

> Nation-states are not founded upon 'objective' criteria, such as the possession of a discrete language. Instead, nations have to be 'imagined' as communities. Because of this imaginary element, nationalism contains a strong social psychological dimension...The imagining of the nation is part of a wider ideological, discursive consciousness (adding that) Nationalism is ... a way of thinking or ideological consciousness. In this consciousness, nations, national identities and national homelands appear as 'natural'. Most crucially the 'world of nations' is represented as a 'natural' moral order (1995: 10).

Arguably, the reality of the Nigerian situation requires that the nation needs to define itself, taking into consideration contemporary realities. The aim of such a project will necessarily mean to ensure that Nigerians put behind them the colonial legacy and consequently build a strong and prosperous nation. What is important to know here is not so much the creation of a Nigeria where all the various nationalities are coerced to conform to a certain *Nigerian-ness*, but to follow a process that will ensure that the various entities are allowed to express themselves within the context of a strong and united Nigerian state.

This, in effect, raises the issue of how a collective national identity will be promoted in an environment such as Nigeria's. Or put differently, are there circumstances or historical moments whereby every group in Nigeria is made to feel a sense of collective national identity for Nigeria? But before we embark on an examination of such moments in the Nigerian history, it is first imperative to familiarise ourselves with the general debate about national identity and every other issue related to it which will aid our understanding, when they are applied to the Nigerian situation.

2.2c National identity

The term "national identity", has been analysed in various ways. Whether it is Mackenzie's notion (1978: 109)[74] that "common purpose" instead of identities exist; La Pierre's understanding (1984: 197-198),[75] that it is "collective memory of common past" or Paolo Pistoi's exposition (1983: 82),[76] which states that "identity is the social boundary which defines the group with respect to other groups of the same order, not the cultural reality within those borders", it could be said to be that a common theme runs through them all. This is basically that 'national identity' has often been seen as coterminous with national character, describing a state as distinct from others in terms of its history, values, events, rituals, etc. In effect, national identity is seen as only synonymous with a situation where the national character of a state is explicitly represented and reproduced in such a way as to reflect its nation-ness (Brookes, 1999: 247-248).

[74] Cited in Schlesinger, 1991a: 156
[75] Ibid, 153
[76] Ibid, 153

Similarly, Gellner provides us with a definition, which suggests that the state is the provider of national identity. Using the formation of nation-states in industrial society as his point of departure, he said that those states are maintained through "a universal, standardised system of education". In effect, what Gellner is saying is that, through the employment of education, a state can 'transmit cultural uniformity' (Gellner, 1983: 35-36).[77] In the same vein, Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983: 11-12) idea of the state also suggests a form of cultural practice. In other words, Gellner, Hobsbawm and Ranger believe that one form of identity of the state to be sustained is through the celebration of its history, in the form of such ceremonies like those involving flags and other images of the state which are to be consumed by all. Indeed, the thrust of their argument seems to be that the state is a static and natural phenomenon to be reproduced and continued in a particular manner depicted in a national character that is historically associated with it (see Brookes, 1999: 247-9).

Nevertheless, some writers such as Schlesinger (1991a) and Hall (1992a) disagree with the basic premise of the foregoing submissions. Schlesinger argues that this is just one way of conceiving identity, because objective factors within and outside a state mean that identity is constantly changing and being reconstituted. Schlesinger believes that there are other "sources of differentiation inside industrial cultures and (therefore), the new creation of various collective identities ... may be in opposition to official national culture" (1991a: 160). This aligns with the theory of cultural identity as put forward by Hall, which is that peoples' cultural identities are not fixed and unified and therefore "all of us are composed of multiple social identities, not of one ...(because) we are all complexly constructed through different categories, of different antagonisms"[78] (Hall, 1991b: 57),[79]), and given the historical context of world politics, what we now have is "hybrid" and "diasporic" identities[80] (Hall, 1991a). What this therefore means is that, in contemporary states today, there are differences based on religion, ethnicity, region, locality and diaspora.

National identity understood from this standpoint is of more relevance to us in this

[77] See Schlesinger: 1991a: 160; de Swaan, 1985: 125.
[78] Quoted in Brookes 1999: 248.
[79] Also see Hall, 1992
[80] Ibid.

study. In which case, it could be seen simply as a "*process of identifying* (original emphasis) with the nation" (Brookes, 1999: 248). Of particular importance is Billig's (1995: 4-8) notion of national identity. According to him, "to have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood", adding that national identity is also to be found in "the embodied habits of social life" (Ibid: 8). But more importantly, Billig,[81] believes:

> An investigation of national identity should aim to disperse the concept of 'identity' into different elements ...[in which case] an 'identity' is not a thing; it is a short-hand description for ways of talking about the self and community ... [because] they are related to forms of life. In this respect, 'identity', if it is to be understood as a form of talking, is also to be understood as a form of life. The saluted and unsaluted flags are not stimuli that evoke 'identity-reactions'; they belong to the forms of life which constitute what could be called national identities (1995: 60).

What this in effect means is that national identity rather than being seen as a synonym for the expression of a fixed and eternal character of the nation-state is continually in the process of changing. In this respect, as stated earlier, Schlesinger (1991: 153) argues that "national identity is best understood as a form of collective identity". His concern is mainly with the "general sociological problem of what collective identity is and how it is constituted". As he put it: "collective identities are *constituted in action* and are continually reconstituted in line with both an internal dynamic and external balances of force" (original emphasis). In concluding his study, which was about the difficult issue of a European identity, Schlesinger then stated:

> If we are to navigate our way with success through the whirlpool of collective identity, there is no alternative to developing a thoroughgoing pluralism of structures ... in the Europe of the future, one that recognises multi-ethnicity, multi-culturalism and the multi-faith society as indispensable elements in a new order (1991: 191).

2.2d National identity and the Nigerian context

How can such submissions about the term 'national identity' be related to the Nigerian situation? Is it possible to use theories developed out of the experiences of

[81] In reference to the works of (Bhavnani and Phoenix, Shotter and Gergen, 1989).

European and other industrialised states of the world, to analyse the Nigerian situation? Some writers are of the opinion that the theories and approaches developed in the metropoles are not irrelevant for Africa, more so as these African nations are part of the global system and are also under enormous pressure to meet the requirements that go with that.[82] Indeed the kernel of their position is that

> Western conceptual exploration has obvious intellectual (and sometimes imperialist) benefits, even for Africa, (although they also maintain that) serious problems occur, when such unreconstituted models, theories and paradigms to answer problems and offer explanations of processes elsewhere, are applied to Africa irrespective of local ways of making sense and doing things (Tomaselli, 1998: 145).

This is the crux of the matter. That is, if we are to apply western developed theories to analyse the African situation, for them to be relevant, it will be worthwhile to know first what constitutes the states in Africa. In respect of this study, by so doing we learn what it will take to promote national identity for each of the states that make up Africa. In the case of Nigeria, we need to understand how the complex and pluralistic Nigerian state came about. This is where Smith's argument (see p.25, above) about nationalism in a post-colonial state becomes very relevant, because not only will it enable us know the make-up of these states but also what it will take to create a sense of a collective national identity for the various groups within them.

2.2e The post-colonial state

The literature on the post-colonial state is replete with the effects that colonialism has had on the colonised. On the African continent, some have argued that this has had particularly adverse effects as the Western educated elite who championed the course of independence, employed models of cultural studies imported from the developed nations of Western Europe and uncritically applied them to the African situation. Indeed many post-colonial writers have attacked the claim to universality of human nature as the works of some western theorists wittingly or unwittingly show. Here the works of such notable western writers as Shakespeare, Dante or Goethe come to mind. As remarked by Ashcroft et al, "we are often told what makes [these writers] 'great' is their ability to reveal something of 'the universal human condition' (Ashcroft et al, 1995: 55).

[82] See Muller and Tomaselli,1990: 302; Ssmith, 1991:111.

However, post-colonial writers like Chinua Achebe, George Lamming, Gauri Viswanathan, Alan Bishop, Frederic Jameson and Aijaz Ahmad etc, are at odds with this concept of universalism. They basically see this as a 'myth' by which the metropolis maintains imperial control over the periphery (Ashcroft et al, 1995: 12-77). Additionally, any criticism of the concept of universalism is seen as an acknowledgement of the fact that post-colonial societies have distinctive characteristics and are able to respond adequately to whatever effects, whether cultural, economic, or political, are generated in such societies. As succinctly put by Ashcroft et al:

> The value of post colonial discourse is that it provides a methodology of considering the dialogue of similarity and difference; the similarity of colonialism's political and historical pressure upon non-European societies, alongside the plurality of specific cultural effects and responses those societies have produced (Ibid: 56).

It is this development that has generated such discussions as the 'decolonisation of African Literature' (see Chinweizu et al, 1985). But in response to that the question has always been asked as to whether this is possible in the contemporary world. That is, can the rest of the world that have had the experience of colonialism and imperialism, be *free of all colonial taint* in whatever they do? The reality of the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser, even after decolonisation, suggests that this is hardly possible. Tiffin (1995: 95) in her thesis opines that "it is not possible to create or recreate national or regional formations wholly independent of their historical implication in the European colonial enterprise".

Nevertheless Simon During (1995: 125) contends that for those who have been the victims of colonialism and imperialism, post-colonialism is the need in nations or groups to achieve an identity uncontaminated by Universalist or Eurocentric concepts and images. On the other hand, Linda Hutcheon, (1995: 135) disagrees, arguing that "the entire post-colonial project usually posits precisely the impossibility of that identity ever being 'uncontaminated': just as the word post-colonialism holds within it its own 'contamination' by colonialism ...". And still there is a belief that it is possible for both the 'local' and 'global' to exist side by side. This is what Diana Brydon (1995: 141), calls "a new globalism that is neither the old universalism nor the Disney

simulacrum which simultaneously asserts local independence and global interdependencies and then seeks a way to cooperate without co-option, a way to define differences that do not depend on myths of cultural purity or authenticity but that thrive on an interaction that 'contaminates' without homogenising".

No doubt, contemporary African cultural life has been affected by colonialism. That influence has persisted, even after decolonisation, as neo-colonialist and imperialist theories attest. This lies at the heart of those who believe that post-colonialism does not mean a call for autochthonous culture. Kwame Appiah (1995: 119; 124) belongs to this category, arguing that "if there is a lesson in the broad shape of this circulation of cultures, it is surely that we are all already contaminated by each other, that there is no longer a fully autochthonous pure African culture awaiting salvage by our artists (just as there is, of course, no American culture without African roots)." According to him "there is a clear sense in some post-colonial writing that the postulation of a unitary Africa over against a monolithic West - the binarism of Self and Other - is the last of the shibboleths of the modernisers that we must learn to live without" (Ibid: 124).

But whether or not the reality of the post-colonial situation is accepted, the fact is that these states are today grappling with the destruction of their link to tradition or identity which colonialism has brought about. Referring to "the post-colonial situation", for instance, Lundby and Dayan (1999: 399-400) note that it "can be seen as a moment of reformulation of identities. It has inherited the deep restructuring of identities undertaken during colonial times: hardening of existing identities: destruction of the flux of interactions." They note that, as a result, the post-colonial states have "witnessed the creation of new and hybrid identities" as "individuals and groups can no longer define themselves only in terms of their past". National identities for such states then are not fixed or permanent but contingent upon time and the issues that the states are confronted with from time to time.

Therefore, what is it that will form the basis for the expression of a national identity in a post-colonial African state like Nigeria? Through which of its agencies or institutions can this be achieved? Many experts on the Nigerian media believe that, in terms of promoting a collective Nigerian national identity and therefore contributing

to the national integration of Nigeria, it is the media that is best suited to carry out this task. They believe that this is the case because of the media's role in the historical development of Nigeria.[83]. Nevertheless, before we know how effective the Nigerian press would be in this respect, it is necessary to go through some of the general submissions that have been made regarding the role of the press in the promotion of national identity.

2.2f The Press and National Identity

The debates about 'national identity' recognise the role that the media, in general and the press in particular, can play in the promotion, construction, articulation and maintenance of all kinds of national or collective identities. For instance, as noted by Schlesinger (1991b: 303-304), the intention of the UNESCO'S New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was to protect weaker nation states of the Third World from "cultural imperialism from the West". He also noted in his book that "one European Commission study emphasises the importance of information in European unification, just as Anthony Pragnell (1985: 8)), recognises public television service as an integrative force.[84]

In his contribution, Billig (1995: 11) emphasises the roles played by not just the politicians but also the newspapers in the promotion of national identity. He noted, for instance, that politicians are able to do this because "democratic politics is founded on the institutions of nationhood; [and so] in pursuing their public trade, [politicians seek to address the nation ... [and because they] have become celebrities in contemporary age, their words, which typically reproduce the clichés of the nationhood, are continually reported in the mass media." But Billig also acknowledges that politicians "do not provide the only conduit by which the nation is banally flagged" as his case study, using British newspapers, shows. In it he discovers that:

> All the papers, whether tabloid or quality, and left- or right-wing, address their readers as members of the nation. They present news that take for granted the

[83] For instance, read the views of one of the interviewees, Prince Tony Momoh, on pp.135-136 under the headline: "The press and independence struggle in Nigeria". Also see Nwuneli, 1986; Agbaje, 1992; Dare and Uyo eds, 1996; Bitrus, 1996; Anamaleze, 1979, Duyile, 1987; Omu, 1978; Amatokwu, 1989

[84] See Schlesinger 1991a: 142

> existence of the world of nations. They employ a routine 'deixis', which is continually pointing to the homeland as the home of the readers. The little words - mostly overlooked - are the crucial components in this routine deixis of the homeland ... The crucial words of banal nationalism are often the smallest: 'we', 'this' and 'here', which are the words of linguistic 'deixis' (Ibid, 11 & 94).

What is very important in the way that the newspapers 'flag' the nation, as Billig's example of the British newspapers show, is their use of 'sports' to "invite 'us', the readers to support the national cause (p. 11). This stresses the role of newspapers in the promotion of national identity through their coverage of sporting activities involving their individual nation-state. Based on Hall and Held's analysis, Billig notes that is banal nationalism which has kept the democratic nation-states at the heart of the people. His argument is that such nationalistic feeling becomes ingrained in the people's psyche making them support the nation as they become aware that their ambition could only be realised within their own state which leaves in a world of different nations that "has institutionalized 'them' and 'us'." The intriguing thing about Billig's study is the revelation that, through their content, the press "daily brings the flag home to the citizenry...(or) banally points out 'the' homeland...(using) familiar habits of language...such as 'people' (or 'society')...'we', 'this', and 'here'. (94).

Meyrowitz (1986: 71), in his study of the electronic media, also emphasises the role the media play in constructing national identities because they have the capability to bring together people that are not physically in the same place. He calls this a 'placeless culture'[85]. Thomas Fitzgerald (1991: 193) explores this further when he talks about the ability of the media to bring about 'diffusion of group identities'.

While it is important to note at this juncture that the media is not the ultimate or sole creator of national identities, given the fact that such researchers as Schlesinger (1993; 1991a & b) and Sreberny-Mohammadi (1991) have discussed the role of the nation-state, in this respect, nevertheless, the media's role, as *homogenizer* is an important aspect of the project of inculcating a sense of national identity in the populace. For instance, Fitzgerald (1991), in his work, discovered that the media can

[85] Quoted in Fitzgerald, T.K., 1991: 193

play an effective role in nurturing a strong national identity. He said that the media could do this successfully in a society where there is no opposition to 'cultural aspirations'. In his own words:

> A vibrant and peaceful ethnic identity is possible in a multicultural society. Ethnic identity would seem to have important psychological functions, hence should be nurtured without falling into the trap of assuming there must be a corresponding, separate culture. The challenge is how to nurture a strong national identity, yet still recognise a variety of different interest groups, ethnic styles and the persistent need for minority identities which carry with them a degree of self-esteem, dignity and pride (1991: 211).

Although Meyrowitz' findings (1986), as earlier noted, were based on his study of the electronic media, its significance could be related to what Benedict Anderson (1991) said about the habit of newspaper reading which enables individuals to 'imagine' their communities, even though they could never physically meet all the members of the community. He delineates this, stating:

> We know that particular morning and evening editions will overwhelmingly be consumed between this hour and that, only on this day, not that ...The significance of this mass ceremony ... is paradoxical. It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion (Ibid, 35).

Anderson's submission only goes to show how the habit of reading newspapers socialises the citizenry to identify with the nation on a continuous basis. But all these, predictably, do not in any way diminish the reservations that some writers have expressed about the ability of the press to promote cultural identities given the effect of " 'global culture' which underlines the general problem of constructing full-proof cultural defences" (de Moragas Spa: 1988)[86]. But others like Richard Collins (1990: 199-213),[87] nevertheless, have also argued that the so-called "global culture" could indeed be a source of unity within nation-states. Arguing along the same line, Schlesinger stated that this is inevitable, adding that what is therefore needed is for us to "think in terms of the simultaneous interaction and parallelism of different cultural levels within given social formations" (1991b: 305).

[86] See Schlesinger, 1991b, 304-5
[87] Ibid

However, despite these contentions, it is also apparent that not much research has been conducted to establish the role of the media in the promotion of national identities.[88] Brookes (1999: 251) used textual analysis to assess the British popular press' role in the promotion of British national identity. What he discovered was that "whether the BSE/CJD crisis was reported as primarily a health crisis or an industrial crisis, the representation of the BSE issue was structured around national identity".

What he then found was that:

> The British press encourages common-sense identification with the nation as the dominant form of identity ... [and] occasionally this has been through the evocation of images and representations of explicit nationalism. But mostly, in the coverage of the threat to health and the economy posed by BSE, it is through the construction of an abstract nation at risk through constant evocation of the 'natural' boundaries of the national community (1999: 261).

Additionally, one of the conclusions reached by Brookes (Ibid) is that "in the case of media operating *within an established nation-state* (original emphasis) the press can be effective in reinforcing national identity in a context in which its naturalness might otherwise be challenged."

This, arguably, is true of the Nigerian press. Even though it is generally believed that it is partisan and divisive[89], no one can also deny the fact that the Nigerian press has more often than not used some specific developments and events within the Nigerian state to bring the diverse Nigerian peoples together, thereby instilling in them a sense of collective national identity. Two such issues which will be examined in this study are:

(1) Nigeria's triumph at the FIFA-organised under-17s world cup tournament in China in August 1985; and
(2) Nigeria's hosting of the 27th Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in June 1991.

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[88] In research titled: *"Newspapers and national identity: the BSE/CJD crisis and the British press"*,
[89] See pp. 61, 65, 158 & 162-164 below

However, although Brookes' article is useful in understanding the role of the British popular press in the promotion of British national identity, not much has been done in the area of the press' role in the promotion of national identity in a post-colonial state like Nigeria. This study will show that the Nigerian press is one of the institutions in society that has, in spite of its history, been engaged in the process of promoting and reinforcing a collective Nigerian national identity, within the context of a multicultural environment.

Therefore, drawing on Smith's analysis of nationalism and Billig's notion of the 'daily flagging' of the nation (see pp. 29 & 31 respectively), this study proposes that it is possible to nurture a strong national identity within the context of a multi-ethnic society like Nigeria. I do agree that Nigeria is a nation that is divided along ethnic, religious and regional lines each with its own identity, but I contend that the expression of ethnic identities is not a hindrance to the promotion of national identity. While the Nigerian constitution explicitly spells out how the various nationalities can be fully integrated (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999), in this endeavour, it could be said that to promote a Nigerian national identity is to promote an integrated Nigerian State, which conforms to a certain "national character describing a particular set of phenomena (representations, events, values, experiences, rituals etc)". But I argue that given the historical development of a nation like Nigeria, what will form the basis for an enduring national integration and therefore a collective Nigerian national identity, is a situation where there is no opposition to, as Fitzgerald (1991: 203) puts it, 'cultural aspirations'. The implication is that in such an environment, diversity will not necessarily be a hindrance to integration as people are able to recognise and accept the national perspectives to issues. Therefore it is safe to say that the promotion of national identity cannot be understood only in terms conforming to a national character *embodying a certain nation-ness*. We should also be interested in how 'identification within the nation' is promoted 'as the dominant form of cultural identity' (Tomlinson, J., 1991: 83).

For example, in accepting Anderson's analysis, which talks about the important role that the habit of reading newspaper plays in the promotion of national identity, at the same time, what is emphasised as important to this study is what the content of the newspaper is, which is what is significant in the process of identifying with the nation.

This is in agreement with those who believe that the relevance of the media in the promotion of national identity lies in the manner in which it addresses and reports the news to its audience. As the evidence from the study of British newspapers shows, "the content of a newspaper does not just reflect the ritual conditions under which it is read, but reinforces and reproduces it" (Brookes, 1999: 249).

In this study therefore, I will investigate the role that the Nigerian newspapers play in the promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity using the evidence from: first, the opinions garnered from interviewing the experts on the Nigerian mass media and second, the analysis of what the newspapers actually publish. I challenge the literature that asserts that the historical development of Nigeria, which accounts for the general nature and character of the press (Nnaemeka et al, 1989: Vols. 1 & 2),[90] is a hindrance to the press' ability to promote Nigeria's national integration and unity. It is possible, in contemporary societies, to aim to tolerate a hybrid of cultures with the press serving to reinforce this without necessarily promoting disintegration (Civil Liberties Organisation, 1996; Nigerian Press Council, 2000: 132-133).

The main issue in analysing the role of the Nigerian press in the promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity is not so much what the press does today but the major characteristics of what informs what it is now doing. And to make that connection from its past to the present is to emphasise the impact of the colonial enterprise on the nature of the African media in general and the Nigerian media in particular. This is what is going to form the basis of the next section. It begins with an account of the evolution of the mass media in Africa, the purpose of which is to provide the premise for an understanding of the history and context of the Nigerian press.

Literature Review II

2.3 Mass media in the African context

[90] See also Enwenwa, I., 1989: 76-7; Uche, L.U., 1989: xvii).

The literature on the African continent usually divides the continent into two geographically distinct regions, namely North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. But whatever the differences that are immanent in these two regions, there is something common to their media audiences which is the extensive historical and cultural contacts they have had with each other as well as the fact that they *have been subject (sic) to external influences* (Jeter et al. 1996: xi). Indeed, Africa had powerful kingdoms "for nearly 6500 years" and what could be tagged 'racial purity' before their conquerors, ranging from the Greeks to the Persians, the Arabs, the Romans and the Europeans, brought upon it a variety of cultural influences (Ibid), that have stunted its advancement in almost all fields of human endeavour in the contemporary world order. And one institution in contemporary African states that has been a direct consequence of such external influences is the mass media of communication. There is nowhere else on the African continent that this is truer than in sub-Saharan Africa, which is the focus here. The evolution of the media in this region is worth exploring so we can understand the basis of its peculiar nature.

Jeter et al (Ibid, xi-xii), noted in their work that "the early presses in a number of African colonies were established and run by missionaries ...[who] also set up schools and agricultural facilities through which they engendered their own set of moral values, work ethic and political institutions"[91]. They also found that although "these European religions and political values were sometimes at cross-purposes with those of indigenous religions and governments, these values left traditions that influenced the media systems in independent African nation-states"[92] Indeed, as Jeter, et al, note, (Ibid, 9), the African mass media continue to be subject to Western influences, such as those regarding the concept of news and the use of communication technologies in social and economic development. Consequently, this "clash of media values puts Africa's modern mass media at loggerheads with African governments which have resorted to adopting stricter media policies to cow the media" (Ibid). Malinowski (1966: 11) explained this phenomenon as a legacy of colonialism when he stated that "the whole range of European influences, interests, good intentions and predatory drives must become an essential part of the study of African cultural change." Further, as also put by one writer on the African media, John N. Williams

[91] Also see Ayandele, 1966.
[92] See also Wilcox, 1975: 1.

(1963: 243), the only way to understand the nature and role of the media in Africa generally is to consider the continent's colonial past.[93]

The result of all this is that when one looks at the evolution of the African media, one discovers that a common strand runs through them. This is what Jeter et al (1996: 11) referred to as *the philosophical contexts of Africa's mass media.* For instance, before independence, newspapers were first "instruments for establishing indigenous forms of government, tools of political parties or of nationalist movements." Second, they were instruments for legitimizing the indigenous governments wherever they were in place." Third, "they were instruments for demonstrating the disapproval of indigenous, repressive political systems that departed from the broad-based expectations of a nation" (Ibid: 11). Whatever the approach adopted in defining the region's media role, what seems certain is that in order for the media to perform its role successfully, it would need the government to first of all recognise its unique role in society and thereafter support it towards the attainment of societal goals (Ibid: 22).

Poignantly, Ruijter (1989) identifies four characteristics of government-media relations in Africa: they are: "manipulative" because "official communiqués from government sources constitute the bulk of the news on the continent; "collaborative", because it brings about inter-dependency between the state and the media; "supportive" of the legal and underpinnings of the state, and, lastly, they are "preventive", in that the media face stumbling blocks in their attempts to play the watchdog role and to uphold the social norms of the state machinery.[94]

Exploring this further, Pratt (1991) noted that although in Africa there are privately-owned and state-owned media, their role is blurred because both have similar editorial content. To explain this phenomenon, Jeter et al (1996: 30-3) stated that it is because the press play a unifying role as African governments have often emphasised the need for the integration of all ethnic loyalties in the task of nation-building and so journalists are likely to feel the pressure to promote homogeneous rather than heterogeneous perceptions of their national roles.[95]

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[93] See also Mazrui, 1972: 122.
[94] See Jeter, J.P., et al, 1996: 27-28
[95] see also Tusa: 1992: 15; Paul Ansah: 1981; Index on Censorship, cited in Tusa, 1992: 17; Arikpo,

In the same vein, Hamelink (1983: 22) talked about the homogenizing effects of "cultural synchronization" perpetrated by the small, urban foreign-orientated elite, who, as a result of the far greater influence they have on the cultural environment than the other members of the population, demonstrate perceptions that tend toward homogeneity. The result is that the "decisions regarding the cultural environment in a given country are made in accordance with the interests of a powerful central nation and imposed with subtle but devastating effectiveness without regard for the adaptive necessities of the dependent nation"[96]. Schwartz (1978), came up with the criteria of "inner-directed high professional" and "other-directed" journalists in analysing the role of the media in Africa. Employing those criteria, Jeter et al (1996: 31) contended that African journalists are "other-directed." Consequently, they asked whether the African journalists in the conduct of their duties operate within the strict confines of the interests of the urban elite or of their publishers. The conclusion they reached was that because the media depend so much on government policy as regards their instruments of trade, such as newsprint and other materials for printing, "journalists may emphasise a careerist attribute - job security - rather than a professional attribute: independent thought and action based on the ideals of professionalism."[97].

However, the similarity in the editorial contents of both the public and private media only serve to limit the media's ability to make an independent and effective impact on development. This, indeed, is the rationale behind the call for private ownership of the media in Africa,[98] although there have also been a clamour for a shift from the *colonial model* of journalism training, which reflects Africa's colonial history, to the *development model* which emphasises the need for African journalists to be trained in order to be equipped to carry out national development.[99] Nevertheless, the African

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1967: 165; Wilcox, 1975: 31.

[96] Quoted in Jeter et al, 1996: 30; see also Roser and Brown, 1986, on how government's intervention in every sphere of media operations affect African newspaper editors.

[97] See also Breed, 1955; Sobowale, 1979)

[98] See Jeter, et al, 1996: 32.

[99] This is the major objective of the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), which was established in 1976. Its functions are as follows: to assess the training needs of communication training institutions in Africa; to assist in curriculum design and development for journalism education; to facilitate the exchange of resources among training institutions in Africa; to develop research programmes for various communications projects; to promote awareness, among African governments, of the role of the media in national development; and to advocate the accreditation or certification of journalism training centres in Africa (Jeter, J.P., et al, 1996: 40). Also see Jimada, 1987; Hachten,

media have other peculiarities which limit the way they function.. Part of the problem for the press in Africa is the disparity between the urban areas and the rural areas. The newspapers are located in the cities and with poor transportation links with the rural areas, not many newspapers are read in the deprived rural settings. The findings by Wilcox[100] (1975: vi), is typical in Africa. In his study of the mass media in Africa, he discovered that:

> In terms of the mass media, the paucity of the press is only exceeded by the mammoth contrast between the urban and rural areas. In Dakar or Abidjan, today's Paris editions are displayed on well-supplied news-stands that often reach 50 feet in length. Yet it takes a newspaper two or three days to travel from Abidjan to towns in the northern part of the country, 350 miles away. In Dakar thousands watch television while a village 75 miles away is lucky to have a radio receiver or a newspaper among 350 people.[101]

Here other issues affecting the press which will aid our understanding of the Nigerian press will be focussed on. A major task in this project is the dissection and analysis of what really constitutes and influences the way that the Nigerian press has conducted and continues to conduct its activities.

Given Nigeria's socio-political context, the Nigerian press is often faced with some daunting issues of fundamental importance to the Nigerian state What plays a significant role in what the press does, in this respect, is Nigeria's cultural diversity. To a large extent many of the newspapers in Nigeria today were established in recognition of the need to take care of the various interests engendered by Nigeria's cultural differences and the various interests within them.[102] This is why the role of the ownership is crucial in understanding the direction that each of the newspapers follows in the coverage of some vital issues necessary to the unity and survival of the Nigerian State. Indeed, the Nigerian press has been described as being susceptible to the manipulation of their respective owners because they regard the newspaper as a tool for fighting political opponents (Dare, 1997: 545). Against this background, two

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1968..

[100] Although Wilcox did his studies over thirty- two years ago, there have not been remarkable changes in the situation as he found them then. See for instance, communiqué from Workshop on Media and Democracy, NPC, 2000: 131-133; also see Adesonoye, 1989: 96-98; Egbochukwu, 1996: 212-217; the views of fieldwork interviewee, Mohammed Ibrahim, p.170-171

[101] Also see Chick, J.D., 1971.

[102] See the mission statement of *New Nigerian*, for example, in chapter 3, below; Dare, O. 1997: 543-544

questions will be raised and employed as our point of departure for analysing and understanding the nature of the press coverage of some of the aforementioned issues in Nigeria: To what extent does the coverage by the press reflect public opinion? Secondly, through their editorial policies, do they construct public opinion? To help enable an answer to such questions it is necessary to explore the background issues relating to the Nigerian press.

2.4 Nigerian unity and press: The socio-political and economic setting

2.4a The socio-political setting

What is now simply known as Nigeria was a group of nations, nationalities and religious groupings in West Africa just over a century ago. European expansionism and colonisation brought them together. The Europeans named the territories the "Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria and the Colony of Lagos." In 1914, they were all amalgamated into one country as the "Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria" (Kirk-Greene, 1968). On 1st October 1960, Nigeria gained independence, but, just as before independence, the country is still dogged by a series of problems that continue to threaten its corporate existence.

This is hardly a surprise for a people who were brought together purely to meet the needs of the European colonialists. According to Crowther (1966), the reason for the amalgamation was primarily economic expediency. Although the people that make up the area that is now known as Nigeria had interacted with each other before the advent of colonialism, they also had some fundamental differences in terms of their culture, religion and history generally.[103]

Today in Nigeria there are about 250 autonomous ethnic groups. Of all these, it is the three majority ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba, that dominate Nigeria's socio-economic and political environment. Their mutual suspiciousness and inability to work together have cost Nigeria dearly (Obasanjo, 1989: 55; Aguolu, 1973: vii). But it should be emphasised that their relationship with one another is rooted in and informed by a history that far precedes Colonialism (Nnoli, 1981: 192-

[103] See for instance, Garba, J., 2000

216).[104]

The Hausa-Fulanis are Muslims and inhabit the northern part of Nigeria.[105]. As a people they were highly organised and had a well structured system of government before the colonisation of the area by Europeans. Indeed after the amalgamation in 1914, Lord Lugard found in the North a convenient system of administration which he exploited for his indirect rule policy.[106] It suffices to state that they had maintained powerful empires and are very proud of their past. This explains their resistance to Western influence, particularly in the area of education. Overall, this particular point accounts for the imbalance in the educational development between the North and the South, with all the consequences that this has continued to have on the Nigerian state.

The Yorubas, on the other hand, occupy the south-western part of Nigeria (Lloyd, 1967: 267-292).[107] They are Christians and Muslims, highly educated, wealthy, middle class and urbanised. They formed the bulk of the population of the then Western region which, in 1963, had the Mid-west state carved out of it to cater for the interest of the minority groups that used to be part of that Western region. The Yorubas also maintained powerful empires, but their traditional rulers (*obas*) did not wield the amount of power and influence that the emirs (Islamic authority figures) had in the north. They were not resistant to Western education and were the first group in Nigeria to come in contact with the Europeans.

The Ibos, unlike the Hausas and Yorubas, had no prior form of "political hierarchical kingdom"[108]. They occupy the south-eastern part of Nigeria. One of their characteristics is their individualism, which as remarked by renowned Nigerian academic, Professor Chinua Achebe (an Iboman), have earned them the hatred of other groups in Nigeria (1983: 56-64). They had a later contact with the outside world, probably because of the thick forest in the area they occupy. Once they made contact with European explorers and missionaries, they took advantage of it and

[104] See also Onimode, 1981: 166-191; Andreski, 1968; Diamond, 1967; Africa Today, 1963; Sale, 1969: 12-14; Anise, 1970; Nigerian Civil War, 1973).
[105] See, for instance, South Atlantic Quarterly, 1968: 591-602.
[106] For more on the Indirect Rule Policy of the British Colonial Government in Nigeria, see Ezera, Kalu, 1964.
[107] See also Adedeji, 1966; Bascom, 1969; Ferguson, 1970.
[108] See Njaka, 1970; Basden, 1966; Offonry, 1951; Uchendu, 1965; Ibo State Union, 1958.

became Christians and highly educated (Uche, 1989: 7-23).

Perhaps the issue that has had the most effect on Nigeria and Nigerians today is politics. It is the one that has given Nigeria its shape and character. It could be said that politics in Nigeria started on the very day that the Europeans came into contact with the peoples that inhabit the area that is now called Nigeria. But for the purpose of this study, we would start from the period that the nationalist struggle for independence commenced (Coleman, 1963; Sklar, 1983; Ezera, 1964). That was the period that the press, for instance, started making effective contributions to Nigeria. This came about in the 1920s when Herbert Macaulay emerged as the father of Nigerian nationalism and used his *Lagos Daily News* to attack the British. Later in 1936 he formed the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) (Ibid).

However, the enthusiasm to free Nigerians from the yoke of colonialism gathered momentum within the parties (NCNC and AG,) particularly after WWII. It could be stated that it was the WWII that spurred the cause of Nigerian nationalism and set in motion the realities of contemporary Nigerian society. Those who fought alongside their European counterparts returned home to claim equal status with the Europeans. Besides, the educated elite who graduated from American and British universities also returned home to tell tales of discrimination and intensified the fight to achieve self - determination.[109]

But basically, what is important for this study is how Nigeria's socio-political setting has informed the Nigerian reality today. For instance, when discussing Nigeria's struggle for political independence, it should be noted that political parties provided leadership. This is important because the shape that developments in the new post-colonial Nigeria subsequently took has all its roots in the way that these political parties originated. Simply put, they all grew out of a host of associations which were committed to the improvement of their respective communities, reforming and democratising the political processes and also ensuring the freedom of the populace from the burden of colonialism (Sklar, 1983: xiii-xxi).

[109] See Coleman, 1963; Sklar, 1983; Ezera, 191964.

In 1944 Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Iboman, together with Herbert Macaulay, a Yorubaman, formed the first political party, the National Council of Nigeria and Camerouns (NCNC). It was not a tribal party but truly a national party. But unfortunately, rivalry between the Ibos and the Yorubas saw Azikiwe breaking away from the NYM, the parent body of the NCNC, thus dealing a blow to national unity.

In 1951, the Action Group (AG) was formed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, a Yorubaman, from *Egbe Omo Oduduwa.*[110] It became the first exclusively ethnic political party in Nigeria. It should also be noted that the NCNC was also backed up by the Pan Ibo Union and began to represent the sectional interests of the East, dominated by the Ibos. In 1949 the Northerners formed the cultural organisation known as "Jam'yyar Mutanem Arewa"[111] (NPC)). Alhaji Aminu Kano, a Hausa-Fulani, broke away from the Jam'yyar to form the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) (Sklar, 1983: 143-365).

Although four political parties, namely: the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC), the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), the Action Group (AG) and the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), became the established parties at the time Nigeria attained political independence in 1960, they all had very different ideas as to the direction that Nigeria should follow. Professor Sklar, in his classic study of Nigeria's political parties in the First Republic, gave credence to this point when he stated:

> The NCNC stood for political democracy in its classical, individualistic form. The Action Group of Nigeria stood for federalist democracy to safeguard the rights of cultural communities. The Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) exemplified the modernisation of traditional political authority (the party's regionalist motto was" One North: One People, Irrespective of Religion, Rank or Tribe); its radical opponent, the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), espoused egalitarian democracy (Ibid, xiii).

When the McPherson constitution was introduced following a series of constitutional talks for self-government with the British, elections were held between 1951 and 1952. But what became crucial for the welfare of Nigerian politics was how the

[110] The English translation of this Yoruba group is 'Society of the Children of Oduduwa'.
[111] The English translation of this Hausa/Fulani group is 'the Northern Peoples' Congress'.

political map of Nigeria turned out in the period from 1951-1962. For instance, during this period, the electoral victories that the NPC, the AG and the NCNC, recorded in the North (Hausa), West (Yoruba) and East (Ibo) respectively, meant that they were now 'commonly identified with "ethnic" group interests'. However, as Sklar noted this was misleading, because although each of these three major political parties controlled their respective areas, none of them ever 'intended to promote a specifically ethnic interest'. Indeed, in the North, though 'rooted in Muslim emirates', Sklar reiterated the point that "the NPC endeavoured to reconcile traditional authority in all parts of that culturally diverse region with the requirements of modern government." In the same vein, even though the NCNC commanded a large following in the mainly Ibo-speaking Eastern Nigeria, it had a very significant support from the Edo-speaking people in the nearby Midwest (which, became a region in 1963), as well as attaining some electoral and parliamentary strength in the mainly Yoruba-speaking Western region until, at least, 1963. For its own part, the AG, according to Sklar, though 'rooted in its Yoruba origin', yet in 1956, it emerged 'as the fore-most party of "minority" group interests in the Eastern and Northern Regions' (Ibid: xiii-xv).

However, it should be stressed here that a clearer picture of the shape of what was to come, in Nigeria's socio-political landscape, emerged in 1954 when Nigeria became a federation of three regions, namely North, East and West.[112]. Just prior to independence, elections were held all over the country in 1959. The three parties won in their respective region as they did in 1952. Although the NPC got the most votes cast all over the country, it did not have the necessary majority to form the government and therefore had to form a coalition government after forming an alliance with the NCNC.

Given the fact that the three major political parties professed different political ideas, the formation of political alliances in a bid to control the Federal government became a very delicate and potentially divisive possibility. In the first place, the issue became how a politically conservative party like the NPC, based on its regionalist principles, which was in control of the Northern Region, and that had a majority of the

[112] For a comprehensive analysis of power and conflict in Nigeria before and immediately it attained political independence in 1960, see Sklar, 1983.

population of Nigeria, would work with the other two trans-regional parties based in the South (AG and NCNC), whose principles were not conservative in nature because of their 'strong libertarian and egalitarian traditions' (Ibid: xiv). In effect, neither of them could conveniently form an alliance with the NPC, which rather sought to ally with other conservative elements in the Southern regions, thus adhering to their political beliefs.

The consequences of all this came to a head, beginning from 1960, the year that Nigeria attained political independence. At independence the Prime-Minister was Alhaji Tafawa Balewa (NPC), and Nnamdi Azikiwe the Governor-General (NCNC), later titular president when Nigeria became a republic in 1963. The parliamentary leader of the opposition in parliament was the leader of the AG, Awolowo, thus enabling his lieutenant Chief S.L. Akintola to become the premier of Western region. Both men soon fell out particularly because Akintola refused to carry out party directives regarding the governance of the region leading the rank and file to dismiss Akintola. But he quickly formed his own party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) (Ibid: 284-318).

With the crisis[113] raging in the West, the Nigeria government declared a state of emergency in the area and appointed a Yoruba Administrator. Investigations into the activities of the AG led to Awolowo being sentenced to 10 years for treasonable offences. Meanwhile, Akintola was reinstated as premier of the Western region. In 1964, Federal House of Parliament was dissolved and elections were scheduled for December 1964. Towards the election, the NPC formed the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) with the NNDP in the West and the Mid-west Democratic Front. The NCNC on its part formed an alliance known as the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA) with the AG in the West, the NEPU in the North and the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), also in the North.

The UPGA boycotted the 1964 federal elections following the violence that preceded

[113] The power struggle between Awolowo and Akintola caused political mayhem in the Western region that threatened to spill over to other parts of Nigeria. Even though the Federal government acted to bring the situation under control, the crisis led to a series of events which culminated in the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970.

it, while election rigging in the West prompted rioting (Vickers 1967: 106-124).[114] Following the crisis and accusations of election rigging, the figurehead President Azikiwe initially refused to re-appoint the Prime-Minister from the winning party – the NNA. He later re-appointed Balewa as Prime Minister. But the crisis continued unabated and eventually plunged the Nigerian state into a civil war. It was at this stage that the military started intervening in Nigeria's socio-economic and political landscape, and this continued intermittently until 1999, when a new democratically elected civilian administration was sworn in.

This is the Nigerian question confronting Nigerians today. But importantly, the delicate nature of the Nigerian society makes the Nigerian question more problematic.and it is informed by history. For instance, the "Panel on Nigeria since independence project ..." in 1989, made the following declaration:

> The problems of the Nigerian political process are reducible to the difficult relations between State and society in Nigeria. The historical conditions in which the Nigerian State emerged have precluded its integration into a composite society (cited in Ekeh et al, 1989: 8).

But to fully evaluate why the Nigerian state has become enmeshed in this situation, it is also important to know its socio-economic basis. This is discussed next.

2.4b The socio-economic setting

When Nigeria attained independence in 1960, it was only on the political front as much of its economy was heavily dependent on Britain and the industrialised western countries. The result was that the economy was structured to supply raw materials for the industrialised west and then serve as markets for their manufactured goods. This created a situation whereby Nigeria's economic relationship with the industrialised countries was based on merchandise trading which, grew between 1960 and 1970. This is acknowledged in the 'Nigeria Handbook' (1991: 140), as follows:

> The growth of merchandise trade, the core of Nigeria's economic transactions, showed a gradual increase from 1960 up till the early 1970s. In 1960, merchandise imports stood at 1 million (Nigerian currency). It rose to 550

[114] See also Harris 1965: 25-31; Essien-Udom 1966.

million in 1965, N885 million in 1970...

However, when in the 1970s Nigeria experienced oil boom, oil[115] became its "most important single export commodity", accounting "for more than 80 per cent of total export earnings" (Ibid). Indeed, as indicated in the 'Handbook', from the 1970s upward there was an increase in Nigeria's trade relations with the industrialised countries as this rose from "N885 million in 1970, (to) N1.7b in 1974, reaching N14b by 1980, the highest ever recorded" (Ibid). The 'Handbook' also notes that "the growth of exports within that period was even more remarkable (because) "from N339m in 1960, it rose to N885m in 1970, N5.8b in 1974, and N22b in 1980" (Ibid). This gave the impression of growth in the Nigerian economy because as stated by the Nigerian President, Obasanjo[116] "In 1979, we (Nigeria) were ranked 48th position in the leading world economies."

But the oil boom era brought about the neglect and non-development of Nigeria's non-oil sectors, particularly agriculture, creating an imbalance and a dislocation in its economic structure[117]. And this explains why, Obasanjo lamented the fact that "by 1999 when we (a new civilian democratic government) came back, we were 177th..."[118]

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Such a drastic drop in Nigeria's world economic ranking confirmed that the structural imbalances in the Nigerian economy were unsustainable. It took the uncertainties, fluctuations and fall in the prices of oil, Nigeria's major export since the 1970s, to expose the fact that Nigeria was unable to sustain such economic structure that has been in place since independence in 1960. For instance:

> "From a peak of $26b in 1980, oil revenue tumbled to $14b in 1982 and continued to fall, reaching $7b and $5,5b in 1986 and 1988, respectively"[119]

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[115] Nigeria celebrated the 50th anniversary of the discovery of oil in its shores in June 2006. Shell d'Archy, which later became known as Shell BP obtained a licence in 1938 and began oil exploration in Nigeria. However, it only discovered oil in commercial quantity in 1956 and then export of crude oil took off in 1958.

[116] President Obasanjo stated this while meeting with British Foreign Secretary, Mr Jack Straw on his visit to Nigeria, on February 14th, 2006, and published in the online edition of *The Guardian* (Nigerian), on15/02/06 (http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/news/article01).

[117] See Nigeria Handbook, 1991: 141.

[118] Read Obasanjo's point as published by *The Guardian* on 15/02/06

[119] See Nigeria Handbook, 1991: 140.

With these realities, Nigerian authorities were faced with the dilemma of how to reduce Nigeria's heavy dependence on foreign imports which had been sustained by the massive foreign exchange earnings from oil exports. This fell to the democratically elected civilian government of Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983), led by Alhaji Shagari and one of the choices it made was to secure a loan of $1b from the IMF in 1982 to cushion the effects of reduced foreign exchange earnings. When it became clear to the administration that that was not going to resolve the economic crisis, it again in 1982, came up with a package of economic policies to curb imports into the Nigerian economy. Nevertheless, this so-called austerity measures failed to redress the situation as Nigeria continued to suffer heavy balance of payment deficits.[120]

This situation continued unabated until the late 1980's as Nigerian authorities persisted with other economic measures to stem the decline in the Nigerian economic environment with the resultant economic burden on vulnerable Nigerians. One of such measures was the one introduced in 1986 by the military administration led by Babangida. Tagged the structural adjustment programme (SAP), its aim was to remove distortions in the Nigerian economy, ensure sustained growth and maintain a balance of payments position. As put by Nigeria's military government's leader then, Babangida:

> "It seeks to harmonise what we consume with what we produce, using our domestic endowment of human and material resources. It would involve new uses of wealth, new property relations, new product and production processes, new attitudes to work, new consumption habits, and new interaction with the rest of the world. It would be a painful process, but any further delay would only intensify the consequential hardships." (Ibid, 141).

But developments within the Nigerian economic environment show that the situation has hardly changed. There is the argument that Nigeria is still a mono-cultural economy, with no industrial base. In the words of a renowned Nigerian academic, Professor Peter Egbon:[121] "Nigeria's economic structure remains highly undiversified and disarticulated as oil exports account for about 95 per cent of exports while manufacturing exports are less than one per cent."[122]

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[120] Ibid

[121] Professor Egbon was the Vice-Chancellor of Nigeria's Delta State University, between 2000 and 2004.

[122] Professor Egbon's remarks were made at a conference organised by the Institute of Chartered

These dire economic circumstances of Nigeria,[123] have also been articulated by a renowned Nigerian commentator, Dr Chinweizu:

> What Nigeria has been engaged in...is the development of its consumania, using its petro-dollar bonanza to feed its appetite for foreign goods and services of every sort...without the concomitant development of industrial productive capacity...Nigeria still has no basic industries...it has failed to build a steel mill despite 30 years and $10 billion of effort. It has failed at managing such basic utilities' suppliers as NEPA[124] and NITEL[125]. In four decades as an oil exporter, Nigeria has squandered some $500 billion of petro-dollar bonanza.[126]

The economic restructuring programmes that the authorities have embarked upon under such a context have unleashed untold hardships on particularly the vulnerable Nigerian masses. For instance, Dr G.A Akinola of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, has identified Nigeria's economic crises "which have badly undermined the stabilizing force of the family and the middle class".[127] as one of the problems facing the Nigerian state today.

It is recognised that the Nigerian economy needed some readjustments to correct the imbalances within it. And it is also believed in some quarters that the adjustments programmes set in motion some modest growth that the Nigerian economy has recorded recently. Among them is the World Bank which, in the appendix to its document titled: "Regional Outlooks":[128]

> "Indicated that Nigeria is sub-Saharan African second largest economy with "a vibrant private sector and strong investment spending , which kept its

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Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN) in 2007

[123] Even Nigeria's current President, Shehu Musa Yar'Adua acknowledged this at the recent Nigerian Content Summit held in Abuja, in December 2007 when he stated that although Nigeria makes a lot of money from oil and gas sector, the sector contributes less to Nigeria's GDP because of "low level participation of Nigerians in the sector, due to a lack of institutions and system that would enhance local content development" (see *The Guardian* [Nigerian] online: http://www.guardiannwesngr/energy/article01/indexn2_html?pdate=261207&pti...)

[124] National Electric Power Authority (NEPA).

[125] Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL).

[126] Read his comments in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 24/06/05, under the title: "The reconstruction of Nigeria: Four delusions on our strategic horizon" (http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/policy_politics/article01)

[127] See *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 26/06/00 (http://www.ngrguardiannews.com/editorial2/en789707.html

[128] This was reported in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 17/07/07.

> overall growth at 5.6 per cent in 2006, despite an estimated 1.6 per cent contraction in the oil sector caused by the unrest in the Niger Delta."

In spite of this, some have also argued that the various economic measures have created the negative social, economic and political circumstances which Nigerians are faced with today. When the ICAN organised their 37th Yearly Accountant Conference in Lagos, in December 2007, their verdict was that these Nigerian plights have been exacerbated by the "failure of governance".[129] Professor Egbon, one of the keynote speakers, noted that this has also created weak state institutions incapable of ensuring that "development must be moving around people, not people around development (and that also), it should empower individuals, rather than dis-empower them."

But nothing captures this situation, as described by Egbon, more than the fall-outs of the effects of oil politics in Nigeria, which is the Niger Delta crisis. The Niger Delta is the oil producing area of Nigeria but following years of neglect of their plight, caused by oil exploration, by various Nigerian government, some militant groups have sprung up in the area resorting to violent means to air their grievances; As *The New York Times*[130] has observed:.

> "A big part of the problem is that the people of the country's oil-rich Niger Delta remain deeply impoverished, largely because of endemic corruption in distributing oil wealth and the historical indifference of oil companies to those economic inequities and to environmental devastation in the Delta. At the same time, the militants who claim to represent the Delta people have evolved into criminal gangs, adept at stealing huge amounts of oil on black markets, the proceeds of which are used to buy ever more sophisticated weapons."

The Niger Delta crisis was first raised in the 1958 Williink's Commission report which also touched on how to develop the area and improve the living condition of the people. And when in 1995, the World Bank carried out a comprehensive study of the region, it also concluded that: "Niger Delta area is the least developed area of Nigeria."[131] This is a paradox given the fact that Nigeria's wealth is produced in that part of the Nigerian state. Not surprisingly, the people of the area are demanding for a

[129] This was reported in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 02/01/08
[130] See *The New York Times* editorial opinion of 27/02/08.
[131] See *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 26/12/07 as referenced in the next footnote

much bigger share of Nigeria's oil revenue but also local autonomy as regards how the area should be developed following the destruction caused to it by oil exploration,. The historical basis to this is analysed by Sklar (2004)[132] as follows:

> In Nigerian history, the economic foundation of regional autonomy is the constitutional principle of economic derivation , meaning that revenue derived from exports should be returned to the region of origin...*Resource control* connotes the demand of those people who inhabit the areas from which marketable resources are derived to control their ownership and management (original emphasis)

The escalation in the crisis is a pointer to the fact that this has not been adequately addressed. As Mr Timi Alaibe,[133] said:

> As a consequence, the people have over the years engaged in different forms of agitation, conflict and unrest", adding that "by the 1990s...long years of neglect and deprivation, as well as failures in addressing the development challenges prevalent in the region, had created a volatile atmosphere where youths disrupted oil production activities at will and communities frequently engaged, with little provocation, in destructive inter and intra community strife.

Importantly, this oil politics has generated so much pressure on other aspects of the Nigerian state that they are threatening its corporate existence hence Nigerians are now calling for a restructuring of the nation. How can these be addressed within the context of one Nigerian entity? With such a possibility, which institution in the Nigerian state can help promote and foster it, and therefore stem its slide towards anarchy? One institution in the Nigerian State which, many Nigerian experts believe has the potential to address and effectively contribute to the promotion of one Nigerian entity and therefore the resolution of the Nigerian question is the mass media (Nnaemeka et al, 1989: Vols. 1&2). Their belief is based on their findings to the effect that the evolution of the Nigerian press is connected with the historical development of the Nigerian state. And as earlier noted, this study aims to find out what role an institution like the Nigerian press can play to ensure the process of maintaining Nigeria's corporate entity.

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[132] Under the heading: "The Federal Question"

[133] Mr Alaibe, managing director/chief executive officer, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) made these remarks at the fifth convocation ceremony of Igbinedion University, Okada, Edo State, Nigeria on Wednesday, 26/12/07 and published in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition: http://www.guardiannewsngr.com/focus_record/article01//indexn2_html?pdate=2812..

But it is within the unhealthy economic environment that has been foisted on the Nigerian environment as a result of its historical connection with the western industrialised world, as has just been analysed, that the press is expected to fulfil this task. This is what has earlier been referred to as the neo-colonial structures within which the Nigerian State still operates (See, Madunagu, E., 1984; Ihonvbere, J. ed. 1989). Nowhere is this more obvious than in the way that Nigeria was sunk into debt, in the 1970s and 1980s.[134] Debt repayment[135] created a parlous economic situation that has brought the State to her knees.[136] All the institutions in the Nigerian state could not function properly because scarce funds needed for development were used to service debts. In fact, according to a report published in *The Guardian* (Nigerian), on-line edition of Thursday, 2/1/03, Nigeria spent 82 percent of her total budget proposals for the year 2003 on her debt servicing obligations for that year[137]. With such a burden, it is no surprise that the Nigerian State was unable to import the much needed raw materials to run, for example, the State's print media institution.[138]

Given the impact of these realities on the press, are there ways that it could be made more effective in the task of mobilising Nigerians towards integration and consequently, instilling in them a sense of collective national identity?[139] But we cannot know this without an evaluation of the press vis-à-vis its contribution to the resolution of the Nigerian predicament. Towards this end, a brief survey of the Nigerian press and an analysis of how the nature of the Nigerian state has shaped it

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[134] Read the views of interviewee Momoh, pp.201-202.

[135] In 2005, the Paris and London Clubs announced the cancellation of debts owed to them by the world's poorest nations, including Nigeria. In the deal the Paris Club wrote off $18b out of the $30 billion dollars that Nigeria owed the International Financial Agency (Cowell, A. 2005; Anuforo, E. 2005). However, the fact that the debts have been written-off has not changed the precarious economic situation in Nigeria and its debilitating effects on the newspaper institution.

[136] For an insight into Nigeria's economic situation and external debt, see: 'Perspectives on the Nigerian economy' by Ishrat Husain {1987: 1-38; also, for an account of the economic conditions in Nigeria, see: Okeke, O. et al. eds. 1998; Ihonvbere, J. and Shaw, M. 1998.

[137] Also see: "Obasanjo links poverty to debt servicing-says Nigeria pays 30% of annual budget to creditors", *ThisDay* newspaper on-line, 22/12/04; "How debt puts Nigeria in chains, by DMO (A Nigerian federal government agency)", *The Guardian* [Nigeria] on-line, 27/10/03; "Govt spends N92b on debt servicing in 10 months", *The Guardian* [Nigerian] on-line, 13/10/03; "75.14m Nigerians poor", *ThisDay* newspaper on-line, 21/12/04; "Okonjo-Iweala {Nigeria's Finance Minister} seeks debt pardon for Nigeria". Also, for updates on how much debt Nigeria is owing, see, "External debts rise to N4.4 trillion, says minister", *The Guardian* [Nigeria], on-line, 15/10/03; "External debts now $34b, says Okonjo-Iweala {Nigeria's Finance Minister}, *The Guardian* [Nigeria] on-line, 15/12/04).

[138] Read the views of interviewees on pp. 201-203 below.

[139] Read the views of interviewees on pp. 204-207, below

are essential.

2.5 The Nigerian press: A brief survey

The involvement of the Nigerian press in the socio-political process of Nigeria started in the 1920s, as noted. Writing in "Philosophy and Dimensions of National Communication Policy", Enwenwa (1989: 76-77), remarked that:

> ... the history of the Nigerian mass media institution is intimately tied to the political development of the country ... [whatever] the field of newspaper publishing, for instance, either by regional sectional interests or regional governments.

In the same vein, Golding and Elliot (1979: 21) noted that:

> Nigerian journalism was created by anti-colonial protest, baptised in the waters of nationalist propaganda and matured in party politics.

One of the foremost authorities on the Nigerian press, Professor Fred Omu (1978: 248-250), has referred to the Nigerian press as "providing a remarkable example of overzealousness and irresponsible partisanship and recklessness". As noted by Uche (1989: xvii):

> The establishment of the mass media in Nigeria were along ethnic lines and their ethnic orientation has somewhat affected their functionalism. Also, the mass media played the leading role of promoting the political, social and economic aspirations of their tribesmen.

Thus the partisan nature of the Nigerian media and the consequent negative impact on national integration, constitute a field of inquiry.[140] An extensive part of these inquiries has tended to focus mainly on how the historical manifestations of Nigeria have impacted on the media's ability to foster national integration and consequently instil a sense of national identity in Nigerians.[141]

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[140] See for example, Atwood, et al, 1982; Chicks, J.D. 1971; Grant, M. A. 1971; and West Africa, 1980.

[141] See Dare, O. 1997; Almond and Coleman 1960; also read the views of A. Maghezi, quoted by Enwenwa, 1989: 81-2.

Even though others have acknowledged the role history has played in shaping contemporary Nigerian media, they also maintain that this should not hinder its efforts to perform within the context of the goals of the State. Enwenwa (1989: 93) distinguishes the choice of method or mode of national integration from the historical context in explaining the nature of media institutions. His contention is that it is "not the history and past heritage, but rather the actual political situations, the choice of method or mode of national integration and the implementation of that policy that better explain the nature, organisation and functioning of the mass communication institution". In other words, the effectiveness and relevance of the media institution would depend on its ability to fulfil and achieve national objectives. As he put it:

> If societal integration is an evolutionary process of synthesis based on a conscious effort towards the set goals or national objectives, then the mass communication institution must symbiotically dovetail and not just mirror the set of values and ethos that define the State.

The thrust of. Enwenwa's findings[142] is that the media should be organised in terms of Nigeria's national objectives in order for it to fulfil the constitutional obligations prescribed for mass media, to wit: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall ... uphold the fundamental objectives of establishing Nigeria as a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy, a just and egalitarian society and a free and democratic society and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the Government to the people" (1989: 88-89).

The fact that it has been accorded this special recognition in the Nigerian constitution since 1979,[143] shows how important a role it could play in the struggle to enthrone a truly independent Nigerian state where unity, peace and the civil liberties for all reign supreme. However, to understand the Nigerian press, knowledge of the context where it operates is essential. In a study done by Professor Sam Oyovbaire (2000), he noted that the Nigerian context is complex and pluralistic. According to him:

> "Nigerian pluralism has in recent times acquired the vocabulary of a six zonal structure namely: the north-west zone sometimes referred to as the core

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[142] In his study of "Communication Policy and National Integration" in Nigeria.
[143] See The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1979, Chapter II [21]

> Islamic North; north-east zone; north-central zone, sometimes also referred to as the middle-belt or the Northern minority zone; south-west zone which corresponds to the majority Yoruba nationality; south-east zone, which corresponds to the majority Igbo nationality, and the south-south zone which generally corresponds to the Southern minority nationalities (100-101)..

Oyovbaire also talks about the pluralism of religion and religious sensibilities, as well as the pluralism that evolved out of the development of the post-colonial state. Although the ownership structure of the media has largely been informed by the pluralistic nature of the Nigerian society, Oyovbaire notes that by and large the ownership has "remained with politically orientated wealthy Nigerians with partisan political agendas and a few veteran journalists with professional-cum-business interests in the industry" which invariably means that such owners use the media for their political objectives and motivations (Ibid: 103).

But a very crucial factor in the Nigerian press environment is its prime location, which was brought about by historical circumstances (Ibid: 101-102). True, newspapers have been established and are still being established in other zones of Nigeria. Indeed newspapers have been established in Benin City, Enugu, Kano, Kaduna, Abuja, Jos and Calabar, yet none of these newspapers established outside the south-west zone, also known as the Lagos-Ibadan axis, has more influence on the final product of the Nigerian press. All the newspapers that circulate widely across the Nigerian state, namely: *Daily Times*, *The Guardian*, *ThisDay*, *Vanguard*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *Post Express*, *Daily Champion*, *Daily Sketch* (now defunct), *Punch*, *Comet*, *New Nigerian* - which although it has its headquarters in Kaduna, also prints from Lagos - are all located in the south-west zone. The history behind this, as acknowledged by Oyovbaire, is because:

> The media in Nigeria developed from the second half of the 19th century side by side with colonisation and Christianisation. In this connection the media made its debut into what later transformed into the Nigerian society from the south-west zone which is the materialist location of the Yoruba nationality. Christianisation, modern education and the seat of colonial power in Lagos provided the locational stimuli for the media. It also provided the initial market or readership audience for the propagation of its role. From this point of view the media is highly rooted in south-western Nigeria or in the famous Lagos-Ibadan axis (Ibid).

The implication of this, in Oyovbaire's words, is that although the media may be

relatively diverse and plural, they will come to have a particular perspective derived from the situation in which they are placed:

> A combination of the forces of sociology and political economy, market and geo-political forces, locational imperatives and the phenomenology of content and focus have provided for the media, deliberately or inadvertently, the dissemination of information, news reporting and analysis from a world view dominated by the south-west.[144] The diversity and pluralism of the media in this context is mediated or vitiated by the monopoly of a south-west world view (Ibid).

The general synopsis of Oyovbaire's argument seems to suggest that an institution like the media cannot adequately perform a unifying role in society if it is dominated by a world view that is generally unrepresentative of a pluralistic society like Nigeria, for instance. It could be argued that this is not unique to Nigeria. It is also doudtful if this notion holds generally for the media in any pluralistic society or whether that is the role the media is supposed to be performing. The media should endeavour to accommodate other views within a pluralistic society irrespective of the location from which it emerges[145]. But what is important is whether or not in the course of performing its role, it is able to, as the study of the British press shows: "encourage commonsense identification with the nation as the dominant form of identity" (Brookes, 1999: 261). For instance, what is generally referred to as the British press is mostly located in London and that has not diminished its role in promoting a British national identity (Ibid: 247-262). Although Brookes (Ibid: 250) notes that "the idea of the British press is itself problematic", he nevertheless agrees that it exists, as his following explanation shows:

> Scotland has significant national newspapers of its own, notably Daily Record, while British popular and middle market titles are published in Scotish editions which include different content...Wales does not have a daily newspaper in the tabloid market but does support specific national media institutions elsewhere in the press and broadcasting sectors. Yet the predominantly London-based editions which are widely taken to constitute the British national press usually purport to speak for the whole of Britain, subsuming the national identities of the 'stateless nations' (Ibid).

For us then the first step to ensuring that the press lives up to its expected role in the

[144] See Oyovbaire, S., 2000 [End Note 3]: 111
[145] Read the views of Fieldwork Interviewees: 157-160.

Nigerian state is to know what constitute the character of the press and also what obstacles, if there are, could hinder its performances. Put differently, we would want to know why the Nigerian press is the way it is now and what are the limitations that could hinder its ability to perform its expected role within the Nigerian nation. Indeed the socio-political context from which the Nigerian press emerged has also remained detrimental to its potential to serve as a unifying institution within the nation's socio-political landscape. For instance, Omu (1978), as noted above, has depicted the Nigerian press as providing "a remarkable example of overzealousness ..." in their coverage of the major events of the sixties, such as the AG crisis of 1962, the 1962-63 and 1963-64 census, as well as the federal elections of 1964 and its aftermath. So although the Nigerian press has always remained vibrant and provided a "diversity of viewpoints", it has continued to be associated with propagating narrow, divisive and parochial interests, thereby mitigating the impact it could have on public opinion and consequently, public policy. Dr Olatunji Dare (1997: 543-544) aptly reiterates this point thus:

> With so many titles on the news-stand, the Nigerian press offers at all times a diversity of viewpoints. But the newspapers are serving all kinds of competing interests, and are subjected to all kinds of Editorial control, sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly. These influences that are brought to bear on the press, may be ethnic, political, religious or economic ... Newspapers owned by Yoruba or Igbo or Hausa proprietors can hardly be expected to be neutral in reporting and commenting upon issues affecting their ethnic groups in significant ways. Powerful advertisers or suppliers of inputs vital to the newspaper industry are often in a position to influence the editorial direction of a newspaper. And when a newspaper is owned (or controlled) by a politician or political party, it will have to reflect the political preferences of its proprietor ...

As stated above, the peculiar nature of Nigeria's media development would inevitably make it vulnerable to such influences. And clearly this could be seen as a negative, if the press is to serve as an agent of national integration.

2.5a The Nigerian press within the context of the Nigerian society

Essentially, to most writers, the nature of the Nigerian state is basically post-colonial, which they also see as a hindrance to any institutions of the state that could be mobilised to achieve societal aspirations (Nnaemeka et al: 1989). The consequences

of all this, as Enoch Oyedele (1994: 514-524) has noted, is the non-resolution of what he called the "National Question" which, according to him, should be "concerned with social development and the effective liberation of all national groups and classes from oppression, which is the antithesis of capitalist development." In effect what the post-colonial Nigerian state might address is (a) how to bring together the multifarious groups that constitute these states in order to achieve national integration and unity, and, (b) the roles that should be assigned to the institutions of the states, so that national objectives and aspirations could be realised.

Of relevance to us here is how to delineate the best practicable way to articulate what is needed to promote national integration and consequently instil a sense of national identity amongst the various groups and interests within a post-colonial state like Nigeria. As stated the mass media[146] is one of the nation's institutions that could carry out this task, because of the unique role it has played and the position it has occupied in the evolution of the Nigerian state. (Nnaemeka et al, 1989). Besides, the press, more than any other institution in society, has what it takes to influence other institutions to follow whatever direction of development it is structured to move in (Ibid: 8).[147]. Moyibi Amoda (1977: 262)[148] reiterated this stating:

> The media can effectively help to maintain contact and understanding between the government and the people, between rural areas and the cities, and among nations. Nationally, the media are an important integrative agency. They are a powerful force as an educator, agitator, mobiliser, motivator and entertainer. Their power can be great and immeasurable. They can create a feeling of involvement and participation. It is through them that the agenda of the day is presented to the nation. They are a national forum for the continuous debate, which is necessary in every country, on issues and problems. No developing country, therefore, serious with its development programme or a country struggling against neo-colonialist social and economic structures can afford mass media, which are mainly for commercial purposes and not committed to the national cause.[149]

However, because of historical and cultural antecedents, in order for the mass media to be effectively used for such a purpose, it is imperative that we know what

[146] See Herbert Altschull: 1984
[147] Also see Nwosu, 1996: 20; Momoh, 1985.
[148] From the Working Group on Black Civilisation and Mass Media at the FESTAC Colloquium
[149] Quoted in Nnaemeka, et al, 1989a: 244

Nnaemeka et al (1989) referred to as the "theoretical and philosophical issues and perspectives involved" in formulating a national media policy that would be geared towards the attainment of the national objectives and goals.

The media is presented as having the potential to bring about 'diffusion of group identities' and 'nurture a strong national identity' among a variety of groups (Fitzgerald 1991: 193). Essentially, following this understanding, Nnaemeka[150] that "the specific roles which can easily be delineated for the news media in our particular circumstance are those of decolonisation of the mental and behavioural dispositions of our people, as well as the orientations of their institutions and attitude to social processes ..." (Ibid: 6).

But to Oyedele (1994: 516), the ruling elite in a post-colonial state like Nigeria is unable to do this because they do not have a free hand to address those issues as they are very much dependent on 'the imperialist powers', who continue to influence events within such a state. In his own words: "The imperialists powers do in fact prevent even the adoption of their own methods in the amelioration of their own problems associated with the National Question by the post-colonial states. Instead, they engineer nationalist uprisings and supply all parties with arms as a means of perpetuating political instability in the post-colonial state systems." (Ibid)

For our purpose here, we want to designate the basic characteristics of the Nigerian state as surmised by Nigeria's former information minister, Prince Tony Momoh:[151]

> Our colonially structured external political, cultural and trade relations which have the effect of deepening our continued dependences (sic) on our erstwhile British colonial masters in practically all aspects of our national life; the ethnic-linguistic and sectarian religious sectionalism that has characterised the conduct of our national life prior to and since independence with the concomitant negative impact on the process of national unity and the emergence of a truly patriotic citizenry ...

The proponents of the decolonisation of neo-colonial structures, who see it as a prelude to effective utilisation of national institutions for development, believe that such persisting realities within the Nigerian nation will be detrimental to the use of the

[150] Read Dr Nnaemeka's point in Nnaemeka, et al, (1989a: 1-9)
[151] His views are stated in the 'Preface' to Nnaemeka, T., et al. eds, 1989b: xv.

press for the promotion of national integration and unity. This, according to Nnaemeka, is because, besides having to operate within the contemporary context of the Nigerian state, the mass media itself is also a colonial legacy.[152] . To him this has persisted because "the struggle for political independence did not involve theoretical and philosophical questions about the nature of the institutions of the news media and the role it has to play in the construction and reconstruction of an independent nation" (Nnaemeka, 1989: 4). His view is supported by Hachten (1971: xvi), who noted that in Africa:

> In spite of the outward trappings of self-rule ... the basic mass communications situation has not significantly changed since independence. In post-independence years, media institutions and practices ... have had strong continuity (with their colonial origins).

Nevertheless, Enwenwa (1989) believes that such colonial legacy could be eliminated if only there is a conscious effort by government to formulate a rational and systematic national integration goal-oriented policy as a way of curbing the disputations and other negative messages that permeate the nation's mass media content. Putting it succinctly, Enwenwa (Ibid, 77-78) argues that

> Where the existing value systems are either in conflict or in competition or where some secondary or parochial values contradict and are not rationally derived from an overarching primary value system of national integration, for example, the mass media can only function to promote national illogicalities and irrationality ...

The important thing about this submission is that for any institution of society to effectively perform its role, its characteristics have to be in congruence with the stated objectives of the nation-state. In effect, the effectiveness of the press is a direct function of a socio-political milieu where there is a much settled issue of what should constitute the nation-state and what its purposes and objectives should be (Nnaemeka et al, 1989a).

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[152] For instance, see Kitchen, H., 1956; Ainslie, R., 1966; Hachten, W., 1971; Omu, F., 1978; Echeruo, M., 1976; Mackay, I., 1964; Ladele, O., et al, 1979

In the quest for the realisation of a common national objective, how are the goals and aspirations of the diverse groups to be met? For example, is there a better route to integration without recognition of diversity? Reacting against those who argued that a federal constitution, to take care of the diverse nature of the Nigerian state, would be detrimental to Nigeria's unity, the late Awolowo, one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists, noted:

> For reasons which we have failed to grasp, those who advocate a unitary constitution for Nigeria look upon themselves as THE true Nigerian patriots who sincerely desire, and conscientiously work for, the unity of Nigeria, while the federalists are enemies of that unity and are, therefore, not true patriots ... The making of a constitution for Nigeria, as we have said before, is a weighty and momentous undertaking. Every qualified Nigerian citizen is entitled and in (sic) duty bound to make his contributions on the matter before a final decision is taken ... Those who arrogate to themselves a monopoly of patriotism and wisdom in the execution of this solemn undertaking must be told, ... that they are the agents of the country's disruption and doom, and NOT its builder.[153]

So, although Enwenwa talks about the possibility of an atmosphere of 'national illogicalities and irrationality' prevailing in the mass media because of a lack of a common national goal, to whose pursuit it should be committed, it is also important that due recognition should be given to the nation's diversity. The importance of this lies in the fact that, as a result, the different groups or nationalities are able to pursue and actualise their respective and peculiar endeavours.

However, as the foregoing already shows, the complex nature of the Nigerian society would inevitably mean that there are many issues which would interrupt the possibility of bringing about the full integration of all its component parts and thereby promoting a national identity. It is beyond the scope of this study to identify them all. But the issues nonetheless are never permanent or static, as they change from time to time, depending on the changes in the socio-economic and political milieu at different time periods in Nigeria. Nevertheless, it suffices to add that there are some very fundamental issues[154] which, if the way the press treats them are carefully analysed, will give us some indications as to how the press has impacted on Nigeria's quest for

[153] Quoted in Mahadi, A., et al. eds. 1994: 529
[154] For purposes of this study the issues have already been analysed on pp. 10-13.

national integration and unity over time.

The pre-occupation at this juncture is to trace the history of the Nigerian press as a prelude to understanding how the reality of contemporary Nigerian press came to be in relation to its role within the context of the Nigerian State.

2.6 A brief history of the Nigerian press[155]

One way of knowing how the Nigerian press has come to be what it is today is by learning how it has evolved. It has already been stated that the history of the struggle to realise a Nigerian State free from colonial oppression was mainly expressed through the Nigerian press. The major landmarks and trends that set the press on this cause started in 1859 with the establishment of *Iwe Irohin*,[156] at Abeokuta, by Reverend Henry Townsend. A fortnightly newspaper, it was devoted to the promotion of a reading culture. From then till 1960, when Nigeria attained political independence and after independence until now, when the Nigerian polity had gone through civilian and military administrations, the Nigerian press has undergone various changes that have either positively or negatively impacted on its role in the Nigerian society. Starting with the changes in the size and composition of its practitioners; in the range of institutional structures and internal organisations; in the complexity of roles; in its public image, power and influence, Omu and Awolowo, have remarked that the Nigerian press has evolved from being "a place of refuge for a variety of frustrated and distressed people in the nineteenth century" (Omu, 1996: 1) and "an unprofitable, frustrating and soul-depressing career of the 1930s" (Awolowo, quoted in Omu, Ibid), to "become in the 1990s, an attractive, dignifying and much-sought profession" (Ibid).

In order to understand how this came about, it is important, for our purpose in this study that we give a brief account of how the various stages of the development of print journalism in Nigeria unravelled. These can be divided into seven, namely:

[155] For a comprehensive analysis of the history of the Nigerian press see (Omu, 1978 and 1996). Also for a comprehensive list of the names of the newspapers, frequency of publication and names of their proprietors from 1859-1988, see Nnaemeka et al, (eds) 1989a: 401-411.
[156] It was published in both Yoruba and English languages.

Missionary Journalism; Journalism and the rise of nationalism; Journalism and the period of the first world war; Democratisation of Journalism; Journalism and the 1950s; Journalism during the first republic; Journalism in the 1980s (Ibid, 1-17).

2.6a Missionary Journalism

This started, as noted above, with the establishment of the *Iwe Irohin* in November 1859, by Townsend. It is believed that the newspaper was devoted to the encouragement of a reading habit among the populace. The idea was to imbue them with Western values through the spread of education (Ibid: 2). Following the *Iwe Irohin* was the *Anglo-African* which was a weekly publication, set up by Robert Campbell in Lagos on June 6th 1863, geared towards literary matters in an effort to encourage the growth of literacy. But when this newspaper collapsed in 1865, Omu (Ibid), remarked that it brought home a lesson to prospective journalists that "no serious newspaper could survive if it ignored the excitement of local political conflicts".The death of the *Anglo-African* also marked the end of this era in Nigerian journalism.

2.6b Journalism and the rise of Nationalism

Journalism, during this period grew in response to the rise in the number of educated Africans, who became restless in their campaign to participate effectively in government and influence the trend of events. Having been denied equality, and being discriminated against by the colonialists, these educated Africans saw the press as one powerful institution that they could use to realise their dreams of identity and dignity. Therefore, through journalism, they were able to bring about and encourage a sense of political and nationalist awareness among the colonised Nigerians. The leading newspapers[157] of this period were *Lagos Times* (1880);[158] *Lagos Observer* (1882);[159] *Eagle and Lagos Critic* (1883);[160] *Lagos Weekly Record* (1891-1930);[161] *Lagos Standard* (1893);[162] *Nigerian Chronicle* (1908);[163] *Nigerian Times* (1910).[164]

[157] These newspapers which were all based in Lagos, lasted for a few years because of poor financial backing.
[158] A forthnightly newspaper set up by R.B. Blaize.
[159] A forthnightly newspaper set up by J.B Benjamin.
[160] A monthly/forthnightly newspaper set up by C.E. Macaulay.
[161] A weekly newspaper set up by J.P. Jackson.
[162] A weekly newspaper set up by G.A. Williams.

However, closely aligned with this period is the effect that the period of the First World War had on the development of Nigerian journalism, which is the thrust of the next sub-heading.

2.6c Journalism and the First World War

This period marked another turning point in the evolution of print journalism in Nigeria. For instance, when Lord Lugard completed the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1914, there emerged a "national journalistic constituency" (Omu, 1996: 5). This 'national' environment saw the birth of several newspapers whose pre-occupation was the sensitisation of the colonised peoples of the entire new Nigerian state to the need to overthrow the oppressive colonial machinery. The newspapers devoted to this task were as follows: *Nigerian Pioneer* (1914);[165] *African Messenger* (1921);[166] *Nigerian Spectator* (1923);[167] *Nigerian Advocate* (1923); [168] *Lagos Daily News* (1925-1936);[169] *Nigerian Daily Times* (1926);[170] *Nigerian Daily Mail* (1930);[171] *West African Nationhood* (1930);[172] *The Comet* (1933);[173] *West African Pilot* (1937).[174] This period also witnessed the emergence of vernacular newspapers in the Yoruba and Hausa languages, followed by provincial newspapers that were based in Calabar, Onitsha, Aba, Port-Harcourt, Enugu, Ibadan, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Osogbo, all in Southern Nigeria. Another significant point to note is that although a majority of these newspapers were nationalist in outlook and therefore anti-colonialist, one newspaper, the *Nigeria Pioneer* was pro-colonialist (Omu, 1996: 5).

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[163] A weekly newspaper set up by C. Kumolu Johnson.
[164] A weekly newspaper set up by J.B. Davies.
[165] A weekly newspaper set up by Kitoye Ajasa.
[166] A weekly newspaper set up by Ernest Ikoli.
[167] A weekly newspaper set up by Dr R. Akin Savage.
[168] A weekly newspaper set up by S.H. Braithwaite.
[169] The first daily newspaper in Nigeria set up by one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists, Herbert Macaulay. It was a political newspaper as it served as an organ of Mr Macaulay's political party, Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP).
[170] The second daily newspaper to be set up .This was done by the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company. It has survived till today and now known as the Daily Times.
[171] Another daily newspaper set up by Ernest Ikoli.
[172] A monthly newspaper set up by J.C. Zizer
[173] A weekly newspaper set up by Duse M. Ali.
[174] This was another daily newspaper which was set up by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, a foremost Nigerian nationalist, who later became the leader of the NCNC, a political party he formed together with Herbert Macaulay in 1944. The newspaper survived till the early 1970s before went out of circulation.

2.6d Period of journalistic revival and revolution: Democratisation of journalism

This era coincided with the arrival of nationalists and journalists into the fray to route out the colonialists. For instance, people like Azikiwe, who had studied in the United States, came back home in the 1930s, after his brief sojourn as a journalist in the Gold Coast (now Ghana), to establish national and provincial newspapers, all geared towards the mobilisation of Nigerians to the fight against colonialism, starting with his establishment of the *West African Pilot* in 1937. Together with other journalists, they expressed themselves to reject established "traditions of dependence and token political participation ... in favour of the popular struggle for political emancipation and independence" (Ibid: 8).

2.6e Decline of concerted action for a common objective or cause

The unanimity of purpose that was characteristic of the way that nationalists and journalists prosecuted the fight against colonial domination was lost, beginning from the 1940s,[175] when mutual suspicion began to define the relationship between newspapermen (see p.?).[176] This was exacerbated by the feud that engulfed the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Service* in the 1940s over the nomination and election of a candidate into the Federal House of Representatives. Nothing could have been more devastating for the nationalist instinct of every Nigerian at this point than this controversy, which was played out on the pages of these two hitherto nationalists' newspapers because, according to Omu, it "contributed to the regionalisation of nationalism and the crystallisation of inter-group tension and animosity which characterised political developments for a long time" (Omu, 1978: 248). All this was happening at a time when political parties were in control of different regions. In particular, newspapers, with few exceptions "were owned by or supported by rival political parties (mainly) the NCNC (*West African Pilot*) and the AG (*The Nigerian Tribune*)". Reflecting on the harm that these developments did to the cause of Nigerian integration and a national identity for the Nigerian populace, Omu concluded

[175] What should be noted here is that although Nigeria was a colony until independence in 1960, the British colonialists also ensured constitutional developments which enabled political parties to emerge and contest democratic elections. And this struggle for political power among the various parties was done on the pages of once nationalistic newspapers. Because the papers were each owned by political parties, the relationship among journalists declined.

[176] Under the title: "The socio=political and economic settings".

thus:

> It is one of the ironies of Nigerian history that in a crucial decade in the nation's development, a period which witnessed the taking of political and constitutional steps which led inexorably to independence, the newspapers were completely immersed in the vortex of partisan politics and were in no position to prepare the people for the challenges of independence and national unity (1978: 250).

2.6f Journalism during the First Republic

The important points to remember here are that: (1) the British colonialists were no longer at the centre stage of political controversy and therefore no longer the common enemy, and, (2) given the diverse nature of Nigeria and consequently the emergence of fundamental differences of opinion about the future of the state, when political independence was achieved, there arose the problem of what would be the best way to meet the challenges of nationhood. It was therefore no surprise that the different political parties used their respective newspapers to fight on their behalf. It is said that 'competing political party newspapers advertised their fanaticism' (Adamu, S., 1994: 469) and in effect heightened the internal political struggles among rival regional groups. However, this is not to diminish the united stance that almost all the newspapers took against the proposed Preventative Detention Act of 1963, during this divisive period. But the issue is that their best efforts at this time pale into insignificance when viewed against the damage and division that their roles and activities caused during such major events of the 1960s like the AG crisis of 1962;[177] the 1962-63 and 1963-64 National Census controversy;[178] and the controversy that trailed and ruined the 1964 Federal Elections.[179]

Perhaps another important issue to note is the fact that the ownership structure of the print media in Nigeria, coupled with the partisan and divisive politics of the day,

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[177] To understand the origin of the AG crisi, see pp 48-54 above; alo see Nnoli, (1978: 154-156).

[178] The national census in Nigeria has always ended in controversy. The reason for this is because revenue allocation is tied to the population of a particular region or state. In other words, the more people in your region, the more money you would get from the federal government. The census conducted in Nigeria since it became a republic in 1963 has always shown the northern part of Nigeria as having a higher population than the southern part. But most southerners dispute this, leading to accusations of rigging. Even the last census conducted in 2006, saw a Nigerian (southerner) commentator, Dr Reuben Abati, write an article in *The Guardian* (Nigerian), titled: "Census as robbery", which was published in its online edition on 24/03/06

[179] For the controversy that eventually led to ruination of the elections see pp. 52-54 above.

brought about a situation whereby the different governments, both regional and federal, became more involved in the establishment of newspapers as a way of making their views and positions known in the tense and very hostile political atmosphere. For instance, at independence, the Federal government which, was being controlled by the NPC-led coalition had no newspaper and was as a result subjected to scathing criticisms by the other newspapers owned by rival political parties, namely: the NCNC and the AG. Hence in 1961, the Federal government set up the *Morning Post*. In the same vein, following the controversial Federal Elections of 1964 and its aftermath, the Western Regional government led by the Akintola's NNDP, which was a break-away faction from the AG, established the *Daily Sketch*. It was also the political situation that led the Eastern Regional government and the Northern Regional government to set up the *Eastern Nigerian Outlook* in 1960 and the *New Nigerian* in 1966, respectively (Omu, 1996: 10).

What was unfortunate about these developments, however, was that the emergence of these regional and federal government-owned newspapers did not bring about a balance in the political arguments in the country, as journalists were only allowed to function "within the narrow confines of official interests" (Dare, O. 1985;[180] also see Nwosu, 1996: 26). So, given this structure of ownership, there came to an end the era and 'legacy of crusading journalism' with the result that, subsequently, journalism came to be characterised by what Omu (1996: 10) described as "a cacophony of voices" .

2.6g Government / Press relationship and journalism in the 1980s

What is striking about the evolution of the Nigerian press and its roles in the creation of the Nigerian State and the Nigerian identity is that these have changed over time in response to the changes within Nigeria's socio-political and economic environment. These changes, as acknowledged earlier, are generated both internally and externally. But it is also important to note that Nigeria's internal politics has played a significant role in the way that the press has operated and continues to operate vis-à-vis its constitutional role. While, for instance, during the era of British colonialism the press was in the forefront of the campaign to actualise an independent Nigerian State, with

[180] Cited in Nwosu, 1996: 26).

its own identity in the comity of nations, but bitter and divisive partisan politics, even before political independence was realised, brought an end to that unanimity of purpose that informed their fight against colonialism. So what became manifest, just before and immediately after independence in the 1960s, was that there was no over-riding common crusade to nurture the inchoate and fragile diverse socio-cultural environment into a united Nigerian State, one where the multi-cultural groups are allowed to flourish within the context of a collective identity. This is articulated by Matthew Kukah (1996: 134):

> With independence, the press found itself a victim of the political pressures on the regional tripod on which Nigeria rested. The press was now conscripted to fight regional and ethnic battles in defence of the political classes of the three regions.

Under these circumstances, it is quite in order to state that the press was seriously handicapped in meeting the requirements needed to unify the diverse Nigerian society. In fact this was not helped by what Kukah (1996: 134) also described as the failure of the press to educate the people on the essence of unity, but that, instead, the southern press in particular "opted to reinforce old prejudices", which portrayed the government and people of the North "in very negative, hostile and pejorative terms" (also see Sardauna, 1986: 134). Putting the overall performance of the Nigerian press in perspective, Kukah (1996: 135), concluded that "the press has been unable to rise above ... [their] prejudices."

Nevertheless, any analysis of the Nigerian press must take cognisance of all the realities that have affected the growth of the Nigerian press, in which the Government has played a very major part. For the purpose of this study, Government / Press relationship will be divided into: pre-independence and post-independence though a common phenomenon is that it is characterised by conflicts. The consequences for the press have been that the government, whether colonial, civilian or military, has often responded with repressive measures to muzzle the press[181] (see Omu, 1996: 14-16).[182]

[181] The military authorities in Nigeria have always regarded the press with suspicion, as they found it difficult to conduct affairs of state in a democratic manner. But in the absence of political parties to articulate the positions of the Nigerian citizens, the battle to be heard was fought on the pages of newspapers, of which the military tried to curtail with various draconian decrees.

Indeed, Ekpu's submission points to the fact that governments in Nigeria have taken various draconian measures to emasculate the press to the extent that he labelled the Nigerian press "an endangered profession" (Ekpu, 1996: 42).

But if there is any issue that has further complicated government / press relationship in Nigeria, it is the intervention of the military into Nigerian politics and administration. The overwhelming verdict by many Nigerian authors on the Nigerian press and the military, is that through its centralisation of authority, the military not only destroyed the federal and regional constitutions which were aimed at allowing the various groups that make up the Nigerian state to express themselves, under its administration the Nigerian media in general and the press in particular also became victims of what some have referred to as "the military arrogance and power play" (Kukah, 1996: 141). Kukah also idenfies other major obstacles that the press has to overcome in carrying their activities within the Nigerian context. In an article titled: "Public Perception in Nigeria", Matthew Kukah (1996: 141-143), contended that it is important to realise that "part of the struggle of the press has to be seen within the context of the quest for self definition in a very hostile environment". Echoeing the same sentiment, Stanley Egbochukwu (1996: 212-227), in his article "Media management and the economics of publishing in Nigeria", advanced an economic rationale to explain the press reality in Nigeria. To him therefore, "under the (Nigerian) situation, what matters is no longer profit but survival ... [because] the newspaper industry in Nigeria today is plagued with very low demand, reduced advertisements, over capacity, escalating costs, debt burden, large scale fraud, non-credit business practices and so on".

These are some of the issues that have made the Nigerian press what it is today and which, no doubt, provide the basis for an understanding of print journalism in Nigeria, which witnessed some remarkable changes in the 1980s. Many writers on the development of the press in Nigeria have adduced various reasons for this, although they all agree that the changes became inevitable as the press has to respond to the new realities engendered, particularly by the modest advancements which the Nigerian state made in the areas of education and in the economy. Regarding this

[182] See also Kukah, 1996: 141; Ekpu, 1996: 42-55; Jason, 1996: 31-41.

era,.Omu stated that there was "a spirit of creativity and experimentation which engendered a new journalism", as exemplified by *The Guardian* newspaper,[183] which was established on February 27, 1983 (1996: 10-11).

2.6h The press and Nigeria

Some analysts maintain that the Nigerian press or the media as an institution in Nigeria exhibit some inadequacies which are antithetical to the professional standards that the media institution needs to live up to, at all times, if it is to fulfil its constitutional role in the Nigerian State. Their views can be divided into three:

> Firstly, some argue that in order for the media to be useful to the complex and culturally diverse Nigerian society, it has to show professionalism in every situation and become a "handmaid and catalyst of social development" (Nwosu, 1996: 24-25).[184]
>
> Secondly, there are those that believe that the Nigerian media can become an effective institution for mobilising society towards the necessary changes needed to unite and integrate the Nigerian State, if it "re-asserts itself as a vanguard of the people" and also "decide which way society goes instead of always reacting to what the society has become" (Jason, 1996: 36).
>
> Thirdly, the media and the journalists are always vulnerable to both private and government control, and therefore ineffective in carrying out its constitutional role, the journalists should ensure that they establish the media or medium, which is entirely owned and financed by themselves (Nwosu, 1996: 26-27).

These points are debatable because one could also argue that merely referring to these issues is not an alternative to their resolution, which only a proper diagnosis of their causes can achieve. For instance, it can hardly be disputed that the Nigerian media and the press in particular cannot operate outside of what the socio-political and

[183] The newspaper is usually referred to as the 'flagship' of the Nigerian press. Because of its background. See its mission statement in Chapter three, pp. 93-95 below. Also read the views of fieldwork interviewee, Alhaji Jose on pp. 178-180 below under the headline: "Newspapers set up in response to new socio-economic reality", and those of Chief Odukomaiya on p. 151.

[184] Also see Kukah, 1996: 141-143; Idowu, 1996: chap. 14; Eteng, 1996: 287-290; Omu, 1996: 17.

economic context allows. This is a view shared by Dr Jubril Mohammed (1996: 309), who remarks:

> Nigeria's dependent status in the international capitalist system has resulted in a stunted private sector, too weak to sustain a flourishing news media system commensurate with the needs of the country. In addition, a significant proportion [of] - Nigerian journalists [are] barely educated and professionally tampered [sic]. Their working environment is poor and condition of service horrible. [Additionally]...the existing journalism institutions...barely [have the] theoretical knowledge and basic skills which the profession requires.

It is therefore no surprise that despite the best efforts to make the Nigerian media institution work, it has continued to be plagued by problems (Jason, 1996: 36-40);[185] that are inimical to the growth of an independent media institution that could be used effectively and efficiently to mobilise Nigerians towards the attainment of the overall Nigerian State's objective of "unity in diversity". The poor state of Nigeria's level of national economic development, which has made publishing a rather painful and excruciating undertaking, has also not helped the situation. Salient to this is the way that the press, in particular, has to mostly rely on revenue from advertisements to survive. Given that substantial advertisements cannot be generated from within a very poor economy like Nigeria's, the newspapers or the press become vulnerable to the negative machinations of the few advertisers available[186]. The situation is even made worse by the fact that most, if not all the advertisers depend on Government patronage to operate within the economy. So, as noted by Stanley Egbochukwu (1996: 215-216):

> Buyers of advertisement spaces are scared to be identified with any medium or

[185] Also see Egbochukwu, 1996: 212-219 & 222.

[186] The role of the advertisers in nation building and national identity is important insofar as they play a major role in the way that newspapers survive in Nigeria. This explains why the newspapers set up outside the Lagos/Ibadan axis can hardly survive because all the major advertisers are based in that southwestern part of Nigeria. A newspaper can only play an integrative role if it continues to publish. But what part the advertisers play in that respect is not so clear-cut in Nigeria. The reason is that the advertisers themselves also rely on government patronage to sustain their businesses because most economic decisions are not not determined by objective economic conditions but rather on mainly political expediency on the part of most govermnets in Nigeria, hence in spite of the various economic measures that they have taken in the past, they have failed to lift Nigeria out of economic doldrums (**Ssee** Chinweizu's article as published in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) edition of 24/06/05 and titled: "The reconstruction of Nigeria: Four delusions of our strategic horizon". So as Egbochukwu (1996) has analysed, advertisers in Nigeria are sceptidcal about advertising in newspapers that are mostly hostile to the government. It is also the case in Nigeria that newspaper proprietors have been known to put pressure on the journalists to be less critical of government in order to ensure that their newspapers continue to enjoy government's patronage and therefore the survival of their newspapers (Read interviewees on pp.176-178 under the heading: "The motives for setting up newspapers".

newspaper that they perceive to be anti-government.

2.6i Press development in different parts of Nigeria

One of the reasons mostly associated with the concentration of the press in the southwest, is linked to the historical development of Nigeria, coupled with the southwest's natural location as the gateway to Nigeria, through the sea, that have ensured the overwhelming economic advantages which that part of Nigeria has over the others (Oyovbaire, 2000: 103) particularly the northern part. This accounts for the widely held view that the so-called Southern press is actually based in the Southwest of Nigeria which, is also sometimes referred to as the Lagos/Ibadan axis. But in most cases, this fact is erroneously taken as if the Southern press actually speaks for every part of Southern Nigeria, whenever there is a comparison made between the influence that both the Southern press and the Northern press wield in all areas of governance within the Nigerian State.

Typical is the point articulated in Haruna's article titled: "The Press: The Northern Nigeria Experience", which portrays the Southern press as one unit in his analysis of the ways that the press fights the south's cause, as against the North's. His reasoning, however, fails to acknowledge the argument that what is generally seen as the southern press hardly represents the views of all the areas that make up the Southern part of Nigeria. Rather, many in Nigeria have come to regard the so-called Southern press as representing no other view than the worldview of the Yorubas, which is the ethnic group that constitute the south-western part of Nigeria (Oyovbaire, 2000: 99-112;).[187] In any case, many Nigerians now regard the "media as a political weapon" which they believe is good for balancing the political arguments in Nigeria, of which most northerners see themselves as victims (Haruna 1996: 56-70). [188] According to Haruna, one way by which the Northerners can overcome this problem and prevent the threat from the Southern press against Northern values, is if: "rich northerners overcome their reluctance to invest in the press so that the contention of sectarian and

[187] See also Nnaemeka, 1989: 7 in Nnaemeka, et al. eds. 1989a; also see views of fieldwork interviewees: T. Momoh, on p. 156 and D. Onabule, on p. 160.
[188] See *Sunday Democrat* Editorial of May 29, 1994, titled: "Who will save the Northern press", quoted in Haruna, 1996: 56.

regional interests and ideas in the country can be balanced and even-handed" (Ibid, 69-70).

Even though Haruna reached this conclusion, he nevertheless attacked the basic premise of the *Sunday Democrat's* Editorial, which is that the failure of the northern elite to establish newspapers due to their lack of entrepreneurship, has resulted in the poor state of newspaper development in the north as compared to the south, where newspapers are not only being set up very often but are also flourishing. He even questions the viability or profitability of southern newspapers or any Nigerian newspapers because "except the *Daily Times* and the *Nigerian Tribune*, (based in Lagos and Ibadan respectively)", none publishes its profit and loss accounts annually, adding that there is also no independently certified circulation figure of any newspaper or magazine (Ibid: 56). Further, Haruna is quick to add that the viable economic environment in the south masks the differences that exist in different parts of the south in terms of their ability to establish and sustain a viable newspaper. In effect, although Haruna believes that "the southern press has always been far more active than that of the North ... [and are] far more numerous and wider in circulation than the northern media", he notes, however that that in itself cannot provide a fair assessment of the state of media in the north when it is compared with the same situation in the south. As his explanation indicates, the proper context for an examination of the northern media will show that the press everywhere in Nigeria is of doubtful profitability, and that the mortality rate within the southern press is also relatively high - and that it is not the entire south that is better served than the north (Ibid: 58)

This point is borne out by the fact that, try as some entrepreneurs have, in the Southeast (made up mainly of the Ibo ethnic group), to establish viable national or even local newspapers, they have never succeeded. Okey Ekeocha (1996: 72-97) has adduced various reasons for this, and they include the following: the individualistic nature of the Iboman, bad management techniques, lack of co-operation among stake-holders, the involvement of government and self-serving individuals in newspapering which, result in people using their newspapers to promote selfish political interests etc. Although this may well be the case and does indeed corroborates Haruna's misgivings about the state of the media in the south, however, Ekeocha's submission

does not explain why an Iboman that failed in the southeast to establish a viable national newspaper, succeeded in doing so in the southwest, as the experience of Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, the proprietor of the Lagos-based *Champion* newspaper shows.[189]. The reason simply is that, as experience has shown, for any entrepreneur wishing to establish a national newspaper in Nigeria, they are more likely to succeed if located within the so-called Lagos/Ibadan axis[190].

What we have tried to do in this chapter is navigate our way through those fundamental issues that have made the Nigerian press what it is today. However, since our main focus is to investigate what role the press plays in the promotion of a Nigerian national identity, it is necessary to understand the nature and structure of the press in question. For example, as noted above, the nature of the Nigerian society has been instrumental in the establishment of the various presses in Nigeria today.[191] Surely then, it is to be expected that whatever they do ought to be directly influenced by the purpose for which they were set up. Hence background knowledge of the press is required. This is the next project that will form the kernel of chapter three.

[189] See the views of fieldwork interviewee: H. Odukomaiya, on p. 160.
[190] This refers to the newspapers which are located within the southwestern part of Nigeria. They are the national newspapers and are the most viable in Nigeria.
[191] See pp. 48-54 above.

CHAPTER THREE

The Sampled Newspapers: Social Context and Mission Statements

In considering the background of all the selected newspapers, two of the issues that will be used are their individual social context and mission statement. The following is a categorisation of the newspapers into the various interests that they represent. The newspapers have been selected not only because of the history behind them but also because of their geographical reach, audience, size and type, as well as their format and content characteristics (Maja-Pearce, ed. 1996).

However, before we go into a detailed discussion of the background of each of the newspapers, it is worth stating how this is going to be done. With particular reference to the mission statement of each of the newspapers, it should be noted that it was not possible to locate the individual mission statement of each of them because of the various issues that relate to the stark reality which usually confronts any researcher in Nigeria, as discussed.[192]

Usually, a new newspaper or publication publishes its mission statement on the front page of its maiden edition. But for some of our selected newspapers, the first editions were either missing or where they were unavailable; their front page was torn out of the newspapers. But I was able to lay my hands on the mission statement of at least one newspaper in each category of newspaper ownership in Nigeria. For example:

(i) Of all the selected three state government-owned newspapers, namely *Nigerian Observer*, *Daily Sketch* and *Nigerian Statesman*, it was only the *Nigerian Observer* that I managed to get hold of one of its early editions, where Lt. Col. Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, the military governor of the then Mid-Western state of Nigeria, the owner and publisher of the newspaper, spelt out the aims and objectives of the *Nigerian Observer*.

(ii) For the Federal Government-owned *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times*, I could only locate the first copy of the *New Nigerian* where its mission statement was

[192] See Chapter Four below

published.

(iii) Out of the four privately-owned newspapers used for this study, that is *The Guardian*, *National Concord*, *Daily Champion* and *Vanguard*, only the mission statements of the first two were readily available, although I was able to source the *Vanguard's* media profile that also dealt with the aims and objectives of the newspaper, which it published on its website on 24/10/00.

There is some relevance in this. For instance, in the case of government-owned newspapers (state or federal), their mission statements are quite similar since they are all usually set up to take care of the interest of the state or of the entire federation of Nigeria, as the case may be. In effect, getting to know the Edict setting up one government newspaper or the mission statement of any government-owned newspaper, is knowing what those of the others are (Read interviewees, p.152).[193] This is by no means saying that they are all the same. But the Edict setting up a state-owned newspaper like the *Nigerian Observer*, is never too different in purpose from the ones setting up other state newspapers like the *Nigerian Statesman* or the *Daily Sketch*.[194] Also, in the case of Federal Government-owned newspapers, the functions that the *New Nigerian* would serve will be similar to that of the *Daily Times*. In the same vein, it could be said that not much difference exists in the mission statements of the privately-owned newspapers. So although the mission statement of each of the privately-owned newspaper could not be said to be alike, the mission statement of a newspaper like *The Guardian* could be a fair reflection of that of the *Vanguard*, *Daily Champion* and *National Concord*[195], particularly with regard to their national focus and economic ideology.

Nevertheless, we need to add a caveat here: each of the newspapers chosen for this study came into being in different circumstances such as the various stages from colonialism to post-colonialism, and from military rule to civilian rule, etc.[196] Consequently, some of these newspapers have had to or have been made to change their editorial direction accordingly. This is particularly true in the case of government-owned newspapers, although the privately-owned *National Concord* is an

[193] Under the title: "The impact of ownership on the press".
[194] By 2002, the state government-owned *Daily Sketch* had ceased to exist.
[195] The *National Concord* is also now defunct.
[196] See pp.60-81 above.

exception, since it actually started more or less as the political organ of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) during Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983) but later changed its editorial policy to become nationally focussed, after its proprietor, Chief M. K.O. Abiola quit the NPN in 1982 (Nnaemeka, et al, 1989a: 408).[197] But as regards the government-owned newspapers, their circumstances have changed at one stage or another and therefore they have tended to shift their editorial directions to suit those circumstances. The point to remember here is that the editorial direction of government-owned newspaper has always been dependent on the type, nature and character of the government, whether as military or civilian administrations in Nigeria.

But this phenomenon will be easier to understand if we take it from the angle of the two categories of government ownership of newspapers, that is, state and federal. It is necessary to make this point because each came to own their respective newspapers in two distinct ways. For example, to have a newspaper of their own which they need, first and foremost, to cater for the interests of their individual state, state governments set up their own newspapers, while the federal government considered it necessary to have its own newspaper because almost all the state governments have their own newspaper (and considering the privately-owned newspapers), all of which may not necessarily provide adequate coverage of the activities of the federal government.[198]

However, the federal government did not initially set up the federal government-owned newspapers, that is, *Daily Times* and *New Nigerian*. The *Daily Times* first started in 1926, as a private undertaking, while the *New Nigerian* was set up by the then, northern regional government in 1966 with the sole purpose of protecting its interests within the context of one Nigerian nation (Muhammadu, 2000: Chapter one)[199] They were both acquired in 1975 by the federal military government, led by General Olusegun Obasanjo, and their editorial policies had to change to suit their new owners. [200]

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[197] See also Haruna, 1987.

[198] See views of fieldwork interviewees, pp165-166, under the title: "Issues that account for the differences between north and south".

[199] See fieldwork interviewees: Sam Amuka, G.G Darah, and, Dan Agbese. on pp. 157-159..

[200] Predictably, state newspapers have also had to change direction to suit the government of the day. A typical example of how government-owned newspapers, in Nigeria, make U-turns to serve the government of the day, is exemplified by the various news reports which, the then Bendel state

The situation is not also helped by the transient nature of leadership in the Nigerian political environment.[201] The effect is that there is no generally accepted ideology[202] to guide the leadership of a state or of a federation as to what purpose government-owned newspapers should serve on behalf of the populace or the general objective that they should perform in the interests of all, at the state or federal level. As a result, the editorial direction of government newspapers change in accordance with the wishes or interests of the government in power, at state/federal level (Abati, R. 2002).

That is why the newspapers, as discussed, behave in a radically different way depending on whether the administration is military or civilian. But those who are well informed about the Nigerian newspaper industry in particular, and the media in general, maintain that this is an unhealthy situation. Their argument is that, no matter who is in power, the responsibility of government newspapers is to "publicise government programmes and report them to the public very accurately with a view to getting feedback to the government on public policies and programmes" ("Osoba decries official interference in govt newspapers", *Daily Times,* 19/6/91, back page).

In respect of privately-owned newspapers, it is also worth reiterating that two categories exist in Nigeria. That is, there are private newspapers that were set up for

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government-owned *Nigerian Observer*, splashed across its front pages on the days leading to the General Elections in Nigeria in August, 1983. For instance, on the week before the elections, the newspaper not only urged the people of Bendel state to give the incumbent Governor, Professor Ambrose Alli, a second chance to rule the state, but to also pray for him to defeat his rival in the Governorship race, Dr Osaigbovo Ogbemudia of the opposition NPN party, in the following reports titled: "One week to election – The People's prayer" (03/08/83), and "Give Alli a second chance" (12/08/83). But immediately after the election result was declared and the candidate of the opposition NPN party won the Governorship, the *Nigerian Observer* quickly changed its tune by carrying on its front page the story: "Ogbemudia's second coming...He thanks Bendelites" on 16/08/83 and also published an editorial titled: "The People's verdict", on page three of the same edition. State government-owned newspapers in other states of the Nigerian federation, where the incumbent did not win, also had to change their editorial policy in response to the new dispensation. These developments, not surprisingly, prompted the NPN-controlled federal government-owned newspaper, *New Nigerian*, to publish, on page three of its edition of 20/08/83, the story titled: "Newspapers make U-turn to serve new masters". But the *Nigerian Observer* retorted by carrying an editorial comment on its front page titled: "Where we stand" [see Appendix I1], in its edition of 28/08/83, to try to rationalise the way it had carried out its responsibilities.

[201] For instance, between 1966 and 1999, Nigeria witnessed seven military coups d'etat that also aborted two democratically-elected civilian governments in Nigeria during that period.

[202] See fieldwork interviewee: E. Izeze, on pp. 163-164, under the headline: "The Nigerian press reflects nationality perspectives".

political and economic purposes[203]. Except for the *National Concord* during its first three years (1980-83), none of the other private newspapers selected for this study (*Vanguard, The Guardian* and *Daily Champion*) wholly fall into the first category. In fact, apart from the thriving *Nigerian Tribune* (Tribune at 50, Haruna, 1996: 56),[204] which was established in 1949, as the political wing of the AG led by the late Awolowo during Nigeria's First Republic (1960-1966), all the other newspapers that were established by political parties, or were set up for political purposes, could not survive and therefore folded for lack of patronage and funds.[205]

Based on the foregoing, the background of all the newspapers will now be discussed in the following order:

(a) **State government-owned newspapers** - *Nigerian Observer, Daily Sketch* and *Nigerian Statesman*[206] .

(b) **Federal government-owned newspapers**- *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times.*

(c) **Privately-owned newspapers, divided into: (i) Newspapers owned by publishers from minority ethnic groups, namely,** *The Guardian* and *Vanguard*; **(ii) Newspapers owned by publishers from majority ethnic groups, namely**, *National Concord,* and *Daily Champion.*

3.1 State Government-owned Newspapers

3.1a The Nigerian Observer

The *Nigerian Observer* was established, financed and owned by the then Midwestern state government of Nigeria. The State was renamed Bendel state in 1976, but later split into two in 1992, namely: Edo and Delta States.[207] The research period (1983-1993), falls into the time when the Bendel state government owned it. It is on that

[203] Read fieldwork interviewees under the heading: "The motives for setting up newspapers", pp.176-178..

[204] Read the viewsof fieldwork interviewee: Al-Bashir under the heading: "The motives for setting up newspapers", pp.176-178.

[205] For a list of the political newspapers that were set set up in Nigeria between 1978 and 1983, see Nnaemeka, et al, 1989a: 408.

[206] Later known as *The Statesman*

[207] The Edo state government now wholly owns the *Nigerian Observer*. Delta state has also established its own newspaper and it is called *The Pointer*.

basis that the activities of the *Nigerian Observer* will be documented.

However, of much relevance here is the Bendel state context within which the *Nigerian Observer* had to operate. It was different from all other states in Nigeria because of its multi-ethnic composition, which earned it the tag, 'mini-Nigeria'. It is not difficult to see why. The state had more ethnic groups compared to the other states within the Nigerian federation. Bendel state was made up of the following ethnic groups: Edo, Urhobo, Itsekiri, Ishan, Igbo, Ijaw, Isoko, and Afemai (Nigeria 1991: Official Handbook: 52-54). This is quite significant because the politics of Bendel state which the *Nigerian Observer* was caught up in were mainly determined by ethnicity, as with Nigerian state (see Nnoli, O., 1978).

The *Nigerian Observer*'s mission statement, on establishement in 1968, was to promote the interests of the state. As noted, without a copy of the first edition of the newspaper, the aims and objectives of the newspaper were instead spelt out by the Military Governor of the then Midwestern state, Lt. Col. Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, who presided over the establishment of the *Nigerian Observer*:

> [At the inaugural session], I told the Directors that the main aim for establishing the MIDWEST NEWSPAPERS CORPORATION is to print and publish a daily newspaper which will provide the means of informing the public of the intentions, programmes and policies of government and also as a medium of education, information, and the enlightenment of our people.
> "... news in the OBSERVER does not reflect the view of the Government, and very important ... is the independence and freedom of the *Nigerian Observer*...
> [and though] Government sponsored... it must ... be free from Government control as to what it should write or not write ... [and] be free to criticise any aspect of Government policy which it considers worthy of criticism in the interest of the public. ...[It is] established primarily to educate, inform and enlighten the people, [and therefore] must be free and unfettered in the discharge of its responsibility.[208] The function of this Board of Governors is to

[208] He further said here: "My belief in the freedom of this paper is fully enshrined in the Edict setting up the Corporation through the provision of a Board of Governors under the chairmanship of the Chief

play the role of an effective custodian of the integrity, independence, and freedom of the NIGERIAN OBSERVER. ... [The] MIDWEST NEWSPAPERS CORPORATION guarantees ... [its] newspapers the liberty to gather news, to spread enlightenment, and to speak their minds candidly (*Nigerian Observer,* Monday, August 26, 1968: 7).

3.1b Daily Sketch

The Western Regional Government of Nigeria established the *Daily Sketch* under the leadership of Akintola, in 1964. It was printed and published by the Sketch Publishing Company Limited. But after the creation of the three states of Ogun, Ondo and Oyo, out of the former Western Region of Nigeria in 1967, the newspaper became jointly owned by all three. Although more states have now been created out of the former Western Region, our period of research covers the era when it was still owned by these three states.

There are two important points to be noted when talking about the context of the *Daily Sketch,* which served as great influences on the newspaper's activities during the period under study: The first is that, in the area where it operates, there is also the very influential privately-owned newspaper, the *Nigerian Tribune*, established in 1949 by Obafemi Awolowo, as the political arm of the AG, which he also led. The AG, was indeed one of the political parties that fought for Nigeria's political independence and dominated the Western Region's political landscape, during Nigeria's first republic (1960-1966). When in September, 1978, the ban on political activities was lifted to usher in Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983), Obafemi Awolowo, also founded the UPN, and, as the *Nigerian Tribune* was made to do for the AG during Nigeria's first republic, it also became the political arm of the UPN. So even though the *Daily Sketch* was also there to serve the three UPN-controlled state governments of Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo there was the *Nigerian Tribune*, which was a 100 percent supporter of everything UPN in that Yoruba-speaking area of Nigeria, where the influence of Awolowo was dominant and complete.

Justice of the State, assisted by the Chairman of the State Public Service Commission, the Leader of the local Bar Association, the chairman of the State's Apex Co-operative Organisation, and a recognised trade union leader."

The second point is that, in the Yoruba-speaking area of Southwest Nigeria there is a clear anti-North feeling. This has its origin in the way that the struggle for the political leadership of Nigeria has been conducted since Nigeria's political independence in 1960., tThe general feeling among most Nigerians, including the Yorubas, is that the northern-based Hausa-Fulanis are seen as having dominated the political leadership in Nigeria for a very long time (see Usman, Y.B. ed. 1982: ix). For instance, in the 1983 presidential election, Awolowo was the presidential candidate of the UPN and contested against Alhaji Shehu Shagari, a Hausa-Fulani from the north, who was the flag bearer of the NPN. And so, not surprisingly, the *Daily Sketch* was anti-Shehu Shagari's NPN.

3.1c *Nigerian Statesman/The Statesman*

The Imo State Government owns the *Nigerian Statesman* and as is characteristic of government-owned newspapers; its editorial policy is geared towards informing the people of the state about the government's programmes and policies. The newspaper is based in the south-eastern part of Nigeria, where anti-North feeling is also very strong. The fact that the NPP had Azikiwe, an Iboman from the southeast, as its presidential candidate for the 1983 elections was one of the factors that influenced the coverage of the *Nigerian Statesman* in June 1983. But more importantly, the other overriding aim of the *Nigerian Statesman* was to represent the voice of the Ibo ethnic group in the Nigerian scheme of things (see *Daily Champion*, 8/6/93).

3.2 Federal Government-owned Newspapers

3.2a *New Nigerian*

The *New Nigerian* newspaper was the only newspaper that was 100 percent owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria,[209] during the period covered by this research. The northern regional government in 1966, at a time when the political atmosphere in

[209] The *New Nigerian* was put up for privatisation by the Civilian government of Nigeria, led by Olusegun Obasanjo. Also see: "El-Rufai explains delay in sale of NNN", Daily Trust newspaper, 12/12/02.

Nigeria was very tense, set up the newspaper. The editorial policy, as spelt out in its mission statement when it was launched on January 1, 1966 by the Sardauna[210] of Sokoto and the Premier of the then Northern Regional government, Sir Ahmadou Bello, is as follows:

> "The Principles by which we stand-or fall
> The New Nigerian makes its bow in troubled times
> A few weeks ago a leading daily newspaper 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 Nigerian? There are many things we shall strive to achieve - but above all we shall try to be a good newspaper, dispensing news and comment without fear or favour.
> 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. But at the same time we shall champion the vital need for national unity. For without unity and the trust and mutual respect that go with it, this great country will never find its rightful place in the sun.
> In the same way that we shall oppose the evil extremes of tribalism, so we shall raise our pen against all forms of racialism and discrimination. We shall honour truth and try to instil within our editorial staff, a sense of purpose and a pride in their profession. We shall welcome all shades of responsible opinion, for we are conscious of the fact that we represent the people as a whole, and not just a section of it.
> We shall try to show understanding towards all. We ask the same and no more from the public.
> Thus the principles by which we stand are simple, but should truth and justice be assailed by ignorance and fear, or tolerance challenged by prejudice, then they will become the principles by which we shall fight and, if necessary, fall (Maiden edition, *New Nigerian*, January 1, 1966:1).

The Sardauna was indeed very passionate about the newspaper's editorial policy

[210] This is the title of the spiritual head and leader of adherents of the Islamic religion in the northern part of Nigeria.

(Muhammadu, T., 2000: Chapter 1). In the calculation of the Sardauna, this was inevitable during that period in Nigeria's socio-political development, particularly as they relate to the handicap faced by the people of the region then as they lacked any credible medium through which they could contribute, not only to the crucial debate to shape Nigeria's future, but to also present an accurate assessment of Northern Nigeria to the rest of Nigeria, which the mainly Southern Nigeria-based press was not doing (Kukah, 1996: 133-136; Haruna, 1996: Chapter 5).[211]

Thus, from the onset, the *New Nigerian* was acknowledged as a well focussed newspaper, with a clear editorial direction.[212] Importantly, barely two weeks after the newspaper was launched, Nigeria witnessed its first military coup d'etat (January 15, 1966) and other events which subsequently led to the outbreak of the civil war which threatened the corporate existence of the Nigerian State. With those developments, the *New Nigerian* soon became a national newspaper that stoutly stood behind Nigeria's military government in their quest to keep the Nigerian State as one and united (Muhammadu, 2000: Chapter 3).

However, the editorial content of the *New Nigerian* has never been the same again after the Federal military government acquired the newspaper in 1975.[213] From then on the newspaper became the mouthpiece of the federal government, with this assuming a destructive proportion[214] after the military handed power over to a democratically-elected civilian administration to usher in Nigeria's second republic in 1979 (Haruna, 1996: 64-65).

3.2b *Daily Times*

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[211] Also see Muhammadu, 2000: Chapter 2).

[212] Read the views of fieldwork interviewees: Sam Amuka, G.G.Darah and Dan Agbese on p. 160, under the heading: Each section of the press constructs a notion of national identity", pp.157-161. Also read particularly the views of interviewee T. Momoh about *New Nigerian* newspapers on p.159

[213] Read the views of fieldwork interviewee: H. Odukomaiya, G.G Darah, Farouk Ibrahim on pp. 149-151 under the heading: "Negative effects of mil;itary administration on the press".

[214] The democratically-elected civilian government in Nigeria (1999-2007) led by Olusegun Obasanjo, (the same man that was at the helm of affairs as Nigeria's Military Head of State in 1975 when the *New Nigerian* and *Daily Times* were acquired by the federal military government), took steps to privatize the two federal government-owned newspapers. In fact the *Daily Times* was up for sale on the Nigerian Stock Market between November 12 and December 13, 2002. Also see Eke, E., 2006; Garba, K.A., 2005; & 2006.

The *Daily Times* is often referred to as "Nigeria's oldest surviving newspaper", [215] having been founded in 1926. Almost all the national newspapers in Nigeria, were started by people who have, at one time or the other, had some kind of connection with the *Daily Times*. It was established by "a group of Nigerians and foreigners under the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company" (see Abati, 2002).

However, it took off as "a reactionary newspaper" with a policy to "support Government as far as possible", and so it was no surprise that the *Daily Times* was not really "a part of the anti-colonial movement". Nevertheless, when the *Daily Times* sold its controlling shares to the Daily Mirror Group of London in 1947, its editorial direction changed for the better as it "became less reactionary, providing quality leadership in different aspects of Nigerian life and society" (Ibid).. These developments culminated in progressive and professional journalism, that led one commentator on the Nigerian media, Dr Reuben Abati (2002: p. 1), to describe the *Daily Times* as "the newspaper of record for the principle trials of the period leading to the independence of the Nigerian nation and after, [because] it shed its reactionary garb gradually, and became the parliament of the poor struggling people of Nigeria".

But unfortunately, the *Daily Times*' fortunes took a turn for the worse, when, in 1975, the Daily Mirror Group decided to sell its majority shares and withdrew from the newspaper. It eventually did and the Murtala/Obasanjo military administration (1975-1979) in Nigeria, at that time, directed the National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON), "to acquire 60 percent of the *Daily Times*, on behalf of the Nigerian government" (Ibid).. Effectively, from August 30, 1975, when the Nigerian government became its majority shareholder, with the remaining 40 percent being shared by private interests, the *Daily Times* became the "propaganda arm of ... the Federal Government" (Ibid). Consequently, the Nigerian public abandoned the *Daily Times* as a non-credible medium. It is the activities of the *Daily Times* during this

[215] The period 1979 to the late 1990s was particularly difficult for the newspaper because its credibility was seriously damaged during Nigeria's second Republic (1979-1983). For instance the public abandoned the newspaper. Attempts were also made to burn the premises down after the public became disillusioned that a federal government-owned newspaper was used by the ruling party during the second republic, the NPN, against political opponents. It never regained public confidence after that. The newspaper no longer attracted adverts and was hardly seen on the newsstand because of its financial difficulties.. These led to a series of events that led the federal government under civilian administration of Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007), to privatise the newspaper. Also see Abati, R. 2002.

period that will be documented in this study.

3.3 Privately-owned Newspapers

3.3a *The Guardian*

The Guardian newspaper was set up by and also owned by Chief Alex Ibru, a Nigerian businessman. It is fondly referred to by its admirers as the 'flagship of Nigerian journalism'[216] and as the first newspaper in Nigerian history to have been set up purely in response to Nigeria's economic and socio-political environment (Omu, 1996: 11).[217] At inception, the newspaper declared its mission as follows:

> "What THE GUARDIAN stands for: The Guardian is an independent newspaper, established for the purpose of presenting balanced coverage of events, and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria. It owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic community, religious or other interest group. Its primary commitment is to the integrity and sovereignty of the Federation of Nigeria and [beyond that] to the unity and sovereignty of Africa.
>
> "The Guardian is a liberal newspaper, committed to the best tradition and ideals of republican democracy. It believes that it is the responsibility of the state not only to protect and defend the citizens, but also to create the conditions, political, social, economic and cultural, in which all citizens may achieve their highest potentials as human beings. It is committed to the principle of individual freedom, but believes that all citizens have duties as well as rights.
>
> "The Guardian does not, in principle, object to the ideology of free enterprise, since this would be inconsistent with its commitment to individual liberty and

[216] Read the report titled: "DAME reaffirms The Guardian as the flagship of Nigerian press" published in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) edition of 12/11/05. DAME stands for Diamond Award for Media Excellence

[217] Also read the views of fieldwork interviewee H. Odukomaiya on p.161 under the heading: "Ownership and space for neutrality", and B. Jose, p.179 under the heading: "Newspapers set up in response to new socio-economic realities".

freedom. But it believes that the state must intervene judiciously in the economic life of the nation, in order to minimise the adverse effects of free enterprise and ensure that less privileged citizens have reasonable and fair access to the basic necessities of life.

"The Guardian will at all times uphold the need for justice, probity in public life, equal access to the nation's resources, and equal protection under the laws of Nigeria for all citizens.

"The Guardian believes that Nigeria is a legitimate member of the international community, but holds that she can best fulfil her international obligations only if her own security and integrity are assured.

"The Guardian's logo is the ancient Egyptian symbol for Conscience. The motto, "Conscience, Nurtured by Truth," is inspired by Uthman Dan Fodio's saying: Conscience is an Open Wound; only Truth Can Heal It." (*The Guardian*, Sunday, February 27, 1983 p.1).

3.3b *National Concord*

When the *National Concord* came into existence on March 1, 1980, it was generally regarded by many Nigerians as an organ of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) (Nnaemeka et al, 1989: 408). The reason why the *National Concord* was described as such was because its proprietor, Abiola, was one of the founding members of the NPN, and had used the newspaper to promote everything pro-NPN. However, when Abiola quit the NPN in 1982, following a row over the party's nomination for the 1983 presidential election, the editorial policy of the *National Concord* changed (Ibid) against the NPN as the newspaper now adopted a policy of publishing anti-NPN and anti-NPN controlled Federal Government stories and issues (Haruna, 1987: 7)

But its Mission Statement, when it hit the newsstands in March, 1980, was laid out as follows:

"WHAT WE STAND FOR - by the publisher"

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

"OUR name says it all - NATIONAL CONCORD.

"We are out for harmony, unity, peace, friendship, understanding and co-operation in Nigeria. These are ideals to which we shall devote our energy and attention in order to build a virile and progressive country. In doing this, we shall remain scrupulously faithful to the ethics of the noble profession of journalism.

"National harmony is one thing that has sadly eluded Nigeria since she attained political independence on October 1, 1960. Before then, the several constitutional conferences in London and here at home had given signal to the political confusion which was later to follow after independence.

"**Our problems**"

"The basic problem of disunity has manifested itself in several ways ever since. Whether you call it tribalism or factional politics or extreme parochialism, it is the same cankerworm which has been responsible for the excessive corruption and indiscipline which successive leaders have vainly promised to remove.

"What has happened in the past is that the load of fighting these evils has devolved on the leadership alone. But this country does not belong to the leadership alone. We all own the country and collectively created its problems and must collectively solve those problems.

"The role of the Concord group of newspapers will be to assist, in every way possible, efforts made to rid our great nation of these evils. Attempts to worsen the situation or prevent progress towards a solution shall be fought to certain defeat. This is where we stand {*National Concord*, March 1, 1980, front page}.

3.3c *Vanguard*

The *Vanguard* was established in 1984. According to the newspaper's media profile as published on its website on 24/10/00, pp.1-3:

> "The Vanguard was set up in 1984 by veteran journalist, Sam Amuka, as a private enterprise. No government affiliation. No partisan bias. It is committed to democratic ideals, freedom and the rule of law ....
>
> "EDITORIAL ORIENTATIONS"
>
> "All our publications - Vanguard, Sunday and Weekend Vanguard are authoritative national publications that provide reliable and analytical information in local, national and international news. They are all mass circulating and are geared towards a better life for the people ...
>
> "As a truly mass-circulating and wide readership newspaper, there is a deliberate policy to target decision-makers by our editorial coverage and presentation.

3.3d *Daily Champion*[218]

The *Daily Champion* newspaper was first published on October 1, 1988. Its proprietor, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, is a very successful businessman from one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Ibo. No other Nigerian would know the motivation for Iwuanyanwu in setting up the newspaper more than the man who provided the professional advice and expertise to make the *Daily Champion* newspaper a reality -Chief Henry Odukomaiya, its first Managing Director. His own words provide an insight into what the *Daily Champion* stands for:

> *The other national newspaper, the Champion, which I also helped to set up (the first being the National Concord), has as its proprietor, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu. You know as at that time, the West African Pilot*[219] *which, was*

[218] See what the *Daily Champion* stands for, as published on its website on.05/03/2006: http://www.champion-newspapers.com/aboutUs

[219] The *West African Pilot* was one of the foremost nationalist newspapers that articulated the Nigerian position during Nigeria's struggle for political independence from Britain.

established by another Iboman, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, on November 22, 1937, had already gone into extinction and so Chief Iwuanyanwu thought that the Ibo race stood to be marginalised if there was no voice to speak on their behalf.

"The only voices that were available to them at that time only existed in their own part of the country ... the East. For instance, newspapers like the Nigerian Statesman and the Daily Star were published from Owerri in the Eastern part of Nigeria, and so they were regional or local newspapers.

"So Chief Iwuanyanwu wanted a newspaper which would be a nationally accepted newspaper but which would start off by protecting the rights of the Ibo nation, the Ibo cause... The philosophy had to do with the intention of the proprietor to use the newspaper to integrate the Iboman into the Nigerian society.

*"In its mission statement, it simply stated: 'Starting with the Ibo nation.' In effect the Champion newspaper was set up by an Iboman, using the newspaper to promote the interest of the Ibo nation within the context of the Nigerian State. The newspaper first came out on October 1, 1988 and that Mission Statement is there for you to read and understand (**Chief Henry Odukomaiya. Fieldwork interview in Lagos**).*

Another clue as to what the *Daily Champion* newspapers stand for was also given in 1989, by the Executive Director and Acting Managing Director of the newspaper, Dr. Ihechukwu Madubuike:

"Having carried out adequate market surveys, we were confident that there was a general yearning for a new kind of newspaper - a quality tabloid with mass appeal, the kind that is not too 'high brow' but instead caters for the needs of virtually all strata of the society ...

"We are read in all parts of the country and all parts of the country are adequately represented on our staff" (*Daily Champion*: 24/6/89:12).[220]

The social context and mission statements of these newspapers vis-à-vis their constitutional role in national integration, are indications of how they will fulfill that role. But factors within the Nigerian context will inevitably affect how such a role is performed. These are what would be engaged with next.

[220] Indeed, on its website, accessed on 05/03/06, the *Daily Champion* declared: All our publications ... are authoritative national publications that provide reliable and analytical information on local, national and international issues. They are all mass-circulation.

3.4 The Nigerian press: Limitations and obstacles

This issue relates to the question of whether the print journalists in Nigeria, with privately- or government-owned newspapers, have the freedom to practice their profession without being encumbered by the interference of the owners. Additionally, this section addresses other encumbrances affecting newspapers or the journalists working for them. For instance, to what extent do the social context and mission statement of each of the newspapers, as delineated above, influence the way that the Nigerian press conducts its activities?

In order to answer this question, it is important that we analyse the reality of the press in Nigeria by way of the limitations and the obstacles that it is faced with. It is very common to hear mostly government officials in Nigeria extol the freedom of the press that the journalism profession in Nigeria enjoys,[221] even though evidence within the Nigerian press show that the contrary is the case. Indeed, as Chief Segun Osoba, a renowned newspaper administrator and journalist has said, the freedom of the press in Nigeria is a qualified one, given all the anti-press decrees[222]

Yet another significant point is that observers of the Nigerian press scene have argued that it is erroneous to believe that only the government-owned press that have been subject to outside interference from their owners. Indeed they have shown that the owners of the privately-owned press also interfere with the way that their newspaper outfits are run or managed.[223] As Malam Mohammed Haruna (1987: 7)[224] contends:

> Private ownership does not necessarily guarantee free press or a commercially successful one ... In Nigeria, the private newspapers may be relatively

[221] See for example the report: Nigerian Press is freest in Africa" published on page three in the *New Nigerian* edition of 10/06/85, and attributed to the then Chief of General Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Major-General Tunde Idiagbon, during the General Muhammadu Buhari military administration in Nigeria, from 1984-1985.

[222] See: "Ours is qualified freedom-Osoba", *Daily Sketch*, 22/06/83, back page. Also see Momoh, 1995: Chapter 2..

[223] At the Second National Media Week of the NUJ held in Owerri, the capital of Imo state of Nigeria, the then Nigerian Information Minister, Prince Tony Momoh accused the press of being confrontational saying that if they accuse the government of interfering with its own media house, they shouldn't forget that owners of private newspapers do not fair better. As he put it: "The objective of private papers is that it does not criticise its owners and its interest." Read Prince Momoh's comments as published in the Vanguard edition of 6/6/89, p. 7.

[224] Hharuna views can be found on page 7 of the *New Nigerian* edition of 18/6/87, in the article titled: "Ownership Control of Press in Africa".

> independent of government interference, but the notion that they are necessarily freer than government newspapers arise from the erroneous thinking that government is the only threat to press freedom ... Government is not only the owner of newspapers and all owners tend to behave alike, that is, that as those who pay the piper, they try to dictate the tune ...

Haruna made particular reference to the proprietor of the *National Concord*:

> Interference by one can be as invidious and pervasive as by the others. [Some] clear evidence is how the *National Concord* turned around from uncritical support of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) [to which its publisher belonged], into the most vitriolic attacker of the party's officials, when Chief Abiola had to quit the party ... [Also] the paper has never been known to focus on the inefficiency of our communications system, for which the International Telecommunications (ITT), whose vice-chairman, Chief Abiola is, may or may not have been to blame.

Yet there are also those that contend that whether or not a Nigerian editor, for instance, enjoys any freedom to practice or manage a newspaper is really dependent upon the personality of the editor.,[225] there is the belief among some journalists that unnecessary self-censorship, rather than interference from the owners, has been the major obstacle to press freedom in Nigeria.[226]

Given that in Government-owned media, in particular, the appointment and dismissal of journalists is at the behest of governments, it is no surprise that the journalist is weighed down by the threat of dismissal if he/she does not toe the government line. As one commentator on the Nigerian media, Mr Lewis Obi, notes, for some political and other extraneous reasons. journalists would be sacked for actions which are "professionally in order but politically indiscreet."[227] This indeed, has always been the case. For instance, see the *Nigerian Observer*, 8/6/83, p.9, where it is noted that the newspaper owned by the Bendel State government had had 10 editors in 15 years. The State government in November, 1982, appointed Chief Arogundade, a renowned civil servant to manage the newspaper. Mr James Jukwey- Editor of *Benue Voice,* owned

[225] Read fieldwork interviewees on pp.155-156 under the heading: "Does government always interfere? Editors engage in self-censorship".

[226] See the statement credited to Mr Steve Osemeke, Chairman, Nigeria Union of Journalist (NUJ), Bendel state branch, in the report: "Alli wants freedom for journalists", *Nigerian Observer*, 09/06/83, page three; Also see the paper given on April 29th, 1987, by Dr Olatunji Dare, then Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, Nigeria, in Ilorin, the capital city of Kwara state of Nigeria, under the auspices of the Kwara State branch of the NUJ.

[227] See the article: "The King's Song and the Press", published in the National Concord of 17/6/83, p. 3.

by the Benue State government was forced out of his position by the State government because he refused to yield to pressures from government to publish stories favourable to the State government. He was moved to the Circulation Department of the newspaper as the Manager. He quit. Similarly, Mr Bobo Brown - Editor of the *Sunday Tide*, owned by the Cross River State government was fired because he protested against the insertion of a front page lead story by the State government different from what he had approved.[228]

Beyond the risk of being demoted or fired, editors of newspapers that are critical of government are every now and then picked up and detained by state security operatives, with no explanation given as to what offences that they have committed.[229] Newspapers or magazines are also closed down or proscribed, as was the case with the *Newswatch* magazine in 1986.[230]. Nigerian government State Security Service (SSS) operatives also go to the extent of arresting and detaining wives and children of Editors if they are unable to arrest their Editor husband.[231]

Editors of government-owned newspapers are also summoned, at any time, to government house "to answer serious allegations" against them by whomever the government chooses to listen to.[232] What happens as a result of all these is that many editors (government or private) have often argued that if they are fired for refusing to succumb to owner interference, other journalists are on the ready to take over their positions.[233]

However, even if we discount the negative effects that direct ownership interference (government or private) can cause to press freedom in Nigeria, it could still be argued that the journalists themselves are their own enemy when it comes to the issue of press freedom. A very good case in point, is the fact that though it is generally known that Nigerian governments interfere in the management of their newspapers, there is

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[228] Also see *National Concord*, 1/6/93, p.2 in respect of the "premature retirement of journalists working with *The Herald* newspaper owned by the Kwara State government.
[229] see *New Nigerian*, 3/6/83; *Daily Times* 22/6/83 and 23/6/83; *New Nigerian* 24/6/87, p.11; *The Guardian*, 26/6/93).
[230] see also *Vanguard* 17/6/89; *National Concord*, 1/6/91, front page
[231] See *Vanguard*-22/6/83; *National Concord* 21/6/89, p.10 and 20/6/89 front page; *Daily Times* 1/6/91, front page; *National Concord* 1/6/91, front page; *The Guardian*, 25/6/93, p.3.
[232] (see *New Nigerian*, 25/6/93, back page).
[233] See "Standard Editors resign", *The Guardian*, 19/06/93, page A2.

also the evidence that journalists, during civilian administrations in Nigeria, for instance, often allow themselves to be used by politicians.[234]

Indeed, generally, journalists have often been criticised for making themselves vulnerable to government manipulation, for instance, by their sycophancy and seeking favours from the government in power, be it civilian or military. For instance, Dare (1987) castigated Nigerian journalists by pointing out that "the collapse of [Nigeria's] Second Republic, occurred largely in spite of, not because of them [the journalists] [because] some of them were too busy partaking in the pillage to raise any alarm".

The Nigerian journalists frequently solicit the assistance of Nigerian governments, (State/Federal) to finance their various activities.[235] Perhaps what is more devastating to the newspaper industry in Nigeria is the way that the government, whether civilian or military, tries to strangulate and control the press through its policies.[236] A typical example is the way that the government ensures that there is a reduction or a substantial cut in the supply of newsprint to the newspapers, particularly those that are privately-owned and which in most cases are those that are very critical of the Nigerian government.[237] The government embarks on the politics of newsprint through:

(i) Deliberate denial of import licences for the importation of newsprint to most newspaper houses
(ii) Making sure that the few newspaper houses which are lucky enough to obtain such import licences are subjected to untold hardships in their bid to obtain the

[234] See "Parties and Press in Anambra, *The Guardian*, (Nigerian) 19/6/83, p.3.
[235] See *Nigerian Observer*, 09/06/83, ,page 3; "Anambra NUJ bags N145,000 from govt", *Daily Champion*, 12/06/91, page 21; "NUJ thanks Buhari, Idiagbon", *The Guardian*, 04/06/85, front page; simply because the two Nigerian leaders, acknowledged the invitation of the NUJ to its 30th anniversary celebrations and declined to attend. Also see: "You can get our media houses to publish whatever you want them to publish", a statement attributed to the late premier of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, DR Michael Okpara, as published in the New Nigerian of 10/06/85, page 2; and also the report about Dr. Okpara's outburst at a news conference, titled: "Dr. Okpara raves at reporter", on the back page of the *Nigerian Statesman* of 05/06/83.
[236] In 1985, the federal military government of Nigeria, in a letter said to have emanated from the office of the Secretary to the federal government, directed that the federal government, its parastatals,-and its ministries should place their adverts only on newspapers owned by the federal or state governments. Given the fact that in Nigeria, the greatest spender on advertisements is the federal government, its ministries and its parastatals, it was quite obvious that through its policy on advertisements, the federal government was shutting off the private newspapers from a large chunk of revenue.
[237] See the *National Concord* story on Concord's newsprint abandoned by the roadside.

necessary Form M, which has to be completed to allow importation of goods into Nigeria

(iii) Also ensuring that the newspaper houses are subjected to agonising delays during the processing of their Form M and the issuing of the letter of credit needed for the importation of newsprint from overseas manufacturers.[238]

The newsprint issue has become such a major problem to the newspaper industry that many newspapers are actually faced with the constant fear of folding as a result of their inability to source such a vital product[239] . For instance, in 1983, the situation became so dire that the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) published a paid advert in major Nigerian newspapers alerting the nation to the danger being faced by the newspaper industry due to the government policy to restrict supplies.[240] During that period also, the General Secretary of NPAN and also Managing Director of Sketch Group of Newspapers, Chief Segun Osoba stated emphatically that some newspapers may fold because of various problems caused by non-availability of newsprint, high prices of printing materials and the fact that Nigeria's Ministry of Commerce only issued licences for a token importation of newsprint to a very few selected newspapers.[241] Following the parlous state of the Nigerian economy, the federal military government had in 1985 set up a special task force on the importation of essential commodities into Nigeria. Newspaper proprietors took advantage of this development to appeal to the head of the task force, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma to grant special concession to the newspaper industry by acting promptly to look into their newsprint difficulties. The foregoing, in reality, is the context under which the Nigerian press operates.

Nevertheless, the general argument among those who believe that interference of any sort could be avoided is that for that to happen:

> There is a need to devise a means which will insulate practitioners from the owners, whether they are private, government or party. This is for the simple reason that in Africa, the conditions of a free and successful press...namely, a

[238] See "Nigerian newsprint crisis revisited" [Editorial] *Nigerian Statesman*, 3/6/83, p.3; also see "The NPAN case" [Editorial] *National Concord*, 1/3/83, p.2..
[239] See the online editions of *The Guardian* (Nigerian) newspaper published on: 24/09/03; 02/09/05; 24/03/06
[240] See "Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria", *National Concord*, 6/3/83, p.10..
[241] see "Some newspapers may fold up-Osoba", *New Nigerian*, 2/6/83, p.16.

> high level of literacy and universal education; a thriving democracy; an alert citizenry; a developed economy with a high standard of living; equitable distribution of wealth; developed communications and distribution system etc, are absent.

They also contend that:

> There is the need to create trusts for the press, especially the government and party press ...because in our [Nigerian, African] context of capitalism, one is free at least to use his wealth how he wishes, so long as it is within the law and does not threaten national security[242]

Armed with the foregoing, as the social contexts and mission statements of the Nigerian press, how do we then determine the role that they play in the promotion of a Nigerian national identity? What research methodology/methodologies should be employed to achieve this purpose? In the next chapter we will focus not only on this issue but also on what informed the choice of the methodological approach/approaches and why, as well as what rules and guidelines will be applied in order to realise the objectives.

[242] See "Ownership, control of press in Africa, *National Concord*, 18/6/87, p.7. Also see: 'Charles Sharp mourns Democrat [newspaper], where the first Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* expressed his views on why newspapers fail in Nigeria).

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 Intensive/In-depth Interviews and Qualitative Content Analysis

A researcher undertaking a study of how the Nigerian press promotes a collective Nigerian national identity could be advised to look at not just the press content alone, but the whole 'circuit of mass communication', involving also the examination of press production and audience response in order to establish and measure its success in this endeavour. Indeed, Jenny Kitzinger and David Miller (1998: 10), note that: "...it is impossible to determine how people will understand or interpret a (media) text simply by analysing the *content*; it is necessary to examine the *responses* of actual audiences." However, Professor Kitzinger, in her own article titled: "Resisting the Message: The Extent and Limits of Media Influence" (Miller et al, 1998: 211), acknowledges that "media power is certainly not absolute, nor does it exist in a vacuum, and audience reception is not an isolated encounter between an individual and a message". But she also came to the conclusion that although "the media do not operate as a single force in a hermetically sealed ideological conspiracy ... [because] there can be a powerful interaction between media messages and broader contextual assumptions ... [they] still influence the way we think". The thrust of Kitzinger's article is that the audience is diverse and the way that they decode media messages is influenced by their own social and political positions. But in spite of this, as her study shows, the media has a powerful influence on the way we think and interpret things.

This is the crux of this study whose main focus is to find out how the Nigerian press contributes to Nigerian integration and unity. In which case, the emphasis is not on press production or audience response, but on how the press, through its activities, is able to promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity, and consequently contribute to the realisation of Nigeria's fundamental objective of national integration and unity.

The research questions to which answers are sought are:

- Does the Nigerian press' inclination to promote nationality, group or sectional identities hinder its ability to contribute to the overall Nigerian national goal of integration and unity?
- Does the Nigerian press' promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity, using some events, involving Nigeria, within and outside, to 'flag' the state, foster Nigerian national integration and unity?

In seeking to answer these questions, it is hypothesised that:

- The extent to which the Nigerian press can contribute to national integration and unity is determined by its ability to promote nationality, group or sectional identities within the Nigerian state.
- The ability of the Nigerian press to instil a sense of collective Nigerian national identity in the nationality and diverse groups or interests that constitute the state is directly related to the way it uses some events or occasions to 'flag' the Nigerian state.

With these issues in perspective, my initial plan was to do a quantitative content analysis of the newspapers. This was with a view to taking a look at the issues represented in them. The idea was to look at the different events that occurred throughout any particular period as represented by what all the newspapers covered in accordance with their ideological beliefs, followed by a comparison of all of them. For instance: how did the *Vanguard* newspaper report the same issue as *Daily Sketch*, *The Guardian* and *National Concord,* etc?; did they cover different issues on the same day?; why did they choose particular stories, even though others did not cover them on the same day? However, after an initial pilot study, I changed my methodology to take into account the nature of Nigeria and the effects that that nature has on an institution like the press within it.

Nigeria is a post-colonial state where civil society is weak - particularly in terms of accountability and the rule of law, aspects that centrally guide democratic nations .[243]

[243] See pp.35 & 138-142 above.

The result is that there is no adequate theoretical background about the Nigerian press/media to serve as a guide for what I was looking for. A typical example would be the agenda setting theory[244] of the press. The press has no power to set an agenda in Nigeria and so this theory is not useful here. I had to look for what was really happening which is what the press is actually doing. And this aligns with the argument that the Nigerian press cannot operate outside of what its environment allows.[245] The reality therefore is that because of the Nigerian context and the press' structure and ownership pattern, its content is predictable. As articulated in Chapters One and Two, the press is 'partisan', 'manipulative', 'collaborative', 'preventive', 'a tool of government and political parties', and 'a promoter of nationality interests' (Jeter et al, 1996: 11).[246] All it was doing was counting what I already knew to exist. Quantitative content analysis was not going to tell me something new or different. Instead I concentrated on using a more qualitative research approach by doing a critical reading of the contents of the newspapers and examining them. This involved analysing the patterns of coverage over extended periods and thus did involve a content analysis. However there was no attempt to do this in a strictly quantitative manner, but rather to establish trends and patterns and to make comparisons. The aim was to employ the research tools that would adequately address the research objectives and produce the best result. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000: 3 & 25):

> The important thing for any researcher... to understand is the *correct approach* to follow to ensure the best result ... research methods ... should be selected ... because they are appropriate for a given study and are understood by the person conducting the analysis (original emphasis).

Therefore, given the realities of the Nigerian circumstances vis-à-vis the focus of this research, a combination of intensive/in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis were adopted as the methodological approaches. While the former was used to garner data from those experts on the Nigerian press and analyse what they said

[244] The philosophical context of the media in Africa, as enunciated by Jeter et al shows that the media is limited in the influence it can wield, for various political, economic and social reasons. So, the press in the classical sense does not exist (Read, for instance, the views of fieldwork interviewees on pp.161-164 under the heading: "The Nigerian press refdlects nationality perspectives".. Nevertheless it is still playing a useful role. Despite the fact that it is not really winning, it is getting the voice of people heard.

[245] See Jakande, 1979: 110-111 and views of interviewee Farouk Ibrahim on p.133 below

[246] See Uche, 1989; Ruijter, 1989.

about its nature and character vis-à-vis Nigeria's national goal of integration and unity; the latter was needed to understand what the Nigerian press is engaged in on the ground.

The next discussions will be focussed on the two methodological approaches, followed and on analyses of the various sampling methods and how they were employed to collect data at different stages of each of the research methods.

4.1a Intensive/In-depth Interviews as a research tool

The intensive/in-depth interview is one of the techniques that was used to gather the data for this study because the advantages it presents are enough to erode any disadvantages that might affect the outcome. For instance, although Wimmer and Dominick (1991: 148-149) recognise that for in-depth interviews, 'generalizability' is sometimes a problem, as they are non-standardized and sensitive to interviewer bias, they explain the strong points to include providing a wealth of details, and more accurate responses on important issues because it creates a rapport between the interviewee and the interviewer (Ibid).

Therefore, the interview is very useful as a research tool for a study of this nature. It enables a researcher to gain insights into areas not otherwise obtainable and thus "allow(s) for a more accurate and greater understanding" of the intricacies of the press' context like that in Nigerian (Frey and Oishi, 1995: 1).[247] The interviews served as a useful background to the qualitative content analysis aspect of this study. For instance, Lindlof (1995: 168) contends that:

> Researchers also use interviews to *verify, validate, or comment on data obtained from other sources* (original emphasis).

Thus, it was not just enough to conduct interviews, as it was also important to examine what the interviewees said against the actual activities/content of the

[247] Cited in Alison Oatey, 2006: 1, 3; see also Lindlof, T.R., 1995: 163-194.

newspapers, which had happened ten years earlier. This involved the triangulation of research methods: content analysis, interviews and comparisons. This time lapse is argued, however, not to be a problem because of the breadth and number of interviewees who are given voice. Indeed, it can rather be seen as an advantage in that they were able to give considered views about the past events and coverage in conditions released from the hurly-burly of the events themselves.

Therefore, the triangulation of methods obtained is argued as appropriate in relation to this study because it made it possible for me to tap into the experiences of those who were themselves responsible for the content/activities of the press. The journalists hold clear expertise and insights and consequently I was interested in knowing how and why they do what they do. Lindlof (1995: 167) articulated this position when he noted that:

> Interviews are especially well suited to helping the researcher *understand a social actor's own perspective*. Often, a researcher will interview persons only if their experience is central to the research problem in some way. They may be recruited for their expert insight, because they represent a certain status or category or because of the critical events in which they participated. The researcher expects the special nature of what they have experienced to result in a special articulation: words that can be expressed only by someone who has 'been there' (original emphasis).

To appreciate the usefulness of this methodology, it is also of vital importance that the process of the interview should be clearly delineated (Hansen et al 1998: 280). The interviews were conducted over a three-month period (between December, 2000 and February, 2001 in Nigeria. The process involved holding the interviews in Lagos and Kaduna, southern and northern parts of Nigeria respectively and, conducting them in offices, homes and a conference centre for 'convenience and practical feasibility' (Liebes and Katz, 1990: cited in Hansen et al, 1998: 271) and ensuring they did not last more than two hours each (Oatey, 2006: 2).[248] The type of interview is the 'non-structured interview', which allows for open-ended questions.[249] This type of interview makes it possible for questions to be asked in an informal way with the interviewer having the opportunity to ask follow-up questions for a more detailed

[248] Also see Wimmer and Dominick 1997: 455 cited in Oatey, 2006: 2.
[249] See appendix I

answer. It also gives the interviewees[250] the opportunity to talk freely (Nichols, 1991: 131; Wimmer and Dominick 2000: 163).[251]

The interviews made it possible to gauge the views of some of the experts on the Nigerian press. This sought to serve as a useful background (Lindlof, 1995: Chapter 6; also see Hansen et al, 1998: Chapter 10) to the textual aspects of the project, which is the analysis of what the newspapers do. This allows a way of ascertaining how their activities impact on the quest for a collective national integration and unity.

All but one of the interviews was recorded, using a cassette tape recorder and later transcribed. The tapes 'labelled for...date, interviewee name' (Lindlof, 1995: 209)... and place of the interviews remain in my possession. My informal discussion with Uncle Sam was not taped, as explained, but was also a 'purposeful conversation' (Frey and Oishi, 1995: 1; Palgrave-skills4study, 2006: 1-2).

The 'textual data' from the interviews were analysed, focussing on some of the 'essentials' as they relate to fundamental issues that confront the Nigerian state (see Hansen et al 1998: 278-283).[252]

4.1b Qualitative content analysis as a research tool

The qualitative approach was particularly suitable for my research because of the nature of the research population and its context. While discussing the qualitative research method, Wimmer and Dominick (1991: 139) state how it differs from the quantitative research along three main dimensions. For instance, they explain that while quantitative research is objective and can be seen by all because it is out there, qualitative data is subjective and only exists in reference to the observer. Additionally, while quantitative research looks for general categories to summarise the behaviour of humans, qualitative research does the opposite by looking for different categories; while quantitative research aims "to generate general laws of behaviour and explain many things across many settings", thereby emphasising breadth, qualitative research

[250] See appendix V, for profile of the interviewees
[251] See also Jenson and Jankowski 1991: 155; Hansen et al 1998: 257-261).
[252] Also see the various headlines in Chapter Five under which the data from the interviews were analysed.

attempts "to produce a unique explanation about a given situation... (and therefore) strive for depth".

Based on these distinctions, my use of the qualitative method enabled me to look selectively at issues that the newspapers covered, using my own background knowledge and understandings, and that of my interviewees, to focus on key moments and events in the history of Nigeria as the focus of my analysis. This was relevant because the behaviour of a press like the Nigerian's is not determined by one set of categories but by different and distinct categories created by the different circumstances that the Nigerian situation throws up. I was therefore not looking for a general pattern that could explain the behaviour of the press but something in-depth that would reveal its behaviour in relation to specific and local events and issues.

Therefore prominence was given to aspects of the issues represented in the newspapers, that were likely to affect newspapers' personnel and determine their editorial direction. This was particularly relevant whenever there was a change in government, depending on the type of administration in place, that is, civilian or military. These issues are: (1) General and (2) Specific issues (see Table 1 below). This was done, taking into account the predictable nature of the Nigerian press, which meant that there was no point in spending hours analysing it to know how it generally conducts its activities. Instead it was more useful to analyse some patterns of its behaviour as evident in the archival materials during the period under study (Lindlof, 1995: 208-209), using the two issues noted above as my points of departure. For instance, an important aspect of the press is its use of specific events to 'flag' the Nigerian state. This showed the conditions under which the press was promoting collective Nigerian identity - allowing detail that a quantitative content analysis would fail to uncover.

Wimmer and Dominick (1991: 140-153) list four common qualitative research techniques as: field observations, focus groups, intensive interviews and case studies. The intensive interview has been discussed, but at this juncture, it is important to add that Alan Bryman (2001: 376 & 378), has also identified documents as another qualitative technique that is used in media research. As he puts it "mass media output can be explored using a qualitative form of data analysis like content analysis, which

"entails searching for themes in the sources that are examined". According to him, the kinds of source upon which content analysis is often carried out are documents, such as newspaper articles ...[which are appropriately examined) in qualitative research". On the basis of his explanation, sources such as editorials and news stories can be used to ascertain how, for instance, the newspapers promoted the overall Nigerian national objective of integration and unity during the research period. Also referring to the importance of documents to researchers, Lindlof notes that:

> Documents indicate, among other things, what an organisation *produces* and how it *certifies* certain kinds of activities ... that *memoralize* its own history or achievements ... [and these) documents can help the researcher to reconstruct past events or on-going processes that are not available for direct observation ... (1995: 208; original emphasis).

But J. Scott (1990-cited in Bryman, 2001: 376-377), suggests four criteria for assessing the quality of documents: they should be authentic, credible, representative (i.e is it typical of its kind) and have meaning in terms of being comprehensible. The archival materials/documents of the Nigerian press used for this study meet these criteria for two main reasons: Firstly, they were selected because of the interests that each of them represent and secondly, as an archival record of press coverage they are a credible source.

Lindlof nevertheless states that one way to avoid the limitations of using documents for research purposes is to "evaluate the subtle prejudices that may have affected the construction of the 'facts' therein ... [particularly because] documents reflect certain kinds of organizational rationality at work, such as news media procedures for defining who is or is not a spokesperson for a public group" (Ibid)..This was relevant to my analysis, as my interest, as stated was in analysing what the newspapers do, from whose perspective, and how this impacts on the whole question of the Nigerian goal of national integration and unity.

Bryman has identified four approaches to use to interpret documents, namely, qualitative content analysis, semiotics, hermeneutics and discourse analysis. For this study, the interest is in qualitative content analysis. He defines it as comprising "a searching out of underlying themes in the materials being analysed" adding that "the processes through which the themes are extracted is often,,left implicit (as) the

extracted themes are usually illustrated-for example, with brief quotations from a newspaper article or magazine" (p. 381).

Roger Fowler (1991: 1) talks about "how language is used in newspapers to form ideas and beliefs". His emphasis is particularly on how language represents things and makes people believe highly patterned things (see Ibid, pp. 2, 4, & 11). Analysing the patterns that are common in the content of the Nigerian press helped with the analysis. This was much more useful because it shows that what I have done is there and it's based on the premise that the Nigerian press promotes national identity in various ways, was therefore a key methodology. The Nigerian press use momentous events involving the state on the one hand and promote nationality and other interests that are not detrimental to the Nigerian state's overall objective of national integration and unity, on the other. This method was designed to establish the patterned ways in which this is done.

I also focus on the "style" and the "rhetoric" that the newspapers employ in the process of reporting issues in the pages selected to be analysed. Van Dijk (1991: 209), for instance, notes that "style has to do with the choice and variations of the words journalists use when writing...", while "rhetoric deals with special ploys, such as alliterations and metaphors that help catch the reader's attention, and which therefore are primarily used with a persuasive aim."

Accordingly, in this study the newspapers' texts are read as documents which tell me the direction of each of them, in terms of their history and policy (Lindlof, 1995: 208-209). The purpose is to treat them as documents that represent the policy and editorial direction of the newspapers over a period of time. In other words, my interest is in looking for evidence that would capture the nuances of the character of the press in Nigeria, which would be enough to demonstrate the editorial policy of each of the newspapers and how their overall policies influence their activities and consequently impact on the issues relating to a collective Nigerian national identity.

What should be emphasised here are the differences that exist in the way the newspapers address issues depending on whether the administration in Nigeria is civilian or military. During a civilian administration, the political party in control of

the government, whether at the state or federal level, commandeers the state-owned or federal government-owned newspapers and uses them to promote the party's interests. On the other hand, government-owned or privately-owned newspapers tend to have a national focus during a military administration because of the centralised nature of that type of government (Osuntokun, 1989: 351).

I catgorised the coverage I wanted to analyse under a number of broad headings which had to do with major events in Nigeria during the period, taking into account; two of the issues already listed in Table 3. To enable me do this, the following questions served as guides:

- Who is responsible for the news reported?
- Who controls the news agenda in each of the newspapers?
- Is it the government that dictates what should be published in government-owned newspapers?
- Do government-owned newspapers simply publicise government activities and therefore lack the independence to critically examine government activities?
- Do privately-owned newspapers mostly report the political and economic interests of their respective proprietors?
- Do the stories in the newspapers (government's and private's) emanate from independent sources or eyewitness accounts?
- Do journalists have the freedom to carry out investigative journalism and also play their expected role of directing the news agenda?
- How do the newspapers go about instilling a sense of collective national identity in Nigerians?

On these bases, I came up with the headings:

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press during elections supervised by a civilian administration;

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press during elections supervised by a military administration;

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press under a military administration: Events in June 1985 and June 1989;

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press under a military administration: Coverage of a specific issue - the 1989 SAP riots

Analysis of the Nigerian press and a collective Nigerian national identity-Flagging of the nation: World Cup triumph and hosting of the OAU Summit in 1991

Having established these categories, my major pre-occupation was to analyse the activities of each of the newspapers under various themes, at different periods as represented by the different headings. The purpose was to examine the influence that the type of administration in place, civilian or military, has on the editorial policy that each category of newspaper ownership follows, in carrying out their activities, as they relate to those listed in the headings above. In other words, if we take the election issue, as an example here, using themes to analyse the activities of the newspapers will bring into sharper relief, what influenced the editorial policy that was adopted by:

1. A state government-owned newspaper;
2. A federal government-owned newspaper; and
3. A privately-owned newspaper

Doing a qualitative content analysis of the newspapers in this respect confirmed Jeter et al's (1996: 11) and Ruijter's (1989) conclusions about the media in Africa[253] and revealed that the newspapers are: a tool of the political party in power; a megaphone of government; a platform for national issues; a voice for nationality interests; an instrument for investigative journalism; an instrument against oppression and; an agent of unity.

Some graphic illustrations of how the activities of the newspapers reflected each of these themes are shown in two tables in this part of this chapter and other tables in the

[253] See chapter two above.

appendix. The purpose is to demonstrate how using qualitative content analysis, themes to explain the activities of the press can be extracted from newspaper articles, stories or headlines.

For instance, Tables 1 and 2 below show that during the elections organised by a civilian administration in 1983, and by a military administration in 1993, the government-owned newspapers were tools of the political parties/government in power (also see appendices IX, X, XI, XII, XIII). The various reports show that each of the newspapers could only publish stories that were favourable to the ruling authorities whether civilian or military.

Table 1

State Government-owned Newspaper
: A tool of party in power
Examples of negative stories against rival parties/opponents of ruling party

The Nigerian Observer	*The Nigerian Statesman*	*Daily Sketch*
-Omo N'Oba's pay was not stopped: NPN agents float diabolical rumour to cause disaffection-Alli", (**lead, 1/6/83, p.1**).	Unongo [Governorship candidate of the NPP in Benue state] was to be killed May 16 True or False?: NPP gubernatorial candidate tells police cuddling story of teargas bombardment (**lead, 3/6/83, p.1**)	-NPN can't use the army-Awo" (**lead, 28/6/83, p.1**).
-Count down on '83: Ogbemudia stronghold broken", (**2nd lead, 1/6/83, p.1**).	-Why NPN govt should be changed – Uzoigwe (**lead, 5/6/83, p.1**).	-NPN men attack UPN-2 badly wounded", (**lead 14/6/83, p.1**).
-UPN leaders earmarked for killing today {by NPN agents}?", (**1/6/83, p.1**).	-Zik [Presidential candidate of the NPP] accuses Shagari: Violation of Official Secret Act 1964 (**lead, 5/6/83, p.1**).	-Revenue Sharing suit against FG: Bendel Govt wins: Court says states are entitled to statement on money paid into Federal Account" and "Power to administer states' share is illegal" (**lead, 4/6/83, p.1**)
-Shagari is enemy of Bendelites: He dispossessed us of N111m revenue since '79-Alli, (**lead, 2/6/83, p.1**).	-P&T staff dismissed: He gave President's special line to Emeka Ojukwu (**21/6/83, p.1**).	
-Benin-Owena borehole contract: Ogbemudia took N50m without execution, (**2nd lead, 2/6/83, p.1**).		
-Bendel got nothing from F-govt", (**2/6/83, p.1**);		
-NPN will lose Rivers -Opinion poll, (**4/6/83, p.1**).		
-Okilo's lust for opulence, (**4/6/83, p.1**).		
-Crisis in Ovia NPN", (**7/6/83, p.1**)		
-Those who fabricated on Oba		

stand condemned, **(7/6/83, p.1)**.
-NPN candidates are UPN drop-outs-Agbobu **(lead, 21/6/83, p.1)**
-NPN sure to lose Bendel, **(21/6/83, p.1)**..
Ogbemudia aborted Niger State, **(21/6/83, p.1)**.
- -N2.5m Midwest Dev. Fund: Ogbemudia left no kobo- Gov. Alli, **(lead, 28/6/83, p.1)**.

Table 2

Aftermath of 1993 Presidential Election
State Government-owned and Federal Government-owned Newspapers
The megaphone of government in power

Nigerian Statesman	"Why we cancelled June 12 elections-IBB **(lead; 28/6/93, p.1)**. "Abiola, Tofa banned" **(28/6/93, p.1)**. "NRC, SDP to produce new flagbearers" **(28/6/93, p.1)**. "Banned politicians can now contest" **(28/6/93, p.1)**.; "Nigerians receive pat on the back" **(28/6/93, p.1)**
New Nigerian	"Cancelled Presidential election-Party, Caucuses plan meetings", **(lead, 28/6/93, p.1)**
Daily Times	IBB, governors meet tomorrow" **(lead, 28/6/93, p.1)**.

As appendices XIV and XV indicate, the newspapers can also focus on national issues when there is a military administration in Nigeria. The stories that are featured in these appendices, confirm one of the distinguishing characteristics of the government-owned newspapers when there is a military administration in Nigeria. It shows them also having a national focus unlike the complete partisanship which they exhibit as they reflect only the views of the party that control each of the states or the federal government that own them.

Appendix XVI shows that under another circumstance, newspapers can be used to further the interests of nationality groups. When the interest of any nationality group is at stake, a newspaper owned by a state government can be used to foster such a group within its domain. This is what the *Nigerian statesman* owned by the Imo state[254] government did for the Ibo nationality group in 1993.

[254] This is constituted by the Ibo nationality group.

A look at appendix XVII will confirm that some, particularly the privately-owned newspapers, can conduct investigative journalism. This shows that in spite of the draconian decrees the military government always put in place to curb what it regards as the excesses of the media institution, some particularly privately-owned newspapers are still fearless enough to conduct investigative journalism.

Appendix XVIII shows that the newspapers are also used as instruments against oppression.. And when it comes to standing up in defence of the democratic will of the Nigerian people, the stories in the table indicates how privately-owned newspapers, unencumbered by government control, can stand up against oppressive or undemocratic decisions made by any government.

But appendix XVIX confirms the major hypothesis of this research, which is that the newspapers that promote nationality interests can still instil a sense of collective national identity in Nigerians by using some momentous international events involving Nigeria to flag the Nigerian nation. This was exactly what all Nigerian newspapers, whether private's or government's did in 1985 when the Nigerian Junior football team won the Under-17 World Cup tournament.

These tables and appendices are designed to provide examples of the methodology being used. Each of them will be fully analysed later in Chapters six to ten which deal with qualitative content analysis of the activities of the newspapers. They cover how they behaved when dealing with both general and specific issues. In the remaining part of this chapter the sampling method used in this research will be focussed upon.

4.2 Sampling Methods

It was important that I designed the appropriate sampling techniques to use to gather data at the two methodological stages, with each further divided into sub-stages. At the former stage, the questions bordered on who should be interviewed; what should be their background and the interest they represent. At the latter stage, the issues were how to select the newspapers to analyse; how many years of their activities within the period of the research (1983-1993) should be covered; which month or months of

each of the years should be selected for analysis and how many days or weeks within a month/whether a whole month or some months within a year should be examined.

Before doing the sampling, consideration was given to the intervening variables regarding: making arrangements for those to be interviewed; the availability of archival materials of Nigerian newspapers and; the difficulties of data collection in Nigeria (see Nnaemeka et al, 1989a, Vol. 1: 411; Kalu, U., 2004). Consequently, I had to consider using a combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods. Alan Bryman (2001: 88) defines probability sample as a representative sample that reflects the population accurately, so that it is a microcosm of the population. He identifies four types: simple random sampling; systematic sampling; stratified random sampling and multi-stage cluster sampling (88-93). However, Bryman notes that non-probability sampling is all forms of sampling "not conducted according to the canons of probability sampling" and states three types: convenience sampling; quota sampling and snowball sampling (Ibid: 97-101).

One of the positive points about simple random sampling, as explained by Alan Bryman (1989: 88), is that each unit of the population has an equal chance of being represented. However, Wimmer and Dominick 1991: 68) have noted one of its weak points to be that it might be more expensive than other methods. Nonetheless, the systematic sample enables the researcher to select units directly from the sampling frame, for instance all the units in Nigerian newspapers - private; government; state and; federal, without resorting to a table of random numbers. Some of the arguments for this technique are that selection is easy and can be more accurate than in a simple random sampling and the procedure is generally inexpensive (Ibid, 69). But it is noted that the downside to this procedure is that to make it worthwhile and eliminate possible bias in making the selection, a complete list of the population must be obtained (Ibid).

Stratified random sampling enables a researcher to adequately represent his research population which means stratifying it by a criterion with a systematic sample selected from each of the strata resulting from it. It ensures proportional representation of the population as the population is stratified by a criterion, such as ownership (private and government-two ownership type equals two strata (see Ibid, 70).

Cluster sampling occurs when there is the need to sample from a 'widely dispersed population' which, for instance, in the case of the Nigerian press, would include state, federal and private newspapers spread across the length and breadth of Nigeria. According to Bryman (Ibid, 91), "with cluster sampling the primary sampling unit (the first stage of the sampling procedure) is not the units of the population to be sampled but groupings of those units. It is the...aggregation of population units that are known as *clusters* (original emphasis).

Convenient sampling is a technique that researchers employ either for reasons of accessibility of research materials, or for the fact that doing a wholly probability sampling would cost a lot of time and money. According to Bryman (Ibid: 97), this is acceptable as most research are based on convenience samples. As he puts it:

> ...in the field of organisation studies it has been noted that convenience samples are very common and indeed are more prominent than are samples based on probability ... Social research is also frequently based on convenience sampling...(as) probability sampling involves a lot of preparation so that it is frequently avoided because of the difficulty and costs involved.

Some of the shortcomings of this method are that it is arbitrary and might not be representative and therefore cannot be generalised. However, the fact that a researcher can use what is available makes it irresistible particularly given the fact that the research outcome can provide "a spring board for other research (Ibid).

Bryman (Ibid, 99), notes that "the aim of quota sampling is to produce a sample that reflects a population in terms of the relative proportion of people in different categories such as gender, ethnicity, age groups, socio-economic groups and region of residence and in combination of these categories. Some of the criticisms against quota sampling are that: it is non-representative because the choice of respondents, when for instance interview is the research approach, is left to the interviewer; the interviewer is likely to make judgement about certain characteristics in deciding who to interview; interviewees are assigned to class groupings. However, it was useful for this study because it was cheaper and quicker to arrange, and easier to manage (see Ibid: 99-101).

Even though I have made reference here about what the literature on sampling

methods states, I would like to point out that the nature of my research made it impossible for me to gather data using the techniques as described by the various authors. This point is particularly relevant in relation to how the data was gathered for purposes of the qualitative content analysis of the newspapers. For instance, there is the problem of gathering data in Nigeria as finding newspapers archives is problematic. Therefore it is impossible to use an efficient scientific approach, as described by the authors cited, for such a purpose.

So I was only interested in the content of newspapers as I had an agenda to look for themes that explain behaviour of press. As a former journalist in Nigeria, and being familiar with the newspapers and the interest that they each represent, it was possible for me to do this. In effect on the basis of what I knew was there and on what I could assess, I divided the themes up on a convenience basis. For instance, although I decided to sample the sixth month of the first year 1983 and every other year after that, in order to reduce the amount of materials to be analysed, this strategy really worked as the themes which explain the behaviour of each of the newspapers, under different circumstances that I was looking for, were there in the dates and number of days in each of the months sampled.

In the next two sub-headings, how the sampling of the interviewees and the newspapers was done will be stated.

4.2a Sampling of the Interviewees

The journalists interviewed were selected not only on the basis of their in-depth knowledge of the Nigerian press but also because they largely represent, if not all, then most interests groups in Nigeria. Beyond the predictable representation of the broad ethnic mix, some are practicing journalists, while some are now retired; others have served as government functionaries and/or as publishers. Additionally, the mix sought out those journalists who work for or have had the experience of working in a newspaper owned by a state or federal government; while others work or have worked in privately-owned newspapers.

This was to ensure that the issues related to the research objectives, were analysed by those who have the necessary experience of the nature and characteristics of the Nigerian press, in terms of the modalities of their operations, politics, intrigues and overall dynamics (Directory of the Nigerian Media, 1994; Newswatch: Who's Who in Nigeria: 2001). But a notable absentee from the group of interviewees is the female. This is argued as not detrimental to this study because the issue was not gender related but on the different circumstances that influence the behaviour of the press. Although there are very prominent Nigerian females who are knowledgeable about the press, trying to locate some of them proved too much a task for me, given the time I had for my fieldwork in Nigeria. It was even much more difficult to find a prominent female journalist because the hierarchy of the Nigerian press is male-dominated.

Although the interviewees were readily available and served the purpose of this study, they were however selected on the basis that they fairly represent the diverse nature of the Nigerian state. But it is important to also stress that only the three majority ethnic groups of Hausa-Fulani, Ibo and Yoruba really dominate Nigeria's socio-political landscape (Obasanjo, 1989: 55)[255]. It is their politics, intrigues and indeed rivalries that have, more than anything else, affected the various institutions of the Nigerian State. So in the best of all worlds, I would have actually chosen to do interviews with some of the journalists from each of these groups because of their diversity and the preference of gaining as wide a selection of voices as possible. Nevertheless, the peculiar Nigerian situation, which is bedevilled by lack of good social infrastructure like effective telecommunication and road networks, made it practically impossible to enable interviews with those journalists from each of the three majority ethnic groups.

First, the telecommunication problem made it impossible for me to contact them from the UK before I travelled to Nigeria for my fieldwork. Even when I eventually travelled to Nigeria, the problem was compounded by the fact that the non-journalists I had intended to interview were either not available or were not prepared to participate. A typical case was Usman (now late), a renowned Nigerian academic and social critic who turned down my requests for an interview.[256] But his views on the

[255] Sanda 1976; Danmola, et al., 1995)

[256] Dr Usman was a known critic of the Nigerian press because he saw them as 'agents of

Nigerian press are well known and some of them are cited in this study. Other non-journalists declined for not being 'qualified enough' to talk about the issues.

For instance, although journalists, whose ethnic background is Hausa-Fulani and Yoruba, were among those interviewed, all efforts made to arrange interviews with journalists of Ibo origin came to nought. In fact the situation became so desperate for me that I even considered interviewing any important personality from the Ibo ethnic group to make up for the journalist. I got that in the form of Nigeria's former vice-president, Dr Alex Ekwueme, whom I met while conducting my fieldwork in Kaduna, in the northern part of Nigeria. But unfortunately all arrangements and promises fell through on the grounds that he had not enough time to address the issues raised in the questionnaire.[257] Probably as a non-journalist he found the questions a little bit difficult.

But while my inability to interview journalists of Ibo origin could be seen as a weakness of this research, the quality of the data from the other interviewees is sound and may make up for it in part because those journalists who were available included some of the most experienced Nigerian journalists – and many had a worldview that enabled them to go beyond the confines of their own ethnic interests.

Poignantly, most of the journalists that I contacted were quite willing to participate, which may well have had to do with me being a former journalist. Nevertheless, I must also add that not all that were contacted readily made themselves available to be interviewed.

Uncle Sam (proprietor of one of Nigeria's national newspapers, Vanguard, himself, a former practising journalist, for instance, was very reluctant to participate. He does not give interviews, and, having worked for him for seven years, I was quite aware of this. He is an extremely busy man, but being such an influential and well respected

misrepresentation of what is happening in the Nigerian context'. Although I explained the focus of my study to him over the phone, in Kaduna, Nigeria, he was insistent that I read everything he has written first before he would agree to sit down with me for an interview. Not even my explanation that I was familiar with the ones that were relevant to my study could change his mind.

[257] Part of the letter he sent to me reads as follows: "I have gone through your questionnaire. Unfortunately, it is not possible for me to respond to the questions without my undertaking some in-depth research of my own which, I do not imagine is the purpose of the questionnaire ... I therefore very much regret that it was not possible for me to be of any assistance to you in your work.

journalist in Nigeria, I thought his views were certainly those that I could not afford to do without. However, after a few telephone calls, he agreed to have 'a chat' with me in his office but insisted that nothing should be taped. I had to respect his wish. His 'chat' with me was brief but I used my journalistic skills[258] to ensure that every word he spoke was written down (Palgrave-skills4study, 2006: 2).

With Alade Odunewu, however, I was not so lucky. At the time I did my fieldwork in 2001, Chief Odunewu was the Chairman of the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). My various attempts made to secure an interview with him met with failure either because 'Chief is not in' or 'he does not like doing interviews'.[259]

4.2b Sampling of Newspapers

A total of nine newspapers, were selected for analysis as a representative sample of the research population. In this study, the Nigerian newspapers based on their ownership pattern and structure, their activities that border on national integration and unity and all the issues related to them constitute the population (see Chapter Three).. Using a simple sampling technique, the aim was to make sure that they represent the basic interests of all sections of the Nigerian society, which in this case are categorised into the majority and minority ethnic groups, their culture and religion as well as the federal and state governments. Four of the newspapers are privately-owned, while of the remaining five, both the federal and state governments control two and three, respectively.[260] One of the advantages of this process is that there was no bias in the selection because it was done on the basis of what they represent and the types of ownership, making them reflect the population accurately.

To ensure this was the case, stratified sampling procedure was used to select the nine newspapers from the over thirty newspapers that were in existence during the research period.[261] Then using cluster sampling based on ownership, two clusters southern and northern Nigeria emerged. In which case, private newspapers from south and north;

[258] One of the skills I learnt as a practising journalist in Nigeria was short words and letters to take notes and expand them into reports and stories later. This served me very well when I had a chat with uncle Sam without using a tape-recorder.
[259] For how my various attempts to secure an interview with Chief Odunewu went, see Appendix iv
[260] See Appendix III for the social context of the sampled newspapers at a glance
[261] See Nnaemeka et al, 1989.

federal newspapers from south and north; state newspapers from south and north. But in using this procedure a problem arose. The availability of newspapers was inconsistent between the two areas. While records of some newspapers were available to some extent in the southern part of Nigeria, it was not the case with those newspapers that were published in the north. Besides most of the newspapers (See Nnaemeka at al, 1989: 401-411), that were in the north were not well circulated even within their base and I found no records of them in the archives of the National Library of Nigeria and Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, both in Lagos. As a result, state government-owned and privately-owned newspapers from the northern part of Nigeria are missing from the sampled newspapers.[262] This could be seen as a problem and their non-selection could be interpreted as a weakness of this study. Yet the effect of this is minimal for three main reasons: the fact that there is no adequate theoretical basis for the establishment of newspapers in Nigeria. They are set up for one or more of the following: (a) for personal and political reasons; (b) to protect nationality/ethnic interests; (c) to protect the interests of governments at federal and/or state levels, and; (d) for economic reasons.[263] In other words, while there are clear differences between the newspapers in terms of their aims and objectives, all of these are represented in the sample – and are thus substantially representative of the newspaper population.

4.2c Sampling of newspaper materials for analysis

It should be noted that not all the newspapers were always available for examination either because they were: established after 1983; out of circulation after being sealed-up by Nigeria's military regimes for falling foul of draconian military decrees (Maja-Pearce, 1996: 202-203; Article 19, 1997) or due to the poor facilities for conducting research in Nigeria as has been noted.[264]

Two reasons therefore informed the sampling procedure that was used to select the materials for analysis. First, the Nigerian circumstances pose some difficult problems

[262] As discussed elsewhere, the nature of the Nigerian press is such that it is predominantly within the Ibadan-Lagos axis, and Northern newspapers have consistently failed to thrive (see p. 25 below).
[263] Read fieldwork interviewees: pp.176-180
[264] See Nnaemeka et al, 1989a: 411.

for any researcher wishing to collect comprehensive data for analysis. The problem is much more pronounced when it comes to having access to past copies of newspapers because of lack of needed materials and personnel for keeping adequate records.[265] For instance a recurring feature of even some of the copies of newspapers that were available in library archives was that some of the pages were either torn or missing completely,[266] Second, because of the enormous amount of materials involved, it was necessary to limit the number of newspaper materials to be analysed to a very manageable level without compromising the reliability of the conclusions reached about the true nature of the coverage done by the newspapers.

With regard to the first point, Mr Ray Ekpu, Chief Executive of a leading Nigerian news magazine, *Newswatch*[267] lamented the poor state of libraries in newspaper houses in Nigeria. The *Daily Times* (13/06/83 p13) quoted him:

> [Recalling] an incident in 1980 when a newspaper organisation was setting up its new library and had to dispose of some of its old newspaper cuttings and photographs as a result of space shortages ... [and lamented that] many newspapers still do not have trained librarians because they still do not see the need for them ... Many newspapers still spend peanuts yearly on library development, with the result that their libraries have a stunted growth ...

With these in mind, it was important to limit the sample of articles and issues to look at, using some issues of fundamental importance in Nigeria as analytical categories[268] as a guide. The analytical categories were not chosen arbitrarily but because they are the issues that influence the editorial direction of Nigerian newspapers, be it within a civilian or a military administration in Nigeria.[269] The sampling was done in stages in order to reduce the texts and articles to be analysed to a manageable level (see Hansen et al, 1998: 101-105). I therefore undertook a simple random sample pilot on one year's press of a ten-year period (1983-1993). Consequently, I sampled by focussing on:

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[265] See, for instance, Nnaemeka et al. eds. 1989a: 411; Robertson, A.F., 1985: 279-290.
[266] See appendix VI
[267] Mr Ekpu said this during a lecture titled: "Libraries: The lifeblood of newspapers" at the annual June lecture of the Nigerian Library Association, .the *Daily Times* reported his views under the title: "Newspaper managers advised on library".
[268] See table 3
[269] See for instance (Hansen, et al, 1998: 106), who state that the selection of analytical categories should be based on the fact that they are directly related to the overall aims and objectives of a research.

How the newspapers treated the issues in the sixth month of the first year;

What they treated in the second week of the sixth month of the year;

Looking around the period that a specific crisis occurred and then treating the crisis in detail as covered in all the newspapers in the same week of the same month. For example, the June 1989 SAP riots, the aftermath of the annulled June 12, 1993 Presidential election, and Nigeria's Under-17 national team triumph at the FIFA-organised World Cup tournament, held in Beijing, China, in August 1985.

My intention in doing this was to gauge what a year's worth of that sampling will give me with a view to cutting down the rest of the sampling to a manageable size that will still be representative of the activities that the newspapers engage in. In fact the sample pilot brought to the fore, what a task it would be to analyse, using the sampling pilot procedure, the yearly activities of the newspapers, over a ten-year period. After going through the significant amount of materials that I collected from the sampled newspapers, it became clear that it would be impossible to explore all of the issues that newspapers covered in one thesis.

As a result, using simple convenience sampling methods, I decided to, in addition to the first year, 1983; sample the sixth month of every other year after that (1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, and 1993). And using a systematic sampling technique, I selected ten days of coverage from each of the newspapers spread over a four-week period of the month, with the first week inclusive, as follows:

- The first seven days of the sixth month of each of the years randomly selected;

- Followed next by every seventh day after (14^{th}, 21^{st}, 28^{th}), till the end of the month.

However, the negative aspect to using this procedure was that some of the newspapers had missing pages, or some dates or copies were missing from a whole month of

newspaper publications, thereby creating the possibility of bias. This was compensated for by taking other copies to ensure that ten days were still covered within the month (see Bryman, 2000: 90) through the following procedure:

- Where there are some copies of the sixth month of the selected year of each of the newspapers missing, the convention adopted will be to analyse the first seven available copies of the newspaper for the month;

- This was followed also by every available seventh copy thereafter, till the end of the month.

4.2d Sampling of stories/articles for analysis

Many Nigerian newspapers, including those selected for this study, publish both first and second editions stories. The reason is because of the way that newspapers are distributed in Nigeria. As a result of the poor transportation network, etc, the privately-owned newspapers based in the Lagos/Ibadan axis, in particular, make sure that they reach the northern and eastern parts of Nigeria by sending their first editions only. The first edition of each of these newspapers is usually made up of late news. For instance, the first edition sent to the eastern and northern parts, say on 12 June, 1983, is usually the second edition of 11 June, 1983 in the southwest (Lagos/Ibadan axis).

Besides, the prominence that different stories are given in the different editions also varies. For instance, the lead story in the first edition in the north or east might not be the lead in the second edition, where it was published a day before and vice versa. Predictably, this is not always the case but happens most of the time. This enables many of the newspapers to make sure that the prominence given to any issue is relevant to the areas where the edition is sold. In effect a story that would make the lead in the north or east, because of its relevance to the area, could have been just one of the stories published in the second edition the day before in the southwest. But it should be added that most of the stories published in many of the newspapers, especially those located within the Lagos/Ibadan axis, selected for analysis, are

second edition stories.[270]

But because of the lack of comprehensive copies of newspapers published during the period under study, convenience sampling procedure was used to select the stories to be analysed. Every effort was made to ensure that priority was given to the news stories on the front pages of each of the newspapers. Some paragraphs in the headlines and sub-headlines will be quoted, where appropriate, to illustrate a point. Fenichel and Dan (1980: 338) have noted that:

> ... the main and sub-headlines of newspapers, due to their simplicity and high visibility, may in themselves influence public opinion.

The strong points here are 'visibility' of stories and their capability to 'influence public opinion'. These explain the choice of the pages in the sampled newspapers selected for analysis. So although stories on the front pages and back pages are readily seen, the inside pages of the newspapers where the issues that fit into the analytical categories are, will also be treated. This will be done particularly if the front pages of the newspapers are missing, in which case, the relevant issues in the available pages will be analysed. But more importantly, this will be done in line with my plan to analyse the coverage of the newspapers under the categories in the following table:

Table 3

General Issues	**Specific Issues**
Elections and Electioneering	June 1989 SAP riots
Activities of political parties	Coverage of the 1991 OAU Summit in Nigeria
	June 1993 Presidential Election
	World Cup triumph of Nigeria in 1985

The idea here is to capture how the newspapers treat the issues that might promote Nigerian national integration, i.e. they can potentially do so, and that whatever way they do choose is clearly deliberate. In effect, on general issues that fall into the sampled period, the headlines and sub-headlines news stories, on the front pages, will

[270] I am able to make these assertions because I was involved in the management of two of Nigeria's national newspapers, the *Vanguard*, for seven years and later, *The Independent Weekly* newspaper, for three years.

first be analysed. However, when it comes to how the newspapers dealt with specific issues, the headlines and sub-headlines stories on their back pages will in addition be analysed particularly if such specific issues are not reported by the newspapers on their front pages. This procedure will also be used where the front pages of any of the newspapers are missing and the back page news stories have dealt with any of the specific issues.

The sampling was done this way having taken into consideration the reading habit of many of the people that read newspapers in Nigeria. For instance, Nigerian vendors, who roam about the streets soliciting for buyers of the newspapers, have a habit of displaying the front or the back pages in order to attract potential buyers.[271] The vendors also maintain a newsstand to display the newspapers for sale. In recent years, as a result of the hard economic situation which, has raised the cover price of newspapers out of the reach of the average Nigerian newspaper readers, there has emerged the FRAN.[272]

However, where the front page is not available, page 2 will be analysed. But when page 2 is unavailable, the back page[273] will be the next in priority for analysis. Nevertheless, when the back page is all sports, then the next available page after page 2, 3, or 4, as the case may be, will be analysed. It should be added here that this procedure was necessary[274] given the fact that past copies of newspapers, as noted above, are rarely available to the researcher in Nigeria.

What have been analysed in this chapter are the two methodological approaches that will be used to carry out this research. They were chosen because they are relevant to my type of research and convenient for finding answers to my research questions and

[271] Also see, for instance, Agbese, D., 1997: 45, where the author noted that newspaper vendors in Nigeria, suggest headlines that would sell newspapers to Editors.
[272] This stands for the Free Readers Association of Nigeria. What happens in this case is that Nigerians who cannot afford the high cost of newspapers mill around the newsstands to read newspapers for free or alternatively, they pay a token amount to the vendors to gain permission for 'free reading'. Also see fieldwork interviewees: Al-Bashir, p.193; Egbochukwu, 1996: 214-215; Abati, 2006: electronic source, *The Guardian*, 23/04/2006
[273] The back page of Nigerian newspapers is the last page at the back of the papers. During the period under study, it was not the tradition of the newspapers to feature only sports stories on the back page as is mainly the case in the newspapers published in the UK.
[274] With respect to issues of this nature, that is, using documentation as a research method, see Magnusson and Bergman, 1990.

hypotheses. For instance, the tables show how the qualitative approach was employed to analyse the content of the newspapers. The themes that form the headlines in each of the tables show what particular editorial policy/policies that the sampled newspapers adopted in response to the different circumstances in which they had to conduct their individual activities during the research period and these, as earlier noted, will be analysed later in the thesis.

But the next chapter commences the next stage of this project, which is, the analysis of the intensive/in-depth interviews conducted as part of the qualitative research method used for this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Interviews

The main thrust of this chapter is the outcome of the various interviews conducted in Nigeria, as part of the fieldwork for this study. As already indicated, it provided a unique opportunity to use the resources of the experts on the Nigerian press. The analyses of the interviews are based on the scope and focus of this study. But at this point, some of the issues that informed the way that they have been articulated should be pointed out:

- The first is that names of the interviewees have not been concealed. This was done with the approval of the interviewees, who said that they were happy for their names to be used.

- The second is that because of their expertise and knowledge of the Nigerian press, I did not consider it necessary to interpret everything that each of the interviewees said. The purpose here is to give readers the opportunity to read what they had to say on the various issues that they were asked to comment on. As a result, some of them have been quoted extensively where necessary.

5.1 Fundamental issues in Nigeria: Analysis of perspectives of interviewees

When interviewed, these experts on the press in Nigeria agreed that the media must be mobilised to redress the symptoms of Nigeria's colonial past.[275] As some writers on the mass media in Africa note, for the media to do this successfully, there needs to be a shift from the *colonial model*[276] of journalism training, which emphasises Africa's

[275] See Prof. Ikenna Nzimiro, 1989: 24-48; Kitchen 1956; Ainslie 1966; Hachten 1971: xvi.

[276] This model is usually credited with instilling in African journalists western values of what news is. This is now 'discredited' because it is thought to be unrelated to the realities of a post-colonial state and therefore unsuitable as a technique to be employed to analyse and understand the situations within it. The development model on the other hand is said to be relevant to the African context because it teaches African journalists the essence of the African environment and what is needed to make the change for the benefit of Africans.

colonial history, to the *development model* that would ensure that the training that African journalists get fully equips them for the task of national development (Jeter et al. 1996: 40).[277] However, as discussed elsewhere, because the press has failed to live up to this challenge,[278] according to the key informants, it has been portrayed as being partisan, regionalised and tribalistic, even though its role in the making of the Nigerian nation is well documented (Omu, 1996: 10; Macebuh, 2001: 2; Nwuneli, 1986; Amatokwu, 1989). As a result, it has been written off as being incapable of instilling, in Nigerians, a sense of collective national identity.

But the Nigerian press is certainly a child of the circumstances under which it found itself. In his submission on the "Press and Military rule", Lateef Jakande a Nigerian media expert, alluded to this when he stated that

> The press is part and parcel of the society it serves. It is the mirror of that society. If therefore, the society consents to a particular system of government, the press can do no more than work within that system ... the role of the press must be reconciled to realities (Jakande 1979: 110-111).

Another observer of the Nigerian press, Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, has also corroborated this point:

> *Every press is a product of its milieu, the society, and it defines itself in respect of what it finds itself in.* ***(Interview in Kaduna)***

But nobody has specifically focussed on how the press' role has changed over time or how it has often stood up, whether in response to threats from outside or within. In fact a careful study of the Nigerian press would reveal that certain issues and crises that have been represented by the press are structured around national identity. In all of the issues, what had tended to guide its behavioural pattern has been the need to promote a collective Nigerian national identity within a multi-cultural context. The nature of the Nigerian society makes it inevitable that so many issues will be involved. But it is possible to gauge and measure the achievements of the press / media in this regard through an examination of their role in some of the fundamental

[277] See also Adeigbe, ed. 1985; Ugboaja, F.O. et al. 1987; Opubor, 1985: 188; Sobowale 1989: 306-397; NPC, 2000: 127; Akinfeleye, ed., 1988.
[278] Uche, 1989: xvii; Oyovbaire 2000; Omu 1978; Ciroma 1994: 35.

issues,[279] which centre on Nigerian integration and unity. Some of the issues discussed by the interviewees are listed below, followed by their analysis.

1. The press and Nigeria's unity;
2. The colonial period and the nationalist struggle for independence (1914-1960);
3. The Nigerian civil war (1966-1970);
4. Military intervention in Nigerian politics;
5. Civilian rule;
6. Annulment of the June 12 1993, presidential election;
7. The controversy over Nigeria's membership of the OIC;
8. The census controversy;
9. The sharia issue;
10. The press and a collective Nigerian national identity.

5.1a The press and Nigeria's unity

It is generally agreed among the experts on the African media that the press has been in the forefront of the quest for Africa's development in all areas of human endeavour. For instance, they are quite united in their belief that the press in Africa is more a unifying force than a divisive force.[280]

Many of the interviewees in this study share this view. They believe that the press in a post-colonial state plays a homogenous rather than a heterogeneous role in accordance with government's emphasis on unifying all groups in the state:

> *If you look at the history of the press in Nigeria, it has never compromised national unity ...There is no section of the press that is indifferent to the issue of national integration ...The press wouldn't say 'we don't need Nigeria', but it will tell you that Nigeria will do better if you arrange it this way or that. (**G. G. Darah: Interview in Lagos)***

> *...The need for Nigeria to remain united has been emphasised by all the newspapers. To the best of my knowledge, this need has been emphasised by all of them in different perspectives. There has never been any Editorial in any of the newspapers calling for the break-up of Nigeria". **(Al-Bashir: Interview in Kaduna).***

[279] See pp.10-13 above
[280] See Tusa, 1992: 15; Ansah, 1981; Arikpo, 1967: 165; Wilcox, 1975: 31.

...The Nigerian media seek to foster national unity. ***(Emeka Izeze: Interview in Lagos).***

No newspaper in this country has ever promoted disintegration. They may criticise the structure, they may say we like adjustments here and there...but the question of national unity is uppermost in the eyes of every newspaper in this country (***Mohammed Ibrahim: Interview in Kaduna).***

However, there is also the belief that the basis for unity is, for the different units that make up Nigeria, to take cognisance of the Nigerian situation and then arrive at a generally agreed formula on how the different units should appreciate each other in order for them to be able to live together. This is the Nigerian dilemma that prompted Professor Wole Soyinka (2000), for instance, to say: "We are a nation that desperately needs to define itself".[281]

This clearly aligns with the reasoning of both Farouk Ibrahim and Momoh, who respectively assert:

"First of all you cannot talk of unity or a nation if people do not understand each other. You need to know, understand and appreciate your compatriots before you can have unity ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim: Interview in Kaduna).***

In 1914, we had the amalgamation of the North and the South and that geographical space has remained substantially the same. 97,000 communities occupy this geographical space, more than 370 nationality groups or national groups. But officially we say 250 nationality groups, out of which we have the major three-Hausa/Fulani, Ibo, and Yoruba. These major three have tried to dictate what Nigeria should be. Unfortunately they have not come to the recognition from experience that it's impossible to reduce the number to less than three. The civil war proved it; we could not wipe out Biafra. The Action Group (AG) crisis in the West proved it, we cannot undermine the Yoruba, nor is it possible to undermine the Hausa/Fulani who themselves have been trying to undermine the other people and make them play second fiddle.

And when we talk of the potentials of all the others put together, they have a population more than the three. So these groups or nationalities have more in common with themselves as nationalities, as ethnic groups than with a nation. We have not really developed a national outlook. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

5.1b The press and the independence struggle in Nigeria

[281] See Ekeh. 2001; Ekeh et al. eds. 1989; Bello, Ahmadu [Sardauna], 1986: 134.

Starting first with the colonial period, it will become apparent that the Nigerian press, more than any other institution in society, fought a heroic battle to ensure the realisation of an independent Nigerian nation. This is what Jeter et al (1996: 11) referred to as 'the philosophical contexts of Africa's mass media'. Also, Macebuh (2001: 2) has remarked that "In the beginning, the Nigerian press played a critical, even indispensable role in our fight for independence. Indeed, it is arguable that it was the press that transformed the theoretical idea of Nigeria into a living, vibrant reality." However, many of the interviewees couldn't agree more, as each of their statements below clearly indicates:

The most revolutionary, the most courageous participants in the anti-colonial struggle were the Nigerian Press. It was unprecedented in Africa. The Nigerian elite, the Lagos elite was insufficiently articulate to generate the readership or the reading public for the newspapers. The newspapers kept the politicians on their toes.

It was the press that helped to define what you can call the Nigerian interest vis-à-vis colonial interest. At a point, in terms of historical epoch when it was required to distinguish between what the Nigerian people want and what the British imperialist wanted, it was the press that articulated the Nigerian viewpoint.

So the Press grew up in the context of the evolution of the Nigerian State. It has a very close link to the Nigerian system. From the early 20s to the 60s, it was the Press that fought the British much more than you will find anywhere else in Africa where the leading lights were also politicians, a role exemplified by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who came from Ghana to Nigeria. The first thing he did was to set up a Newspaper. So he announced his own partisanship into the Nigerian struggle in 1937. ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

"The press' own mission before independence was to work and drive out the British from Nigeria, which they did because it was a nationalist press.
(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).

"The Press, pre-independence...found a common ground in the sense that there was a common enemy that is the colonial master and everybody recognised the need for independence. So they were able to speak with one voice in terms of independence for the country. ***(Dan Agbese. Interview in Lagos).***

In colonial Nigeria, the press was at least to some extent, a popular sector. It was very nationalistic [and] maybe at that time we had what I call a common foe, the colonialists. There was not much trace of ethnic or regional divisions. ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

In his own contribution, Alhaji Babatunde Jose (interview in Lagos), who was part of the campaign against colonial rule, being a journalist at that time, also noted that the pre-independence press was very active in mobilising the public in the crusade against British colonial rule and for independence. He said that politicians, individuals and political parties who owned the press were nationalists and were unanimous that British rule was unacceptable and that the country has to become independent. He referred to the pre-Zik[282] stage where the politicians started newspapers on their own, with their own money. According to him, these politicians were the publishers, the editors and sometimes functioned within a one-man weekly newspaper and there was] not much news, but opinions, editorials and articles that were directed against British rule. The other stage of the press was what he described as the advent of Herbert Macaulay's *Daily News* followed immediately by the *Daily Service*[283] which were both Lagos-based. Alhaji Jose added that the next stage was the 'Zikist' era which, according to him, started when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe arrived from the United States of America to the Gold Coast (Ghana) and then to Nigeria where he started the *West African Pilot* whose motto was: "Show the light and the people will find the way." He said Dr Azikiwe's nationalism was 'proper nationalism' and of a different kind as it was not localised among the intelligentsias but also 'targeted the workers and tribal organisations all over the country appealing to the people regardless of their ethnic group or ethnicity'.

To Chief Henry Odukomaiya (interview in Lagos), "the role of the press prior to independence in 1960 was very significant". Recalling that Dr. Azikiwe set up the Zikist Group of Newspapers, namely the *West African Pilot*, the *Comet* and what he called "a number of other newspapers, which have now gone", he said those newspapers at that "at that time played a catalytic role of gingering people up to their rights (as)...they sensitised Nigerians to their rights and the need for them to fight the British colonialists for independence...(and) .made them aware that they were in

[282] Zik stands for the name Nnamdi Azikiwe, a foremost Nigerian nationalist, and journalist. He returned from his sojourn in the US in the early thirties and established the *West African Pilot* newspaper in 1937 and used it to campaign against the colonialists. The main difference between his newspaper and those that preceded it was that the *West African Pilot* had much influence on the psyche of the colonised Nigerian people because of its wide circulation.

[283] Herbert Macaulay, a foremost Nigerian nationalist, was the leader of what was then known as the National Democratic Party (NDP). The *Daily Service* was owned by the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) formed by the young intelligentsia, or professionals from British universities.

bondage because a lot of people did not even know that they were in bondage. A lot of people took it for granted that the British were there and that they would be there forever".

These are all corroborated by the other interviewees as exemplified by the following quotes attributed to each of them:

> *In pre-colonial period the Press essentially saw its duty as that of fighting for Nigeria's independence.* ***(Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***
>
> *The pre-independence Nigerian press was largely under-developed ...in the sense that there weren't many of them. We had the* ***Nigerian Tribune****, the* ***West African Pilot****, the* ***Daily Times****, and the* ***Nigerian Citizen*** *as it was then and the concern was the struggle for independence, supporting the political leadership, the political parties, promoting regionalism rather than federalism as a matter of fact. But the only common denominator at the time was to kick the British out in a most peaceful manner.* ***(Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna)***
>
> *"As you know, the Nigerian press pre-independence was more interested in fighting the colonialists and ... in making Nigeria become an independent nation. The question of national integration was not much the focus. But of course at the same time ethnicity was not the critical issue as it became after independence. So this is the way I see the press, pre-independence. Of course the press in the South, as even today, was in the majority. They were more critical of the colonialists than the* ***Nigerian Citizen****, which was the only newspaper really in the North then. There were other smaller ones, but it was the* ***Nigerian Citizen*** *that was very prominent...* ***(Muhammadu Turi. Interview in Kaduna).***

5.1c The post-colonial press

One of the strongest points of the Nigerian press is perhaps the fact that it was able to react positively to the demands that were thrown at it during the nation's struggle for independence. It did that successfully because it quite appropriately articulated the Nigerian position vis-à-vis the British colonialists.

So, since independence, how has the Nigerian press performed? What has been its main focus and how has this affected the need for the realisation of Nigeria's national aspiration of integration and unity? Apparently, the clear perspective on the national issue that dominated its activities during the independence struggle has not been

carried through to the post-independence era (Omu, 1996: 10; Kukah, 1996: 134-135).[284]. The press was expected to react to the different issues that developed in terms of how to ensure that all interests in the country were well represented and catered for (see Ibrahim, I. and Akanni, T. eds, 1996: 121).

Many of the interviewees believe that, since independence, this is where it has all gone wrong with the Nigerian press. For instance, in the opinion of Farouk Ibrahim, this became the case because, since Nigeria attained political independence in 1960, 'the press has not really redefined its role clearly.' The reason for this, as further explained by Ibrahim, was because during most of the 60s, 70s and even up to the 80s, the press carried on with the same anti-establishment position that became its hallmark in colonial Nigeria. His argument is that this limited the press' potential to play its expected role in society. As he put it:

> *The post-colonial press is supposed to be development-oriented, to assist the government run their administration better, and define what is in the best interest of the country. I am not sure that the Nigerian press really has been able to define its role in this respect.* ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

Chief Odukomaiya believes that the press did not do anything untoward until the first post-independence elections in 1964 and 1965. The acrimonious developments that followed these elections, he explains, inevitably led to the first military coup d'etat in Nigeria on 15 January 1966 and the subsequent coup d'etat in Nigeria, with all the consequences that they have had on the entire Nigerian society (Ekwe-Ekwe, 1991).[285] He contends that 'it was at that time that the role of the press became manifest because the ownership structure of the various presses began to show in the things that they published and printed.' For instance, he also notes that the way that the military leadership of Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi[286] went about governance (Aguolu, 1973: 159) not only generated a lot of discontent against the new military regime, it culminated in the killing of Ironsi himself by young military officers of northern extraction because they decried what they regarded 'as the discriminatory

[284] Also see Bello, Ahmadu [Sardauna], 1986: 134.
[285] Also see Adekanye, 1987: 17-30; Agbese, 1990: 293-312; Ehrenreich, 1982: 235-285;; Akpan, 1988: 40-46).
[286] Major General Ironsi was the first Military Head of State of Nigeria.

manner in which the first coup was executed.' (See Dudley, B.J., 1973: 104-108). Describing this particular event and the effect it had on the Nigerian press, Odukomaiya states:

> *That appeared to have been the last straw that broke the camel's back for the Nigerian press, as they no longer had any pretensions of unity. It became a case of 'to thy tent Oh! Israel' ... And because of the various degrees of schisms that existed in the various parts of the country, they could not play many roles by way of integration. They could not play any integrative role because each of the newspapers had its own limitations ... as Nigerian politics itself was sharply divided along ethnic lines.* ***(Henry Odukomaiya: Interview in Lagos).***

On his own part, although Momoh acknowledges that the press had striven to be nationalist since Nigeria attained independence, he said its methods and activities have rarely been effective because, apart from not ensuring accountability, which could have guaranteed responsible government in the Nigerian polity, the press has not been able to develop an enduring feature of seeing issues from a national perspective.[287] In the words of Momoh:

> *The press has striven to be nationalist since independence and it has seen itself to be successful only when it is opposed to government and Nigerians seem to be interested in opposing government. Nigerians seem not to believe governments because of the corruption they have come to associate with them and the fact that we have lots of things to hide because of the failure of accountability.* ***(Tony Momoh: Interview in Lagos)***

Mohammed Ibrahim agreed with Momoh's view by stating that although the issues that confronted the press after independence, together with other forces in the Nigerian political landscape succeeded in getting rid of the British colonialists, were "national unity, national integration and national cohesion", it became handicapped because it was faced with a situation "whereby the political structure of Nigeria was largely based on regionalism" and consequently, "people identified more with their regions than being Nigerians". Hence, as his explanation further shows, the political parties that controlled each of the regions, "attempted to own newspapers" not only to promote regional agenda but as a response to the changes that were taking place in the

[287] See for instance, Osuntokun, 1989: 351; for a detailed treatment of critical issues of national importance in Nigeria, see: Okeke, Akpuru-Aja and Emezue, eds. 1998; Nwankwo, 1988; Rasheed Na'allah, 1998; Olagunju, Jinadu and Oyovbaire, eds. 1993; Ayida, 1990; Committee on Creation of States, 1983; Agunbiade, 1991; Ellah, 1983; Ayoade, 1988; Suberu, 2001; Ekeh and Eghosa, eds. 1989; Diamond, 1988; Badru, 1998).

newly independent Nigerian nation (Adamu, S. 1994: 469-472; Muhammadu, T. 2000: ii-iii, v-vi, 1-8).[288].

Alhaji Muhammadu, also one of the interviewees and former Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* newspapers, also supports Alhaji Ibrahim's view. For instance, while referring to the various events that occurred immediately after Nigeria gained independence, he put this point in perspective:

> *After independence, the attention was turned to other various issues that arose. There were more regional considerations then than before independence. I think after independence, there was the issue of what should be the relationship between the regional governments and the Federal government. The Western regional government led by the Action Group (AG) was very critical of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), which was in control of the Federal government ... and so the press took their cue from there to fuel the controversy ...The* ***Daily Times****, which though was a leading newspaper, was Yoruba-biased. Then there was the AG's own newspaper, the* ***Nigerian Tribune.*** *Then on the other hand there was the* ***West African Pilot,*** *which was in support of the NCNC, and of course there was the eastern newspaper called the* ***Nigerian Outlook.*** *So...these newspapers saw issues from the point of view of their owners...as a result of ethnicity and the struggle for power by the political leaders... They all thought along the line of what they will gain sectionally, rather than nationally... And so the newspapers took their cues from there... (and) promoted narrow and parochial, ethnic and regional self-interests."*
> ***(Turi Muhammadu. Interview in Kaduna)***

But unfortunately, these developments overall, had the dubious effect, some argue, of causing the Nigerian civil war, which ensued in 1967 (Amoda, 1972: 14-75).[289] Some analysts believe that the Nigerian press played an active role in it (Osuntokun, 1989: 351; Adamu, S. 1994). Poignantly, while describing the activities of the mass media during this period, Osuntokun referred to them as "the harbingers of the civil war, through their irresponsible and jaundiced views expressed either on radio, television or in the print media", adding that "the mass media ... right from the time of intervention of the various regional governments were more prone to reflecting regional sentiments than working for national unity." (Ibid).

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[288] In his book, titled: "Courage and Conviction-New Nigerian: The First Twenty Years", Muhammadu details the way the press conducted its activities during the period before and after Nigeria's independence)

[289] Also see Aguolu, 1971; Azikiwe, 1973; Nwankwo and Ifejika, eds. 1969; Ekpebu, 1969: 33-60; Ekpeyong, 1967; Legum, 1966: 12; Lloyd, 1970: 1-13; Meisler, 1967: 334-6; Azikiwe, 1969; Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990; Jacobs, 1987).

Nevertheless, given the divisions within the Nigerian nation, brought about by the long period of colonial rule (O'Connell, J. 1967; Nnoli, 1981: 192-216),[290] the press could hardly have behaved differently. Indeed some theorists have argued that because of the effects of the colonial enterprise, certain groups in post-colonial states could become so disillusioned and dissatisfied to the extent that they would opt for secession, as in the case of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra by the Ibo ethnic group in Nigeria (Smith, 1991: 133).

5.1d The civil war and the internal divisions in Nigeria

There is no doubt also that the civil war further reinforced the internal divisions and tensions within the nascent Nigerian State and consequently, as noted above, shaped the way that the press reacted to the various issues that arose. At this juncture, it should be noted that in order to douse the tension in the country, the new military leader that assumed power after the counter-coup of July 29, 1966, Lt. Col. Yakubu Gowon, created twelve more States[291] as a way of emasculating the Eastern Region, which was trying to secede from Nigeria (Aguolu, 1973: 161-166)[292].

According to Odukomaiya, by that action, Lt. Col. Gowon removed the rug from under the feet of the secessionist leader, Colonel Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. However, Odukomaiya concluded by saying that when the war ended the way it ended in 1970 (Achebe, 1998: 56-64; Obi Ani, 1998; Igbokwe, 1995),[293] there were so many cleavages in the Nigerian political system and the Nigerian press acted along that line. Today that division still echoes through the Nigerian nation's political landscape, particularly as it pertains to the Ibos (Igbos), who fought the secession war and lost. In a presentation made, in 2001, to the Justice Chukwudifu Oputa

[290] Also see Onimode, 1981: 166-191; Andreski, 1968; Diamond, S., 1967; Sale, 1969: 12-14; Anise, 1970.
[291] Three regions, namely: Eastern, Western and Northern existed in Nigeria before she gained political independence from Britain in 1960. A fourth region, Midwest, was carved out of the Western region in 1963, three years after Nigeria's independence.
[292] Also see Sklar, 2004.
[293] These authors have dealt on the effects of the war on Nigeria, particularly as they affect the Igbo group

Commission on Human Rights Violation Investigations in Nigeria, the Pan-Igbo Organisation, Ohanaeze, chronicled what it described as the atrocities that the Igbo ethnic group has suffered in Nigeria, before and after the civil war.[294]

On the role of the press, during the civil war and after, Duro Onabule's recollections of the events of that period in the life of the Nigerian nation, is quite revealing:

> *The press ... had a lot of impact on Nigeria, particularly on the eve of military intervention in the Nigerian political system in 1966 and the subsequent civil war against the declaration of the Republic of Biafra by the Ibos. The press had an impact because the other side in the civil war, the Ibos, who were fighting for the actualisation of the Republic of Biafra, were so handicapped in terms of their access to the press to put their own views through to the rest of the country. And suddenly, because of the pattern of the coup, the pattern of the killings as a result of the military coup of January 15, 1966, a section of the country felt aggrieved while another section, that is the Western part of the country, was indifferent. Meanwhile, the Easterners (mainly the Ibos) somewhat tactlessly believed that it had conquered what it believed was the major political obstacle in the country, ... the Northern leadership. In the process, a section of the Nigerian press, that is the New Nigerian, really inflamed the situation ...to such an extent that the repercussions of the earlier coup were inevitable. The newspaper whipped up sentiments, whipped up emotions, whipped up anger among the Northerners against the Ibos with the result that there were tribal killings and then the counter-coup of July 29, 1966* ***(Duro Onabule: Interview in Lagos)***

As Onabule's explanation further shows, the role of the press during this period was particularly felt in the aftermath of the coming together of the Western and Northern regions against the Eastern region. For instance, he contends that this and other developments in the country led to the mass exodus of Easterners from Lagos and from other parts of the country,[295] and with the national press mainly based in the Lagos area (Western Region), the Ibos had virtually no medium to put across their

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[294] Part of the presentation as reported in *The Guardian* [Nigerian] online edition of 26/07/01, under the title: "Ohanaeze, at Oputa panel, counts Igbo's losses in Nigeria..." read as follows: "To...understand our case on marginalisation and disempowerment..., [it] is purposeful denial of the rights of some members of a given unit by some other members of the group who control the power of allocation of resources...In all realms of public endeavour, Ndi Igbo have the requisite manpower and natural resources. But their rights to a fair share of Nigeria's resources have been consistently denied them by Federal authoritites...Ours is a case of deliberate exclusion of Ndi Igbo form common resources by a combination of ethnic groups which control the centre...Indeed, the observed consistent pattern of discriminatory and exclusionary responses of the Nigerian system to Ndi Igbo in the commanding heights of the policy suggests that our exclusion is not only deliberate but also malicious..."

[295] See Igbo Youth Movement, 2000; Eastern Nigeria, 1966; Muffett, 1982-These books touch on the various events that led to the civil war, particularly as they affect the Ibos.

side of the story. He added that, subsequently, the media in the other parts of the country, particularly in Lagos, simply suffocated the East's side of the story so that they had no medium. He said that it is arguable whether such imbalance influenced the outcome of the war, but that there was no doubt that the press coverage of the civil war, largely determined the stand of the outside world towards the civil war at that time.

At the same time though, some of the interviewees noted that the Nigerian civil war rekindled the nationalist instincts of the Nigerian press because it generally supported the Nigerian government's stand that the state should remain an indestructible and indivisible unit (Macebuh, 2001). Supporting this, one of the Interviewees,. Darah, explained: "It was the press that saved Nigeria. We were all young then, but in that period of '66 to '69, the press backed the Nigerian government." Declaring that the press did this in the interest of a united Nigeria, he added that in a way it was doing what the press had done during the anti-colonial period. For instance, he said that when the various colonial constitutions (Richardson, McPherson, Lyttleton)[296], were trying to weaken the Nigerian State, balkanise the people, the press was fighting to make Nigeria remain united; fighting the British and challenging British legislation that tended to weaken the country by division.

Arguing along the same lines, Mohammed Ibrahim noted:

> *"The press supported the government (military governmnet's policy to keep Nigeria one) during the civil war years. They ... propagated national unity, they propagated reconciliation and restructuring and so forth ... they campaigned for a strong central government"* (***Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna***).

5.1e The Nigerian press and military intervention in Nigerian politics

As indicated above, another central aspect in Nigeria's history in which the press has played a prominent part is in the military interventions in Nigerian politics[297]. This is one issue that clearly exposes the press as showing a lack of depth in its

[296] See, Ezera, 1964, for a detailed analysis of Nigeria's constitutional developments during the colonial period

[297] See Emezi, 1997; Ukpabi, 1972; Dent 1969; Adedeji, 1970; Akinyemi. et al. 1971; Baker, 1971.

understanding of the Nigerian polity (Uko, 2004: part 4). Although, like other segments of the Nigerian society, the press welcomed the military because they saw them as a better alternative to the rancorous politicians (Dudley, 1973), what has become obvious is that the military was not a better alternative to the civilians which they, the military discredited (Obasanjo: 1994: 21).[298] For instance, as Professor Dudley attested (1973: 109), when the implications of the first military coup on January 15, 1966, in Nigeria "came to be known and assessed, the reactions changed and with disastrous consequences".

For our purposes here the role that the press played in military intervention in Nigerian politics can be divided into two phases. The first period is when they, like other Nigerians, were in total support of military rule. This period was characterised by the press encouraging the military to overthrow democratically-elected civilian administrations (Uko, 2004; Odetola 1982: 26). What then happened afterwards was that the press was subjected to military pressure, thus using the press against the civilian political class (Adekanye, 1987: 7-30).[299] Statements by some of the interviewees, confirm these conclusions. Thus, in the discussion of the press and military administration in Nigeria, Onabule said:

> *The press influenced Nigerians to favour military take-over of government in 1966 ... All along the media would create the atmosphere or the tension for the military to intervene, rightly or wrongly. The tension, the atmosphere is always there for the military to use as an excuse to intervene and the media were always guilty at that time of believing that they would use the military to change Government.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

Expressing a somewhat similar viewpoint, Al-Bashir said:

> *The Nigerian media supported the army. In 1966 after the coup, the* ***Drum*** *magazine carried a caricature of the Sardauna of Sokoto kneeling before Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu)[300] and that was at a time when there was tension in the country .... The painful [aspect] was that the Nigerian media was able to promote this kind of thing ... when they could have resisted the army at that time... [Also] when Alhaji Shehu Shagari was re-elected President in 1983, the* ***Nigerian Tribune****, for three months after October 1983, on its front page kept more or less calling on the military to overthrow the administration of President Shagari because they believed Chief Obafemi Awolowo (The proprietor of the* ***Nigerian Tribune****), to have won the election. When the*

[298] See also Odetola 1982: 18, 26 & 31; Agbese, 1988: 270-286; Ekwe-Ekwe, 1990.
[299] See also Agbese, 1990: 293-312.
[300] Major Nzeogwu led the first Nigerian coup on January 15, 1966.

Military struck again on December 31, 1983, the ***Nigerian Tribune*** *again carried an editorial commending the Nigerian Military for overthrowing the democratically-elected government of President Shehu Shagari. Then* ***Punch*** *again carried the same editorial supporting the position of the* ***Nigerian Tribune****. The new Military ruler, General Buhari was asked on the BBC, when he was saying that the Nigerian politicians were messing up, whether he brought it to the attention of the politicians. He said 'no', because the Nigerian media had told them everything. So, in other words, the ground had been softened for them (the Military) before they struck.* ***(Interview in Kaduna)***

Mr Agbese's contribution is that after inviting the military, the press were then subjected to prolonged haranguing from the military to discredit the civilian political class.[301] In the opinion of Agbese:

The first fourteen years of military regime, what then happened was that the press was subjected to a great deal of military indoctrination. And the indoctrination took the form that the civilians having been kicked out of office for various offences, among which was corruption, nepotism and their inability to settle their own political rifts in the interest of the nation, the military were able to turn the press more or less against the political class. And so the political class became the enemy of the nation.
So progressively the press imbibed military indoctrination and began to act as if it was a natural thing to do, and that there was nothing good in the civilian [rule]. And that was the way the military could establish their own legitimacy, I believe. And so the press was more or less a very strong instrument in the war against the political class [that was] waged by the military for a very long time. ***(Interview in Lagos)***

But this had dire consequences for civil society because it could be safely said that when Nigeria returned to civil rule in 1979, it took a long time to re-orientate the press to begin to look at the civilians as the new administrators. So even though the military was no longer on the scene, they cast a long shadow over the nation. As a matter of fact, for the first four years of the civilian regime, the military psyche was still very strong in the press. And, according to Agbese, this was manifested in the form of exaggerating whatever disagreements happened, however minor, among politicians, which was then used as evidence that the politicians had learnt no lessons and they were still behaving the same way, and therefore they were not competent to

[301] For detailed analysis of how military regimes have militarised civil society in Africa, see, for example: Rutayisire, 1986; Decalo, 1990; Huthful and Bathily, eds., 1998; Klay Kich, Jr. and Agbese, eds., 2002; Hutchful, 1989.

rule the country. In Agbese's words:

> *By 1983 when we were going into the second term elections, the propaganda was very strong. And the propaganda was about corruption, blatant corruption in the political establishment. It was therefore easy by the end of 1983 for the military to come back because the same problems were played up very much by the press. It was played up in this way: the newspapers owned by the political parties fished in the ponds of their political opponents and whatever was wrong with the country was found in the backyard of other political parties. So it was terribly exaggerated. There was corruption but it was terribly exaggerated. And there is enough fact now to show that even if there was corruption in the first and second republic, there was more corruption during the military regime.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

This is where the press has come under criticism because, as further articulated by Agbese, its role during this period was not entirely Nigerian-as-a-state in outlook, as it showed partisanship and engaged in activities which were detrimental to the quest to ensure that the various groups that make up the Nigerian state were mobilised towards the national effort of integration and unity. Continuing, he noted:

> *This became the case as the press played up the sentiments against the civilian political class probably because it expected that after the military and then the return to civil rule, everything would be totally different, the politicians would behave differently. And of course the press didn't reckon with the fact that after fourteen years of being in the political wilderness, the new political class had a lot to learn, plus the fact that there was a new political system, the executive presidential system, which was being grafted on to the parliamentary system, which the country operated during the first republic, 1960-1966 (**Interview in Lagos**)*[302]

According to Agbese, what the press could not understand and analyse properly was that the oldest politicians who had experience in the parliamentary system found the presidential system of government a new experience. And then, on the other hand, he explained, there were the new politicians who had no experience to fall back on and so nobody knew exactly how to behave.[303] This dilemma created a problem in the first four years, which apparently the press did not understand.

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[302] Also see the communique from the "Report of Workshop on Media and Democracy", NPC, 2000: 131-133

[303] Also see Falola and Ihonvbere, eds., 1985; Ikoku, 2002; Ojiako, 1983; Bernasko, 2000; Ojigbo, 1980; Joseph, R., 1987; Sklar, 1983: xiii-xxi.

Why did the press act in this manner, with all the implications it had for the national effort? In the view of Agbese, this happened because "at the time, there weren't many people in positions of responsibility in the press who had gone all the way from the first republic through the military and all the way to the civilian regime. In effect nobody was guiding anybody."

But as suggested above, it soon dawned on the press that the military were no different from the civilian political class, which they overthrew[304]. This could be called the second phase of the press and military administration in Nigeria. This tendency of the press became particularly manifest after 1985 during the regime of General Babangida, who had on 27 August, 1985 overthrown the military regime of General Buhari in a palace coup. It is important to note here that General Buhari led the military coup of December 31, 1983, that deposed Nigeria's democratically-elected second republic President, Shehu Shagari.[305]

Authorities on the activities of the press during the military interregnum in Nigerian politics argue that the misconduct of some military officers and the prolonged military rule eventually alienated the media and the public[306] to the extent that, subsequently, anger was built up against the military. Indeed, this was an era marked by obvious corruption which was perpetuated by the military and which permeated the entire Nigerian society. To lend credence to this, a former military Head of State of Nigeria, General Obasanjo (rtd), and now Nigeria's president in the new civilian dispensation, said:

> Corruption on any scale is bad; so is mismanagement on any scale. But given the event of the past ... it is clear that the civilian politicians ... were far less rapacious in their corruption compared to the military who succeeded them, and far less degenerate in their social and economic management (Obasanjo 1994: 21).

As a result of these clear shortcomings of the military administration, the press was in the forefront of the campaign for the military to return to the barracks (Macebuh 2001: 31). As put by interviewee, Mohammed Ibrahim, "[It is to] the greatest credit of

[304] Olugboju et al. 1994; Uko, 2004: parts 2 &3.
[305] For a comprehensive analysis of Nigeria's past Heads of State and Government, see Iroanusi, 1997.
[306] Read Dan Agbese's views above, pp. 146-147. Also see Uko, 2004: part 3; Adeyemi, 1993 in Graybill, 1998; Olukotun, 2004; Olugboju, 1994; Article 19, 1997; Onagoruwa, 1976; Thompson, 1988.

the Nigerian media ... that they fought the military. They tried as much as possible to get rid of the military to hand-over power to the civilians ..." Yet Onabule acknowledged that this became the case because the hopes of those who fought and campaigned for civilian rule were dashed through what he called 'manipulations by the military'. So although the military returned to barracks, the rivalry among politicians became so intense that it was no surprise that the military, led by General Buhari, struck again in December 1983.

5.1f Negative effects of military administration on the press

What was also very noticeable about this period was the enactment of draconian laws by the military administration to curb press freedom, quite contrary to their promise of press freedom when they assumed office.[307] Such military action clearly had a negative impact on the press' role in the Nigerian polity. Odukomaiya gave expression to this when he stated:

> *During the period of Military administration, starting from 1966, the press had no freedom, the freedom was suppressed. So the role of the press at that time had to dovetail towards the ability to just managing to exist. It had to suppress its personality, it had to pretend to be loyal to the government of the day, as otherwise it would be closed down. That was what happened until 1975 when General Muritala Muhammed overthrew General Yakubu Gowon's regime.* ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos)***

Mohammed Ibrahim couldn't agree more when he said that,

> *When General Muhammadu Buhari took over in 1983 ... they suddenly realised that, after all, General Buhari was not a friend of the press. He introduced draconian measures to 'instil' discipline ... Detention was rampant, even journalists were not spared, other anti-government forces were also not spared. They were not [thus] too critical because the consequences were there.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

However, during this period also, the negative effects of press and military administration were mostly felt in the way that the military government became involved in the running of the affairs of once dependable and effective newspapers.[308]

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[307] See Obasanjo, 1980.

[308] Professor Osuntokun (1989: 351), gave a clue as to why the Nigerian military administration resorted to this strategy when he reasoned as follows:The military had always distrusted the media and

For instance, what happened when the government took over the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian* was that the two newspapers lost their objectivity and succumbed to government interference (Abati, 2002)..Odukomaiya again:

> *Not long after the new regime took over power, General Muhammed announced the Federal Government take-over of the* ***Daily Times****. I was still there. In fact he announced the seizure of the* ***Daily Times*** *and said that the Federal Government was taking over controlling interest in the* ***Daily Times****. Of course that was done to muzzle the* ***Daily Times****, emasculate it and made sure that it did not have any independence(Interview in Lagos)*

Darah also agrees with Odukomaiya's view when he says:

> *The* ***New Nigerian*** *was very critical of government [from] 1975. From a nationalist point of view, it reflected the northern point of view, which was legitimate ... It had a regional interest. It was not against national integration. It was conservative but it never said they didn't want Nigeria. It was the Muritala/Obasanjo administration that appropriated the newspaper in 1975... Since then, [its] role as media for articulating... position [of the northern part of Nigeria], has been weakened almost irredeemably.* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos)***

In a similar tone, Farouk Ibrahim, expresses his opinion thus:

> *By 1975, the Federal Military Government of General Muritala/Obasanjo took over the* ***New Nigerian*** *... It became a government newspaper ... I think generally a government-owned press is perceived as a megaphone of the government all the time. It doesn't criticise government and is less than objective when it comes to presentation of facts and policies of government* ***(Interview in Kaduna).***

In the case of the *Daily Times*, for instance, Odukomaiya also noted that before it was taken over by the Federal Military Government, it was by far the strongest and the most viable of all the newspapers in Nigeria. However, once both newspapers lost their independence, as a result of the take-over, other newspapers that were hitherto fearless and independent, took their cue. In effect, although the military's professed

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held them as one of the factors of instability in the country ... The armed forces, in spite of their shortcomings, had a more national perspective of events than the media, which right from the time of intervention of the various regional governments were more prone to reflecting regional sentiments than working for national unity. Having just fought a civil war for national unity, the military was not prepared to allow anything to disturb the peace of the land. The natural tendency in the military is towards centralisation of command...These centralising tendencies manifested themselves in...the Federal take-over of the television and radio houses in Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna. To cap it all, the Federal Government took over the *New Nigerian* and acquired the majority shares in the *Daily Times*, the only major independent newspaper.

aim was to promote unity through centralisation, it became counter-productive. Indeed, as further explained by Osuntokun:

> This centralisation of the media imposed *une unite de direction* ...(and eventually) led to ethnic rivalry and friction thereby ironically destroying the national unity which the military was trying to build (351).

5.1g The Press and military in the absence of formal democratic activities

The overwhelming view about the activities of the press during military administration remains that it was the press that held the Nigerian society together, in the absence of formal democratic and political activities, by standing against the military (Maja-Pearce, ed., 1996: 202-203).[309] Hence the events that occurred during this period, have led some observers of the Nigerian press and military administration in Nigeria, like Macebuh (2000), to note that

> In the dark days of tyranny and dictatorship, the Nigerian press stood firmly as a lonely scourge of wicked authoritarianism, and relentlessly gave promise that this nation would someday triumph over all those who were drunk with power, and begin again to retrieve the destiny which is undoubtedly ours.

This was also what veteran journalist and politician, Chief M.C.K. Ajuluchukwu (2000: 45), meant, while reflecting on the role of the media during the military regime of General Sani Abacha, when he stated that

> "... history should record that the Abacha regime brought out the best in the Nigerian media. Rather than cave in under his brutal and oppressive onslaught, the media tackled him head on, oblivious of the grave danger to which his opponents were confronted."[310]

On this issue, the thoughts of Darah, typify the views of most of the interviewees. To him,

> *The press in Nigeria is almost the last institution to hold on. It was so on December 31 1983, when General Muhammadu Buhari came, till 1993 when General Ibrahim Babangida messed up. There were no political parties. There were no non-governmental agencies. All the battles were waged inside*

[309] Duyile, 1989: Chapters 6 & 24; Ogbondah, 1993.
[310] Also see, Awoniyi, S.B. 2001.

Newspapers. It was the Military versus the rest of Nigeria. When General Buhari promulgated his draconian laws, the press was the first victim. Journalists like Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson, both of the Guardian Newspapers, were the first victims. Did they relent because of that? No! The press has made life uncomfortable for governments that toyed with the issues of development. The government of General Buhari couldn't last. ***(Interview in Lagos).***

5.1h The impact of ownership on the press

It is appropriate to reiterate that the ownership structure of the Nigerian press affects the way that the newspapers perform their roles (Dimpa, 1997?: vii & 109; Duyile, 1989: 42-64). For example, a unique feature of the Nigerian press is the difference in the way that both privately-owned and government-owned presses operate. This is particularly evident in state government-owned newspapers where the edicts or laws establishing them are meant to specifically promote the activities of the same government that established them, although nowhere in the edict is it stated that the interest of the government should be at the expense of the entire state or federation, as the case may be.[311] Hear Muhammadu, Momoh and Izeze, respectively:

There is a difference in the way each of them operates. The government-owned newspapers like the ***Daily Sketch*** *and the* ***Nigerian Observer*** *etc., were established to look after the interests of the respective government that established them, though the* ***New Nigerian*** *was an exception. But the privately owned newspapers operate in a different fashion. They have to survive first of all because they don't get subsidies from the government. And so they should be free to publish independent opinions for people to buy them and also rely on them as carrying balanced views.* ***(Turi Muhammadu. Interview in Kaduna).***

If you look at the edicts or the laws establishing these presses (government-owned), you will be surprised that they are meant to promote the activities of the same government ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

Oh yes. If government owns [the paper], you invariably know how you are going to perform. And if a private company owns you, you will definitely not operate like a government newspaper. You operate on the basis of a private company which means primarily you are there as a company ... to make profit. ***(Emeka Izeze. Interview in Lagos).***

[311] See, for instance, the edition of *Nigerian Observer*, 1968: August 26, p. 7.

5.1i Forms of control: The axe and the editor

A very typical feature of the way the presses are managed in Nigeria is that the editors of newspapers do not have the freedom to operate in a professional manner as many seek to protect their jobs (Jeter, et al, 1996: 31; Rosa & Brown, 1986: 114-121). Surely this is bound to have implications for the press' effectiveness in promoting the ideals of national integration. The issue here is that if those journalists who are employed either by the privately-owned or the government-owned newspapers are to keep their jobs then they are not expected to promote interests outside of those defined by their employers (Dare, T. 1997: 543-4).[312] Indeed it was not uncommon to find the Federal government, particularly during the era of military administrations, promulgating very draconian laws to bring 'dissenting' journalists and newspapers to 'order' (Maja-Pearce, 1996: 203).[313]

5.1j Newspapers: A tool of government in power

However, it is not known that the interests defined by a government in power will necessarily be in consonance with the overall national interest (NPC, 2000: 132). Hence a government-owned newspaper might become the tool of a government in power against political opponents, as is often the case in most of Africa, and indeed in Nigeria.[314] .

Agbese relates his experience as Editor of the Federal government-owned *New Nigerian* newspaper, during Nigeria's Second Republic (1979-1983):

> *They (NPN-led federal government) saw the* ***New Nigerian*** *as not merely a Federal Government-owned newspaper but because the NPN controlled the Federal Government, therefore, it was essentially an NPN newspaper and that an editor of the newspaper should recognise that. Unfortunately, I couldn't*

[312] See Nwosu, E.N. 1996: 20-29. Also see the following editions of *National Concord*: 5/6/83, p.2, 19/6/83, p. 3, 25/6/83, front page, and 17/6/83, p. 3).

[313] See also Olugboju, et al, 1994: 7-39; Olukotun, 2004; Article 19, 1997; Onagoruwa, 1980; Thompson, T. 1988).

[314] See, Ruijter, 1989, cited in Jeter, et al. eds. 1996: 29; Jukwey, J.I. 1997: 86; Osuntokun, A. 1989: 357; See the front page report titled: "CENSORED: Media houses under siege", of the *National Concord* edition of Saturday, 25/6/83; the copies of the *Nigerian Observer* during the first week of June, 1983

recognise this ... I think it was during the campaign of the 1983 elections and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe came to Kaduna for his presidential campaign and I sent a reporter and a photographer to the airport. They brought the story and with the photograph, I made it the back page lead. And it caused, shall I say a consternation within the ranks of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the then ruling party because nobody had done that before. I remember somebody writing and saying, "Yes! There is a change in the leadership and the direction of the ***New Nigerian.***"
And my own defence had always been that the ***New Nigerian*** *is a publicly-owned newspaper... I have read the mission statement of the* ***New Nigerian*** *and nowhere does it say that you cannot give voice to a different political view. But it didn't go down too well.* ***(Dan Agbese. Interview in Lagos).***

This scenario became especially manifest during the 1983 electioneering campaign when political opponents of the Shagari-led Federal government saw the *New Nigerian* as a hostile environment, and were therefore dissuaded from placing party political adverts on the pages of the *New Nigerian*. This situation was particularly obvious in August 1983, in the heat of the presidential campaign, as not a single advert was placed in the New Nigerian by the opposition political parties, namely: PRP, NPP, GNPP, and UPN. Again, the editor of the *New Nigerian*, at that time, Agbese, explains the possible reason for this:

It is true that in August 1983, during the electioneering campaign when I was the editor of the ***New Nigerian****, only adverts from the NPN were published. My own assumption, and I base it at what I knew at the time because I have no hard evidence for this since I was not involved in the advert department ... but I assume that the other political parties also assumed that since it was "a hostile territory", whatever they put out would either be submerged or be treated in a way that it would make it ineffective. So they didn't bother to place adverts there at all. There was no case of any advert being rejected from any other political party that I knew of. But I think it was based on the assumption of "Why go there, they wouldn't treat you well anyway?" Because each time there was a press conference by another political party, it was like at first when I got there, they were not involving the* ***New Nigerian****. When I opened the doors of the* ***New Nigerian*** *they felt happier and they did invite us and they came to my house to discuss [the situation] with me.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

Ibrahim acknowledges that the Nigerian press is susceptible to the manipulations of the different levels of government:

I was a practitioner. I was in the system for over 30 years. Let me tell you this: All governments are liars, whether military or civilian. All government, at any given time, would want to use the press for their maximum advantage. All government would want to ride on the back of the press to reach the

population. All governments would want to manipulate the press for their objectives. And Nigerian governments, in the last forty years, have behaved in this manner. ***(Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

Nevertheless, Ibrahim recommends that, in order for the press to overcome this reality, it should be encouraged to remain the watchdog of society, irrespective of whether or not it is being manipulated by government, and eventually "ensure that democracy, the rule of law, justice and fair play are really established in this country and become the norm in the society (Ibid)".

5.1k Does government always interfere? Editors engage in self-censorship

As earlier acknowledged, experts on the Nigerian/African media believe that government's involvement and interference in all aspects of the press limit the press' professional competence.[315] Nevertheless, there are those who also contend that, more than any other thing, self-censorship among media practitioners is the greatest hindrance to their ability to practice professionally (Obazele 1996: 155).[316]

In explaining the role that he played in the establishment of the *New Nigerian* newspaper in 1966, Charles Sharp[317] noted that he and his colleagues were given a free hand to run the newspaper by the northern regional government who owned it (Muhammadu, 2000: 12-26). Indeed, while recalling his experience as the Chief Executive of the *New Nigerian* newspaper, which was owned by Nigeria's federal government during the period covered by this research, Farouk Ibrahim argues that it is not always "true that government ownership automatically muzzles the press", because, according to him, even though the *New Nigerian* is owned by the government, the newspaper "had been very critical of government when it had cause to think that the government was wrong" adding that "luckily at least since this regime[318] came into power we do what we have to do to run a very good newspaper." This is a view that Muhammadu also shares when he says that, particularly in the first

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[315] See p.46 above.

[316] See *The Nigerian Observer* edition of 9/6/83, p. 3; also read the story: "Concord's embarrassing distortions", as published on page 8 of *The Guardian* (Nigerian) edition of 1/6/87).

[317] Charles Sharp, a British journalist, was the first Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* newspaper-1964-1969

[318] The civilian administration led by President Olusegun Obasanjo was elected into office in May, 1999

twenty years of its existence, the *New Nigerian*, even though established by the then Northern regional government in 1966,

> *... had a very national outlook. Indeed people were even surprised that even though it was a newspaper owned by the then Northern regional government, it expressed very pungent views, independent opinions and focussed on national issues and interests. Towards the end of the Yakubu Gowon administration (1966-1975), the* ***New Nigerian*** *published a petition against Governor J. D. Gomwalk of Benue-Plateau State even though the Benue-Plateau State government was one of the owners of the* ***New Nigerian.*** ***(Turi Muhammadu. Interview in Kaduna).***

But Farouk Ibrahim believes that how government-owned newspapers report or take sides on matters concerning Government is essentially a function of the persons running the newspapers. Thus he reiterates:

> *Sometimes government-owned newspapers over-censor themselves. I can tell you sincerely since I came to this house* ***(New Nigerian),*** *nobody has ever asked why you used this story, even though we have carried things quite critical of Government. Nobody has ever questioned our activities because it's believed that we are doing it in the national interest. And it's simply because we have our reasons and our facts. We say that Government is right here and Government is wrong there. I have said in the past that people feel uncomfortable that they don't want to be seen to be criticising the authority.* ***(Interview in Kaduna).***

In his book titled: "Courage and Conviction-New Nigerian: The First 20 Years", a former Managing Director of the newspaper (1976-80), Alhaji Turi Muhammadu, further stretches the argument to add that the reason the Federal government-owned *New Nigerian* was able to stand up against the government, after it was established in 1966, was because it proved itself to be very responsible and mature in its approach to issues (Muhammadu, 2000: vi-vii). This is wholly supported by the current Managing Director of the *New Nigerian*, Farouk Ibrahim:

> *The difference is that when we criticise, we watch our language, we try to be a lot more responsible and ... mature. That's part of the tradition of this newspaper house and we have maintained it. Just outright condemnation we don't do that. In the past ... this newspaper criticised Government over matters like the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the posting of vice-chancellors, etc. But we did so in a language that said yes! With the Government we disagree but it couldn't but respect the constitution.* ***(Interview in Kaduna).***

5.1l The press and the Nigerian question

Beyond the foregoing, it is generally argued by the interviewees that the press has allowed itself to be completely engulfed by the divisive Nigerian politics, particularly after Nigeria's independence in 1960, which, in effect has undermined its professional status as the Fourth Estate of the Realm (Adamu, S. 1994: 467-472; Ciroma[319] 1994: 35).[320] Nevertheless, there is also the argument that in order to understand why the press became caught up in the divisive politics of the Nigerian State, the question to ask is how Nigeria came to be in this situation.- what went wrong? And more importantly, what happened within the newly independent nation that impacted negatively on the press? For instance, many agree that the realities of all the institutions in Nigeria today, including the press, are a direct consequence of the Nigerian society engendered by many years of colonialism (Enwenwa, 1989: 76-77).[321]). That Nigerian society, as they see it, has yet to decide the national question and so it is basically divided along ethnic, regional, religious and cultural lines (Saro-Wiwa, 1994: 527-534).[322] And the fact is that Nigeria is made up of over 250 nationality groups, and these groups have more in common with themselves as nationalities or ethnic groups than with a nation,[323] with the result that many institutions in Nigeria, including the mass media, have developed along those lines.

Additionally, most of the interviewees believe that this erodes the Nigerian press' ability to contribute to national integration and unity.

5.1m Each section of the press constructs a notion of national identity

[319] On January 22nd 1994, Alhaji Adamu Ciroma delivered a lecture titled: "The Imperative of National Unity and the Responsibility of Leadership" at the First Annual Sir Ahmadu Bello Mmemorial Lecture under the auspices of Arewa House, Centre for Historical Research and Documentation, Kaduna. In reference to the Nigerian press, Alhaji Ciroma stated: "Our press today...represents the most sickening evidence of the collapse of values and order in our society and the sub-ordination of national institutions to the control and manipulation of self-seeking parochialisms with seemingly no notion, much less interest, in the Nigerian nation".

[320] See Osuntokun, A. 1989: 351

[321] See also Golden, P. and Elliot, P. 1979: 21; Andreski, 1968; Hatch, 1970; Sale, 1969; Aguolu, 1973: vii; Onimode, 1981: 166-191

[322] See also Abutu, A. 1994: 398-402; Nkom, S. 1994: 430-443; Kukak, M. A. 1994: 445-458; Jibrin, I. 1994: 459-466; Oyedele, E. 1994: 514-526; Mustapha, A.R. 1986: 81-96

[323] Read the views of fieldwork interviewees on pp. 161-164 under the caption: "The Nigerian press reflects nationality perspectives.

More importantly, the reality of the different nationality groups has engendered a Nigerian Constitution, which provides for a Federal form of government whereby a deliberate attempt is made to ensure that states are created along nationality lines, with a Federal government at the centre to propagate and implement issues in the overall interest of Nigeria (Whitaker, 1966: 7-150).[324][325] The result, as described by Odukomaiya (Interview.in Lagos), is that the press, as representatives of all sectors of the Nigerian community, only "speak for the Ibos, speak for the Hausa/Fulanis, Kanuris and the ethnic minorities" (Uche, 1989).[326]

Does this augur well for the national effort towards national integration? How can the press that represent and speak for their respective groups mobilise the entire nation? Even before and after Nigeria attained independence, there were intense discussions about how the new nation could forge unity within diversity. This was part of the reason why the British Colonial government, in 1957, set up the Willink Commission to look into the minority problems in Nigeria (see Ezera, K. 1964).[327]

To Momoh, this is simply the way forward for the press and the nation. He said that recognising the nation's diversities should form the basis for promoting national integration in Nigeria.[328]

> *It's inevitable! (We) must recognise the diversities as a basis for promoting national integration... each of the newspapers should do so to reflect their own diversities... it's good for national integration. It is important that we address the issues as they affect the components of the nation. National integration does not mean unanimity of opinion. National integration means recognising all the component parts of a nation and attending to their needs and they too making sacrifices in the interest of the nation.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

What implications do these have for national cohesion and integration? It has been argued that it is possible for a nation or a group to achieve collective identity by recognising and promoting the various nationalities within its domain (see, for

[324] See also Lewis 1968: 46-47; Carter (ed.) 1966; Aguolu, 1973: vii & 159; Newsweek, 1969: 52-53.
[325] For a detailed account of the Federal structure in Nigeria, see Awa, 1964 & 1976.
[326] Also see Omu, F. 1978; Haruna, M. 1996: 56-71; Ekeocha, E. 1996: 72-98; Kukah, M. 1996: 132-143; See, Tribune at 50, 1999?; Maja-Pearce, 1996: 202-229.
[327] Also see Saro-Wiwa, 1994: 529-531; Coomasie, 1994: 263-269.
[328] See also Ajayi, 1984: 1-12; Amuwo, et al. eds. 1989; Obasanjo, 1989.

instance, Schlessinger, 1991: 191), and the press can play a major role in this (Fitzgerald, 1991: 211). Momoh believes that this is not a major problem because, given Nigeria's historical circumstances, exemplified by its multi-national and multi-cultural groups (see Lloyd, 1970: 1-13),[329] the Nigerian press could and should be used to promote nationality interests because, according to him, national integration/identity in Nigeria should mostly be seen from the point of view of its international relevance. In his own words:

> *You can only talk of integration internationally. Or let us put it this way; you don't see a particular State newspaper running down the Federal Government. But you can see a particular newspaper running down another State in competition with another State and only opposing the Federal Government when the Federal Government undermines the interest of the State. For instance many States have taken the Federal Government to court over the issue of Revenue Allocation and the Derivation Principle. But that is not national disintegration; it is simply addressing the issue.* ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos)***

Sounding a similar note, Odukomaiya argues that if we are going to look at the issue of national integration, we have to recognise that there is the need to start from a nucleus, from a root because it is from that root that any group or institution can go ahead and play any integrative role. While supporting this notion, Onabule (Interview in Lagos), echoed the thoughts of the late nationalist fighter, Awolowo, by stating that "whatever your nationalist instincts are ... whether you like it or not ... you are from your own local government area first before being a Nigerian."[330]

On that score, Momoh singles out the *New Nigerian* newspaper as "the most genuine" of all the newspapers "because it reflected a northern perspective and did not deny it (Muhammadu, 2000). It said: 'We are Nigerians from the North'. That is, in the debate within the Nigerian polity, it will represent the north but where Nigeria is [talking or in dispute] with any other country, it will represent Nigeria."

Some of the interviewees voiced their clear agreement with Momoh because they believe it is the legitimate route to national integration in the Nigerian polity:

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[329] Also see Mackintosh, 1966.

[330] The late Minister of Justice of the Nigerian federation, Chief Bola Ige is also known to share this view as noted by Sklar, 2004, under the title: "The Federal Question.

It is only natural that the ***New Nigerian*** *has to speak for the North. It has always been a Northern newspaper propagating a Northern bias. The Federal government did not start the newspaper. It was the Northern government that started it.* ***(Sam Amuka-Pemu. Interview in Lagos).***

It started as a private newspaper called the ***Nigerian Citizen****. It has never compromised national integration. It was partisan. It was very critical of government up till 1975... it reflected the northern point of view, which was legitimate. The* ***Nigerian Tribune*** *was not representing the northern part.* ***Daily Times*** *was not doing it effectively. There was no* ***National Concord*** *then; there was no* ***Guardian****. So the* ***New Nigerian*** *was the voice of the North. It had a regional interest. But it was not against national integration.* ***(G. G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

The editorial policy of the ***New Nigerian*** *was primarily to promote the interest of the North, to project the culture of the North within the context of a Nigerian Federation. In other words it's obliged to look at national issues through, if you like, the eye of the culture and politics of the North.* ***(Dan Agbese. Interview in Lagos).***

But it should be pointed out that it has not only been the *New Nigerian* that was established to promote the interests of a particular region or ethnic area. Just like the *Nigerian Tribune* (see *Tribune* at 50, 1999) before it, which was set up to promote the Yoruba cause, the *Champion* newspaper was also set up to promote the interests of the Ibos.[331]. Nobody would know this better than the man who was involved in the whole process of bringing the *Champion* to fruition, Odukomaiya:

The ***Champion*** *that I also helped to set up ... has as its proprietor, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu. [While]...the* ***West African Pilot****...had already gone ... so Chief Iwuanyanwu thought that the Ibo race stood to be marginalised if there was no voice to speak on their behalf. The only voices that were available to them at that time only existed in ... the East. For instance, newspapers like the* ***Nigerian Statesman*** *and the* ***Daily Star.*** *[but]... they were regional or local newspapers. So Chief Iwuanyanwu wanted a newspaper which would be a nationally accepted newspaper, but which would start off by protecting the rights of the Ibo nation, the Ibo cause. The philosophy had to do with the intention of the proprietor to use the newspaper to integrate the Iboman into the Nigerian society. Its Mission Statement said: 'Starting with the Ibo nation.' In effect the* ***Champion*** *newspaper was set up by an Iboman, using the newspaper to promote the interest of the Ibo nation [but] within the context of the Nigerian State.* ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

[331] To understand the feelings of the Ibos within Nigeria, see the Ohanaeze's submission to the Justice Oputa Commission on Human Rights Violations Investigation, as published in the online edition of *The Guardian* [Nigerian] newspaper on 26/07/01 – Onwubiko, 2001.

Poignantly, these three newspapers, the *New Nigerian*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Champion* were each set up to promote the interests of their respective ethnic groups, that is the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba and the Ibo. This is not in any way saying that their significance, as national newspapers, is diminished as a result.

5.1n Ownership and the space for neutrality

Two of the most respected national newspapers in Nigeria, the *Guardian* and the *Vanguard*, whose proprietors are from the minority ethnic groups of Urhobo and Itsekiri respectively, were not set up to specifically protect or reflect the interests of the minorities.[332] In explaining the basic rationale for the setting up of the *Guardian*, Odukomaiya addresses this:

> *The motivation for Chief Alex Ibru was certainly not political at all. What was apparent at that time that the* ***Guardian*** *was being set up was that the* ***Daily Times*** *had already been taken-over by the Federal Government, the* ***Nigerian Tribune****, of course belonged to the Awolowo group, [while] the* ***National Concord*** *belonged to Chief Abiola, the* ***New Nigerian*** *was supposedly owned by the Federal Government but it was still fighting the Northern cause and so Chief Ibru saw that there was a very, very good opportunity for a newspaper to succeed which did not play any partisan role. So the first newspaper in modern times in Nigeria to really come out as an independent newspaper was* ***The Guardian. (Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

Nevertheless, according to Momoh:

> *The Vanguard and The Guardian do not reflect Delta's (state) worldview (where the owners come from) or the minority worldview, for the simple reason that the minority worldview is of no consequence in a place as large as Nigeria and it does not pay to reflect a minority worldview.* ***(Interview in Lagos)***

5.1o The Nigerian press reflects nationality perspectives

There is no doubt that the thrust of the interviewees' contention is that in

[332] See the mission statements of both newspapers in Chapter Three.

understanding the role of the press in national integration in Nigeria, then we have to relate its efficacy in fulfilling that task to the reality of what it is to contribute to integrating (Okeke et al, 1998).[333] Here the view that stands out is that because there is no Nigerian nation, there is no Nigerian press and, consequently, the press in the main do not have a national perspective on issues but instead reflect the nationality perspectives[334].[335]

> *The Nigerian situation is that the media reflect the nationality perspectives ... We must look at Nigeria through the media from a perspective of the reflections of nationalities rather than the national group ...We are not an integrated people. Nigeria is not a nation in the sense of Nigerians automatically and involuntarily reflecting and manifesting a national outlook. We don't have it. Everybody, every national group is looking at Nigeria from its own nationality window* ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

> *The press is very much playing the tune of, not necessarily the owners, but more importantly, sectional and regional interests. And it has been hindered in some kind of way because when the press is blatantly partisan, when the press sees nothing wrong in a particular environment and sees everything wrong in another political environment, there is a problem. I thought we had come to a point where we should be able to look at statements made by politicians maturely and say to ourselves, would this be in the national interest? But we haven't reached that point at all ... In other words an Iboman who owns a press is still looking at basically the interest of the Ibo community and the same thing with the Yoruba community and the same thing, I suppose with the Hausa community. So they are unable to look at what things unite us and move at things that divide us.* ***(Dan Agbese: Interview in Lagos).***

> *During the First Republic ... the newspapers promoted narrow and parochial ethnic and regional self-interests.* ***(Turi Muhammadu. Interview in Kaduna).***

> *Overall if you ask me to rate the Nigerian Press in terms of their contribution to national integration, I would say that there is no Nigerian press. I'd prefer to refer to them as [separate] media houses ... [Thus] I wouldn't refer to the press here as an institution – [However,] if there is a Nigerian nation, there is a Nigerian press. We are building a Nigerian nation; we are trying to build a [pan-national] press.* ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

> *Nigerian integration should be based first on the fact that we are not yet a nation and that ... we have been trying, but we have not yet built a nation* ***(Babatunde Jose. Interview in Lagos).***

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[333] See also Ekwe-Ekwe, 1991; Ikeazor, C. 1997; Panter-Brick, ed., 1978; Olagunju, et al, 1993; Ayida, 1990; Nigeria. National Assembly, Conference Committee on Creation of States, 1983?; Agunbiade, A. O., 1991; Oyovbaire, 1985; Suberu, 2001; Ekeh P. P., and Osaghae, E. E., eds, 1989; Okonkwo, I.E.R. 1987).

[334] Mohammed, 1996: 309.

[335] See also Omu, 1978: 248-250; Uche, L. U, 1989; Dare, 1997; Kukah, 1996: 134-135

There is partisanship in the Nigerian press. There is regional partisanship. There is ideological partisanship. ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

Nigeria is not a nation-state yet. And that could be affecting the press. But we are on the verge of becoming a nation-state and the Nigerian press is rallying to the support of the Government in this respect. ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

Regional attitudes dictate how newspapers behave. These are some of the problems we have in Nigeria. Nigeria is [effectively] more than one country. ***(Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Lagos).***

But important as the idea of the nationality press is, as a catalyst for the construction of an integrated nation, some have expressed misgivings as to its effectiveness in a context where the citizens do not even agree on what constitutes the nation or whether it should exist at all. Farouk Ibrahim's concern is typical:

My position on this matter is that in Nigeria, I think that media practitioners need to be educated to understand. First of all you have to accept that there is a need for the existence of the Nigerian nation. Sometimes some of them tend to write, let's go our separate ways. It's been written in the newspapers so many times. ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

Farouk Ibrahim's idea is also echoed by Babatunde Jose, who said that it will be difficult for the press to promote national integration in a situation where there is a strong attachment to ethnic background brought about mainly by the failure of people to succeed at the national level:

Ethnicity in Nigeria is [encouraged] when leaders fail at the national level, [as] they pander to their ethnic sentiments. I believe that we have to accept the fact that we are a group of nations. It is a difficult challenge, but each nationality should be developed within their ability. ***(Babatunde Jose. Interview in Lagos).***

Nevertheless, Emeka Izeze's account demonstrates that there is nothing sinister about this because the reason why Nigerian newspapers are seen as representing nationality perspectives is as a result of what he called 'the absence of ideology' in Nigeria's socio-political landscape:

Newspapers all over the world have their own political leanings. It doesn't matter where. The absence of ideology in our environment had made people to

align with certain worldview, which may well be limited to their own ethnic area. Otherwise if we were in a society where you have very clear ideology, you find newspapers will be differentiated purely on the basis of ideology. Issues tend to dictate the reactions of people. ***(Interview in Lagos).***

5.1p Uncoordinated patterns in the press: The effect of differences between North and South

As has been shown, many (if not all) of the interviewees have acknowledged that the Nigerian press believes in a united Nigeria. However, they are also aware that the inherent nature of the press shows that they lack a co-ordinated pattern in how this should be actualised. It could be argued, based on their submissions that this situation has been brought about by both objective and subjective factors in the Nigerian society.[336] Many of them argue that certain critical issues that the pre-independent developments engendered, and which now exist and permeate Nigeria, would simply make it impossible for the press to be anything other than what it is now. For instance, they make reference to the cultural differences between the mainly Muslim northern part of Nigeria and its mainly Christian southern counterpart (Haruna, M. 1996: 56-71).[337] More than any other factor, they agree that this is one issue that has fundamentally shaped the Nigerian press and therefore accounted for the imbalance that is immanent in the media institution in Nigeria. This is clearly corroborated by the comments of some of the interviewees:

We talk in Nigeria about the Southern-based press and the Northern press - their orientation is radically different. Our perceptions of the same national issues are different and it's not anything unnatural ... Your location determines exactly what you see with most issues. It's the rule of thumb in journalism. You are located in the North where generally the culture, tradition and perception of Government are different from that of the South. So you can't fail to get these reflected on the pages of your newspapers ... I think that generally the press in the South is not just aggressive but sometimes really less responsible... ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

The perspective that is being reflected in the Nigerian press is the so-called Western perspective, which is called the Lagos/Ibadan worldview. That worldview is a function of the outgoing nature of the Yoruba people, the business enterprising nature of the Yoruba and, of course, the Ibo and the Southerners generally. But the fact is that the Northerners are not extroverts,

[336] See Nkom, 1994: 432-440 and Odigie-Oyegun, 1994: 221-228

[337] See also Ekeocha, 72-98; Muhammadu, 2000; Oyovbiare, 2000: 99-112; Dare, 1997: 543-544; Omole, & Omang, eds., 1997: 77

their religion has affected their way of life ... They do not even see anything good in investing in newspapers ... So the Nigerian situation is dominated by the Western view...and that is the worldview that has affected the Nigerian press ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

5.1q Issues that account for the differences between north and south

Duro Onabule has delineated four of those issues and, according to him, they have to do with the fact that:

1. The northern part of Nigeria has no culture of self-criticism;
2. The typical northern businessman doesn't invest outside the north and has no culture of long-term investment, which the media requires to succeed;
3. The north has no reading habit;
4. The low purchasing power of most people in the north.

These are corroborated by what a notable northern politician, who was also the Federal Minister of Agriculture in the defunct second republic, Dr Shettima Mustapha, espouses as the major defects in the northern part of Nigerian, and which have resulted in the imbalances in the Nigerian press. For instance, at a Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) forum (Bornu in 2001), he stated that when it comes to the establishment of newspapers in Nigeria:

> Wealthy people from the North would rather invest their money in ventures that will yield quick money ... In the whole of the North-East, it is a shame that there is not a single regular paper, whether daily or weekly, that you can say "this originated from the North-East" [from] which you can get information, not because there are not people who are wealthy enough to float newspapers but unfortunately, our wealthy people see only one way traffic in making money. That is why you always sit down and claim that Lagos-Ibadan axis or South-West papers don't like you. Of course they have influence; they bulldoze you to do things because you are afraid of them and their pen.

The crucial point to note here is that any northerner who attains the ultimate political position as civilian President or military head of state of Nigeria is often handicapped, as he could be undermined by the southwest-based press in their attempt to project ideas which might not be in consonance with the overall national objectives. Indeed, the *Nigerian Tribune* provides a classic example of how a newspaper could be used to promote the objectives of a specific ethnic group to the detriment of those who do not

have access to such a medium of communication.

Onabule and Jose put this point tellingly, as they explained the dilemma faced by Nigeria's first prime-minister, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, a Muslim and a Hausa/Fulani from the north, who was subjected to intense opposition by the southern-based press owned by his political rivals:

> *When the Federal government of Prime-Minister Tafawa Balewa found that it was being attacked right, left and centre by the* ***Nigerian Tribune,*** *owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, attacked by the* ***Eastern Outlook,*** *owned by the Eastern regional government, attacked by the* ***West African Pilot,*** *owned by Dr Azikiwe, he decided to set up the* ***Morning Post****. But the people did not and still don't trust Government newspapers and so the* ***Morning Post*** *died because it was ineffective.* ***(Babatunde Jose. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *Prime-Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, had no voice until the Federal Government, which he headed, set up a newspaper called the* ***Morning Post****. But then it's not enough to set up a newspaper unless you have [sustainable] circulation and, of course, are supported by advertisement revenue, no newspaper can survive. [But] Prime-Minister Balewa did not have that with the* ***Morning Post*** *and the newspaper ... collapse[d], while the* ***Nigerian Tribune****, set up by Chief Awolowo while in Opposition as the leader of the Action Group (AG), was making headway.* ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

Onabule believes that where such imbalances exist, "there is not much a newspaper can do to integrate a country ...". For instance, on the role of education in this endeavour,[338] Onabule said that "no matter what efforts the press makes towards national integration, unless our brothers in the north improve their prospects for higher education[339] and acquire a reading habit and then have the purchasing power to buy the newspapers, there is not much the press can achieve."

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[338] See, for instance, Tella 1989)

[339] Higher education in Nigeria is in the Exclusive Legislative List in the Nigerian Constitution. What this means is that funding of education is done mainly through federal allocations to the states of the Nigerian federation. The states are then expected to use the funds accordingly. But the issue of education in the northern part of Nigeria has a cultural dimension to it informed by the religious divide between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria.While the mainly Christian south had embraced mass education right from the onset of colonisation of the area now known as Nigeria by Britain in the 1880s, this was not the case with the mainly Moslem north. The result is that there are more educated people in the south compared to the north hence reading culture is very low in the north. This undoubtedly limits the impact that newspapers can make promoting collective national identity through its activities. Although this is the case, it does not not edetract from the role that the press can play in promoting national identity. As educational prospects continue to improve for the average northerner, so too will the reading culture and therefore the press' influence.

Indeed, this is what Dr Festus Adesonoye (1989: 105) meant when he stated that, in order for a national communication policy to succeed, "a high level of literacy among the citizens of the country" is required because "there seems to be no point, for instance, in establishing ... newspapers ... when most of the people for whom they are intended cannot read them."

5.1r Effect of high radio listenership in the north

Closely aligned with Onabule's and Adesonoye's observations is the fact of the predominance of radio listenership in the north, as compared to the south. The implication of this is that buying and reading of newspapers are hardly the pre-occupation of the average northerner and therefore the press has little or no influence on them.[340] A northerner and former Chief Executive of the *Democrat* newspaper, Al-Bashir was very forthcoming when he explained this:

> *The readership in the North is very, very, low and it has not been able to match the listenership of radio. In 1997/98, the British Broadcasting Corporation released a report and said that after Tibet in China, the highest listenership of radio in the world is Northern Nigeria. If you wake up in the morning and see the people going to the Mosque or wherever, you will see them [with a] radio. You go to the market; it's the same thing... So when it comes to discussing international issues with these people, particularly the traders, you will be surprised at their knowledge of what is happening in the world. It is not from the newspapers that they get their information, it is from the radio. So there is a very, very powerful radio listenership in the North, to the extent that newspaper has become more or less an elite kind of media of communication ... Even [among] the so-called elite, the educated elite, very few of them buy newspapers, unless there is a controversy - election results are coming, yes, -ministers are going to be announced, yes - policies are [announced], yes. Apart from that, no, they don't care about newspapers. So that attitude also impacts on the newspapers produced here in the North. And I say a newspaper attracts its immediate environment, if you know what I mean. And so when it does not attract its immediate environment, you don't expect it to be more influential outside its own environment. These are some of the factors militating against the Nigerian press.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

[340] Read footnote 339 above.

5.1s The active southerner as against passive northerner[341]

Recalling his experience as a journalist with the Concord Group of Newspapers, Onabule said that when the *National Concord* newspapers came on the scene in 1980, the proprietor, Abiola, who, despite being a Yorubaman from the southwest, dared to challenge the mainstream Yoruba views. This meant not reflecting (or reflecting well on) Awolowo's political views and philosophy, whereas the Yoruba press never questioned his leadership. Put in his own words, Onabule's views go thus:

> *The **National Concord** came in on the nationalist scale because even though a Yoruba man set it up, it did not come out to support the Yoruba cause. In fact the newspaper was defending a Northerner, President Shehu Shagari and the activities of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) ... (So) from my experience with the Concord Group of Newspapers, the entire Yoruba press before the Concord newspapers hit the newspaper stand in 1980, was just personality through Chief Awolowo. Most, if not all the people in the Yoruba press, belonged to the Awo group.[342] But when the Concord newspapers came out, we were able to curtail that substantially and were able to balance the political arguments in Yorubaland. If we are to extend that to the North then there will be a balance in the Nigeria press.* **(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).**

Indeed his argument is that, for there to be a balance in the Nigerian press, the mainly Muslim northern Nigeria should also emulate the culture of challenging the mainstream views in their domain, which are antithetical to effective national press performance. However, he added by remarking that,

> *... culturally, it will not be easy to achieve. Easterners and Westerners are by*

[341] The question could be asked: To what extent does religion factor into cultural attitudes in relation to national identity and unity issues? There is no doubt that the attitudes and behaviour of the Moslems in the northern part of Nigeria are influenced by their religious faith. This view is supported by one of the interviewees, Prince Tony Momoh who noted that "the northerners...their religion has affected their way of life...They do not even see anything good in investing in newspapers" (read Momoh's views on pages 164-165 under the heading: "Unco-ordinated pattern in press: The effect of differences between north and south"). And as Chief Onabule's explanations show here, the cultural differences between the two regions are major factors in the way that people in the area react to issues. It should be emphasised here that in relation to this the Islamic religion plays a major role in the north. However, when it comes to issues of national identity and unity the interviewees have demonstrated that the Nigerian press does not use such a contentious issue as religion to promote a collective Nigerian national identity. What it uses instead are international issues involving Nigeria and other nation states (Read their views on pp.203-207 below).

[342] This refers to those that follow the idealogy foremost Nigerian nationalist, Chief Awolowo (late), who dominated the political landscape of the southwestern parts of Nigeria.

nature self-critical, either it is one group against the other or within the same group, there are people against one another and it is strongest in Yorubaland. It is not entirely the same with our Ibo brothers, but they are building up to it gradually. But nationally, I don't see the possibility of the same level of self-criticism becoming a feature of both the North and the South. Maybe it will take some time for the North to imbibe that culture of self-criticism. These are some of the issues that have shaped the Nigerian press ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

5.1t The role played by the location of the press

Another critical factor in the Nigerian press is where it is based. It is generally believed that the worldview of the Nigerian press is South-west or what is called the Lagos-Ibadan axis, as discussed elsewhere (Oyovbaire 2000: 99-112). This is one issue that has come under criticism and has therefore had clear consequences for the way that both northerners and southerners perceive issues in Nigeria. So most northerners believe that it is the southwest's worldview that dominates the press, and consequently, is unrepresentative of northern and other interests in the nation. For instance, while criticising the imbalance in the media institution in Nigeria, Dr Nnaemeka (1989: 7) also stated:

> The concentration of key national media establishments in the southern parts of Nigeria ... has not only been a major source of the furtherance of the North-South dichotomy in the political equation of the country, it has equally presented seemingly intractable problems of the development of a universally acceptable and credible Nigerian national media organisation.

The views expressed by almost all the interviewees amply bear out these concerns. Indeed a notable journalist from the Southwest, Onabule, is well aware of this phenomenon in the Nigerian system and has been quick to acknowledge its shortcomings:

> *The press in this country is mainly based in Lagos, in the South, particularly in the Yoruba area and unfortunately it is that Yoruba area that has continued to determine the character of the Nigerian press ...Private newspapers like the* ***Punch****, the* ***Vanguard****, and the* ***Guardian*** *... remain at best Southern voices and [these are] always against the North.* ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

Onabule said that this situation has brought about some imbalances in the Nigerian

press. In his view, this does not augur well for the purposes of mobilising the press for national integration and unity. He said that this, for instance, explains why the Nigerian press has been so uncritical of the current Nigerian leader, President Obasanjo, who is Yoruba. Onabule arrived at this conclusion as a pervasive characteristic of the Nigerian press – he addresses the way they treated the current president, Obasanjo, since the day he handed-over power to a democratically elected civilian Government, while he was still the Military Head of State in 1979. According to him, when Obasanjo left office in 1979, the Nigerian press took this southern Yorubaman "as the darling of the Nigerian press". Duro Onabule testified to this:

> *He spared none of his successors as he criticised almost every move that they made, every policy they introduced. He did not spare President Shagari ... or General Buhari and he was most devastating towards General Babangida. [But] all of them ignored him. Then he thought he could continue it with General Sani Abacha and, of course, he had his problems with General Abacha who incarcerated him. But ... the same Obasanjo ..., is now back in government.* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

The press became critical of him though, first of all when he was being sponsored by the Military, that he was being sponsored by the North and that he was even being sponsored by the former military Head of State, General Babangida. Onabule further says that the Nigerian press as a whole came out against him and supported his fellow Yoruba Southerner, Chief Olu Falae. The press thus saw Chief Falae as the representative of the South, as against Obasanjo, whom they saw as a stooge of the Northerners.[343]

> *But as soon as he won the election and assumed office as President, he started running into problems as he encountered criticisms on various issues. Now he was being given just a little dose of the poison he gave his successors after he left office as the Military Head of State in 1979 as people were criticising him and talking about the marginalisation of the North and the marginalisation of the Ibos in the current political dispensation. However, the same media, the same Nigerian press that opposed his candidacy for President, have now made a U-turn and embraced the same Obasanjo that they dismissed as a stooge of the Northerners, as their own man.*
>
> *To the Nigerian press, nobody should criticise President Obasanjo and that nothing should happen to him. In fact they have even gone as far as saying that President Obasanjo is being criticised because he has stepped on the toes*

[343] Also indicative perhaps, of the southern-based press.

of powerful Northerners. That is the Nigerian press for you. When Obasanjo as ex-Head of State, was criticising Northerners in Government, the Nigerian press did not say Obasanjo was criticising those Northerners because they stepped on his toes... But in any case, even if it was true, then those on whose toes he too has stepped on should be equally right to criticise him and if it was not true, then it shouldn't be true also that Northerners are criticising him because he stepped on their toes.

*The Nigerian press should realise that President Obasanjo is being criticised, just like every other government anywhere else in the world (**Duro Onabule: Interview in Lagos**).*

5.1u The problem of lack of infrastructural facilities

Another factor that the Nigerian press has to contend with are the apparent shortcomings in the infrastructural development in the nation. This is mainly visible in the area of poor transportation, which has substantially limited the reach of even those newspapers that tagged themselves as national newspapers (Adesonoye, 1989: 96-98),[344] According to Mohammed Ibrahim, despite the infrastructural problems, the newspapers still want to give the appearance of nation-wide coverage when they could effectively articulate issues within their domain as a way of contributing towards the national endeavour. The reason why the newspaper have continued to be organised this way is what Alhaji Ibrahim referred to as 'the profit motive' rather than the actual reality of the Nigerian environment, which is that Nigeria is not yet a nation-state and that national integration would come through developing the nationality groups, etc.[345]

On that basis, Alhaji Ibrahim's view goes thus:

*They pretend to be national newspapers because of advertising revenue, no more; no less ... Let me put it to you this way. There is the general belief that any newspaper which is not published in Lagos will not enjoy the kind of circulation it should enjoy, will not have the advertising revenue it requires, etc. So this is why, when they publish in Kano, they also want the newspaper to circulate in Lagos; when they publish in Kaduna, they want it to circulate in Lagos; when they publish in Calabar, they want to circulate in Lagos. This is where the pretension is, as I keep saying. Whereas if they are able to develop the market within their locality, generate as much revenue as possible, diversify their printing business, then they will have no business ... seeking a national platform. They would survive as regional newspapers. (**Mohammed.***

[344] See also Egbochukwu, 1996: 212-217; Wilcox, 1975: vi.
[345] See, for instance, Enahoro 1993; Madunagu 2000a & 2000b; Otitoju 2000; Saro-Wiwa 1994.

Ibrahim, Interview in Kaduna).

5.1v Impact of the Nigerian context on press behaviour

As already noted, the Nigerian reality, no doubt, has served as a limiting factor to what the press can contribute towards the national effort of national unity and cohesion. In effect, what are therefore certain, given Nigeria's history, are the nation's socio-economic, cultural and political diversities. It is one thing to recognise the significance of nationality press. But what has been the case with the Nigerian media / situation? Given the mitigating factors of Nigeria's reality to the effectiveness of the press in this endeavour, the delicate issue facing the Nigerian press would necessarily be how to redress the situation. For instance, the question could be asked, whether the nation's best interests would be best served through the press expressing Nigeria's diversities within the context of one Nigerian nation? If one goes by what some commentators and writers on the Nigerian press have espoused, the press, in this respect, has failed woefully. Their conclusions have tended towards the notion that instead of employing the nation's diversity as a basis for strengthening the nation, the press has used it to further weaken the nation (Usman, Y.B. and Abba, A., 2000). But the interviewees, in the main, do not see the way the press conducts its activities as necessarily detrimental to national integration and unity. Typical is the view of Al-Bashir who remarked that:

> *You can see the biases [in] ... the Nigerian media ... [but none] has come out to propagate the break-up of Nigeria.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

5.1w The Nigerian press reflects contentious issues in society

The underlying and significant aspect of the interviewees' arguments is that the peculiar nature of the Nigerian society has engendered in the Nigerian press the need to react to issues as demanded by circumstances. Jakande (1979: 110-111), has noted that the Nigerian press can do no more than reflect the contentious issues in the Nigerian state, enhance the nature of the debate within it in order for an acceptable national consensus to be agreed upon. Veteran journalist and publisher of the *Vanguard* newspapers, Mr Sam Amuka, concurred with this:

> *The press is not pre-occupied with whether we have a country or not. There*

are many grievances about the present Nigerian structure. Various groups in the country are complaining that they are marginalised. These ... are being reflected in the press ... The country is divided on ethnic, economic and social grounds. The press is divided between north and south ... [But while] they now talk of a sovereign national conference. These are the views that are reflected in the press. Everything should be traced to sectional interests. What is national has become sectional ... People's lives are touched, depending on where they come from, by issues. ***(Sam Amuka-Pemu. Interview in Lagos).***

5.1x Press performance: A result of lack of a clearly defined state role

Indeed, in a society like Nigeria's, where the role of the state is not clearly defined, the role of the press is also bound to be eclectic and dependent on circumstances as they arise (see Nnaemeka et al, 1989, vols. 1 & 2). This is true of the Nigerian situation where the cultural environment has bred and continues to breed a multiplicity of media to cater for the many ethnic and sundry interest groups. G.G. Darah (Interview in Lagos) contends that the Nigerian situation has remained the way it is because no particular group or class in society is dominant enough as to be able to stir the nation towards a generally acceptable unity of governance. And so over the years, the articulation of national integration has not been defined and informed by a common purpose, but by the ever-changing demands of groups and sectional interests:

No one ethnic group has overcome the other ones. Everybody is still a contender. So this gives enough room for the press to find operational terrain and to hold a diversity of views ... So it is not confusion but a multiplicity of voices and all the voices do not compromise on the question of national integration. But because of different position as to what that integration would mean- since Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Niger- Delta,[346] *you have found a new trend in articulation of national integration ... And for anybody in the Niger-Delta now, national integration should include equity, should include justice. The way national resources are being distributed now, that's not national integration the way they want it. So the press too is responding to the evolution of these new ideas as they relate to social justice, democracy and freedom.* ***(G. G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

However, their position becomes even clearer when we relate it to what Anthony Giddens (1981: 13), said while distinguishing between the 'nation-state', the 'nation'

[346] The Niger Delta area of Nigeria, from where Nigeria's oil wealth is generated, is also one of the most deprived areas of Nigeria. The area has become so volatile now that, almost on a weekly basis, foreign personnel of companies prospecting for oil in the area are targets of local militias, opposed to the Nigerian government's policy in the area, who take them as hostages and demand ransoms. In 1995, one of the world's renowned environmental campaigners in the area, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was hanged by the military government led by then Nigerian leader, General Sani Abacha.

and 'nationalism':

> What makes the 'nation' a necessary element of the 'nation-state'... is not the existence of sentiments of nationalism (however strong these may be) but the unification of an administrative apparatus whose power stretches over precisely territorial bounds. 'Nationalism', by contrast, may be understood as symbols or beliefs which attribute a communality of experience to the members of a particular regional, ethnic or linguistic category - which may or may not be convergent with the demarcation of the nation-state (cited in Schlesinger, 1991: 167).

Seen from the reality of the Nigerian situation, it could be argued that because Nigeria is not effectively a nation-state, ethnic nationalism and therefore, regional, religious or cultural sentiments take precedence over what should be the pan-national objectives. Osuntokun's (1989: 357) reminiscences aptly describe the use to which the Nigerian press has been put and therefore how it came to acquire the character it is made of now:

> Because of the quest for political power on the eve of independence, the media became a weapon in the hands of politicians who were more eager to consolidate regional power in their hands than to nurture and project the sense of common nationality. It took the country the tragedy of a civil war before the stark reality of our lack of national focus in the media became obvious.

5.1y Effects of pre-independence developments on the Nigerian press

However, to appreciate this is to also understand how the situation came about. It is important that we recognise that whatever character the press is made of today is a direct consequence of the various developments that occurred within the Nigerian political domain pre-independence.[347] But one event that stood out clearly, as they relate to the press, was the political row that erupted over the nomination to fill a vacant seat on the Lagos Legislative Council in the early 1940s. This came about because the two contestants for the post, Ernest Ikoli and Samuel Akinsanya got support from two different factions of the nationalist movement. The aftermath of this was the press war between two nationalist newspapers: the *West African Pilot*, owned by Azikiwe and the *Daily Service*, owned by the NYM.[348] Describing the events and the repercussions that they caused later, Omu (1978: 55), stated that they "virtually

[347] See Sklar, 1983
[348] See Adamu, S., 1994: 467-472

destroyed the multi-tribal character of the Lagos section of the NYM" adding that the feud between the two newspapers, "contributed to the regionalisation of nationalism and the crystallisation of inter-group tension and animosity which characterised political developments for a long time".

One of the interviewees readily concedes that these events impacted negatively on the press:

> *Suddenly, because of this division within the political leadership, the media failed, despite the efforts of the Nigerian Youths and the Nigerian students, to unify the political forces. [Instead], the media fuelled the division between Awolowo and Azikiwe, fuelled division between the Ibos and the Yorubas at that time. That was the beginning of the division within the country. The various newspapers took sides ...* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

Jose's historical account added a wider sociological analysis of the nature of the Nigerian press. To him, the introduction of the 1954 Nigerian constitution, which provided for three regions (Eastern, Northern and Western),[349] entrenched tribal and regional politics in Nigeria that subsequently affected the press (see Uche 1989). As his explanation shows, under that constitution people were elected to the Regional Assemblies through the Electoral College, although once they were elected, they could declare for their own political parties. In the Western region (with Lagos then part of this region), elections were conducted, and late Azikiwe, late Dr Olorunibe and late Prince Adedoyin were the three elected members to the Western House of Assembly on the platform of the NCNC. The constitution also provided for election to the House of Representatives using the Regional House of Assembly as an Electoral College, so under that constitution three people have to be elected into the Federal House of Representatives. When the motion was called for, the AG subverted some members of the NCNC not to vote for Azikiwe to go to the House of Representatives.[350] Jose described this event that prevented an Iboman from representing Lagos in the Federal House of Representatives as 'naked tribalism':

> *That was the beginning of naked tribalism in Nigeria ... Dr Azikiwe was denied the chance ... because he was an Iboman and not a Yorubaman. [He*

[349] See Ezera, 1964.
[350] For detailed analyses of political developments within Nigeria, before independence, see Sklar 1983; Ezera 1964

then sought election to] the Eastern House of Assembly in order to become elected into the Federal House of Representatives. And so tribal politics became pronounced, and this was reflected in the editorial policies of the newspapers owned by the political parties. ***(Babatunde Jose: Fieldwork interview in Lagos).***

5.2 Some issues that impact on press' constitutional role

Of more concern to the interviewees are some issues immanent in the media institution in general which impact on the press' constitutional role. These are what one might choose to call the subjective factors that could veer the press from the path that would genuinely enable it to bring about national cohesion (See Usman, Y .B. and Abba, A., 2000). Although it could be said that these issues are contextual, the interviewees believe that some are results of the unprofessional activities of the journalists. They articulated their submissions under such themes as:

1. The motives for setting up newspapers
2. Newspapers set up in response to new socio-political reality
3. Complaints about journalists
4. The press is divisive and promotes ethnic cleavages
5. Professionalism and the press
6. Typical ways press conducts its activities
7. The Control factor in the Nigerian press
8. Effect of media control on the Nigerian state Media control and the state
9. The policies of government
10. Press and government policies

5.2a The motives for setting up newspapers

Starting with the first theme, the question could then be asked whether the reason why some press collapse in Nigeria has anything to do with the motive/s behind their establishment. This question is posed with an understanding that any press that collapses cannot be expected to play any further role in the task of national integration and unity. Within the context of the Nigerian society, we have already seen how writers have blamed the inadequacies of the press and therefore its failure on the effects of the nation's colonial heritage.

But here, for now, our interest is in why certain newspapers established within the nation collapse and therefore the adverse effect on the print media institution in the overall task of national integration and unity. Most observers of the Nigerian press agree that both economic and political considerations account for why some newspapers collapse after a few years in circulation. For instance, they argue that the newspapers established to serve purposes other than those engendered by purely economic or market circumstances, do collapse. A typical example is the *Democrat*, which was published in the northern part of Nigeria. According to its former Managing Director, Al-Bashir, the reason this happened was because the newspaper was established for political reasons:

> *"You know the man [the proprietor, Alhaji Ismaila Isa] is in business, he is a contractor, and he is a building contractor. Now a lot of the percentage of his earnings or of his activities comes from the government. And because he depends on the government, he doesn't want anything bad written about government. So the newspaper relied too much on government. From the very beginning, the journalists were not given a free hand to operate and I think when I got there the circulation was just about twenty-something thousand. But within six months or one year of our coming, we were able to raise circulation to about one hundred and eighty thousand. But then again, you see, pressure was put on me to favour government and all that. And I said if we continue on that path, the newspaper was going to collapse - and it did* ***(Al-Bashir: Interview in Kaduna)***.

As the experience of the *Democrat* newspaper shows, reliance on government patronage resulted in grave consequences for the newspaper. For refusing to sing the praises of the government, the government even refused to pay the newspaper for earlier services rendered. Again in the words of Al-Bashir:

> *By the time we closed down in the* ***Democrat****, we were not able to collect our ... revenue from the Northern government amounting to about seventy-eight million Naira ... (And) I remember particularly what happened to the* ***Democrat*** *during the time of General Sani Abacha. They even wanted to arrest the publisher and jail all of us particularly when we wrote a critical Editorial, which we tagged:* ***"The State of the Nation".*** *It was very critical of government. In fact they took out a paid advertisement to condemn that Editorial. Yes, the Federal government did that. It was in the* ***New Nigerian****, it was in the* ***Daily Times,*** *and it was in all the newspapers. And we knew that that was going to be the end of the* ***Democrat****. And so they refused to pay the publisher for the contract he got from the government... and consequently we had to close down in September 1997 (****Al-Bashir: Interview in Kaduna****)..*

But then, one could also argue that, not all newspapers established to serve political purposes collapse because, as the example of the *Nigerian Tribune* shows, its supporters always form the financial backbone, as further explained by Al-Bashir:

> *There are some people when they see the **Nigerian Tribune** collapsing; they give the **Nigerian Tribune** some money to assist it because of the position it is occupying. So the **Nigerian Tribune** is a very distinct newspaper. We've seen the newspaper survive in the sense that it is not only the owner that actually supports it, but other well-wishers, you know, what they call the Awoists (The Awoists are those that follow the political philosophy of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, one of Nigeria's foremost nationalist leaders that fought for Nigeria's political independence). They won't like the **Nigerian Tribune** to go down. And to the best of my knowledge they have never challenged anything that the **Nigerian Tribune** says. **(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

The *Nigerian Tribune*, established in 1949, was basically the political wing of the AG, whose fundamental aim was to represent the interest of the Yoruba group in the Nigerian equation. Darah contends that this is not unhealthy for the state because, even if, for instance:

> *The **Nigerian Tribune** ... takes the position that Chief Obafemi Awolowo [leader of the AG, one of Nigeria's pre-independence political parties] is never wrong. It may say that it's Western Nigeria or nothing, but in doing that it is not saying it will supplant or replace Nigeria with Western Nigeria. It's only saying that in view of the Nigeria that we want to stay in, it should favour Western Nigeria. **(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos)***

However, during the Second Republic,[351] Jose (Interviewee, Lagos), said that a new pattern for setting up and controlling newspapers emerged, although their rationale remained the same, which was to promote political aims and counter the attacks from political opponents.[352] As his explanations indicate, during the Second Republic a number of rich Nigerians set up newspapers to advance their own political ambitions (Nnaemeka, et al. 1989a: 408). But according to him, on the part of the new civilian federal government, the federal-government-owned *Daily Times* was its tool of attack against the federal government's political opponents. He stated that the Government did this by ensuring that the editors bent to the wishes of the federal government.

[351] Nigeria's Second Republic was from 1979-1983.
[352] See also Dare, 1997: 543-548.

Jose noted that the federal government resorted to this tactic because the *Nigerian Tribune*, owned by one of its political opponents, Awolowo, a Yorubaman, and the *Daily Sketch,*[353] another newspaper from the Yoruba ethnic area, were attacking it because they believed that Alhaji Shehu Shagari[354] cheated Awolowo to win the 1979 presidential election (Usman (ed.), 1982:: viii-ix).[355] In effect, one could say that this development, going by the recollections of Alhaji Jose (Interviewee, Lagos), prompted Abiola to come to the rescue of the federal government, by setting up the Concord Group of Newspapers. He concluded by stating: "So you found that the *National Concord* was backing the NPN-led Federal Government of President Shagari, although where Abiola's personal interests clashed with that of the Government, the *National Concord* would support Abiola ... The Federal Government-owned *New Nigerian* was also supporting President Shagari."

5.2b Newspapers set up in response to new socio-economic realities

What is obvious here is that where personal or ownership considerations assume prominence, the ability of the press to address and tackle national issues will inevitably be curtailed (Oyovbaire 2000: 103).[356] However, although this pattern predominated during the first and second republics for selfish political gains, Alhaji Jose said that the objective conditions within Nigeria's socio-political terrain now have made such tendencies unattractive. His contention is that newspapers are now being established in Nigeria mainly in response to new demands brought about by the realities of the social, economic and political developments within the state (Omu, 1996: 9-12). In effect, any owner that does not allow this new reality to direct the newspaper, and therefore insists on interfering in the management of their newspapers, will not thrive and the newspaper will eventually collapse. Many commentators on the Nigerian press have identified this issue over the years. And this explains why, particularly, government-owned newspapers do not do well.[357]

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[353] The *Daily Sketch* was founded by the late Chief Ladoke Akintola, who used it as the mouthpiece of his Democratic Party, which was a breakaway from the Action Group, led by the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo during Nigeria's First Republic (1960-1966).

[354] Alhaji Shehu Shagari contested the 1979 Presidential election under the platform of the NPN, while Chief Awolowo represented the UPN.

[355] See also Oyediran (ed.) 1979.

[356] See also Dare, 1997: 543-44; Enwenwa, 1989: 76-77; Omu, 1978: 248-250.

[357] See, for instance, 'Charles Sharp mourns *Democrat* (newspaper)', by Charles Sharp [*New Nigerian*, 7/6/85, p.4]; 'Ownership control of press in Africa' by Mohammed Haruna [*New Nigerian*, 18/6/87];

Jose (Interviewee, Lagos) noted that this situation has now resulted in what he refers to as the press' new quest "to find the support and the loyalty of readers, because newspapers are now many". But more importantly, according to him, the newspapers are virtually forced to embark on this new trend basically because they can no longer publish newspapers just for the promotion of their proprietors. They have to make money as the cost of production is very high and so they have to amend their editorial policies in a way that will be acceptable to their readers. He gave the examples of *The Guardian* and *National Concord* newspapers. He said even though *The Guardian* is owned by the Ibru brothers, it has to publish, not to manifestly promote and satisfy the economic interests of the Ibru dynasty, but to also target the middle class. In the case of the *National Concord,* owned by Abiola, he argues that since his death or even before his political travails, which eventually led to his demise, the *National Concord* too had to look after the interests of not only the Yorubas, in whose target area it is published, but to also have a wider circulation and attract advertisements and therefore get a good return for their investments.

5.2c Complaints about the journalists

Although these new realities exist, observers and commentators on the Nigerian media contend that they have not ensured a positive change regarding what the newspapers are being used for. The thrust of their complaints centre around what they term as unprofessional conduct of journalists which have had 'unsavoury effects on the industry', thereby jeopardising their capability to contribute effectively to Nigeria's stated national aspirations, including the quest to ensure unity and harmony among its multi-cultural units.[358] Assessing the activities of the Nigerian media practitioners, James Ademola (1997: 77) stated:

> ... several of today's media men believe that professional journalism is a licence for reckless writing, self-projection, libel, lies, rumours, speculations, [and the] presentation of fiction news, etc.

'Today's journalist should be a technician-and a thinker', by Ray Ekpu [*Vanguard*, 30/6/85, p.26, p.7]; 'Osoba decries official interference' [*The Statesman*, 19/6/91, back page]; Kwara moves to ... revive *Herald* (newspapers) [*The Guardian* (Nigerian) on-line, 29/7/03].

[358] See chapter two of Nigeria's 1999 constitution.

This criticism of the journalists is typical.[359] Some of the Interviewees acknowledged these apparent failings of the media institution in Nigeria. For instance, Onabule's worries concern what some newspaper proprietors now do with their newspapers or magazines. With an enormous growth in new publications, inevitably meaning that their owners lack experience and maturity, they are in the business of publishing mainly to confront government and defame public figures. He said these set of publishers do this in total disregard for the press laws that regulate the journalism profession.[360]

> *They pick on anybody and concoct stories. Anybody, including an armed robber, can just get up, set up a newspaper and call himself Editor-in-Chief and start defaming people ... We have some publishers who use the press to blackmail Government and Ministers. Most of them are contractors ... and they use their newspapers to blackmail when they want a particular contract. If they don't get the contract they use their newspaper to blackmail, or sponsor another newspaper to do it for them ... Even the so-called trained journalists, those with university degrees, are also misguided into believing that press freedom is a license to defame people. If you attempt to cause public insurrection using your newspaper, that is not allowed under the press law anywhere in the world, [but] 90% of the journalists and publishers in this country do not know that there are laws regulating the profession, [yet] once they are called to order, they will be shouting that there is no press freedom, the journalists are being harassed, etc. ... I am still looking for that publisher who has set up a newspaper for patriotic reasons. I don't know of any yet, unlike in the colonial days.* ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

Onabule's position is also supported by Momoh, who described what the Nigerian journalism profession has become today:

> *Now what is happening is that many Nigerian journalists go after contracts and they favour anyone from whom they can get the contracts. Even the proprietors champion these things and they set up newspapers in order for them to get contracts. They feature you so that you will give them contracts. So what we are now witnessing in Nigeria is that the newspapers that should monitor governance have become the clout [stick] for the contractor to get contracts ... What this means, therefore, is that the journalist has more work*

[359] See, for instance, (NPC, 2000: 132-133; Izobo, G. 1989: 130-134; Omu, 1978: 248-250; Oyovbaire, 2000: 103, Aloba, A., 1995: 101; Dare, T. 1997: 543-544; Kukah, 1996: 134; Omu, F. 1996: 10; "Lessons of the World Communication Day", the Editorial comment of the Imo state government-owned newspaper, *The Statesman*, published on 4/6/87, p.3; "Aikhomu castigates journalists", *Vanguard*, 26/6/91, p.3; "Editors are jokers", *Daily Times*, 30/6/89, p.3; "Destabilisation, violence, disinformation and transition programme-News Analysis", *New Nigerian*, 4/6/89,. front page; "Leaders as victims of calumny", *New Nigerian*, 8/6/89, front page; "Press berated for bad reporting", *The Observer*, 26/6/91, front page).

[360] For an insight into the press law in Nigeria, see Yakubu 1999; Fawehinmi 1987; Ugboajah 1980.

to do when someone uses the medium as a clout, because where his own interests or survival are involved, he will simply tell the journalist not to publish the story. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

All these, according to Onabule, have brought about what he called 'a high level of corruption' in journalism practice today in Nigeria. The level of corruption in the journalism profession in Nigeria is well documented (see, for instance, Macebuh 2000).[361] Onabule said that two of those who have exposed this pervading flaws in the activities of the Nigerian media institution today are prominent journalists, namely, Jose and Chief Ebenezer Williams (Aloba) now late. He said the first person to blow the whistle was Jose, one of the doyens of Nigerian journalism, who asked the journalists who demanded money from him, whether they knew who he was. To OnabuleDuro, if anybody could ask Jose and Williams for bribes, the level to which Nigerian journalism has sunk could be imagined, adding that no one can organise a press conference today in Nigeria and expect not to bribe journalists [362]

Momoh also touched on this issue of corruption in journalism practice in Nigeria when he stated as follows:

[My article] in the ***Sunday Vanguard*** *of 11/02/01 titled: 'Watch it Mr Journalist', discussed the complaints about journalists now, especially those on beat journalism like the National Assembly Correspondents, the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria, etc. For instance, people are complaining that journalists demand such things as brown envelopes [bribes] as they perform their duties* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

Momoh said that the journalists have tried to justify their corrupt practices by arguing that that is the only way they can survive as their wages are poor and are sometimes not paid for months. Although Momoh acknowledged that this is common in journalism practice today in Nigeria, he added:

The point I am trying to make is that this is not good for the press. Constitutionally, the press is the Fourth Estate of the Realm and it is not

[361] See also Izeze 2006; Idowu 1996: 201-205; Odetola 1982: 153; Ciroma, 1995: 101; "Journalists lambasted over brown envelope", *The Statesman*, 23/6/93, p.10

[362] See the quote attributed to Dr. Michael Okpara (now late), former Premier of the then Eastern Region of Nigeria, in the article: "The self-appointed kingmakers", written by Onwuka Arua and published in the *New Nigerian* 10/6/85, p.2. Asked to give his personal assessment of the Nigerian media at a press conference in 1983, Mr Arua quoted Dr Okpara as saying "... You can get our media houses to publish whatever you want them to publish...". Also see: "Dr Okpara raves at reporter", in *Nigerian Statesman*, 5/6/83, back page).

because the press is a business, it is because the press is a profession and the pressmen are professionals. If the other three Estates collude as they normally do, the press cannot do the same because it is the agent of the people. So the press has a job to do and...the journalists [should]...do their job professionally.... It is a very tempting profession and a journalist can easily be corrupted, but at the end of the day he loses his credibility. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

5.2d The press as divisive and promoting ethnic cleavages

As noted, one of the inadequacies of the Nigerian press is that it is divisive and promotes the aspirations of their owners, which in most cases are sectional. Experts have also made the point that this has been brought about by historical circumstances which has rendered the Nigerian society to be divided along religious, ethnic, cultural lines, etc. Consequently, the nature of Nigerian media practice is that they have been unable to rise above tribal / ethnic politics in the conduct of their activities.[363]

Nevertheless, Haruna said that this should not be attributed to the so-called divisive nature of the Nigerian society because "there is no society that does not have divisive elements within it and are therefore bound to have differences in religion, differences in language and so on."

As a reporter or as a journalist, you are supposed to go beyond that. You are supposed to overcome your prejudices and be able to reflect as objectively as is humanly possible. Since we are prisoners of our sources the only way you will be able to report facts fairly or as objectively as possible is to report from all aspects. In other words, all the divisions in society, if there is a crisis, talk to all sides on the crisis and so on. But you find that all too often we report from only one side of the issue. ***(Mohammed Haruna. Interview in Kaduna)***

This tendency is what Al-Bashir has adduced as the rationale for why, over the years, the press has been responsible for the construction of what he called "ethnic cleavages", adding that "particularly with the rising tide of ethnic nationalism, the situation has become pathetic in terms of the media injecting a sense of national unity."

Onabule attributes this very tendency of the Nigerian press to the issue of character. It

[363] See Dare 1997: 543-544; Kukah 1996: 134-135; Muhammadu 2000: 1-26); Bello: 1986: 134.

is his contention that many of the media practitioners in Nigeria's media institution today are young and inexperienced and are therefore incapable of rising above tribal / ethnic politics. In his own words:

> *I think it is a character issue. Most of the young ones now writing in the press were born in the era of tribal politics and so there is hardly anything nationalistic about them. They are so narrow-minded. They cannot view any issue from a national perspective. They only view issues from a very narrow and tribal perspective. Always one part of the country is wrong and that is the North or the East, while the other part, the West, is always right. Even within the Western and Yoruba part of the country, only the Awo group (those who are the followers of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and who still believe in his philosophy) or the Awo idea is the correct one and anything different is wrong.* ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos.***

5.2e Professionalism and the press

In as much as many of the interviewees see the Nigerian press in the same light, Al-Bashir maintains that there is still hope that the Nigerian press will live up to its societal responsibilities, if the examples being set by some national newspapers are anything to go by. Further, Al-Bashir is quite encouraged by what he described as the "professionalism being exhibited" in such newspapers as *Daily Champion*, *ThisDay*, *Daily Trust*, *National Interest* and *Newswatch* Magazine. So in effect, Al-Bashir says that "as much as we can see some of the defects of the Nigerian media in terms of their willingness to build national bridges across the Nigerian terrain, there are definitely a number of newspapers that are coming up that are dedicated to this cause and they have been doing their best to really see the other points of view.". The reason why Al-Bashir has come to this conclusion is because, according to him, he has observed that the above-mentioned newspapers and magazine are fair in conducting their professional duties. For instance, he stated:

> *I rate* ***Newswatch, National Interest, ThisDay, Daily Trust, Champion,*** *as the best we have so far in terms of trying to see the opinion of the other side. They will carry what you write. If you write something Islamic, they will carry it. If you write something Christian, they will carry it. That is fairness in a way. I am just giving this as an example ... So we have hope that there are some newspapers emerging, as I have already told you, that can see the Nigerian as a Nigerian. They look at you not in terms of your own tribe but in terms of your humanity, in terms of you as a human being ... [And one] belonging to the Nigerian nation.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

5.2f Misleading the reader: Bias, prejudice and editorial as fact

If the Nigerian press is to effectively mobilise the Nigerian populace towards the constitutional goal of national cohesion, the way it conducts its activities is of vital importance. There are those that believe that the only way that this will be achieved by the press is for it to actually live up to its role as the Fourth Estate of the Realm and therefore approach every issue with a strong and balanced professional commitment (Omu, 1996: 17).[364] But as has been highlighted above, some questions have been raised regarding the manner with which the Nigerian press conducts its activities. For instance, Macebuh (2000: 1) stated that journalism practice in Nigeria today has become so unprofessional to the extent that, for the most part, what one finds, "is a mystifying level of gullibility, an anxiety to publish every silly little uncorroborated battle." But what really worries Macebuh, is what he refers to as its complete abandonment of "the concept of apprenticeship," that is, the tradition of submitting the practitioners themselves, for a time, to the tutelage of more experienced practitioners. Hence, he stated:

> Today ... I cannot in honesty make any sustainable claims for the professional, let alone intellectual competence of much of the generations that followed mine. It is a painful condition to admit to, but it now appears that every young man or woman just out of school automatically appropriates to himself the right to be a columnist. The discipline of news reporting is no longer thought to be worthy of attention of supposedly brilliant staffers. And consequently, one is constantly bombarded with editorials that purport to be factual reports, with incomprehensible and illogical commentary, with news reports that do not appear to have any meaning outside their headlines, with a measure of egotism and narcissism that is truly alarming.
>
> Consider, for instance, a news report whose concluding paragraph begins thus: 'from the foregoing, it is clear that ...' Prince Tony Momoh or Ladbone (I have never been able to call him Lade Bonuola) or Femi Kusa or Tunji Dare would almost by reflex have thrown such a piece of foolish reporting into the garbage basket. But that is what one sees these days on a virtually daily basis.

Poignantly, Haruna agrees with Macebuh, as exemplified by what he regards as the common practice in the Nigerian press, which is their tendency to editorialise their news reports and pretend that their comment is built on facts.

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[364] Nwosu, 1996: 20-30; Jason 1996: 31-41; Kukah 1996: 132-143; Idowu 1996: 198-211

Everybody would always have a perspective. I have one; you have one. But if you want to report you should reflect all the sides to an issue and let the reader be the judge. But when you want to come and write your editorial or you want to comment, then it's clear that it's your perspective that you are now writing about. In that case you can write only your perspective. But invariably you find that among pressmen all too often they even pretend that their comment is fact. ***(Mohammed Haruna. Interview in Kaduna).***

He acknowledges that, for any newspaper, there is always a certain interest it is set up to protect, whether the owner is an individual or a government. But he adds that the media practitioners should also make it a priority to know that there is always the overall national interest. For Haruna, therefore, the important thing for the journalist to do is to "always try to get all the perspectives when reporting and not just their own perspectives".

Some of the interviewees particularly noted that the typical way that the press does its business is capable of derailing them from fulfilling their constitutional role. In turn, they espoused their different observations the Nigerian press on some fundamental issues, like the Sharia and Islam, democracy, the revenue allocation formula and the census, three of the interviewees who are Muslims and of northern origin,Mohammed Ibrahim, Al-Bashir, and Farouk Ibrahim believe that the Nigerian press has caused disaffection and disharmony within the Nigerian state. As explained by Mohammed, this is so because a detailed background to the sharia debate, for instance is often lacking in the Nigerian press and consequently, it is susceptible to what he called "the sensationalising" and publicising of the views of some individuals, who are most uninformed about the facts surrounding the Sharia debate. He made reference to a *BBC* African Service report, which interviewed a leading legal 'luminary' on the Sharia issue, to describe the very typical way that the mostly southern-based press has reported such issues of a very fundamental nature in Nigeria, as follows:

I can recall very well, one of the leading legal luminaries in this country being interviewed by the BBC African Service on the Sharia issue, giving the specific example of a woman who was fined or imprisoned in Niger state, because she was selling beer contrary to the Islamic legal system. Now what my respected legal luminary forgot to remember was that even in a Christian state, selling beer or any alcohol without a license is illegal. You can't go anywhere in this country ... and just begin to sell liquor without a license. ... The fact that that woman was taken to court and penalised for selling beer doesn't mean that

because she is a Christian, she should not be penalised. She required a license to sell and that was what the legal luminary failed to point out when the BBC interviewed him. So these are some of the misleading criticisms which normally come out. Yes, the law says, you can't sell unless you have a license ***(Mohammed Ibrahim: Interview in Kaduna).***

To Haruna, it is no surprise that the press has often approached such issues of national importance in this manner, because, in his own words, "the press is prejudiced and always reporting from an ill-informed position".[365] To support his argument, Haruna talked about the way the press has reacted to issues relating to the *Sharia* law introduced by some states in northern Nigeria, the Revenue Allocation Formula and the Federal Character Principle. What is apparent from what he has observed is that the Nigerian press does not report things as factually as possible and, as a consequence, their impact on national integration is gravely affected. Thus, he noted:

If you take, for instance, the issue of Sharia ... all their approach to it is to tell lies and ridicule it ... They don't even understand what Sharia is all about. All the time they see it from a negative point of view. It's like there is a brief for them to report only the negative sides ... Now, if you do that, you are not helping national integration or unity. The press can disagree completely with the value system of Sharia but, at the same time, it should report as objectively, as factually, as possible. Now you don't see that in the Nigerian press. ***(Mohammed Haruna. Interview in Kaduna).***

Haruna concluded by stating that this approach is characteristic of the manner of the press' reportage of other sundry national issues because it is 'all too often blinded by prejudices, whether they are religious or ethnic', which as he put it, 'come right through in its reports'.

Al-Bashir agrees with Haruna that the Nigerian press is indeed, "very biased or prejudiced". He made reference to the issue of democracy in Nigeria, which he pointed out has exposed what he described as 'the ethnic sentiments and loyalty in Nigerian newspapers'.[366] Al-Bashir's disagreement with the Nigerian press on this particular issue stems from his observation of the press' reaction to the alleged intentions of former Nigeria's military ruler (1985-1993), Babangida, a northerner, to stand as a presidential candidate in the 2003 presidential elections in Nigeria. He said

[365] See also Usman & Abba 2000; Anim 1997: 62.
[366] Also see, Haruna 1996: 56-71

all the press' campaigns against Babangida, were informed by their intention to stop him from running against the incumbent, President Obasanjo, a southerner and a Yoruba. Thus he stated:

> *Former military ruler General Ibrahim Babangida has been the object of insults by some of the media in recent times. Their grouse against General Babangida is that he is allegedly planning to stand as a presidential candidate in the 2003 general elections, even though the man himself has never said that. But they say General Babangida has no right to contest, and yet the media say they are promoting democracy. The best they could do if they so dislike the man is to campaign against him and ensure that he is defeated in the election. It is not for the media to say that General Babangida must not contest when there is no law banning him. But they are campaigning against General Babangida because he might contest the presidential election against the incumbent President Obasanjo.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

On his own part, Onabule simply described this tendency of the Nigerian press as 'double standards'.[367] To substantiate his assertion, he referred to the way the press handled some very sensitive issues that came up during two different administrations in Nigeria. The first was the way the press responded to what the then Chief of Army Staff, Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, a southerner and an Ibo, who was virtually number two in command to the then Head of State, Babangida, a northerner, said when questioned by journalists on the issue of Nigeria's alleged membership of the OIC, an Islamic organisation made up of mainly Muslim countries, in 1986. Onabule said because Commodore Ukiwe's response criticised the AFRC, which was the highest ruling body in the Babangida administration, by saying that the OIC issue was not discussed in the AFRC, 'the press hailed him as a hero and as a man of principle'. He said the press chose to relate to Commodore Ukiwe like that basically because, apart from the press itself being largely Christian-controlled and therefore against Nigeria's membership of any organisation that has connections with the Islamic religion, it is also mainly based in the south, which predominantly practices the Christian faith. However, Onabule said that in an almost related issue, when journalists asked both ex-President Shagari (1979-1983), a northerner and Hausa/Fulani and ex-Military Head of State, General Buhari [rtd] (1984-1985), also a northerner and Hausa/Fulani, who are members of the National Council of States (NCS), an advisory body on national issues, what the position of the NCS was on the issue of some states in the

[367] See also views as expressed in Usman & Abba 2000: 3-8; Oyovbaire 2000: 104-110.

Nigerian federation taking unilateral actions to introduce the Sharia laws in their domain, the press tagged their response unprincipled and against the national interest. Why? Onabule gave his explanations as follows:

> *Both Alhaji Shagari and General Buhari (rtd), as members of the National Council of States (NCS) came out and admitted before the media that the Sharia issue was not discussed by the NCS. So, even though they were both correct to say that the NCS did not discuss the issue, the entire Nigerian media that only in 1986 hailed Commodore Ukiwe as being principled for saying that the AFRC did not discuss Nigeria's membership of the OIC, now turned round to condemn General Buhari and Alhaji Shagari for the same thing obviously because they are from the northern part of the country.* ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

Giving his opinion on this same issue of the 'double standard' in the Nigerian media, Momoh said the reason why this is the case is because 'the Nigerian media believe in selective disclosures and selective justice'.[368] Momoh contended that what has happened, as a result is a basic flaw in the Nigerian press, which he describes as its pre-occupation with such terms as 'It says'; 'They say'. The point that Momoh is trying to make here is that the Nigerian press should do more than simply refer to sources in dealing with issues that are particularly fundamental to good governance by giving priority to calling people to order or calling people to do what they promised to do. For instance, he asked:

> *How much does the Nigerian press look at the previous budgets to see that the commitments in the budgets have been met? How much does the Nigerian press go after the projects that have been awarded in contracts to see how the contractors are performing in the different fields? How much has the press pursued the legislators to take them on, on the regulations that they are passing? How much has the Nigerian press studied the Constitution since they are supposed to hold everybody accountable to the people in the performance of the duties imposed on those in Government, by the people through the Constitution? How much has the press looked at the Code of Ethics? That Code, for instance, provides that no public officer should have a foreign account and yet everybody has a foreign account* ***(Interview in Lagos).***

Momoh was indeed very scathing about the way the Nigerian press has handled the issue of foreign accounts involving public officials in Nigeria. Further, it is alleged that corrupt past and present Nigerian leaders have deposited in British banks stolen

[368] On this particular point see, for instance, Oyovbaire 2000: 104-110.

Nigerian money amounting to about four hundred billion Nigerian *naira* (about a billion British pounds) Momoh said, even though the British government had let it be known that it will not help the Nigerian government to have access to the stolen money without criminal charges being pressed against the alleged culprits, the Nigerian press does not need criminal charges to convince the British government that an offence has been committed. His reasoning is that all the press has to put before Britain is that these corrupt public officials in Nigeria have no right to open foreign accounts and that the breach of the Code of Conduct in the Constitution, which is also a law, is forfeiture. So, in effect, he added: "If any official has a foreign account, it is forfeited to the Federal Government and the press should point to the section in the Constitution".

But Momoh noted that the reason for the press' inability to serve the Nigerian state in this manner is because, as already corroborated above by eminent authorities on the Nigerian press, 'the Nigerian press believes in selective disclosure, selective justice'. He said even though the Nigerian press is fully in the know that almost all the public officials in Nigeria have foreign accounts, they are only prepared to expose those officials who are no longer in favourite position, or no longer in government.

On this issue, Farouk Ibrahim agrees with Momoh. In describing what he has observed about the Nigerian press, Ibrahim stated:

> *In Nigeria for now I think most journalists would say that well, if I have to use this information, if I have to withhold this information to destroy an opponent, fine. It doesn't really matter to them whether at the end of the day; such action would be against the national interest... When it comes to talking about the press, there is so much difference between what the philosophy of the Press should be and what the practitioners in Nigeria do. There have been so many occasions when our newspapers and magazines have published blatant lies. They feel, well, we have to sell.* ***(Omar Farouk Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

To Haruna:

> *Some of the way we have reported, if it were left to the press, Nigeria would have gone to pieces. Because sometimes some of the headlines you see are really divisive headlines. They distort facts about whole sections of the country. Sometimes they tell barefaced lies and so on and so forth. So you*

have this mixed bag kind of situation ... I think the main thing is that we tend to be prisoners of our sources. I guess it's by definition the nature of the Nigerian media ... We just report the political actors. If they are from our own side of the country we just report what they say without asking critical questions, and so on. So it's basically prejudiced. And reporters ought to be able to overcome prejudice ... ***(Mohammed Haruna. Interview in Kaduna).***

Al-Bashir's thinking about the Nigerian press is also along that line as he noted that "we (the press) are so much attached to the political enclave to which we belong and this blurs our minds towards issues of national cohesion."

5.2g The control factor in the Nigerian press

Another factor which has been identified as an impediment against the Nigerian press in the task of promoting national integration is the control factor in Nigeria's media institution. It could be said that this phenomenon has a colonial legacy behind it, if the various measures taken by the British colonialists to control the press, particularly during the nationalists' struggle for Nigeria's independence, are taken into account (Nnaemeka et al, eds. 1989a: 158-159). Further, Nnaemeka et al (Ibid, 162-164) also notes that the activities of the nationalists' press so tilted against the colonialists to the extent that the various colonial governments had to go into newspaper publishing as a way of countering the attacks from the nationalist press. Although different reasons abound as to why media control from any source in Nigeria, is almost inevitable,[369] the crux of the views from the interviewees is that, any form of control exerted on a newspaper, for example, doesn't have to necessarily make a newspaper ineffective in the performance of national objectives insofar as the media practitioners themselves invoke the ethics of the profession as their guide, fulfil constitutional obligations prescribed for the mass media and therefore act as a check on control from any source.[370]

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[369] See, for instance, Dare, T. 1997: 543-544; Mohammed, B.J. 1996: 297-310; Egbochukwu, s. 1996: 215-216; Omu, F. 1978: 248-250; 'Ownership, Control of Press in Africa' by Mohammed Haruna published in the *New Nigerian* edition of 18/6/87, p.7; Haruna 1996: 56; "Why some states own media", *Daily Times*, 8/6/83, p.2; 'Osoba decries official interference', *The Statesman*, 19/6/91, back page.

[370] See Enwenwa 1989: 86-93; Omu 1996: 17; Nwosu 1996: 24-25; Kukah 1996: 141-143; Idowu 1996: chap. 14; Jason 1996: 36; NPC, 2000: 132-133.

This is what informs Momoh's position:

> *You see that's why I'm saying that the Nigerian journalist, although constitutionally an agent, must be a professional. Let the professionals tell the owners and be successful in telling the owners that there is conditionality for their owning which is that the press must monitor governance on behalf of the people ... For instance, as a professional, if you say I should run someone down, I would say, no, I am not going to do that until I hear from him. That's the impact of ethics. It is drawn up and it tells you what you must do which is that you are to publish facts because the law of defamation, protects the man I am being asked to run down. The same thing if I am asked to run down a government. I would respond, as a professional, by saying that there is the law of sedition and that the things I am being asked to publish are covered by the Official Secrets Acts. Of course, there is also the law of treason. So you see that all these impact on exuberant ownership ...* ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

However, Momoh added that the Nigerian press can effectively overcome the ownership obstacle by looking at the role the press is to play, which, as clearly spelt out in chapter two of the Nigerian Constitution, should inform their perspectives and worldviews:

> *That is why I have always said that the media have a responsibility to articulate the Nigerian dream which is Chapter two of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is known as the "Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy." That is what constitutes the Nigerian dream and it is our own definition of the Nigerian interests. It defines what everybody must do. It says that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria and not to one part of it ...*
>
> *It says that through the Constitution, the people of Nigeria have delegated power to those in Government and that these powers delegated must be shared among three, that is those who make laws, those who interpret laws, and those who execute the laws. In other words, the powers are shared among the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary but the people are saying that these powers are being delegated to those who find themselves in that and according to Section 13 of the Constitution, they must succumb to, abide by, and embrace the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the area of education, in the area of social policy, in the area of the polity, in the area of the economy, in the area of the environment, in the area of culture, in the area of foreign policy, they are all there ... That is the Nigerian dream and that is what the press must promote to have a national perspective on issues.* ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

Nevertheless, Momoh also believes,[371] as do some renowned Nigerian media experts, that it would be foolhardy to think that any newspaper, or media in general, can be free from any form of control, whether internal or external, given the fact that they are often set up for a purpose, which is to look after and protect certain interests.[372]

Interviewees Farouk Ibrahim and Haruna agree that any individual or group setting up newspapers or any media house would inevitably have some interests to protect in the first place.[373] Momoh said this practice of using newspapers or the media in general to propagate certain interests or objectives has been employed by Nigerian publishers, whether government or private since colonial times and subsequently during the nationalist struggle against the colonialists. The impact of the colonial legacy on the way that the Nigerian press conduct their activities today is well documented.[374]

Indeed, in the view of Momoh, the major political actors during the nationalist struggle and immediately after Nigeria gained political independence in 1960, established newspapers not only for the purpose of campaigning against colonial rule, on which they were all united, but also to promote their own political ambition against their political opponents. But the main thrust of Prince Momoh's views on the control factor in Nigeria's media institution is his delineation of the various levels at which they occur and their effects on the national objectives of cohesion, integration and unity into: control through ownership, control through patronage, control through policy and control through the ethics of the profession, as well as the control which the environment within which the press operates exerts on the press. Put concisely, Momoh stated:

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[371] See Prince Tony Momoh's submission at the second national media week of the Nigerian Union of Journalist {NUJ}, held in Owerri, the Imo state capital [Nigeria], in June 1989, as published in Vanguard, 6/6/89, p.7. The former Nigerian information minister is quoted as saying: "The objective of private newspapers is that they do not criticise their owner and their interest"-

[372] Also see, 'Ownership, Control of the Press in Africa' written by Mohammed Haruna, published in *New Nigerian*, 18/6/87, p.7. In this Alhaji Haruna stated: 'Editorial independence? In Nigeria the private newspapers may be relatively independent of government interference, but the notion that they are necessarily freer than government newspapers arises from the erroneous thinking that government is the only threat to press freedom. Government is not the only owner of newspaper and all owners tend to behave alike ... [and] that is that for those who pay the piper, they try to dictate the tune".

[373] See Uche 1989; Oyovbaire 2000; Dare 1997: 543-544; James 1997: 77; Aloba 1995: 45-54, Ajuluchukwu 2000: 43.

[374] See Hachten 1971: xvi. Further, Dr. Nnaemeka (1989: 4), has argued that the colonial legacy has persisted because the struggle for political independence, not only in Nigeria but in most of Africa, did not involve theoretical and philosophical questions about the role that the mass media should play in the construction and reconstruction of an independent nation (see also, Enwenwa 1989: 77-78).

The control pattern is through ownership because when you own you control, as he who pays the piper must dictate the tune. Control also is through patronage as, for instance, if I put adverts in your newspaper or if I give you subventions, you must reflect my perspectives. So you can see the business angle to control. Then the final control is through policy, which is that you must obey the laws of the land. For instance, ... we have the newspaper Acts - The Newspaper Ordinance 1917, Amendments 1964, Newspaper Registration Decrees, the Nigerian Press Council Decree. etc. These are the laws of the polity. There is the law of Defamation, the law of Sedition, the law of contempt and the Official Secrets Acts, etc. These are all control through policy because they regulate publications. One can also talk about control through ethics or professional control, which is that you must do it through ethics ... and of course there is control through the environment itself. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

5.2h Effect of media control on the Nigerian state

The important thing to note here is that the various levels of control have their own implications for national integration, particularly as they relate to the way the press has treated and continues to treat some sensitive national issues. For instance, Turi Muhammadu, while making reference to the press' handling of an issue like the OIC palaver, noted that the press was guided by the ownership interests, which in this case, were their loyalty to and faith in their religion coupled with the geographical locations of their newspapers (Muhammadu 2000: v-viii).[375]

If one also considers the views of Jose on the role that the ownership pattern of Nigerian newspapers play in the direction that the newspapers follow, it would be discovered that this is also tied to the religious beliefs of the ownership and the location of their respective newspapers. On that basis, for instance, it would become easier to understand why newspapers like *The Guardian*, *Vanguard* and *Daily Champion*, all based in the mainly Christian southern Nigeria and whose proprietors are also Christians and southerners as well, were opposed to Nigeria's membership of the OIC. But on the other hand, newspapers like the south-based *Concord*, whose proprietor is a southerner but a Muslim, and the *New Nigerian*, which though owned by the federal government but based in the mainly Muslim north, were in favour of Nigeria's membership.

[375] See also James 1997: 77; Aloba 1995: 45-53; Oyovbaire 2000: 101-102;

Hence Agbese said the *New Nigerian* had no option but to support Nigeria's membership of the OIC, whether or not it had any objections about the process of Nigeria's entry because, as an Islamic religious issue, it is part of the culture that the *New Nigerian* is supposed to promote.[376] On this basis, Agbese explained that:

> *New Nigerian support was in line with the Muslim religious culture, which, among other issue, is that a Muslim cannot, in public, oppose whatever is done in the interest of Islam* ***(Dan Agbese: Interview in Lagos)***..

Farouk Ibrahim reasons along the same line when he notes that because the *New Nigerian* is based within a mainly Muslim northern Nigerian environment, it had to support any issue relating to Islam, like the OIC and the introduction of the Sharia law by some states in northern Nigeria. He said in order to ensure that such issues do not damage national integration and unity, the media in general owe a duty to the Nigerian State to organise their reactions on these Islamic issues around the understanding that under the constitution, Nigeria is a secular state and that the constitution allows for the fundamental rights of the people to be ruled and judged according to their faith and beliefs. According to him, it is this aspect of the Nigerian constitution, which the mainly Christian-oriented and southern-based Nigerian press, has failed to appreciate and come to terms with (Interview in Kaduna).

But Odukomaiya (Interview in Lagos) remarks that the Nigerian press' handling of these and other issues (OIC, Sharia, Revenue Allocation Formula, Census, Federal Character Principle,[377] etc.) should be judged on the basis that each media house has its own standard, its own vision and also its own limitations.[378] In effect, it is almost impossible to find a situation in which all the newspapers will agree to denounce or applaud any particular matter. Momoh also alluded to the same view:

> *There is no unanimity on the OIC issue because it reflects the religious perspectives of nationalities and, of course, there is a division between the Christian perspective and the Islamic perspective on this issue ... If you ask*

[376] See "How and why the 'New Nigerian' was established", Muhammadu 2000: 1-26)

[377] The federal character principle within the Nigerian society means every in Nigerian should reflect the ethnic mix of the state. Many Nigerians have opposed this arguing that it breeds incompetence because people are given positions not based on merit.

[378] For the Mission Statement of each of the newspapers selected for this study, see chapter three above.

me about how the newspapers have each responded to other issues such as the census, [or the] OIC, ...[it was] a reflection of the nationality group that dominate their place of operation. For instance, you see that in the Lagos area, what the Yoruba view is dominates the presses, in spite of ownership. The ***Vanguard****, the* ***Guardian****,* ***ThisDay****,* ***Champion****, even the* ***Daily Times****, all reflect the Yoruba worldview by and large because the readership is Yoruba.* ***(Tony Momoh: Interview in Lagos).***

It has already been noted that various writers and experts on the Nigerian press have argued that the press needs to be professional to enable it meet its responsibility to the Nigerian society. They believe, for instance, that it is only in an environment where the media is an impartial arbiter on all national issues that national integration and unity will flourish.[379] However, Ibrahim, one of the interviewees, contends that given the media frenzy generated by Nigeria's membership of the OIC, the Nigerian press has yet to imbibe these principles and therefore failed to exhibit professionalism in their activities by mis-educating the Nigerian public to believe that Nigeria's membership of the OIC was a prelude to Nigeria becoming an Islamic state, ruled according to the Sharia law.

OIC has nothing to do with Sharia. OIC is an organisation. Whether you are 100% Muslim or not, you are free to join OIC. It is the Nigerian media and the Nigerian people who made it look as if it is whatever ... Successive governments [have] realise[d] that it is an added source of soft loan for development without any strings attached. Sometimes, the loans are interest-free. It has nothing to do with religion. It's just because a group of Islamic countries came together and said that, each country with a Muslim population, no matter how small, is free to join. Uganda, Kenya and South Africa are all members of OIC, [despite being] predominantly Christian. So these are the distinctions the Nigerian press have failed to make on this issue, for their own reasons. ***(Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Kaduna).***

He said if the Nigerian press had made these distinctions; it would have become obvious to the Nigerian public that there are two categories of membership, which enables any country to be an observer or a full member. In conclusion, he added: "In the same vein, if a nation wants to, it can keep an Ambassador in the Vatican. So that is why Nigeria has a mission in the Vatican. There is no reason, therefore, why it cannot become a member of the OIC."

[379] For the various arguments and conclusions refer to chapter two above.

5.2i The policies of Government

What is obvious from the foregoing is that the interviewees concede the fact that the media institutions in Nigeria are subject to various controls. Nevertheless, they all agree that the control factor in whatever form should not be made to supercede the overall national interest of the Nigerian State. But an important observation about the problems that the media control factor has created in the media institution in Nigeria made by Nnaemeka et al (1989a: 112) is 'the absence of any guide to behaviour for the mass media, for government and for all other interests provided by a national communication policy ...'

Consequently, Edeani (1989: 111), identified four problems related to mass media control in Nigeria as: "(1) political meddling, (2) lack of professional responsibility, (3) excessive sensitivity by rulers and government functionaries to unfavourable news reports and criticisms by the mass media, [380] and, (4) the absence of a well articulated and effectively implemented national communication policy."[381]

These phenomena were also highlighted by Agbese who, while describing the relationship between the government and the press, noted that the absence of an integrated law for the press to follow has resulted in their inability to challenge the government. Rather, their performance is hampered through an array of laws acting against the press. Agbese especially describes this as one of the common features of military administrations in Nigeria. For instance, he notes that the military in Nigerian politics promulgated retroactive laws to punish 'offences' that had not been such before.

> *The problem for the Nigerian press is lack of government policies on how the press can perform. Because there are no press laws in the country more or*

[380] See, for example: Protection Against False Accusation, Decree no. 4 of 1984 in Nnaemeka et al, (eds.) 1989a: 142, 365, 377, 392, 396-397, 399 re: Decree no. 27; also see, Akinnola 1998; Article 19, 1997; Bitrus 1996.

[381] This point, in particular, is rooted in colonialism, because today in Africa, in general, instead of an agreed national goal influencing the mass media institution, it is the neo-colonial Western concept of news and development that drive the activities of the African mass media. This has brought about what Jeter et al (1996) described as the 'clash of media values' between African mass media and African governments, resulting in most African governments resorting to stricter media policies to cow the media.

less guiding the behaviour of the press. And so we are subjected to arbitrariness on the part of those in power ***(Dan Agbese: Interview in Lagos)***

To support this notion, Agbese made reference to the stories based on the Cookey Report[382] on what was supposed to be the political orientation for Nigeria, published in 1987 by the *Newswatch* magazine. As his explanation shows, government's reaction to the publication was to promulgate a retroactive law to punish the *Newswatch* magazine even though it did not contravene any law by publishing some stories based on the Cookey Report. In the words of Agbese:

In 1987, when we (Newswatch) published stories based on the Cookey Report ... we were proscribed for six months. It made sense to them. They then made a law ... a decree backing the action. In other words before that we didn't breach a law but having taken the action, they had to delegitimise it, they had to make a law backdating it. And a whole lot of things like that were done by the military regimes. An action was taken first and then the action was criminalised and then the law was brought in to back the action of the government ***(Interview in Lagos)****.t.*

It was also during the same military administration of Babangida (1985-1993), that some other newspaper houses fell victim of government's arbitrary powers as they were sealed up for publishing stories that the government considered a threat to 'security'.[383] Agbese's verdict on this is

... it's arbitrariness. I mean what did the ***Guardian*** *do? Or what did the* ***Punch*** *do? They didn't commit crimes and they didn't breach any press law. But somebody simply said: what you are doing is offensive to me and so don't publish. If there is a law and if it says I am doing it under this law then they will go to court and say: 'No, I have not breached the law ... '*

But the problem is the absence of [an integrated] law. And I would personally want to have a law to guide my behaviour so that if somebody challenges me I could challenge him in the court. The court can decide who is wrong and who is right. But in the cases just cited there is nothing of the sort; they criminalise your action and bring the law backing it up and you have no defence. That's the problem. ***(Dan Agbese. Interview in Lagos).***

But Agbese also acknowledges that the press has also not helped its case by not

[382] The Cookey report was based on a series of memoranda and a synthesis of the public hearings which the Justice Cookey Commission received. The Commission was set up by the President Babangida administration and had as its terms of reference the need to fashion a new political direction for Nigeria.

[383] See Maja-Pearce (ed.) 1996: 203; Olugboju, Aigbogun & Nwankwo, 1994: 1-39; Duyile 1987: 362-375).

making a consistent and determined effort to fight this government tendency, going by the way that it has conducted itself over the years. Perhaps, because of the already stated lack of a state communication policy to guide the mass media in particular, the media have been unable to take an enduring and principled stand, in the overall national interest, against successive governments' arbitrary behaviour towards oppositional or critical statements by media institutions or individuals. A typical example given by Agbese is the way the media generally fail to challenge the military governments' arbitrariness against the politicians that they overthrow. For instance, he notes that when the military came to power in 1984 and removed the democratically elected civilian government of President Shagari, a whole lot of politicians were put in jail for spending security votes[384]. Agbese's concern here is that although the politicians spent the security votes under the law, the new military regime ensured that the politicians were jailed for it. The regime did this by criminalising the actions of the politicians and backdating a new law all the way to 1979, the year that the military handed over power to the elected civilian government of President Shagari.

> *In other words if you look at that law, it was like we didn't have a government from October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983. But nobody (in the press) appears to look at the implications of that. The thing was that these guys (the politicians) were guilty; therefore we have to deal with them. That is part of the problem.*[385] ***(Dan Agbese. Interview in Lagos).***

5.2j Press and government policies

The press has often found its way around harsh and arbitrary government policies aimed at emasculating and making it ineffective. One of the ways it has done this has been by going underground.[386] And indeed any keen observer of the Nigerian press would attest to the fact that, whether it was during the colonial era or the dark days of military rule, the Nigerian press had often found a way to survive (Macebuh 2000). This much was acknowledged by some of the interviewees, who noted that the

[384] The security votes which was approved by the NPN-led federal government during the second republic (1979-1983) was a separate budget meant to cover issues of security for the Nigerian state. But many Nigerians were sceptical that that was in fact what it was being used for. They came to regard it as one way that the NPN government deviced to siphone public money for party political patronage etc. This was why many Nigerians were happy when the military clamped down on the politicians for using public funds for dubious purposes.

[385] See footnote 257

[386] See, for instance, Yusuf 1997: 31-35; Olugboju et al. 1994: 11-13.

Nigerian state has always wanted to handcuff the press.[387] However, there is no denying the fact that even with repressive government policies against the Nigerian press, the press has remained a consistently resilient institution in civil society, which everybody, including the government, has to contend with. Indeed, ironically enough, government policies have, instead of muzzling the press, had the opposite effect of making it more radical:

> *The press has operated in defiance of government policies. From what we have seen in the past ten years, even when regulations are made trying to suppress it, it goes underground. Under General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha, they thought the press how to operate without premises. Journals were published with no address. It has mastered working in a very hostile environment. It remains powerful any day. Governments can ignore it, but at their own peril.* ***(G. G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

> *The policies of government must invariably affect any newspaper. How has it affected us? I don't think it has affected the media negatively as such. If anything it probably was aimed to affect the media negatively but it turned out making the media to find other means of survival.*
> *Are we talking about the decrees of the military in those days? Are we talking about Decree 4 or Decree 2? What they did was to make the media grow more radical or become very more engaged in the political process. It then meant that anytime the government was seeking to enforce those laws, clamp down on the media, it became not a matter of law and order any longer but an issue of human rights and the violation of the freedom of people to express themselves and to publish newspapers and so on and so forth.* ***(Emeka Izeze. Interview in Lagos).***

In spite of this, the interviewees also agree that the most important obstacle to the press is the policies of government which have made publishing a very hazardous and economically ruinous undertaking. This problem has been exacerbated by the fact that in the Nigerian State, government is involved in almost every aspect of the Nigerian nation,[388] and, in effect, its policies are bound to affect an institution like the media/the press in many other ways. Many authorities on the Nigerian media have written about the negative effects that Nigeria's economic environment has had and continues to have on the press.[389] What has therefore happened, as many of the

[387] See, for instance, Odetola 1982: 14, 26, 152-153.
[388] In 1981, the late renowned Nigerian Professor of Political Science, Claude Ake, in his Presidential address to the Nigerian Political Science Association, was quoted as saying: 'The Nigerian state appears to intervene everywhere and to own virtually everything, including access to status and wealth'. See also Olurode 1990: 18.
[389] See, for instance, Jason 1996: 37; Ekeocha 1996: 93-94.

interviewees acknowledge, is that the dire economic environment created by government's stringent economic policies, has led to a situation whereby only a few newspapers are able to survive purely on their own and operate as professional media establishments:

> *Only a few newspapers are able to survive on sales and advertisements. The others have to be [subvented] by their owners. Inflation, the underdevelopment of the nation's infrastructure, the technological backwardness to the extent that except for the English we write, most of the things we use in the newspaper are sourced from abroad - newsprint, ink ... the vehicles we use for conveying it, etc. The business is excruciating.* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

5.3 The impact of foreign influence on the Nigerian press

The realities of globalisation on mass media institutions in nation-states constitute a major field of research in media and cultural studies.[390] The effects of international communication on the Nigerian media institution are not the focus of this study. Rather, the foreign influence on the Nigerian press that is under scrutiny here relates to the links between the international economic environment and the economic policies that Nigerian governments have enunciated vis-à-vis the excruciating effects of such policies on Nigeria's media institution.[391] During the research period, the crisis resulting from Nigeria's debt to international financial institutions[392] was a recurring feature of Nigeria's socio-political and economic landscapes.

Some of the details of Nigeria's debt burden, as provided by Momoh, gives an insight into how their negative impact manifest in the print media process. In his words:

> *I have just written my column for the Vanguard newspapers and it is titled: "Deny the Debts". Basically what I am saying is that Nigeria should deny the debts because we had no capacity to pay them. We had no legal capacity, we had no economic capacity and we had no social capacity. We were not told what the implications of what we were signing were before we signed the agreement for the loans. But as it is now obvious to us, the implication for signing such documentation, which was meant to be short-term loans, was that our children and their children would be paying such debts.*

[390] See, for example, Sreberny-Mohammadi et al, 1997; Curan & Gurevitch (eds.) 1997; Mohammadi 1997.
[391] See socio-economic setting on pp.54-60 above
[392] Such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the London Club and the Paris Club.

We borrowed $3.5 billion dollars in the 70s and at that time the rate of exchange was $2 dollars to N1 but since then we have been paying through the nose. In fact we have paid $13.6 billion dollars; we still owe $28 billion dollars and the going exchange rate of the Naira is more than N100 to $1dollar. That is the Western world for you. They made us sign the documents without telling us the implications and so we didn't have the legal capacity and indeed, they even drafted the agreement, our own was to sign. We did not have the economic capacity to pay because we were on the receiving end. We were expected to meet the basic needs of our people but because of the debts we had to pay back we didn't have enough for our people. Yet and at the same time, our creditors were threatening us that unless we paid, they were not going to give us spare parts for our machines etc. Then when we now paid the debts what happened? They devalued our currency before they gave us the next loan and as a result of all these, our economy is now completely messed up. This is affecting every facet of our lives including the press. So to that extent I would say that foreign influence is very real. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

Indeed, the negative impact of the debt burden on the Nigerian press has been phenomenal. For instance, during the mid-80s and in the 90s, because of the devaluation of the Nigerian currency (*Naira*), against the British pound and the American dollar, foreign exchange that the newspaper houses needed to import newsprint became so scarce that not enough raw materials were available to them to maintain their production level.[393]

For instance, on this issue, Odukomaiya and Izeze had the following to say:

Within the past 15 years the restrictions [include that] newsprint has become a very scarce commodity, even though the Federal government purported to have set up a newsprint firm at Oku-Iboku in Aqua Ibom State in 1980. [But] that industry has existed only in the breach. It is there and even when it was in its full bloom, what it was producing was not enough for the Nigerian newspapers to consume.

Now, as if that was not enough, the Federal Government is imposing a very high and prohibitive duty on the importation of newsprint. Well, there is nothing [more] discriminatory ... [than] the imposition of prohibitive duties

[393] For an in-depth knowledge of how Nigeria's parlous economic situation, brought about by the excruciating debt burden, has affected the Nigerian press, see The NPAN (Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria) case, the *National Concord* Editorial 1/3/83, p.2. Also see: the paid full page advert placed by the NPAN in the *National Concord* f 6/3/83, p.10; the Editorial in the *Nigerian Statesman*, titled: 'Nigeria's newsprint crisis revisited' 3/6/83; 'Some newspapers may fold up', by Segun Osoba, the then General Secretary of NPAN, in *New Nigerian*, 2/6/83, p.16; 'Newspapers to benefit from SAP {Structural Adjustment Programme} relief package', *National Concord*, 15/6/89, front page; "NUJ wants govt to reduce cost of newsprint", The Guardian {Nigeria} on-line, 24/9/03)

by the Federal Government on the importation of the raw materials used by the press ... [as they are] bound to have a very deleterious effect. ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

What [also] happened was that foreign exchange became scarce and ... [this affected our ability to obtain] newsprint. And even those who made it their business to import newsprint, they were unable to import as much as was needed in the market. And once supply is not meeting demand, the cost will be going up. That was what happened ...

... [Another reason was] because the Naira was depreciating rather fast and the revenue of newspapers were not improving significantly. ... [Yet] even if you raised cover prices it wouldn't have ... [been enough]. They couldn't raise advert rates either, [even though] many newspapers are not surviving on adverts ... ***(Emeka Izeze. Interview in Lagos).***

The alternative for the newspapers was for them to raise their cover prices because the adverts that they normally rely on became uncertain as most industries were subjected to the strains of the austere economic environment (Egbochukwu, 1996: 212-227). But then the option to raise cover prices hardly made any economic sense as the following explanations of Nigeria's economic plight, given by Al-Bashir, also indicate:

There is also the issue of ... poverty ... In 1987 ... I think the average worker was receiving one thousand, five hundred Naira per month. At that time the cover prices were between thirty to forty Naira ... [so just] one newspaper [would be] about nine hundred Naira per month [which makes it impossible]. So the low earning capacity of the average Nigerian affected the sale of newspapers. And ... they even formed an informal Newspapers Readers Association ... [going to a] vendor in the morning, sit down there with him, go through all the newspapers, then at the end ... they will give the vendor twenty or thirty Naira and he will accept it because the vendors have no liability for unsold copies.

And cover prices were going up because of the raw materials .... In 1988, when I joined the Democrat, I think a ton of newsprint was selling for about N7000. By the time we closed a ton was N70000-N75000. So within ... nine years... the price had [massively] jumped ... [as] with all the other raw materials. So we had to increase the cover price ... I was [then] arguing ,,, that if we increase the cover price we are not going to get a lot of people to buy the newspaper, that the best we could do was to increase the advert page. But the argument they advanced was that only few people advertised and so if you don't increase the cover price and expect something from adverts, the newspaper was going to collapse. But then again if you increase your cover price, the very person whom you hoped will be reading your newspaper will not be doing so. So there was this kind of the impact of the economic situation in the country, which reduced the circulation of the newspapers. ***(Al-Bashir.***

Interview in Kaduna).

5.4 Where press reflects national outlook and promotes a collective national identity

Several studies have shown that the press can play a major role in the promotion of a nation's national / collective identity, even within the context of multiculturalism (Billig, 1995: 11 & 94).[394] Commentators on the Nigerian press have often indicated that the press can play a major role in helping to realise Nigeria's national objectives of integration and unity, where those objectives are clearly stated and known, if it becomes truly professional and re-asserts itself as a vanguard of the people.[395]

There is the belief among the interviewees that the press must recognise Nigeria's diversity as a basis for promoting national integration. But for that to be achievable, Momoh also stresses the need for the press to be in the forefront of the campaign to promote the overriding interests that define Nigeria as a nation and then respect those interests, in addition. But he contends that as far as national integration is concerned, Nigerians have not worked hard at integrating because the institutions are not working to integrate Nigeria, as ethnic and other sundry divisions are still immanent within the Nigerian nation. (Interview in Lagos).).[396]

Indeed, cognisant of the peculiar nature of the Nigerian society and how it has shaped the Nigerian press, some of the interviewees emphasised that the only way by which the press can successfully fulfil its constitutional role, is by becoming truly professional. To Momoh, for instance, "it is the safest way to national integration", because then the point of departure for journalism practice would only be the Nigerian Constitution. In the same vein, Onabule noted as follows:

> *We have to educate our people, our journalists to know what the law regulating the profession is all about. Whatever a journalist publishes, he has to prove that it is the truth. You don't just publish anything in the name of*

[394] Fitzgerald, 1991: 193 & 211; Anderson, 1991: 35; Schlessinger 1991a: 191 & 1991b: 301-307; Brookes, 1999: 251 & 261.
[395] See Enwenwa 1989: 77-78; Omu 1996: 17; Nwosu 1996: 24-25; Kukah 1996: 141-143; Idowu 1996: 209-210; Jason 1996: 36; NPC, 2000: 131-133).
[396] See, for instance, Nnoli, 1978; Nnoli, 1989; Ayida, 1990; Ayoade, 1988; Suberu, 2001; Diamond, 1988; Badru, 1998; Lewis, 1968: 46-47; Mbaeyi, 1971: 15-20; *New York Times*, 1969: 1&24; Aguolu, 1973: vii; Usman, 1982: vii-xvii; Alkali, 1987.

press freedom. That is not journalism. ***(Duro Onabule. Interview in Lagos).***

The views of Darah, in respect of the need for professionalism in the Nigerian press, amply corroborate Onabule's and Momoh's position:

> *When we talk about the role of the press, it doesn't mean the press should behave like claptrap. The press should reflect the dynamism and the divisiveness that is inherent in the multiple interest of the country. It must reflect it; otherwise we won't be able to find the quality of thought, the quality of ideas in the country, if you are looking for a consensus all the time. The press should reflect the dialectics and the controversies. It should not shield them, because it becomes the mirror through which we evaluate the energies in the country.*
>
> *Governments don't fall as a result of that. Countries don't collapse as a result; instead, they get strengthened. Nigeria is in that sense the America of Africa in terms of the media diversity. Nigeria is the United Nations of Africa because it has over 394 languages and each language is an interest group, each has its own heroes, its own leaders, and its own religion. We don't have enough newspapers in the country to cater for these interests. The more we have the merrier.* ***(G.G.Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

Many of the interviewees agree that there are certain issues which the Nigerian press has often used to reflect a national outlook and therefore mobilise Nigerians and instil a sense of Nigerian national identity in them. Odukomaiya's description of the Nigerian press aptly captures this fundamental essence of the character of the Nigerian press:

> *The press has always done that whenever the issues at stake do not pertain to any particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved are not contentious and do not border on the interest of a particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved do not relate to any particular religion, whenever the issues involved do not border on, for instance, gender, the press could rise up and speak with one voice ...*
>
> *The press spoke with one voice when we were fighting for independence. But once independence was won, of course everybody went his own way. When we fought against the Military, the press spoke with one voice. For instance, now the press would rise up against any coup, no matter the section of the press, even including the New Nigerian. They would rise up to condemn the coup if ever there was any attempt. So... if any group of soldiers tries to stage a coup, they will not get a good reception from the press. They will not, I can tell you that ...* ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

The comments by some of the other interviewees also bear out Odukomaiya's assessment of these particular characteristics of the Nigerian press:

> *The press wouldn't say we don't need Nigeria. But it will tell you that Nigeria will do better if you arrange it in this way or that way. So the main trend is for national integration. If the press were to concentrate on and orchestrate the break-up of Nigeria, the politicians could not hold it.*
>
> *So you have this regional emphasis. But overall you cannot find a Nigerian newspaper that has on its own crusaded for dismemberment of Nigeria. You won't find any. Newspapers have written very angry editorials but they all point to one theme, which is that there is need for a good government. They might argue, for instance, that this position or that position that the Government is taking is wrong, or that the Government should do better than it is doing. That is what newspapers have been doing.* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *The country is divided on ethnic, economic and social grounds. But none of these divisions wants a separation. Each one is opting for a better share of the cake. They now talk of national conference. These are the views that are reflected in the Nigerian press.*
> ***(Sam Amuka-Pemu. Interview in Lagos).***

Another clear area in which the Nigerian press employs or expresses a national perspective to issues is particularly obvious when international issues are involved, as attested to by some other interviewees:

> *National integration is reflected in only one aspect of the life of our nation and that is when, for instance, Nigeria has a contest with other countries, like international football matches, international boxing, and so on ... So it's not that it is totally absent. It's just that when stages of contest occur in the polity, it's inevitable that all those areas of control through ownership of the press will take its place ...*
>
> *ECOMOG (The fighting Armed Forces of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]) readily comes to mind. Nigeria spearheaded ECOWAS' military effort to bring peace to Liberia, through the ECOMOG, and so, when it comes to that issue, Nigerians are in support of Nigeria. If you also take the issue of the Bakassi Peninsular,*[397] *which is the border dispute between Nigeria and Cameroun, Nigerians are always united in their support of the Government. In sports it is the same. There is no unanimity on the OIC issue because it reflects the religious perspectives of nationalities and, of course, there is a division between the Christian perspective and the Islamic perspective on this issue. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that supports the*

[397] The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has now settled this issue in favour of Cameroun.

debt burden of Nigeria. They are in support of Nigeria in this area. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that is opposed to the price of oil at the international level, because we are interested. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that is opposed to Nigeria's place in the Commonwealth and in the United Nations. There is no newspaper in Nigeria, no medium in Nigeria that is opposed to our Nigerian President or Government in relation to any other Government in the world. ***(Tony Momoh. Interview in Lagos).***

The only time we do that is when Nigeria is externally attacked. On the Bakassi Peninsular border dispute with Cameroon, we are united. No doubt about that. When anybody threatens Nigeria, like when our people were mistreated in Libya or in South Africa, the Nigerian media are united. On international issues, the Nigerian media are united. But on domestic issues, the Nigerian media can tear the Nigerian nation apart. ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

When it comes to international issues involving Nigeria and other countries, you can trust all sections of the press to speak with one voice. ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

However, and more importantly, in relation to the international issues involving Nigeria, even though the Nigerian press is able to straightforwardly articulate and promote them as one sure, guaranteed process of propagating a Nigerian identity, it has been found wanting in its commitment towards an enduring policy that will ensure a durable perspective to guide its articulation of issues that will bring about national integration (Adamu, S., 1994: 467-472).[398] Momoh recognises this shortcoming, and in effect recommends that in order for Nigeria to integrate, there is the need for national institutions to be developed so that the "largeness of the Nigerian nation can be made to exceed the nationality level" (Interview in Lagos). He weaves his argument around his notion that Nigeria's identity can only be realised at that point of convergence, "where Nigerians can identify the cultural and the constitutional". This is what he refers to as the "Senatorial level". According to him, the Senatorial level is the only effective level where the nationality perspective can be undermined because it is the sub-nationality level where the different worldviews within Nigeria are located (Ibid.).

The preceding paragraphs have been a detailed analysis of the views expressed by some experts on the Nigerian press. Their relevance lies in how they relate to the role of the Nigerian media institution in Nigeria's quest for integration and therefore its

[398] See also Ciroma, A., 1994: 35; Nnaemeka, 1989: 1-8; Omu, 1996: 9-11

contribution to the promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity. The overall verdict is that, despite all the obstacles created for the press by the context in which it operates, the way the press is behaving is the way to achieve national integration because in today's world it is possible to promote unity within a multi-cultural context.

Overall, the upshot of the data gathered from the interviewees can be summarised as follows:

1. The press partially reflects the diverse nature of the Nigerian society.
2. The cultural differences between the northern and southern parts of Nigeria impact negatively on the overall performance of the press.
3. The press is mainly based in the southwest and it is the worldview of that part of Nigeria that dominates the press.
4. The press' role in the articulation and promotion of a collective Nigerian national identity is dynamic as it reacts to different circumstances as they occur in Nigeria.
5. It is healthy for the press to reflect the nationality perspectives in Nigeria as a basis for promoting national integration and therefore Nigerian national identity.
6. The press is largely able to make a distinction between the 'national' and the 'local' in dealing with issues that arise within the Nigerian nation from time to time.
7. Mass media practitioners exhibit negative tendencies that run counter to their professional ethics and therefore act as a hindrance to their role in the Nigerian society.
8. The only way that the press can effectively promote Nigerian integration and then instil a sense of national identity in the diversified Nigerian society is by adopting professional standards in all its activities.
9. The press has to reflect the Nigerian diversity, yet also recognise and promote those issues and interests that define Nigeria as a nation.
10. The editorial direction of the press is vulnerable to the manipulative tendencies of their owners, whether government or private.
11. Although freedom of the press is relatively curtailed in Nigeria, it is unnecessary self-censorship, particularly on the part of those journalists that are in the employ of State or Federal governments that stifle journalistic freedom to publish.

Qualitative content analysis of the Nigerian press, using available archival materials, will be the subject of the next stages of this study. The focus would be on the different circumstances that influenced their activities over the ten-year period covered by this study. One of the features of the Nigerian socio-political context during this period was the predominance of military administration. In August, 1983, the democratically elected government that has been in place since the commencement of Nigeria's second republic (1979=1983) organised an election after its first four-year term. That election which was rancorous provided the atmosphere for another military coup and therefore a military administration in Nigeria that was still in place in 1993, the last year of the period covered by this research. The military government's economic and political measures during that time led to a series of crisis. Eventually however, the election organised by the military administration to usher in Nigeria's Third Republic was also annulled by the same administration and eventually plunged Nigeria into further crisis. It is the activities of the press during that period 1983-1993, that inform the next five chapters.

Chapter six is devoted to the analysis of the press' activities during the elections organised by a civilian administration, Chapter seven focuses on how the press conducted itself when a military administration organised a democratic election. The thrust of Chapters eight and nine is the press' coverage of events during the sixth month of each of the years 1985 and 1989... The latter Chapter particularly touches on the way the press treats a crisis situation under a military regime. Chapter ten examines the activities of the press when there are momentous events involving the Nigerian state and other states in the international community

CHAPTER SIX

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press during elections supervised by a civilian administration

For anybody reading Nigerian newspapers or magazines, now or in the past, on a typical day, it would seem as if the country is going to fall apart the next minute. Such headlines as these are typically splashed across the front pages of Nigerian newspapers and magazines almost frequently:

"Break-up Imminent?" (*TELL*: 20/03/00);

"Nigeria Breaks ... The Shape of What Will Come" (*TheNEWS*: February, 1994);

"Now Nigeria is Finished" (*TELL*: 6/12/93).

Yet, on another day, the whole picture of the Nigerian State, as portrayed on the pages of the Nigerian press, could change to a celebration of national pride, unity and solidarity.

"Soccer World Bows to Nigeria" (*National Concord*: 12/08/85);
"Nigeria Goes to the East and Conquers the World" (*The Guardian*: 12/08/85);
"Nigeria Makes Soccer History ... Wins World Cup" (*The Nigerian Observer*: 12/08/85);
"Eaglets herald Nigeria's World Leadership?" (*National Concord*: 19/08/85); "God is a Nigerian" (*National Concord*: 5/01/84, p. 3).

Indeed, for a country made up of about 394 ethnic and nationality groups,[399] there are several issues that could be represented on the pages of the various Nigerian newspapers. To the discerning observer, the "mood swing" typical of the Nigerian press is determined by the nature of the issues at stake. But typical or not, one of the arguments that has been advanced against the press is that it has earned itself a reputation for allegedly perpetuating arguments and positions that "are not backed by

[399] See Studies in Nigerian Languages, no. 5, 1976 in Usman and Abba 2000: 100-103.

the truthful presentation of what has actually happened and what is happening in Nigeria (as the stories published), are based on the misrepresentation of the historical and contemporary realities of Nigeria." (Usman & Abba 2000: 3).

As one Nigerian journalist (Al-Bashir, Interviewee. Kaduna) has put it:

> On international issues the Nigerian media is united. But on domestic issues, the Nigerian media can tear the nation apart.

Perhaps more scathing is the notion that the press sets its own agenda and is selective in its treatment of issues of national importance.[400]

In this chapter, the activities of the press are explored when there is a civilian administration in place in Nigeria. As noted earlier, however, it is impossible to deal with all the issues represented in Nigerian newspapers, and that it is only those that are likely to affect newspapers' personnel and in effect determine their editorial direction, that will be looked into. During the period of a civilian administration in Nigeria, one such issue is the elections and electioneering. A typical example of how journalists interpret their roles and duties in a government-owned newspaper is narrated in the front page "Comment" of the *Sunday Observer* [a publication of *The Nigerian Observer*], edition of Sunday, 28/08/83. It clearly shows that government-owned newspapers serve the purpose of the government in power, with no agenda-setting responsibility, but just doing and following what the government says. So, ironically, when the NPN won the Governorship election in Bendel state, after the August 1983 general elections in Nigeria, the *New Nigerian*, which was under the control of the NPN-led Federal government, accused the Bendel state-owned *The Nigerian Observer* of making a u-turn from serving the former UPN-led Bendel state government to serve the newly elected NPN-led Bendel state government.[401] In the response of *The Nigerian Observer* as published in its Sunday front page "Comment", as already noted above and titled: "Where We Stand", it noted that, as a state-owned newspaper, it:

> "... not only stood firmly with [UPN] Governor Alli to publicise the activities

[400] See Oyovbaire, 2000: 99-112; Adamu 1994: 467-472; Ciroma 1994: 35; Dare: 1997: 543-548.
[401] See, for instance: "Newspapers make U-turn to serve new masters", *New Nigerian*, 20/08/83, p. 3.

> of his government, but also did a lot to project his person as Chief Executive ... We served Governor Alli, his government ... faithfully and loyally. Now, Time And Tide Have Changed...Government is a continuing process, but individual heads may change ... [Therefore], the Observer must in all honesty pledge its belief and loyalty to the in-coming [NPN] administration ... Journalists had to contend to understand and adjust themselves and their practice to the requirements of a ... government ... [So], the U-turn is very necessary in terms of our set objectives – publicising government activities and educating the people".

Between 1979 and 1983 Nigeria witnessed a second attempt at democratic governance. A democratically-elected civilian administration was sworn-in in October, 1979, when the military handed over power to the civilians, and had a mandate for four years. So in June 1983, the civilians themselves were expected to organise elections as a continuation of the democratic process. This they did and it is how the press conducted itself during that period that will be documented in the remaining part of this chapter. This will be done in three parts in accordance with the structure of press ownership in Nigeria, and each will be treated in this order, namely: the activities of: State government-owned newspapers; Federal-government-owned newspapers; and Privately-owned newspapers.

6.1 State government-owned newspapers

6.1a Elections and State government-owned newspapers: A platform for various interests in the state or a tool for protecting only the interests of the political party in power?

The three state government-owned newspapers in June 1983, made sure that the political objectives of their respective governments were realised by adopting an editorial policy which made each of the newspapers become the platform for the state governor, government officials and officials of the political party in government in the state, to discredit and/or denounce rival political parties and political opponents at both the state and federal levels.

Indeed, the reality as it concerns governments that have established newspapers (state

or federal) is that the government in power, usually make their government-owned newspaper an arm of the government department, where it is made to promote only the interests of the government in power to the detriment of its opponents (*West Africa*, 1980, no. 3305: 2357-2359).[402] This is particularly true during civilian administration when politicians use any means at their disposal to gain advantage over their political opponents (Osuntokun, 1989: 357).[403]

For instance, all through the month of June 1983, the three state-owned newspapers splashed highly favourable stories about the activities of their respective state governors and state governments, as well as the officials of the political parties that controlled their respective state government, at the state and national level, on their front, inside and back pages. Other stories that made the front page were negative stories about the NPN, in control of the federal government. As the 1983 general election approached, the editorial policy of each of the state-owned newspapers was clearly focussed on how to enhance the electoral chances of their individual State Governor, together with his political party, and damage or limit the chances of their rivals.

So, whatever the state-owned newspapers were reporting, their overriding objective was to ensure the return of the State Governor and his political party to power by adopting the following strategies:

(1) Portraying the political party in control in each of the states as the best party for the people of the State; and,
(2) Demonising and/or discrediting, in particular, the NPN as a political party incapable of delivering for them.

Central to these strategies, the coverage will be examined under three themes:

(1) State government-owned newspapers reported negative stories or issues about

[402] See also Rosa & Brown, 1986; Hamelink, 1983 cited in Jeter et al 1996: 30. Also read views of fieldwork interviewees on pp.153-155, under the heading: "Newspapers: A tool of government in power".
[403] See also Ruijter, 1989; Oyovbaire, 2000: 103. Also read, in particular, the views of Interviewees D. Agbese on p.153 and M. Ibrahim on p.155.

rival political parties and the political opponents of the political party in control of the state government;

(2) The newspapers are used to campaign for and report all positive stories about the political party that is in control of the government in each of their respective states;

(3) Report the activities of the other political parties or other electoral issues as long as they can have no negative effects on the electoral fortunes of the ruling political party in the state, but can militate against the chances of its nearest rival, particularly the political party controlling the federal government, the NPN.

The samples for the qualitative content analysis cover ten days, spread through the month of June 1983, as the first week Wednesday 1 June to Tuesday 7 and subsequent seven days after till the end of the month as 14, 21, and 28 June. They are stories that are mainly related to the campaigns for the general elections conducted in Nigeria in 1983 by the civilian administration during Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983).

It should be noted that as far as the newspapers are concerned, there is no policy geared towards setting any news agenda, and investigative journalism is hardly undertaken (Ademola, J., 1997: 79; Dare, 1997: 544). Instead, the news pages are full of what government or political party officials have said, etc., besides the newspapers being used to denounce opponents.

Therefore what we intend to examine in the first part of this chapter, is the extent to which this pattern dominated the editorial directions of state government-owned newspapers during the electioneering period of 1983.

6.1b "NPN government should be changed": A smear campaign by publishing everything negative about the rival political party

> "Why NPN govt should be changed – Uzoigwe"
>
> THE Deputy Governor of Imo State, Prince Isaac Uzoigwe, has given reasons why it is necessary to change the NPN-controlled federal government on

October 1, this year by the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP).

Addressing a mammoth crowd at the kick-off of the Uhuru/Umuchieze NPP campaign rally recently Prince Uzoigwe said the NPN-controlled federal government had since 1979 proved that it was not competent to handle the country's affairs ...

The deputy governor said the only party that would bring joy, peace and stability to the "common man" is the NPP and called on the entire citizens of Imo State and Nigeria in general to vote massively for the party. (*Sunday Statesman*, 5/6/83).

This front page lead story published in the Imo state government-owned *Nigerian Statesman* was typical of the way that each of the state governments of Bendel, Imo, and the other three state governments of Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, which owned *The Nigerian Observer*, *Nigerian Statesman* and *Daily Sketch* respectively, used their individual newspaper to campaign for the political party that was in control of the state government. In this endeavour, the NPN was seen as the major political opponent of the state governments and the political party that controlled it, which had to be presented as negatively as possible, not just to the people of their respective state, but also to the entire Nigerian public.

Experts on the African press, in general, and the Nigerian press in particular, have acknowledged various ways by which most governments in African countries manipulate the press for their own ends (Ruijter, Ibid)). This is particularly apparent during electioneering, when the political parties, registered to contest democratic elections, employ various tactics to outdo their political opponents (Read Interviewees, pp.153-155).[404] One of the tactics that these experts have identified, is the use to which owners of the press (both private and government), put the press during electioneering campaigns. Typical is the way that government-owned newspapers are used to campaign for the political party in control of either a state or a federal government to ensure that that party is voted back to power (Read, Ibid).[405]

Towards this end, the political party in government make sure that only stories emanating from government officials constitute the news (Pratt,, 1996: 11; Ruijter,

[404] Alsop see Rosa and Brown, 1986
[405] Also see Ajuluchukwu, 2000: 43

1989: 57-69, cited on p. 35 of Jeter et al; 1996; Dare, 1997: 543-544). In the case of a state government-owned newspaper, for instance, the general pattern, during the electioneering period of 1983, was that they reported what the state governor and other state government officials said against the rival political party to the political party controlling the state government; what state and national officials of the political party that is in control of the state government said against the rival political parties, particularly the NPN, which was the political party in control of the federal government (Dare, 1985; Nwosu, 1996: 26).

Consequently, the media practitioners have found themselves in a situation where they have to function within the confines of official lines. This situation becomes almost inevitable basically because when it comes to the instruments of their profession, the media institution depend so much on government policies. In effect, the journalists tend to be careerists rather than being professionals in order to ensure their job security (Pratt, 1996: 31).[406]

Not surprisingly, government-owned newspapers are filled with stories about government officials to promote the political objectives of the political party that controls the government (Jukwey, 1997: 86; Dare, 1997: 543-544).[407]

But of all the three, the Bendel state government-owned *The Nigerian Observer* and the Imo state government-owned *Nigerian Statesman* showed the most overt commitment to campaigning for the return to power of the UPN and NPP, which were the political parties in control of Bendel state government and Imo state government, respectively, between 1979 and 1983[408].

In Bendel State, throughout the period, the front pages of *The Nigerian Observer* were reserved, almost exclusively, for what the state governor and the other government officials said against the NPN in the state and the NPN-controlled federal

[406] See also Rosa and Brown, 1986: 114-121 35; Breed, 1955: 326-335); Also see: *National Concord*, 17/6/83, p. 3; FG directive on placing of adverts only on government-owned newspapers in 1985; *National Concord*, 1/3/83, p. 2; *Nigerian Statesman*, 3/6/83, p. 3; *National Concord*, 6/3/83, p. 10; *New Nigerian*, 2/6/83, p. 16).

[407] Also see; Dare, 1985; Ajuluchukwu, M.C.K., 2000: 43..

[408] For a list of political parties that won in the different states of the Nigerian federation in 1979 and 1983, see Olurode, L. 1983: 72.

government.

Sample such headlines, in the newspaper in June 1983, as:

"Omo N'Oba's[409] pay was not stopped: NPN agents float diabolical rumour to cause disaffection - Alli", (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 1/6/83, p.1);

"Count down on '83: Ogbemudia[410] stronghold broken", (2nd lead, 1/6/83, p.1);
"UPN leaders earmarked for killing today [by NPN agents]?", (1/6/83, p.1); "Shagari is enemy of Bendelites: He dispossessed us of N111m revenue since '79 -Alli", (lead, 2/6/83, p.1);

"Benin-Owena borehole contract: Ogbemudia took N50m without execution", (2nd lead, 2/6/83, p.1);
"Bendel got nothing from F-govt", (2/6/83, p.1);
"NPN will lose Rivers[411] - Opinion poll", (4/6/83, p.1);
"Okilo's[412] lust for opulence", (4/6/83, p.1);
"Crisis in Ovia[413] NPN", (7/6/83, p.1);
"Those who fabricated on Oba stand condemned", (7/6/83, p.1);
"NPN candidates are UPN drop-outs-Agbobu[414], (lead, 21/6/83, p.1);
"NPN sure to lose Bendel", (21/6/83, p.1);
"Ogbemudia aborted Niger State", (21/6/83, p.1);
"N2.5m Midwest[415] Dev. Fund: Ogbemudia left no kobo[416]- Gov. Alli", (lead, 28/6/83, p.1).

In a story like: "Omo N'Oba's pay was not stopped" (*The Nigerian Observer* lead,

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[409] The Bini term stands for the title of the traditional ruler of the Bini people of Nigerian who live in the Edo state of Nigeria
[410] Dr Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, former military governor of the then Midwest state of Nigeria (later known as Bendel and now Edo State), was the Governorship candidate of the NPN during the general elections in Nigeria in 1983.
[411] Rivers state is one of the states of the Nigerian federation
[412] Chief Melford Okilo stood on the platform of the NPN for the governorship election in Nigeria in 1983.
[413] Ovia was one of the local government areas of the then Bendel state of Nigeria in 1983.
[414] Mr Patrick Agbobu, the UPN Publicity Secretary in Bendel state during Nigeria's second Republic was the then Bendel East UPN Senate candidate for the 1983 general elections.
[415] Midwest state of Nigeria, later known as Bendel state, has now been split into two states - Edo and Delta.
[416] *Kobo* is one name for the Nigerian currency. So, in Nigeria, the national currency is known as the *Naira* or *kobo.*

1/6/83, p.1), the State Governor, Professor Ambrose Alli urged the people of the state to recognise the 'evil desire' of the NPN for Bendel state, as he accused some people he tagged "NPN agents", of floating "diabolical rumour to cause disaffection...between him and the Omo N'Oba, as well as his brothers and sisters in Edoland.[417] In doing a report like this, the government-owned newspapers make no attempt to contact the opposition party and therefore give it the opportunity to defend itself. They become tools in the hands of the political party that controls the government (Read interviewees, pp.153-155 above).[418] The Omo N'Oba's report, for instance, was based on a radio and television broadcast made by the State governor, Professor Ambrose Alli, the night before the publication. However, the newspaper simply reported what the Governor said and followed that up with the full text of the broadcast starting from the front page to pages 8/9 inside.

Part of the story, as published in the newspaper, reads as follows:

> "OMO N'OBA'S PAY WAS NOT STOPPED-NPN agents float diabolical rumour to cause disaffection-ALLI"
>
> The Governor of Bendel State, Chief Professor Ambrose Alli, has described as most wicked lie and unfounded media reports and rumours of an alleged intention by his administration to depose the Oba of Benin and the stoppage of his salary
>
> In a special broadcast to the people of the state on Tuesday night, Professor Alli said: "I wish to state in very clear terms and without mincing words that no action of this nature was ever contemplated by me or my government."
>
> He pointed out that these rumours which are very diabolical in nature were being floated around by agents of the National Party of Nigeria in their evil desire to cause disaffection between him and the Omo N'Oba, as well as his brothers and sisters in Edoland.
>
> Full text of Governor Alli's broadcast reads: ... *(The Nigerian Observer, lead, 1/683).*

All the state government-owned newspapers adopted this strategy. That is, the newspapers only report what government or ruling political party officials have said

[417] Edoland is the Edo state of Nigeria and occupies part of the southwestern area of Nigeria.
[418] Also see Ademola, 1997: 77

against their rivals. In each of them the NPN was variously referred to as:

A party of drop-outs "NPN candidates are UPN drop-outs - Agbobu [UPN Publicity Secretary in Bendel state]' (*The Nigerian Observer* lead, 21/6/83);

A party, which, in order to win the elections, planned to assassinate key figures in the other political parties 'Unongo [Governorship candidate of the NPP in Benue state] was to be killed May 16 True or False?: NPP gubernatorial candidate tells police cuddling story of teargas bombardment' (*Nigerian Statesman* lead, 3/6/83);

A party being led by Nigeria's President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, who has no respect for the rule of law 'Zik [Presidential candidate of the NPP] accuses Shagari: Violation of Official Secret Act 1964' (*Nigerian Statesman* lead, 5/6/83);

A party that have hatched some strategies capable of manipulating the election process to favour the NPN as in "NPN can't use the army-Awo" (*Daily Sketch* lead, 28/83), where the newspaper noted that the UPN flag-bearer for the presidential election, Awolowo, alerted the people of his south-western Nigeria constituency, in particular, of the NPN plan to rig the elections and therefore urged the people to reject the NPN at the polls since, in Nigeria, according to him, "everything would be normalised if the UPN was voted into power".

This type of reporting is quite characteristic of the way that government-owned newspapers are used to campaign against political opponents of the ruling party. To achieve this purpose, all the newspapers show overzealousness and outright partisanship (Omu, 1978: 248-256; Adamu, S., 1994: 467-472; Enwenwa, I., 1989: 86-88). Indeed, writing about the activities of the Nigerian media during Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983), a Nigerian media expert, Ajuluchukwu, (2000: 43), stated thus:

> "The media in the Second Republic seemed unable to adapt to an environment of new found freedom. They were divided along party political lines".

Being overzealous and partisan was particularly reflected in the way that each of them gave prominence to what was said against the rival political party by the state and

national officials of the ruling political party in each of the states. This was apparent, whether the newspapers were reporting about:

Those decamping from the opposition party, as in;

"Count down on '83: Ogbemudia's stronghold broken" (*The Nigerian Observer*,1/683, p.1);

Uncovering a plot by the opposition party to eliminate members of the party in government:

"UPN leaders earmarked for killing today?"
"NPN men attack UPN - 2 badly wounded", (*The Nigerian Observer*, 1/6/83, p.1 and *Daily Sketch* lead, 14/6/83, p.1), respectively.

Or portraying the rival party, in this instance, the NPN, as corrupt, untrustworthy, oppressive and therefore not to be relied upon to serve the people and meet their needs (Read Interviewees: Agbese, p.162; Farouk Ibrahim, p. 190; Haruna, p.190), for their views on how newspapers are used to distort stories about opponents of ruling political parties):

"Benin-Owena boreholes contract: Ogbemudia took N50m without execution"; and
"Okilo's[419] lust for Opulence" (*The Nigerian Observer*, 2/6/83, p.1 and 4/6/83, p.1 respectively);
"Revenue Sharing suit against FG: Bendel Govt wins: Court says states are entitled to statement on money paid into Federal Account" and "Power to administer states' share is illegal" (*Daily Sketch* lead 4/6/83, p.1);
"P&T staff dismissed: He gave President's special line to Emeka Ojukwu"[420] (*Nigerian Statesman,* 21/6/83, p.1).

[419] Mr Melford Okilo was the Governor of NPN-controlled Rivers state of Nigeria during Nigeria's Second Republic, 1979-83
[420] Chief Emeka Ojukwu was the rebel leader during Nigeria's civil war 1967-1970. He returned from exile in Ivory Coast, during Nigeria's second republic (1979-83) and joined the NPN, which was the political party in control of the federal government of Nigeria, who gave him pardon from charges of treasonable felony due to the part he played in the civil war.

It is worth highlighting how some of the newspapers dealt with at least one of the issues noted above. While reporting what it stated was the decamping of some NPN members to the UPN, *The Nigerian Observer* went about it as follows:

> 'Count down on '83: Ogbemudia's stronghold broken'
>
> THE leadership of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) in Oredo, Ovia and Orhionmwon Local Government Areas is now threatened with massive decamping of followers.
>
> In the forefront of this impending decamping exercise are foundation members of the party who claim that after a careful consideration of their roles, they have come to the conclusion that NPN as a party should be discarded as a leper.
>
> One of them, Mr Michael Isede, patron of the Youth Wing of the NPN and foundation member of the party with his teeming supporters in Oredo, have already quit the party and declared for the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) at the weekend.
>
> Speaking at a mass rally held to welcome them in Benin City, Mr Isede said that it is now common knowledge that all foundation members of the party in the state are now in the cooler, adding that they have abandoned the NPN, which he described as 'hijackers'.
>
> He declared: How can we entrust the destiny of Bendel state to hijackers whose stock-in trade is to amass wealth to the detriment of the teeming masses that constitute the electorate?
>
> Mr. Isede ... accused the state leadership of the NPN of collecting thousands of *naira* from party members who contested nomination for the various elective posts under the party flag without giving them documentary receipts to such collections ... (*The Nigerian Observer*, 1/6/83, p.1).

Reporting also about what it described as the corruption that permeates the NPN as a political party, *The Nigerian Observer* revealed:

> 'Okilo's lust for opulence'.
>
> As the people of Rivers State suffer from daily deprivation, impoverishment followed with the machinery of the government grinding to a halt as a result of strike actions by civil servants and teachers, Governor Melford Okilo's potentials for squandermania and insatiable lust for opulence knows no ends and bounds.
>
> Governor Okilo today seems to represent the forces of contradiction and counter production in our body politic.
>
> That, no doubt, is why Melford Okilo should spend millions of naira to purchase an executive jet ...f or his use when he has not been able to pay salaries and other emoluments to teachers and civil servants for the past six months.
>
> This is a pointer to his (Okilo's) visionless-ness and the NPN deceit of the

good people of Rivers state.

This year's election result will show whether the common people will ever learn.

The *Daily Sketch* noted that an attack against a UPN campaign convoy in Oyo state was orchestrated by the NPN. In reporting the incident, the newspaper splashed across its front page the following story:

'NPN MEN ATTACK UPN - 2 BADLY WOUNDED'

NPN members yesterday launched a brutal attack on the advanced party of Chief Bola Ige's entourage at Oyo township.

During the attack, two UPN members were seriously wounded and later rushed to the State Hospital in the town where doctors battled for several hours to save their lives.

According to an eye-witness account ... the UPN men were going in a convoy of buses when they were stopped by anti-riot policemen.

Immediately, the eye-witness added, the NPN men took control and smashed the windscreen of UPN buses and beat up the passengers in the vehicles ... (*Daily Sketch*, 14/6/83, p.1).

6.1c Campaigning for the political party in government

Another major ploy used by the newspapers to discredit the rival political party was to report positive stories or issues about the ruling party. Nigerian media experts have observed that government uses the press to promote its own political agenda in a number of ways. One of these is what they have identified as government's strategy to ensure that journalists in government-owned newspapers are those that will toe the official line (Dare, 1985). So, not surprisingly, the newspapers conduct their activities in consonance with such socio-political reality (See p.98 above, titled: "The Nigerian press: Limitations and obstacles"). The government-owned press therefore has no hesitation whatsoever in blanking out the campaign activities of opposition parties and ensuring maximum coverage for the political activities and pronouncements of the state and national officials of the ruling party (For a classic example of how journalists under the employ of government interpret their role when there is a civilian administration in Nigeria, see Appendix II). It has also been stated that the Nigerian journalists have come to recognise and learn to operate within the Nigerian context. Indeed, this was exactly what the journalists in government-owned newspapers did

during the electioneering campaign in 1983. For instance in June 1983 all the state government-owned newspapers readily published, on their front pages, mostly what government officials said to favour their respective political parties and therefore increase their electoral chances in their electioneering campaigns. In Bendel state, some of the stories that *The Nigerian Observer* credited to the state Governor, Professor Alli, and splashed across its front pages read as follows:

"Shagari is enemy of Bendelites - He dispossessed us of N111m revenue since '79 - Alli" (*The Nigerian Observer* lead, 2/6/83,, p.1), where the Governor is reported as telling the people why they should reject the NPN-controlled federal government under the leadership of Alhaji Shehu Shagari at the polls because it has deliberately starved the state of much needed revenue for the welfare of the people of Bendel state.

Other stories about what the Governor said and which the newspaper printed on its front pages were:
"Awo [presidential candidate of the UPN] means prosperity - Prof Alli" (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 5/6/83, p.1) and;
"Ogbemudia left no kobo - Gov Alli" (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 28/6/83, p.1).

In the former, the Governor tells, not just the people of Bendel state but the entire people of Nigeria, why they should vote for the UPN's presidential candidate, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, while in the latter the newspaper focuses on what the Governor said to discredit the NPN's Governorship candidate in Bendel state, Dr Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia.

But apart from reporting about the state Governor's activities, *The Nigerian Observer* also filled its front pages with what was said by the officials of the UPN in the state. A recurring feature of the newspaper, during this period, was headlines such as:

"Alli has great respect for Obas-Giwa Amu [a member of the UPN and former Solicitor-General of Bendel state]';
"Awo assured of victory";
"V-P lacks home base"; and,
"UPN dominates Ika L-G area" - all credited to Mr Sule Uzum, the UPN candidate for

the Federal House of Representative and published on the front page of the *The Nigerian Observer,* 28/6/83);

"Alli has made name";
"Only Awo qualifies for presidency";
"NPN sure to lose Bendel";
"UPN set to drown other parties"; and,
"Ogbemudia aborted Niger state"
Front page stories in *The Nigerian Observer* issue of 21/6/83, about what the Publicity Secretary of UPN in Bendel state, Mr Patrick Agbobu, said while promoting the UPN cause).

In the case of the NPP in Imo state, it was typical of the *Nigerian Statesman* to publish on its front pages, positive stories to prop up the incumbent Governor, Chief Sam Mbakwe, against the challenge of the NPN, in the state, with:

"Okpara[421] did not perform better in 6 years as premier - Mbakwe"[422] (*Nigerian Statesman* , lead, 2/6/83, p.1) and;
"I seek 2nd term to complete my jobs - Mbakwe" (*Nigerian Statesman,* 4/6/83, p.1).

A similar strategy was also adopted by the newspaper to further the cause of the NPP and its officials at the national level:

"Unongo's[423] advice to Police" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 2,/6/83, p.1);
"We'll pass currency bill - Obi Wali[424]" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 6/6/83, p.1);
"DG's quit won't affect party" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 7/6/83, p.1), credited to the Secretary of the NPP in Plateau state, Alhaji Saidu Baba Toto, who is reported to have said that the resignation of the NPP's Deputy Governor of Plateau state, Alhaji Muhammadu Danladi Yakubu, to join the NPN, will not affect the NPP in the general

[421] Michael Okpara, now late, was the premier of the defunct eastern region of Nigeria during the first republic, 1960-66, was a stalwart of the NPNduring the second republic, 1979-83.
[422] Chief Sam Mbakwe, now late, was the civilian governor of Imo state of Nigeria during the second republic and contested the governorship elcion in 1983 under the platform of the NPP.
[423] Mr Paul Unongo was the Governorship candidate of the NPP for Benue state of Nigeria during the 1983 general elections.
[424] Chief Obi Wali was the NPP Senate leader during Nigeria's second republic

election.

There were also stories about the campaign activities of the NPP presidential candidate, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe [known as Zik]:

"Ugo polo field"; "Zik campaign in Imo state June 15-17" which were the only stories on the front page of *Nigerian Statesman* of 14/6/83; and,

"Zik promises Effiong[425]" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 21/6/83).

For reasons already outlined above (see p.89) the Oyo, Ogun, Ondo states'-owned *Daily Sketch*, conducted its activities somewhat differently[426]. As a matter of fact, in spite of the electioneering period of June 1983, the *Daily Sketch*, still gave a great deal of coverage to very local and non-partisan issues relevant to the Yoruba-speaking area of Southern Nigeria (Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Lagos states) as well as other issues of national relevance. It was not entirely committed to covering only the stories having to do with its owners, the state governments of Oyo, Ogun, Ondo or used for the coverage of only the activities of the UPN at the state or federal level. Examples in June 1983, where the newspaper focussed on mainly national issues, featured such headlines as:

"Thumb printing: FEDECO blames Police over poor turn-out" (*Daily Sketch*, 2/6/83, p.1);
"JUNIOR WORLD CUP: NIGERIA SHOCK USSR" (*Daily Sketch*, lead, 6/6/83, p.1);
"Electoral law: CRUCIAL TALKS TODAY" (*Daily Sketch*, lead 21/6/83, p.1) and;
"ODIZOR's[427] WINNING RUN ENDS", (*Daily Sketch*, 28/6/83, p.1).

But there was no mistaking the fact that the *Daily Sketch's* commitment was towards

[425] Lt. Col. Phillip Effiong fought on the side of the secessionists during the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70 and was the officer that formally conceded defeat and surrendered to the Nigerian federal troops after the Biafran leader, the then Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu, now a staunch member of the NPN, fled to Ivory Coast in 1970
[426] Also see Oyovbaire, 2000.
[427] Mr Nduka Odizor was a popular Nigerian tennis player who reached the last sixteen of the Wimbledon Championship, in June 1983.

its owners—i.e. the governments of Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo states, each of which was controlled by the UPN, and fundamentally against the NPN, which was the strongest rival to the UPN-controlled states and also a major obstacle to the UPN's plans to dislodge the NPN-controlled federal government (Usman, Y. B., ed. 1982: ix). So just like the purposes which the other state government-owned newspaper were made to serve, the *Daily Sketch* was also, basically used to promote the state and national objectives of its owners. Where the newspaper did not show outright negativity towards the NPN, there was a tendency to portray the UPN as positively as possible. In a story like:

"Plea to Police": a front page story that the newspaper published on 6/6/83. It showed the UPN as a party committed to protecting the electoral process by reporting that the party's governorship running mate in Rivers state, Mr Gomba Osarollor, urged the Rivers state Police Commissioner to protect all party supporters in the state from activities whose consequences would be detrimental to the democratic elections.

6.1d Reporting about the rival political party to promote/without damaging, the ruling party

> 'If I win presidential election: I'LL PURGE NTA - ZIK'
>
> Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the leader and Presidential candidate of the Nigeria People's Party (NPP) at the weekend threatened to flush out all those who have aided and abetted partiality in the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) if he wins the forthcoming presidential election ...
>
> He accused the NTA of advertising the NPN and President Shehu Shagari and discriminating against him and the other presidential candidates.
>
> He declared: "President Shehu Shagari minus being a President is a presidential candidate.
>
> "Why does the NTA ... find it more convenient to always advertise the NPN and Shagari and will not advertise Azikiwe, Awo and others? ..." (*The Nigerian Observer*, 14/6/83).

Although the three newspapers also adopted a similar editorial position of reporting the activities of the rival political party to the ruling party, the main objective, however, was to ensure that such stories did not in any way mitigate the electoral chances of the ruling party. Indeed, according to one of the Interviewees, Alhaji Mohammed Ibrahim (see p. 154):

"All governments would want to manipulate the press for their objectives. And Nigerian governments, in the last forty years, have behaved in this manner".

Each of the newspapers handled this in a different way to achieve the same purpose. For instance, the story above, as published in the UPN-controlled Bendel state government-owned *The Nigerian Observer,* was about what was said by the NPP Presidential candidate in the election, Dr Azikiwe, against the NPN. Even though the NPP was a rival to the UPN, the story nevertheless served the purpose of the UPN because it also showed to the Nigerian public the reason why they, as the electorate, should reject the NPN at the polls. Or take another story in the same edition of *The Nigerian Observer* (14/6/83, p.1) titled:

"Probe Green Revolution Vote - Ogunsanya"

The story was based on what the Chairman of the NPP, Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya, said in Enugu, the capital of Anambra state of Nigeria, while launching his party's presidential rally there. However, *The Nigerian Observer* found it worthwhile to publish the story on its front page because it denounced the NPN's agricultural programme of Green Revolution as not only having been a waste of money but has also brought "hunger and inflation to which the Nigerians have been subjected".

In the same manner, the NPP-controlled Imo state government-owned *Nigerian Statesman*, on 7 June 1983, felt comfortable to publish on its front page a story about the NPN and its governorship candidate in Bendel state, titled: 'Don't vote for Ogbemudia - Ewharekuko', because it was in favour of the NPP governorship candidate in Bendel state, Chief Daniel Ewharekuko.

In the story "Effect of FEDECO[428]'s sequence on outcome of '83 polls: PPA very

[428] The federal electoral commission (FEDECO) was the bosy responsible for organising the democratic elections that ushered in Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983) in 1979. It was set up by the military government of the Murtala/Obasanjo era (29/7/75-30/9/79) that organised the election. Nigeria was ruled by three military governments between 15th January, 1966 and 30th September, 1979. However, FEDECO as an electoral body was trailed by controversy and there were accusations that the democratic elections that declared the leader of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Alhaji Shehu Shagari, winner was rigged. FEDECO has now been replaced by another body known as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).Other parties that contested the elections were Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP), Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP), and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP).

hopeful - Omoregie", the *Nigerian Statesman* (7/6/83), quoted a UPN front liner, Dr. Nosa Omoregie, as saying that the Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) has embraced FEDECO's arrangements for the 1983 general elections because it believed "it will curb the big plan by the NPN to rig the elections".

The fact that the PPA was formed as a result of the political alliance between the NPP, UPN, GNPP, and PRP, to fight the NPN was enough reason for the *Nigerian Statesman* to make a story, credited to a stalwart of the UPN, a front page lead. This was also what prompted the *Daily Sketch* to publish:

"Waves of harassment, terrorism, killings: PPA blames [NPN-controlled] FG" (*Daily Sketch,* lead, 3/6/83, p.1); and,
"No way for accord - Zik" (*Daily Sketch*, 3/6/83, p.1), where the Presidential candidate of the NPP, Azikiwe, was quoted on the occasion of the PPA summit as saying that his party was opposed to any NPP/NPN accord, as had happened after the 1979 general elections.

But it wasn't always against the NPN that each of the newspapers published stories to promote the political party that controlled their respective state government owners. A typical case was the story about the NPP which *The Nigerian Observer* published on 14/6/83, titled:

"NPP MPs join UPN"

In reporting the story, the newspaper stated that the reason why the two NPP legislators from the Anambra state House of Assembly, Messrs P. I. Eze and S. J. Udeorah resigned to join the UPN, was their belief that the leader and presidential candidate of the UPN, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, was "the only messiah who will salvage this country (Nigeria) from its economic mess."

6.2 Federal government-owned newspapers

Just as the state governments control their respective newspapers, the federal

government in Nigeria also owned and controlled the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times* newspapers during the period covered by this research. As was shown to be typical of government-owned newspapers, both newspapers mostly report official sources without any attempt made at criticising government policies or actions. But our concern here is the fact that, during the 1983 General Election campaign, both newspapers were under the control of the NPN-led federal government. As a result, these newspapers became vulnerable to the machinations of the NPN and its officials at both the state and federal levels[429]. There is certainly evidence to show that the weight of the stories or issues that they covered favoured the NPN and the NPN-led federal government. These will be documented under the following themes:

(1) The weight of coverage and editorial direction of the newspapers are to the advantage of the NPN and the NPN- controlled federal government officials as more space is given to issues or stories that promote the NPN.
(2) Anti-NPN issues or stories are virtually non-existent, as some other stories that discredit/denounce the other rival political parties to the NPN are given prominence on the front pages of the newspapers.

6.2a A megaphone of the NPN and NPN-controlled federal government: "Poll favours Shagari" and "NPN will win"

It was common to see pro-NPN and NPN-controlled federal government headlines and stories on the front pages of the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times* during the June 1983 general elections campaign. Referring to this period, with regard to the *Daily Tmes*, Abati (2002: 2) noted:

> What happened was that the NPN turned the *Daily Times* into a party organ, using it as the propaganda arm of both the Federal Government and the NPN. This marked the decline of the newspaper ... Every successive government since Shagari sought to control and manipulate the *Daily Times*. Editorials and front page stories were faxed to the paper from Government House. Managing Directors who tried to produce a professional newspaper ... were shown the way out ...

Three of the interviewees also noted that both newspapers were made the propaganda

[429] See Abati 2002; also read Interviewees: D. Agbese on p153 and; M. Ibrahim on p.155.

arm of the NPN, which was the party in control at the federal level, as virtually every aspect of their report was tilted in favour of the NPN.[430] The reports vary from:

The campaign itinerary of the President and the Presidential candidate of the NPN, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, as in: "Shagari storms Campos Square' (*Daily Times*, 3/6/83).

What he said during his electioneering campaign, such as "NPN'll take care of Lagos' (*New Nigerian*, 3/6/83); and, "Lagos is federal government baby: Developments are inherited from Central administration [not from UPN-controlled Lagos state government] (*Daily Times* headline, 3/683); or,

What positive things have been said about the President, the NPN and the NPN-controlled federal government, such as "Opinion poll favours Shagari's re-election" (*New Nigerian*, 4/683), "Shagari made it with peace", "NPN will win comfortably", "Other achievements of Shehu's govt" (all headline stories in the *Daily Times* edition of 21/6/83).

Passages from the *Daily Times* and *New Nigerian* stories below also give a clear indication of where the editorial preferences of both newspapers lay during this period, which was to ensure that the NPN was presented to the Nigerian public as the only party that had the proven record and experience that Nigeria needed for good leadership and administration. For instance, in the story "Opinion poll favours Shagari's re-election", the *New Nigerian* on 4 June 1983, reported on its front page as follows:

> "THE President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari would score 51 per cent of the total votes cast in this year's presidential elections, a public opinion poll has indicated.
>
> A Lagos-based opinion poll research conducted in 17 States of the federation said that while Alhaji Shehu gets this figure, the NPP leader, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe would get 16 per cent while the UPN flag-bearer, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was credited with 22 per cent. Others scored 3 per cent each ...

In the case of the *Daily Times*, its lead headline on 21 June 1983, while reporting what

[430] Read, for instance, the views of Interviewees H. Odukomaiya, D. Darah and O. Farouk Ibrahim on p.149 under the heading: "Negative effects of military administration on the press".

the Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs, Ahaji Suleiman Takuma, said in the *Daily Times* political forum, titled: "TIMES FOCUS" read:

> "Shagari made it with peace."
>
> ... President Shagari stands foremost among other political leaders with his style of leadership, which has exhibited incredible maturity and tolerance. He is therefore the man the nation needs at this period we are nurturing a new democracy ...

And also under the report "NPN will win comfortably", the *Daily Times* quoted Alhaji Takuma as follows:

> "LEADERSHIP and the state of the nation's economy are the two major issues in this year's general elections, Alhaji Suleiman Takuma has declared.
> Only the President has answers to these two problems in one, Alhaji Suleiman Takuma declared at 'Times Focus' ...
> Discussing the chances of the NPN in the coming elections, Alhaji Takuma said President Shagari not only commands the leadership qualities and style needed to run Nigeria at this period of trying democracy, but also has the experience to deliver the goods ... (*Daily Times,* 2nd lead, 21/6/83).

6.2b Anti-NPN stories are non-existent

A critical look at the way that both the federal government-owned newspapers covered the campaign activities of the NPN would indicate clearly that the intention was to favour the NPN at the expense of the other rival political parties. Even when positive stories about the other political parties were published, this was done in a way that such stories did not necessarily cause electoral damage to the NPN and the NPN-controlled federal government.

In effect, any stories that they published about the other political parties were not based on the negative things that the leaders of such parties said about the NPN and the federal government. Rather, they were stories that would not cause any harm to the electoral chances of the NPN as such stories were mainly to do with:

(a) The reactions of the leaders of the other parties to some harmless accusations made against them like:

"Role in civil war explained: Why I starved Igbos - Awo" (*New Nigerian* lead headline, 7 June 1983); and,

"Awo was right to starve Igbos - Ajuluchukwu" (*New Nigerian* lead,, 21/6/83)..

The former story had the UPN presidential candidate, Awolowo,[431] being quoted as saying "I'm happy about my action because it was my action that united Nigeria and destroyed Biafra", to counter an accusation made by an NPN member and former secessionist leader, Chief Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu.

The latter story was all about what the UPN's Director of Publicity, Ajuluchukwu, said to substantiate Awolowo's defence of his role during Nigeria's bloody civil war (1967-1970).

(b) Some of the issues raised by the leaders of these parties at their campaign rallies: "Payment of party agents- PPA disagrees with Shagari's view" (*New Nigerian* lead, 3/6/83) where the PPA[432] leaders, in a communiqué issued at the end of their summit meeting in Lagos, were reported as expressing disagreement with President Shagari over such irrelevant issue as how party agents for the general elections should be paid. Or the obscure story on the front page of the *Daily Times* edition of 14 June 1983, titled: "Police chiefs will be under Governors if I win", which was about such an electorally unimportant issue of who should or should not control Police Commissioners in each state of the Nigerian federation, credited to the national leader and presidential candidate of the NPP, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe.

By contrast, however, both the federal government-owned newspapers gave prominence to and published negative remarks about the other political parties made by the leaders of the NPN or its presidential candidate and incumbent President, Alhaji Shagari. Consider some of the following negative stories about the other

[431] Chief Obafemi Awolowo (now late) was one of the foremost nationalists that fought for Nigeria's political independence from Britain. He was credited to have used starvation as a weapon against the rebels during Nigeria's civil war (1966-70), when he was Finance Minister. He denied ever using starvation as a war strategy, but was never forgiven by the Ibo tribe who had tried to secede from Nigeria.

[432] The Progressive Parties Alliance (PPA) was a political alliance formed by the NPP, UPN and PRP during Nigeria's second republic to campaign against the ruling NPN's federal government of Nigeria.

political parties as they were splashed across the front pages of the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times* during the electioneering period of June 1983:

"Police recover 21,000 FEDECO forms. Scene: Residence of Press Secretary to Bendel State Gov [UPN-controlled state]" (*New Nigerian* lead, 1/6/83);

"Shagari accuses Zik [NPP leader] of inconsistency" (*New Nigerian*, 6 /683);

"President Shagari speaks at rally in Enugu: Nwobodo [NPP Governor of Anambra state] asked to explain use of N300m" (*Daily Times* lead, 6/6/83);

"2 NPP commissioners join NPN" (*Daily Times*, 6 /6/83); and,
"Akinloye [NPN Chairman] takes Awo [UPN leader] to task - 'Tell the nation the source of N60m for UPN vehicles'" (*Daily Times* lead, 14/6/83).

To appreciate the extent of the NPN-controlled federal government-owned newspapers' campaign against the other political parties, it is appropriate to quote some passages from each of the newspapers. In the story "Shagari accuses Zik of inconsistency", the *New Nigerian* reported as follows:

> The NPP presidential candidate, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe has been accused of inconsistency in his political utterances and associations.
>
> Addressing a mammoth crowd of NPN supporters in Enugu ... the President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari criticised the NPP flag-bearer's political flirtations, which, he said, dated back to the Owelle's advent in politics.
>
> Alhaji Shehu also accused the NPP government in Anambra of mismanaging public funds by setting up a newspaper and a radio station to the detriment of the people of the state ...
>
> Amidst shouts of 'shame, shame', the president called on the people of Anambra to ask the state government what it had done with its share of statutory allocations and foreign loans of more than 300 million Naira which, he said, were guaranteed by the Federal Government ... (6/6/83: 1).

The *Daily Times*, under the headline "Akinloye takes Awo to task—'Tell the nation the source of N60m for UPN vehicles'", published thus:

> THE National Chairman of the NPN, Chief A.M.A. Akinloye, has challenged the UPN leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, to tell the nation where he raised over N60 million which his party used to purchase vehicles

distributed all over the country.

Addressing a large crowd of party supporters ... in Lagos, Chief Akinloye maintained that in order to bribe the electorate, the UPN leader taxed his party governors to donate over N5 million each from the coffers of the state governments.

He said the UPN has been a tribal political party, which has no respect for traditional rulers and the culture of the country ... (Front page lead, 14/6/83).

6.3 Privately-owned newspapers

The privately-owned newspapers differ in one respect from government-owned newspapers: they are unencumbered by the pressures to publish government-sponsored stories or the pressures to be partisan in favour of the political party in control of the government. They do, nonetheless, make some attempts to set and determine the news agenda, for reasons not unrelated to the socio-political circumstances that informed their establishment and in which they had to operate in order to survive (Omu, 1996: 11-13).[433] At the same time, however, it is important to distinguish between privately owned newspapers in Nigeria. Being a private newspaper does not make them immune from political partisanship (Dare, 1997: 543-548).[434] This is particularly true in a situation where political parties[435] set up newspapers to promote their parties.[436]

During the 1983 general elections campaign, only the *National Concord* and *The Guardian*, out of the four privately owned newspapers selected for this study, were in existence[437]. The different circumstances in which the two newspapers were set up showed in the way that they each conducted their activities during this period. And the fact that *The Guardian* was new and still a weekly newspaper then, made the difference even more obvious. As a matter of fact, in the month when most of the

[433] See Interviewees: B. Jose on p179, under the heading: "Newspapers set up in response to new socio-political reality", and H. Odukomaiya on p161 under the heading: "Ownership and the space for neutrality".

[434] See Haruna, 1987: "Ownership Control of Press in Africa", *New Nigerian* newspaper, 18/6/87, p7. See also views of Interviewee: H. Odukomaiya on p161.

[435] For a comprehensive list of the newspapers that were established by political parties during Nigeria' second republic, see Nnaemeka et al, 1989a: 408.

[436] Read the views of Interviewees Jose and Onabunle on p166 under the heading: "Issues that account for the differences between north and south; Al-Bashir and Darah on pp177-178 under the heading: "The motives for setting up newspapers", regarding the *Nigerian Tribune* newspaper, set up by the late Chief Awolowo to support his political party, AG, during Nigeria's first republic. *The Nigerian Tribune* is still a viable newspaper today.

[437] See Chapter 3 for analysis of social context of all the sampled newspapers.

newspapers, whether government or private were filled with the general elections stories, most of them partisan, *The Guardian* did not focus mainly on politics.

The stories that it focussed on could be classified as non-political. The headlines, for example, read as follows:

"US airline exposes Nigeria Airways" (*The Guardian* lead, 5/6/83); "Wanted NTA director yet to be arrested";
"A tiny cocaine world in Lagos"; and,
"The Guardian covers Junior World Cup' (*The Guardian* front page stories, 5/6/83);
"Cash problems keep phone lines dead" (*The Guardian*, 12/6/83, p.1);
"2 names tipped to lead Supreme Court" (*The Guardian* lead, 19/6/83); "Late youth service for Polytechnic students" and "N400,000 fraud claim rocks Mobil" (*The Guardian* front page stories, 19/6/83);
"Drums' giant closes down" and "Gas firm dumps wastes in the drain" (*The Guardian* front page stories, 26/6/83).

In general, the focus of *The Guardian* coverage was national and the issues had national relevance, as opposed to narrow party political issues that dominated the government-owned newspapers. But even when it reported politics, it showed no partisanship or loyalty towards any of the political parties registered to contest the elections.[438]

However, compared to the coverage of the *National Concord* during this period, there was a difference. For instance, the *National Concord* was unique (and worth restating) in the sense that (see p.95) it started out as a newspaper sympathetic to the cause of the NPN and the NPN-led federal government of Nigeria. Indeed when its proprietor, Chief Abiola was a staunch member of the NPN, he used his *National Concord* to campaign for the NPN and against all the other registered political parties during Nigeria's second republic (1979-1983). But when Chief Abiola came to the conclusion that he could not realise his political ambitions within the NPN, he quit the

[438] The six political parties registered to contest the 1983 general elections in Nigeria were: UPN; NPN; NPP; GNPP; PRP; NAP

party in 1982.[439] Soon after that the editorial policy of the *National Concord* changed. Although the newspaper became nationally focussed and therefore showed no overt support or favour towards any of the six registered political parties for the 1983 general elections, it was clear that the newspaper became one of the fiercest opponents of the NPN and the NPN-controlled federal government[440]. For instance, the *National Concord* began to publish very negative stories about the NPN, its officials and the NPN-controlled federal government. It did this by:

(a) Allowing opponents of the NPN to use the newspaper as a platform to launch a scathing attack against the NPN, as in:

"Bad leadership ruins NPN govt", which was one of the stories based on the negative remarks made by a UPN political stalwart at the "Concord Forum"[441] and;

(b) Conducting its own investigation to expose the shortcomings of the NPN-led federal government, as in:

"High tyre prices: Concord investigation: Economy not to blame";

"Outstanding money on building materials: FG owns up';

"Nigerian Consulate stinks: 1m-dollar fraud alleged".

A reading of some paragraphs from two of the stories above would show the extent to which the *National Concord* turned against the NPN. For instance, in "Bad leadership ruins NPN govt", the newspaper reported that:

> THE NPN Federal Government has enough talented men to run the country but the administration is plagued by bad leadership, a UPN legislator, Senator C. O. Adebayo has said.
>
> He said the leadership of the Federal Government "is also plagued by bad utilization of resources and inability to inspire despite the abundance of talents available in the President's cabinet".
>
> The Senator, who was speaking to journalists at the Concord Forum in Lagos, said ... the country's bad economic situation was an electoral asset to the UPN, adding that, "If it were in other countries, this NPN government won't come back" ...

[439] See Nnaemeka et al, 1989: 408.

[440] Haruna, 1987 in *New Nigerian* 18/6/87: 7.

[441] This was a forum run by the senior editorial members of the Concord newspapers to ask Nigerian leaders and other eminent persolities questions relating to issues of the day.

With regard to "High tyre prices: Concord investigation: Economy not to blame", the thrust of this headline story on its front page read as follows:

> SCARCITY of tyres and the exorbitant prices at which they are at present being sold have nothing to do with the current economic recession in the country.
>
> This is the finding of a special *National Concord* investigation into how tyres, which sold at N60 each under a year ago, are now selling at N200 or more, each.
>
> National Concord found in its investigation that [the] Federal Government was deliberately holding back on the issuance of import licences for tyres and its raw materials for local production ...

What is significant about these stories is that it would have been unthinkable for the *National Concord* to publish such when Chief Abiola was a member of the NPN. Chief Abiola's departure from the NPN therefore marked the beginning of a new direction for the *National Concord* (see, for instance: "Concord wears a new dress", *The Guardian*, 5/8/83, p.2)

So, although both the *National Concord* and *The Guardian* were established under different circumstances, not much difference existed in their editorial direction after the *National Concord* relinquished its support for the NPN, beginning from 1982. They did not publish the same stories, but were quite similar in other ways. In one respect, it was inevitable that this would be the case, particularly because of government policy[442]. In fact, an examination of how these newspapers conducted their activities during the June 1983 general elections campaign would reveal that there were some similarities in their editorial direction. These will be documented under the following theme:

(1) There was no overt loyalty shown to any political party as the newspapers tried to publish balanced reports about the elections and gave fair coverage to the activities of each of the political parties. The stories treated had national focuses and were of national relevance.

6.3a No loyalty to any political party

[442] See Pratt, 1991 cited in Jeter et al, 1996: 30.

The difference in the way that the privately owned newspapers covered the electioneering campaigns of June 1983 was their relative neutrality as compared to the activities of government-owned newspapers and those other newspapers that were set up to achieve political purposes (see Nnaemeka et al, 1989a: 408). Of all the election stories that *The Guardian* and *National Concord* covered, it could not be said that they were reported in a way that they would favour any of the political parties. Their strategy was to report any election or political issues that they considered were of national relevance and interest.

In effect, a common denominator for explaining the coverage that these newspapers gave to the election issues of 1983 is their main focus on issues regarding the political actors and government officials and what they said or did. In effect, setting the political agenda and moulding the opinion of the Nigerian electorate were not their major pre-occupations.[443] This was characteristic of these newspapers during the electioneering period. So, even though there is clear evidence to the effect that they were non-partisan, they were not particularly engaged in the construction of the Nigerian public opinion, just like government-owned newspapers.

Starting first with *The Guardian*, on 12 June 1983, the newspaper, under the front page lead story, "Barau out of jail, back in politics", reported about a former Senator who was elected to the Senate in 1979 on the platform of the PRP. The focus of the story was on the travails of one of the political actors of the second republic (1979-1983). This was quite a major shift from government related or partisan stories that usually dominate the pages of government-owned newspapers.

Also focussing on general election-related national issues, as opposed to parochial partisan politics, *The Guardian* led with a front page report titled: "Polls: Students on forced holiday" on 26 June 1983. The story was to the effect that the closure of the University of Lagos in June "was prompted by a Federal command likely to affect all universities before the elections". The approach of *The Guardian* was to report it as it

[443] For a general view about the way the Nigerian press and its practitioners conduct their activities, read the views of the filedwork interviewees in Chapter Five, under the headings: "The complaints about the journalists" on pp.180-182; "The press as divisive and promoting ethnic cleavages" on pp182-183; "Misleading the reader: Bias, prejudices and editorial as fact" on pp184-190.

is. Thus, political developments throughout the country were reported, irrespective of the political party in control in any of the states of the Nigerian federation. For instance:

"Bendel House waylays governor", which describes how the Bendel state governor, Professor Alli, was locked in battle with the State House of Assembly over the UPN-led government's request for a N32,188,590 addition to the state's budget. The article noted that:

> "After ex-governor Balarabe Musa of Kaduna state, impeached in 1981 (by the Kaduna state House of Assembly), Mr Alli is probably the only other chief executive critically embattled by the legislature ... [as] the House ... may serve the Governor a notice of impeachment" (*The Guardian,* 26/6/83, p.1).

It might be misleading to say that the *National Concord* adopted the same approach in covering the electioneering campaigns. Nevertheless, the way that it reported during this period was also premised on not showing loyalty to any of the political parties. The stories that the newspaper reported during this period were generated from:

(1) What the important political figures in any of the political parties and government officials said:
"Plan on votes' counting scares V-P [Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme]", (lead, 2/6/83, p.1);
"Council of State decided on peaceful elections", (front page, second lead,, 2/6/83, p.1);
"Priority for Lagos - says [President] Shagari at campaign", the only story on the front page of the newspaper on 3/6/83.

On 4/6/83, the *National Concord* attributed its front page story, "Goni's wife named UPN governorship candidate", to the UPN's director of organisation, Mr Ebenezer Babatope; and,
On 6/6/83, its front page lead story titled, "Governor's job scares me - Adebayo", was credited to the UPN's governorship candidate for Kwara State, Senator Adebayo.

(2) Its efforts to set the agenda of the political debate by uncovering issues and raising questions about the general conduct of politicians, as in:
"Outstanding money on building materials - FG owns up", which was a story uncovered by the newspaper to the effect that the NPN-led "federal government ... paid out millions of *naira* to some nominated contractors for building materials not supplied" (National *Concord,* lead, 4/6/83, p.1); and,
"Headache over the recovery of loans ... from legislators" where the newspaper reported what it called 'authoritative sources' as informing it that the accounts department of Nigeria's National Assembly was at a fix as to how to recover balances of vehicle loans granted to one hundred and fifty members of the federal House of Representatives, in 1979 (*National Concord*, 29/6/83, p.1).

(3) The need to inform and educate the Nigerian public about what plans were in place to ensure that the election was successfully conducted, as in:
"As '83 elections draw nearer - Police at full alert ... To stop thugs and save lives" (*National Concord*, lead, 7/6/83, p.1), in which the newspaper, let it be known to the Nigerian electorate that it has been informed by 'competent sources' that "more than 40,000 policemen have been trained and specially equipped to curb violence and ensure safety of lives and property during the ... general elections."

In this story, the *National Concord* demonstrated a commitment to the ideals of a democratic environment by not only being non-partisan but also doing a job of investigative journalism to unearth the mechanisms being put in place by Nigeria's electoral body to ensure free and fair elections. For instance, while reporting what it said it garnered from its 'competent sources', the newspaper noted that "25,000 more (policemen) would be trained and made combat ready before the Presidential ballot ..." In all, evidence from the reports show that the motivation for the *National Concord* was to report the election and all the issues related to it.

In this chapter attempt was made to demonstrate how the Nigerian press behaves when there is a civilian administration in Nigeria, using elections and electioneering as our points of departure. From the examination of their activities, it is apparent that there is a difference in the coverage of the privately-owned newspaper and the government-owned (whether state or federal) newspapers. While, for instance, the

former shows no overt loyalty to any political party, particularly in a situation where the proprietor is not involved in partisan politics, while the latter is subject to the control and manipulation of its owner, at the expense of the political opponents of the owner. In the next chapter, the focus will be on how the press conducts itself during elections within the context of a military administration in Nigeria.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press during elections supervised by a military administration;

The similarity between 1983 and 1993 in Nigeria's political history was the fact that elections were conducted in each year to usher in a democratically-elected civilian administration. However, there was still a difference between them. In June 1983, it was a general election which the press focussed on, whereas in June 1993 it was the Presidential election. Also in June 1983, for instance, the general election was organised by a civilian administration and contested by six registered political parties which evolved as a result of the alignment and re-alignment of political forces within Nigeria (Madunagu, E., 2002a). However, in 1993, the two allowed political parties, the National Republican Convention (NRC) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP),[444] were not only created by the military but were also conducted and supervised by the military administration which was then in power.

The point to stress here is that the Presidential election that was held on June 12 1993 was the culmination of the more than eight-year programme of political engineering by the military administration to pave the way for a new civilian administration in Nigeria. The year has proved to be a watershed in Nigeria's political development, as the Presidential election, its subsequent annulment by the military and the aftermath of that annulment have continued to impact on Nigeria's political landscape. Before the presidential election, however, there were other elections conducted to elect a civilian executive governor to administer each of the then 30 states of the Nigerian federation. Civilians were also elected into the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives), and into each of the state's House of Assembly. In effect, although the military had disengaged from lower levels of governance, it still had

[444] The *Guardian* (Lagos, October 8, 1989) announced, on October 7, 1989, (military) President Babangida's creation of two political parties – the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) – with a "little to the left and a little to the right ideologies" respectively.

control of the executive arm of the federal government, from which position it conducted and supervised the presidential election. It should also be added that because the military administration had twice shifted its hand-over date (1990 and 1992) to a democratically-elected civilian administration, Nigerians had become disillusioned with the military administration and were particularly sceptical about the sincerity of the military to successfully organise the June 12 Presidential election.

This was the context within which the newspapers conducted their activities in June 1993. But, unlike 1983, when each of the government-owned newspapers was under the control of the ruling party at state or federal levels and was therefore campaigning for their respective ruling party, the control that the various governments in 1993 had over their respective newspaper was not that clear cut. This was basically because, as earlier noted, the two allowed political parties were the creation of the military and the rules and regulations under which they had to operate were spelt out by them, which was part of the effect of the centralised nature of military rule in Nigeria.[445] But as with every issue in Nigeria, other factors influenced the activities of the various newspapers, not least, the Ibo question, which would become apparent in the way that the Imo state-owned *Statesman* conducted its activities during this period. So, with the exception of *The Statesman*, there was a general pattern in the way that all the other newspapers covered the presidential election campaign in June 1993. For our purpose, the overall coverage of the newspapers will be examined under the following themes:

(1) The non-partisan editorial policy that most of the newspapers adopted in their coverage of the presidential election.
(2) *The Statesman's* overt support for the NRC and its presidential candidate, Alhaji Bashir Tofa, and
(3) The stand of the newspapers on the contentious cancellation of the June 12 presidential election.

7.1 June 12 presidential election engenders a national editorial policy

One basic characteristic of the Nigerian press when operating under a military

[445] See Osuntokun 1989: 351.

administration is that they tend more often to be national in their editorial direction. This was the case with their presidential election coverage in June 1993. Although there were some variations in the story slant of each of the newspapers, there was no doubt that all the newspapers, except one, *The Statesman*, showed no loyalty to neither of the two political parties, NRC and SDP, quite uncharacteristic of the way that most Nigerian newspapers cover electioneering campaigns (Omu, 1978: 248-250).

One of the four characteristics of government-media relations in Africa, as articulated by Ruijter (1989), is that both collaborate to bring about inter-dependency between the state and the media in the task of nation-building. The press regarded the transition programme of the military administration, of which the June 12 presidential election was a part, as a laudable step towards installing a democratically-elected administration in Nigeria. The motivation for this was not unconnected with the realisation by the newspapers that one way to galvanise Nigerians against continued military rule[446] was to ensure that the elections were conducted in a free and fair atmosphere devoid of violent-prone partisanship. In this endeavour, both the privately-owned and the government-owned newspapers adopted a similar editorial policy of informing the Nigerian electorate about the election through the elaborate coverage that they gave to the events before and after the election.

This editorial line taken by most of the newspapers could be related to Pratt's (1991) finding that the role of privately owned and government-owned media in Africa is blurred. Expanding on this further, Jeter et al (1996: 30-32), noted that the reason for this is the need to unite all strata of society in order to fulfil government's aims and objectives. The major task of the press during this period was to mobilise the entire Nigerian public to participate in the election. This they did through giving coverage to election-related issues, such as:

(1) What the federal military government's authorities were saying or doing about

[446] On May 1, 1999, *The Guardian* (Nigerian), published the result of a survey conducted by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), under the tiltle: "Nigerians won't compromise civil rule, says survey" and reported that, no matter how badly civilian administrations may perform, Nigerians prefer them to military rule. Also read the views of Interviewee, H. Odukomaiya on p.198 where he notes that Nigerians will no longer tolerate military rule.

the election;

(2) What the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was doing; and,

(3) Reporting about the activities, programmes and leaders of the political parties.

For instance, many of the newspapers focused on the enactment of Decree 13 of 1993 by the federal military government. Titled "The Presidential Election (Basic Constitutional and Transitional Provisions) Decree 13" was about the guidelines on how to ensure that the election was conducted in a free and fair atmosphere. Typical headlines on the day following the enactment of the decree were:

"Don'ts of June 12 polls: Decree out; Guilty candidates to be banned for 10 years; Police, Governors, NEC officials, media, affected" (*Daily Sketch*, 3/6/93);
"June 12 elections: MKO, Tofa may still be disqualified" (*Daily Champion*, 3/6/93);
"Flag bearers risk 10-year ban for election fraud" (*Daily Times*, 3/6/93).

Basically the newspapers reported that, according to the new decree, any presidential candidate who involves himself in corrupt practices during the June 12 election would be disqualified and barred from contesting or voting in future elections for a period of 10 years. They noted that the decree identifies punishable corrupt practices as including impersonation, treating voters to drinks and food, use of undue influence, bribery or aiding and abetting corrupt practices.

In doing this it would seem that the idea was for the newspapers to enlighten the Nigerian public on why it was important that the transition programme should succeed (Ruijter, Ibid). This was echoed by many of the newspapers on 8 June 1993, when they reported what President Ibrahim Babangida ('IBB' below) said while declaring open a workshop on the events, issues and sources of Nigerian history (1960-70s) in Kaduna. Headlines like:

"Let's learn from past mistakes - IBB" (*New Nigerian*); and,
"We must learn from history - IBB" (*Daily Times*);

These two federal government-owned newspapers sum up the essence of the story as reported by some of the newspapers. In the articles, President Babangida is reported

as explaining that Nigeria has learnt many lessons and also recorded some achievements in the course of formulating and executing the transition programme, which would culminate in the June 12 presidential election.

On 4 June 1993, the newspapers reported that the NEC had given N80m to the two political parties, as one of the measures to ensure that there were no hitches in their preparations towards the election. The newspapers considered this a significant story as some of them made it the lead. For instance, consider the headlines:

"Parties get N80m lifeline from NEC" (*Vanguard*, 4/6/93);
"NRC, SDP get N80m more for activities" (*The Guardian*, 4/6/93);
"NRC, SDP get N80m for campaigns" (*New Nigerian*, 4/6/93) and;
"N80m lifeline for NRC, SDP" (*Daily Times*, 4/6/93).

The thrust of the story was that, according to the National Electoral Commission's director of public affairs, Mr Tonnie Iredia, the grant was in accordance with sections 17 and 22 of the Political Parties (Registration and Activities) Decree No 27 of 1989, the aim of which was to assist the political parties in their campaigns for the presidential elections.

The newspapers also undertook the major task of making sure that the Nigerian public was well informed about the programmes and activities of the two political parties. The various reports revealed what the leaders of the political parties were saying or doing, the idea being to enable the voters make an informed judgement in casting their votes. One of the major events of the presidential campaign in June 1993 was the first live television presidential debate. The two presidential candidates went head to head in a television debate, thus giving them the opportunity to convince the Nigerian public about what their individual party stood for and how they would go about governance. Many of the newspapers tagged it the 'great debate' and provided the details of what the presidential candidates said:

"Great TV debate: Abiola, Tofa 'clash' over oil subsidy" (*National Concord* lead, 7/6/93);
"I owe my country my all, says MKO", and "Why I attacked Christianity – Tofa"

(*National Concord* front page stories about SDP and NRC presidential candidates respectively, 7/6/93);
"Abiola, Tofa in historic debate" (*Vanguard* lead, 7/6/93);
"Tofa, Abiola present economic blueprint" and "Candidates differ on national conference" (*The Guardian* lead, 7/6/93);
"The Great Debate: MKO, Tofa face Nigerians" and "Tofa preaches unity" (*Daily Sketch* lead, 7/6/93);
"Mismanagement, nation's bane - Abiola, Tofa" (*New Nigerian* lead, 7/6/93); and,
"The Great Debate: Abiola Vs Tofa - keen, revealing" (*Daily Times* lead, 7/6/93).

The way that the newspapers reported the election campaign in general, and the television debate in particular, corresponds to what the Working Group on Black Civilisation and Mass Media at the FESTAC Colloquium said about the media, which is that:

> Nationally, the media are an important integrative agency. They are a powerful
> force as an educator, agitator, mobiliser, motivator and entertainer ... They can create a feeling of involvement and participation. It is through them that the agenda of the day is presented to the nation. They are a national forum for the continuous debate (cited in Nnaemeka et al 1989a: 244).

But what was unique about the way that the press tried to fulfil this role during this period was the largely non-partisan way that they covered the activities of the presidential candidates of both parties. Many Nigerian newspapers are notorious for their partisanship (Oyovbaire, 2000; Haruna, 1987),[447] but this time, most of the newspapers gave equal attention to what the two candidates for the presidential elections were saying, probably because, as already noted, the press was fully committed to the national agenda to disengage the military from the political scene, and realised that only elections conducted under a free and fair[448] atmosphere would

[447] Also see Omu, 1978.
[448] The point should be made that the atmosphere at that time in Nigeria was not really conducive to a free and fair election given the fact that the whole political process was planned, directed and executed by the military. For instance the two presidential candidates that contested under the platform of the Social democratic party (SDP) National Republican Convention (NRC) were not seen as particularly representing a spectrum of interest in Nigeria since the parties were the creatures of the Babangida military regime. But the press as did the Nigerian populace took the view that anything that will result in the disengagement of the military from the political scene was acceptable (See fieldwork interviewee, Chief Odukomaiya on p. 138. and also the survey in the Guardian about Nigerians

facilitate the process. According to Enwenwa (1989: 93), the mass media can still perform within the context of the goals of the state, irrespective of its history. In other words:

> It (is) not the history and past heritage, but rather the actual political situations ... the choice of ... implementation of (national) policy that better explain the nature, organisation and functioning of the mass communication institution.

This was quite apparent in the way that many of the newspapers showed neutrality while reporting about the elections. Some of the headlines read:

"Abiola promises drug barons big fight" (*New Nigerian*, 5/6/93);
"Tofa outlines programme for women" (*New Nigerian*, 7/6/93);
"MKO to end fuel shortage" and "I'll share nation's wealth equally – Tofa" (*Daily Sketch* stories about SDP and NRC presidential candidates respectively, 3/6/93);
"MKO promises home-made drugs" (*Daily Sketch*, 10/6/93);
"[Tofa] ... promises to increase fuel prices to save NNPC" (*Daily Sketch*, 11/6/93);
"Tofa promises to abolish oil dichotomy" (*Vanguard*, 2/6/93);
"Abiola, Tofa bank on minorities for victory" (*The Guardian*, 6/6/93);
"Tofa pledges respect for women's rights" (*The Guardian*, 7/6/93).

7.2 'Only Tofa speaks for the east'

The Imo State government-owned *The Statesman*, adopted an editorial line quite different from the others in covering the presidential elections in June 1993. While, as demonstrated, the other newspapers tried to give a fair coverage to all the election-related issues, *The Statesman* was by contrast outwardly campaigning for the NRC and its presidential candidate, Alhaji Bashir Tofa. After elections to the state legislatures and the state executives were conducted in 1990, the NRC emerged as the ruling political party in Imo state and Anambra state, both made up of the mainly Ibo (Igbo) ethnic group (Olagunju et al: 1993). It was no surprise that the Imo state government used *The Statesman* to promote its political objectives.

The Statesman's stand against Chief Abiola was rooted in Nigeria's geo-politics. The

preferring civil rule to military rule

Ibos maintained that they have often been excluded from Nigeria's mainstream decision-making political process, particularly, since after the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970), when the Ibos fought unsuccessfully to secede from Nigeria [449] And so, when Chief Abiola emerged in 1992 as the presidential candidate of the SDP, the Ibos were disappointed that he chose a Muslim, who is a northerner (Hausa-Fulani), as his running mate/vice-presidential candidate. With Chief Abiola being a Muslim from the Southwest (Yoruba), this ensured a Muslim/Muslim ticket for the presidential election for the SDP. But the NRC's presidential candidate, a Muslim from the north, on the other hand, chose Dr Sylvester Ugoh, an Ibo man (a Christian from the south-east), as his vice-presidential candidate, thus making the NRC a Muslim/Christian ticket.

From then on, the Ibos saw the NRC and its presidential candidate as the only political group that was better placed to protect and further the interests of the Ibos. These sentiments were all reflected in the "Tofa Solidarity Nigeria" statements that *The Statesman* posted on the top right corner of its front page throughout the month of June 1993. Four examples of such statements read as follows:

> **Before you vote**
> If Abiola can influence the marginalisation of the East within the SDP, whose unity he purports to represent in picking Kingibe, what will he do to us when he gets to Aso Rock?[450] Tofa has shown that he respects and cares for all sections of this country. Say no to arrogant patronage - **Tofa Solidarity Nigeria** (*The Statesman*, 2/6/93).
>
> **Before you vote**
> 'We shall not allow the marginalisation of any group in the party'. That was MKO Abiola at the launching of the SDP Presidential Campaign. We the Easterners know the truth. The exact reverse has happened to us. We have been skilfully out-schemed. Abiola's remarks and consequent actions are a hallmark of double talk and inconsistency. Vote a consistent Tofa you can trust - **Tofa Solidarity Nigeria** (*The Statesman*, 8/6/93).
>
> **Before you vote**
> More than ever, the Eastern States are farming a common front to tackle issues of common interest. This is how it should be. We are a people whose future is tied together. Ugoh has promised to enhance this unity by recognising the East as his Primary constituency. Who is going to represent us in the Abiola

[449] Read footnote 293 on p.143 above for an extract from the case for the Igbos, as submitted to the Oputa Panel by the Pan-Igbo Group, Ohanaeze; Achebe, C., 1983: 56-64; *Statesman* context above in chapter three; Also see the article:'Igbos and V-P post', published in *The Statesman*, on 8/6/93.

[450] This is the term used to describe the seat of the Executive arm (presidential palace) of the federal government of Nigeria based in Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital city.

combination? Nobody. Our only hope for a better tomorrow is Bashir Tofa and Sylvester Ugoh - **Tofa Solidarity Nigeria** (*The Statesman*, 9/6/93).

Before you vote
In their debates, Abiola and his running mate claimed that they are going to be Presidents of Nigeria not of SDP or Muslims. Indeed! But here below is Abiola for you ... "Nigeria is Nationally and Internally a Muslim State and you may stop patronising the Concord if you do not like my Statement. Afterall, I am a millionaire!! Bashorun MKO Abiola - responding to critics over his role in OIC. Fellow Nigerians ... think about this as you cast your vote on Saturday (*The Statesman*, 10/6/93).

In effect, while the other newspapers were pre-occupied with reporting all aspects of the elections as they related to issues at both the national and state levels, *The Statesman* followed this clear editorial line of campaigning for the NRC and its presidential candidate, Alhaji Tofa. It continuously presented Alhaji Tofa not only as the candidate speaking for the Easterners (Ibos) but also as the more capable candidate of the two. On 1 June 1993, it ran the lead story:

"Political power sharing in Nigeria: Tofa says you can't scheme out the East", and quoted the NRC presidential candidate as saying:

"Nigeria belonged to all and you cannot have a successful country by ignoring anybody".

The following day it followed up with the lead headline:

"Mammoth crowd at NRC rally ... Tofa says attempt to marginalise the East must be resisted", and also quoted Alhaji Tofa thus:

"There will be no unity in a country where an essential component of the nation appears to be relegated to the background in the scheme of things of the nation."

And on 10 June 1993, its lead story was:

"Saturday's Presidential elections: Tofa tipped to win". [451]

[451] According to *The Statesman*, its article was based on the findings "conducted by the Centre for Socio-legal Studies and Research (CSSR), Enugu (Anambra State)".

Even when the other newspapers were reporting about the issues that the two presidential candidates talked about during the first ever presidential debate in Nigeria, *The Statesman* chose to focus only on Alhaji Tofa. Its lead on 8 June 1993 was:

"Tofa scores high marks - at NTA debate with Abiola".

The article was based on the information that the newspaper said it garnered from "*The Statesman*'s opinion poll shortly after the debate", and the "viewers scored the NRC presidential candidate, Alhaji Bashir Tofa very high for his brilliant performance at the interview".

7.3 Reporting the annulment of the June 12 election: 'Nigerians reject fresh elections', and 'The peoples' will must prevail'

The goal that the Nigerian press set out to achieve in June 1993 was more than any other thing the need to ensure that democratic ideals took root and flourished in Nigeria.[452] At the same time, though, there were some differences in the way that the government-owned and the privately-owned newspapers responded to this challenge. This was particularly apparent in the way that they reported the annulment of the election by the military authorities. Most of the government-owned (state or federal), newspapers' reports were focussed on what the military government said in announcing the annulment of the election and why the action was taken, as well as what the officials of the two political parties were planning to do in the wake of the announcement.[453]

Nevertheless, among the government-owned newspapers, slight differences still

[452] For their views on how the Nigerian press plays its role, read Interviewees: G.G., Darah on pp.203 & 205 and, S. Amuka-Pemu on p.205 under the heading: "Where press reflects national outlook and promotes a collective national identity", pp. 203-206.

[453] For instance, Jeter et al (1996: 27) note that the press collaborates and is supportive of the government on issues of national importance, just like the announcement made by the military government to explain the reasons for annulling the election. Also read the views of Interviewee H. Odukomaiya, on p.139 to the effect that the Nigerian press co-operated with the military government as a way of encouraging the military to disengage from politics.

existed in the way that they reported the annulment. But basically these newspapers (state and federal) took an editorial stance that was supportive of and sympathetic to the federal military government's position (Jeter et al 1996: 27). They simply reported the official position of the government and blanked out the outrage and condemnation of the government's action by those opposed to the cancellation.

Typical was the way that the Imo state government-owned *The Statesman*, reported the annulment. It devoted the whole of its front page on 28/6/93 to what Nigeria's President, General Babangida, said in a radio/television broadcast:

"Why we cancelled June 12 elections - IBB (lead);
"Abiola, Tofa banned";
"NRC, SDP to produce new flagbearers";
"Banned politicians can now contest"; and,
"Nigerians receive pat on the back".

In the lead story: 'Why we cancelled June 12 elections - IBB', for instance, it starts:

> " THE Federal Military Government has given reasons for the cancellation of the June 12, Presidential election.
> President Ibrahim Babangida said in a nation-wide broadcast that the elction did not meet the basic requirements of a free and fair poll just as it happened to the primaries of last year which were also cancelled".

This clearly showed how the newspaper became a platform for the government to use to rationalise its position.

And as one of the newspaper's sub-headlines on the front page: 'Nigerians receive pat on the back' showed, while there was widespread condemnation of the cancellation of the election, the newspaper was reporting that the President appreciated them and wanted them to stand behind the government in the interest of peace and unity, as in:

> "PRESIDENT Ibrahim Babangida has expressed government's appreciation of the patience and understanding of Nigerians against the background of the current political situation in the country. He urged all Nigerians to keep faith the unity, peace and stability of the country and of the commitment of the present administration".

Similarly, the two federal government-owned papers led with the following stories:

"Cancelled Presidential election - Party, Caucuses plan meetings", (*New Nigerian*, 28/6/93); and,
"IBB, governors meet tomorrow" (*Daily Times* 28/6/93).

But nowhere in the stories or on their front pages did they report or give prominence to the condemnation of the annulment of the election. Rather, in the *New Nigerian* story, Alhaji Usman Alhaji, the former national secretary of one of the two political parties, the NRC, was reported as saying that the political logjam could be resolved within the limited period set by the military authorities to conduct another election. The newspaper reported Alhaji Usman thus:

> "Meanwhile, former NRC National Secretary, Alhaji Usman Alhaji, has said that the only thing that could give the Federal Government a sign of seriousnesson the present political situation in the nation, was to make adequate arrangement within the limited period and conduct the election.
> Alhaji Usman maintained that if the government action was to save the nation, the decision was a welcome one, adding "I see in the new style some kind of stability ..."

This was clearly against the mood in the country, which was that Nigerians were not prepared to go through another election, as it was generally believed that the June 12 election was won by the Presidential candidate of the SDP, Chief M.K.O Abiola. Indeed, compared to the way that the privately-owned newspapers dealt with the issue, there was a marked difference. They mostly published the opinions of Nigerians, including politicians, condemning the cancellation, and demanding that the election should be upheld. Some of the headlines that these newspapers splashed across their front pages, after the announcement of the cancellation of the election, read as follows:

"'Declare June 12 Presidential poll result now'- NLC (Nigerian Labour Congress) issues ultimatum – Nation-wide strike looms" (*Daily Champion*, 29/6/93);
"Nigerians uphold June 12 election" (*Vanguard*, 28/6/93); and,
"Politicians, others flaw poll's cancellation, fresh agenda" (*The Guardian*, 28/6/93);

Using examples of some passages from the *Daily Champion's* story will show the extent of the privately-owned newspapers' anger towards the military authorities for annulling the elections organised in a bid to disengage the military from Nigeria's body politic. When the *Daily Champion* screamed across its front page the headline "'Declare June 12 presidential poll result now' - NLC ISSUES ULTIMATUM *Nationwide strike looms", the newspaper reported as follows:

> "THE Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) yesterday threatened to embark on a 'national action' from Thursday, if the Federal Government fails to declare the winner of the June 12 presidential election by tomorrow.
>
> A statement issued at the end of its central working committee (CWC) meeting in Lagos said the action would be on July 1 and 2 in the first instance.
>
> Speaking to newsmen shortly after the meeting, the NLC's deputy president, Mr Adams Oshiomole, said a statement rejecting the government's reason for the cancelling the election would be sent to President Ibrahim Babangida and the 30 state governors today.
>
> The congress is of the opinion that the last election was peaceful, orderly, free and fair; an unprecedented development in the history of the conduct of elections in the country.
>
> Nigerian workers, according to the congress, are convinced that the election was the best, contrary to the reasons advanced by government for its cancellation and the "staged-managed" protests in some states.
>
> It insisted that government's statement did not reflect the judgement of most Nigerians and the international community ..."

Another privately owned paper, *National Concord*, made its position clear on the cancellation of the election on the front page stories and comment on the 27/6/93.[454] The first two paragraphs of the lead story, 'NIGERIANS REJECT FRESH ELECTIONS', read:

> Nigerians spoke in unison again yesterday in firm opposition to the fresh presidential elections [sic] plan outlined by the military government last night.
>
> The main plank of the objection which came from Nigerians of diverse background was that there was no basis for a fresh election since there was no deadlock in the 12 June election in which the SDP presidential candidate won convincingly.

The other stories on its front page on that day were:

[454] A copy of the *National Concord* of 28/6/93 was not available for examination, though its position was predictable as its publisher was Abiola.

"IBB Lists New Rules, Unchain Banned Politicians"; and,
"Another transition to what?"

But the front page also featured an editorial titled: "Front Page Comment - The People's Will Must Prevail", where the newspaper concluded:

> "... It is clear that a President-elect has now emerged, that Nigerians have chosen the man whom they want to lead them for the next four years under a democratic government. It is also clear that those who are trying to frustrate the sovereign will of the people constitute only a small, selfish minority within this military administration ... We completely reject the idea of conducting any other election and call on the government to announce the result of the 12 June election in its entirety and to declare the winner without further delay ..."

What has been documented in this chapter is how the press behaves during elections conducted and supervised by a military administration. It is clear that both government and private newspapers see elections from a national perspective. This is understandable since they are not bogged down by partisan politics as it's the case when they operate under a military administration. Nevertheless, it can rightly be said that differences still exist in the way that the private newspapers generally behave during elections compared to what the private newspapers are allowed to do, particularly when the issues are contentious like the Presidential election in 1993. In other words, the government uses its newspaper to articulate and defend its position. The private newspapers on the other hand remain nationally focussed and become anti-government in its editorial policy, particularly when the government tries to truncate an electoral process deemed to have been freely and fairly contested and won.

In the next two chapters (eight and nine), we will analyse other activities of the press when there is a military administration in Nigeria. To do this, the focus will be on: How the presses generally conduct their activities, using as examples, their coverage of events in June 1985 and June 1987; and, How they cover specific issues, like the riots that almost brought Nigeria to a standstill in June 1989 following the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the military administration.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press under a military administration: Events in June 1985 and June 1987

In the preceding two chapters, six and seven, the differences in Nigerian press coverage during civilian and military administrations was analysed, with particular focus on elections organised by a civilian administration and those conducted under a military administration.

In this chapter, the pre-occupation will be on how the press generally covers events during the military administration, with reference to the way that it covered events in June 1985 and June 1987. The important point to note is that, as noted in Chapter Seven, during military administration in Nigeria, the newspapers often have a national focus. This is most noticeable in the State's newspapers because, unlike when they are being run during a democratically-elected civilian administration, they give priority to national stories rather than to those that are of immediate importance to the local areas.

Paramount to understanding the actions of the press here (particularly the federal or State government papers) is that the military administration is centralised and therefore effectively destroys the federal structure of Nigeria (see Falomo, 2003).[455] This is why a State government-owned newspaper, under military administration, does not necessarily lead with State news or what State government officials say or do. Rather, the news based on what federal government officials say often takes precedence, and in terms of the prominence that they are given. In the same vein, the newspapers also give priority to issues seen as of national relevance, irrespective of whichever State of the Nigerian federation that it emanates from (see Jeter et al 1996: 8-11).[456]

[455] See also Nwabueze, 1992; Okadigbo 2000; Ezomon 2001.

[456] This is a marked difference from what happens in a civilian administration, where the newspapers become the tool of the political party in power and their officials and are used against political opponents. For instance, a newspaper controlled by a political party in charge of a government in a

The task here is to document how state government-owned newspapers generally behave under a military administration. To put this in perspective, it is essential, for purposes of the analysis, to outline the general pattern that the State-owned newspapers report news during a military administration. This could be divided into two, namely that:

(1) The newspaper becomes the platform for the State military governor/State government officials to address the nation.
(2) Activities of federal government officials and those of national commentators are often reported and in most cases take precedence over State news.

8.1 State government-owned newspapers

8.1a The nation comes first: 'Reduce alcoholism'; 'Nigeria needs active labour force' and 'No compromise on national security'

As noted, because of the centralised nature of military administration, the newspapers editorial policy is often national in focus. In effect the state governors who are appointed by the highest military authority in the country reflect the national focus in whatever they do. Government-owned newspapers toe the line accordingly. But it should be added that the issues or events that prompt the military governors to address the nation happen at different times in each state of the Nigerian federation. Therefore, when such issues come up in any of the states, the military governor in that particular state uses such occasions to address the nation. Consequently, the Nigerian nation is always the focus of attention. This is a basic feature that distinguishes a military from a civilian administration in Nigeria. Military officials at state or national level see Nigeria as one constituency, which in turn informs their reactions to issues of national importance. The media then become the conduits, through which the administration reaches the Nigerian society,[457]

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particular State, during a civilian administration, will only report stories about the activities of officials of that political party at the national level (see chapter six).

[457] Read the views of Interviewee D. Agbese on pp.146-148 regarding how the Nigerian military governments use the press, particularly against the political class under the heading: "The Nigerian press and military intervention in Nigerian politics", pp.144-149.

8.1b June 1985: 'Gov calls for ban on sale of alcohol to youths under 16yrs'

In June 1985, for instance, the activities of the Military Governor of Imo State of Nigeria, Brigadier Ike Nwachukwu, as reported by the state-owned *Nigerian Statesman* during the period in question, typically exemplify this. As some passages from the above-stated caption of the front page lead story of the newspaper, published on 1 June, 1985 show, Governor Nwachukwu used the National Symposium on the Brewery Industry in Nigeria to condemn "the rate of alcoholism in the Nigerian society ..." The major concern of Nwachukwu was that there were no measures in place to protect the Nigerian youths against such a social vice. He then "called for a ban on the sale of beer to children under 16 years in hotels, bars, restaurants and similar places, as a way of reducing the rate of alcoholism in the society." (*Nigerian Statesman*, lead, 1/6/85, p.1).

The following day, the story the newspaper published on its back page was titled: "Call for review of Civil Service". This quoted Governor Nwachukwu as suggesting to the Study Group on Re-organisation of the (Nigerian) Civil Service, "to lay emphasis on how to motivate the civil servant to perform his duties and on time too" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 2/6/85).

"Gov calls for economically active labour force" was the headline that the newspaper splashed across its front page on 3/6/85. This reported Nwachukwu as urging the "Nigerian workers to constitute themselves into an economically active labour force with the specific purpose of aiding in pulling the economy out of the woods". The Governor used a colloquium on finance in Nigeria, held in Owerri, the capital of Imo state, to address the Nigerian workers.

An important aspect of the function of a State Governor, during a military administration, is that in their duties and pronouncements they reflect the policies and objectives as laid down by the highest military ruling body at the centre. The passage from the front page lead story titled: 'Governor commends immigration men - says no compromise on national security', that the *Nigerian Statesman* carried on 6/6/85, shows Nwachukwu focussing on the federal military government's policy on immigration, especially as they relate to the effect that illegal immigrants could have

on Nigeria's national security. When the Assistant Director of Immigration in the State, Mr Allison Iyawe, paid him a courtesy call at Government House, Nwachukwu saw it as an opportunity to address the Nigerian Immigration authorities not to compromise Nigeria's national security when carrying out their duties. The newspaper quoted Governor Nwachukwu as saying, "In as much as the department tries to avoid any act that could tend to embarrass foreign nationals or their home governments, it should ensure that the interest and security of the country were paramount and should not be compromised."

8.1c June 1987

It was the same editorial policy that the newspapers continued to follow in 1987, as the military administration was still in place. The Military Governor of Imo State, Amadi Ikwechegh, used the occasion of the visit of members of the Enugu zone of the Alumni Association of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPPS) to dwell on what is needed to be done for Nigeria to attain its potential and consequently become a great nation. As the newspaper owned by the State Government, *The Statesman*, was the channel through which this message was conveyed to the Nigerian nation. So, not surprisingly, it ran the story as follows:

> 'Help govt build strong, stable future for Nigeria - Gov charges NIPSS alumni'.
>
> Members of the Alumni Association of ... [NIPSS] have been called upon to offer useful and expert advice, which would assist the Federal Government in ensuring a strong and stable future for Nigeria.
> Governor Amadi Ikwechegh of Imo State made the call at the weekend while exchanging views with members of the Enugu Zone of the Association who called on him at the Government Lodge Owerri ...' *(The Statesman*, 1/6/1987, p. 1).

In Bendel State, the Governor, Col. John Mark Inienger, was also addressing the nation, while commissioning an industrial project in the State capital, Benin City. This time the Governor's point of departure was the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the Federal Government to help resolve Nigeria's economic crisis. Titled: "SAP: big boost to economy" the government-owned *The Nigerian Observer*, on its front page on 4/6/87, reported the Governor as saying that:

> Nigeria has the resources to launch her on a path of sustained industrial development ... According to the Governor, the innovative efforts of industrial outfit as a pioneer in indigenous engineering technology is a vindication of the federal government Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) which lays emphasis on local production of equipment with available local resources and to conserve scarce foreign exchange ...

Also on that same day *The Nigerian Observer* reported what Governor Inienger told participants at the 6th annual conference of Chief Executives of Nigeria Public Enterprises, held in Benin City. Under the headline: "Evolve result oriented programme-Inienger tells Chief Executives", the newspaper stated:

> CHIEF executives of public enterprsies in the country have been charged to perfect result-oriented strategies for managing such organisations.
> Making the call ... [he] noted that the problem of the Nigerian public enterprise had been that of deficiency in effective and efficient implementation of public policies and programmes ...

8.2 'Soleye warns: FMG not father Xmas': A voice for the federal military government's (FMG) officials and national commentators

Another characteristic which State government-owned newspapers in Nigeria exhibit, during military administration, is the prominence that they give to the activities of the federal military government, its officials and any prominent/renowned Nigerians who voice their opinions on national issues, thus conforming with the military authorities' desire to ensure that the media deviate from "reflecting regional (or State) sentiments" and "work for national unity" (Osuntokun, 1989: 351). In this endeavour, all the State government-owned newspapers take it as a duty to publicise any key issue that the officials of Nigeria's federal military government or national commentators are involved in. This same approach was adopted by all the three sampled state government-owned newspapers in June 1985 and June 1987. In this part of this chapter, some of the stories that these newspapers carried to fulfil this objective are examined. Although several stories are highlighted, only one each from the three newspapers is treated in detail, starting with their coverage of events in June 1985 and then June 1987.

8.2a June 1985

When the Nigerian federal Minister of Finance, Dr. Onaolapo Soleye delivered a keynote address titled: 'Financing Public Enterprises in Nigeria', to Chief Executives of Public Enterprises at a conference in Jos, the capital of Plateau State, *The Nigerian Observer*, owned by the Bendel State government, reported what Dr. Soleye said under the caption: 'Soleye warns: FMG not father Xmas'. In the story, the newspaper reported Dr Soleye as expressing unhappiness about the fact that "The N20 billion which the federal government pumped into investments in the form of loans or capitals in public enterprises over the years have not yielded expected dividends ... [because] public enterprises have come to regard the treasury and guaranteed loans for their projects as extensions of government subvention", adding that "this attitude of non- or irregular payment of loans and capital repayment does not augur well for the nation" (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 4/6/85, p.1).

Some of the other national stories that the newspaper featured on its front page in the month included:

"N25,000 tools for coal industry" (7/6/85), which was about developments within the Nigerian Coal Corporation, as stated by the Acting Manager of the Corporation, Mr R. E. Ohaneje.

"Western press flayed" (14/6/85) was a report based on the views expressed by an American professor, blasting Western media for reporting invariably negatively about the third world, during a discussion he held with some journalists in Lagos.

A further story followed the comments made by the former Premier of the defunct Midwestern region of Nigeria, Chief Denis Osadebay, about military intervention in the Nigerian body politic, *The Nigerian Observer* reported the story under the caption: "Why military appears on the stage" (28/6/85).

On 1/6/85, the Imo State government-owned *Nigerian Statesman*, also reported on its front page what Nigeria's federal Minister of Defence, Major-General D. Y. Bali said in a keynote address at the national symposium on the brewery industry in Nigeria. According to the story, which the *Nigerian Statesman* captioned 'FMG determined to

reduce import bills', Major-General Bali touched on one of the banes of the Nigerian economy - imports. The *Nigerian Statesman* noted Bali as saying that the government was determined to reduce "the nation's high import bills to very manageable limits ...", by developing within the Nigerian economy, the "raw materials [needed] for agro-based industries ...", thus redressing Nigeria's "mono-cultural economy with heavy dependence on oil" (*Nigerian Statesman*, 1/6/85).

Also in the same month, what the *Nigerian Statesman* reported on its front pages were, among others:

"Fed Govt to establish food information centre", attributed to the Nigerian Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Major-General Tunde Idiagbon, while he was opening the United Nations University Workshop on Food Science Technology for African countries in Lagos (5/6/85);

"Experts agree on privatisation", which was about the views expressed by Prof. Austin C. Ezejelue and Chief Emmanuel C. Adiele at a colloquium on finance, held in Owerri (3/6/85); and,

"Local beer expected in Nigerian markets within five years" based on the views of a team of industrial experts at a symposium in Owerri on substitution of imported raw materials for the brewing industries in Nigeria (4/6/85).

Rather more seriously, the Nigerian military authority subverts the media's 'Fourth Estate' role to the extent that they become willing tools in the military authority's attempt to discredit the civilian political class that they overthrew, by blaming all the ills of the Nigerian society on them.[458] Consider the slant of this lead story captioned: "We're on the path ... Towards achieving our goal - Buhari", which the *Daily Sketch*, owned by the governments of the then Ogun, Oyo, Ondo States of Nigeria, splashed on its front page on 29/6/85. While using the story to report what was said at a military graduation ceremony by the head of the military administration, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, the *Daily Sketch* stated:

[458] Read the views of Interviewees: D. Onabule, Al-Bashir, and D. Agbese on pp.144-149 under the heading: "The Nigerian press and military intervention in Nigerian politics".

> "Major-General Buhari yesterday took stock of the military administration's 18 months in office and concluded that it was on course towards rectifying the failures of the defunct civilian regime."

In reporting the military authority's sentiments against the civilian political class, the newspapers often focus on what the military administration is doing differently in order to improve the process of governance in Nigeria. For instance, in the *Daily Sketch* story above, one of the ways that the military administration intended to achieve this was by making the overthrown civilian political class appear before military tribunals to account for their period in office, thus making public accountability a part of Nigeria's political culture.

> "General Buhari disclosed that in addition to various decrees to tackle social vices, public officers had been made to account for their stewardship before special military tribunals."

In the report: "Why N127m Port deal doubled", the *Daily Sketch* also noted what the former Chairman of the Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA) told the panel probing the Nigerian Ministry of Transport and Aviation contracts (1/6/85). On the issue of how the detained politicians, who were overthrown by the military, will be tried and brought to justice in the Nigerian courts, the *Daily Sketch* reported the views of the Nigerian Minister of Information, Group Captain Omeruah, under the caption: "Omeruah speaks on detained politicians" (15/6/85).

8.2b June 1987

In June 1987, the pattern was the same for all the state government-owned newspapers. They continued to give priority attention to issues that had a national focus, particularly those attributed to federal military government officials and important social, political and economic figures within Nigeria. One of the ideals that the Nigerian military often promises to maintain and protect, after overthrowing what it usually refers to as "the corrupt civilian administration", is Nigeria's national

security.[459] In effect, anything that is said or done by the military authority in pursuance of this objective is given a wider coverage by the Nigerian newspapers which, in that period in Nigeria's socio-political development, regarded the Nigerian military as more capable of providing a better administration for Nigeria than the civilians.[460] A classic case in June 1987 was when Nigeria's Chief of General Staff, Rear Admiral Augustus Aikhomu addressed the Fourth General Conference of the Social Science Council of Nigeria in the northern city of Zaria. Both *The Nigerian Observer* and *The Statesman* gave it coverage on the front page of their respective editions on 5/6/87. While *The Nigerian Observer* captioned it:

"CGS calls for nation's security";

The Statesman chose the headline:

"CGS urges Nigerians to work towards national security".

Nevertheless, the kernel of the story remained broadly similar, but, interestingly enough, the first paragragh of both newspapers read exactly the same:[461]

> "The Chief of General Staff, Rear Admiral Augustus Aikhomu has called on Nigerians to engage in activities that will sustain the internal cohesion and security of the nation." (*Nigerian Observer* and *The Statesman).*

Apart from its security objective, the Nigerian military administration, at its inception, also lay out the economic and political as well as social agenda it wished to implement.[462] The newspapers often serve as the conveyers of this message to the entire Nigerian nation. One of the economic programmes that the military set out to achieve then was the development of the rural areas as a way of boosting food production.[463] The responsibility was given to the Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) under the Chairmanship of Air Commodore Larry D.

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[459] For the full text of the broadcast by Major-General Yakubu Gowon to the Nigerian nation on the Declaration of National Emergency and Creation of 12 States, on the 27th May, 1967, see Aguolu 1973: 161-166.
[460] See Uko2004. Also see the views of Interviewees: D. Onabunle, and Al-Bashir on pp135-6.
[461] Perhaps suggesting that a press release had been used verbatim for this passage.
[462] See Iroanusi 1997.
[463] Ibid, 116-118.

Koiyan. So when he addressed mass media executives in Lagos to brief them about the activities of the Directorate, *The Nigerian Observer* ran the story on its front page, and under the headline "Model rural communities for each LG", it stated:

> "The Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI) has directed every local government area in the country to nominate two rural communities to serve as models for others to emulate ..." (2/6/87).

The Statesman also reported the story with the caption: "Chairman urges press to spread activities of directorate" (2/6/87, p.9).

Another economic objective of the Nigerian military administration was how to de-regulate and therefore revamp the poor Nigerian economy. The authority came up with a programme it tagged: Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), for this purpose. Under that programme, it introduced the Second tier Foreign Exchange Market [SFEM], (Ibid, 112-115). Although many Nigerians were suspicious of the programme, thereby eliciting fierce criticisms from some quarters, nevertheless the newspapers, in the main, did their utmost to adequately inform the Nigerian public about the long-term benefits. One of such occasions was when the *Daily Sketch* made the story:

"Call on Govt to scrap SFEM - Shonekan replies. Aluko ... says SFEM is good for economic revival" (front page lead on 28/6/87).

Chief Ernest Shonekan who was the Chairman/Managing Director of the United Africa Company of Nigeria (UACN) was reacting to the call made by a renowned Nigerian economist, Professor Sam Aluko, for the abolition of SFEM; otherwise, according to him "the country's economy would be ruined". In reporting the story, the *Daily Sketch* noted Chief Shonekan as saying that he did not share Professor Aluko's pessimism about SFEM and quoted him thus:

"I think SFEM is a good device [by the military] to revamp our economy".

Continuing, the newspaper reported:

"Chief Shonekan recalled that the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of

which SFEM is a component was introduced because:

- The Nigerian economy was overvalued
- There was scarcity of essential goods due to lack of raw materials for manufacture
- Nigerian goods were not competitive in the external market thus depressing our economy ..."

8.3 Federal government-owned newspapers and privately-owned newspapers

8.3a Focus on the nation: "Govt stops fund for studies abroad", "Gov wants civil service bodies amended", "Fifth plan is nation's last chance, "Leaders advised on national issues" and "Nigerians favour 2-party system".

Basically, as explained, when the newspapers are run during a military dispensation, evidence shows that they are devoid of political loyalties and wrangling. Within that context, all the newspapers are immune from the political pressures to toe the official lines of a political party, as when a civilian administration is in place. So, in reporting issues within Nigeria's political terrain, both government-owned and privately-owned newspapers mostly focus on national issues, for purposes of promoting national unity (Jeter et al, 1996: 30-33). On that basis, the work now examines the activities of the federal government-owned and privately-owned newspapers. It finds that:

(1) The focus of the stories/articles that they publish, are national in nature; and,
(2) Within the context of a military administration in Nigeria, there is some evidence of investigative journalism or some stories based on independent sources which are sometimes critical of government, though mostly in the privately-owned newspapers.

As seen from the earlier interviewees, a basic tendency exhibited by all Nigerian newspapers is their ability to promote Nigeria's national course when the issues at stake are not contentious.[464] The era of military administration often provides the press with this opportunity as they more often than not assume the role of political parties, articulating the views of Nigerians of all political hues, thereby serving as the bridge between the Nigerian populace and the military administration (see Macebuh

[464] For instance, read the views of Interviewees on pp.203-206 under the heading: "Where press reflects national outlook and promotes a collective national identity".

2001; Ajuluchukwu 1995: 45).[465] The military, on its part, being the only institution that holds political power, then uses the newspapers to gain access to the entire Nigerian population. This is in line with one major feature of military administration in Nigeria which, as earlier noted, is centralisation.

Accordingly, all the newspapers adopt a national perspective to issues as they are delivered by the military government through its officials, state or federal. Such was the case in June 1985 and June 1987. Some passages from a story like:

"Govt. stops fund for first degree studies abroad".

The Guardian splashed this across its front page on 14/6/85, and typifies the way that the newspapers give attention to very topical national issues, particularly because of the impact that they are likely to have on a spectrum of the Nigerian public. In the story, *The Guardian* captured the essence of the debate in Nigeria, during that period, about the wisdom of allowing young and impressionable Nigerians to study for a first degree overseas, when it reported as follows:

> "The Federal Government will no longer fund or approve foreign exchange for Nigerians who wish to pursue undergraduate studies overseas ...
>
> The order came after an inter-ministerial committee set up by the government to review the curricula of the universities approved that the ... programmes run by Nigerian universities satisfy the need in under-graduate education ...
>
> Executive Secretary of the National Universities Commission (NUC) Malam Yahya Aliyu told *The Guardian* that the ... approved programmes were enough and their course content covered all the fields anybody would want to study abroad ..."

Another important issue that was a major national concern in Nigeria was the northernisation policy[466] of most of the states in the northern part of the federation (see, for instance, *The Guardian*, 16/05/06, Editorial titled: "The Yobe state law on private schools).

[465] Also read interviewee G.G. Darah on pp.151-152 under the heading: "The press and the military in the absence of formal political activities".

[466] When Nigeria attained political independence, there was the fear that the north was not ready, particularly in the area of education. Northernisation policy was put in place by the northern regional government to protect the interests of people of the northern region who were not as qualified as their counterparts from the southern part of Nigeria

This issue again attracted national attention on 5/6/87 when the *Vanguard*, in a very bold front page headline stated:

> "Jaji students flay Kano govt ... over its 'unhealthy' employment policy".

The government of Kano, one of the Northern states, had in place a policy whereby Nigerians who were not from Kano were offered employment on a contract basis. When a group of the Nigerian Armed Forces personnel, studying at the Command and Staff College in the city of Jaji, near Kano, found that this was the case after an extensive study tour, they condemned it and called for it to be scrapped. This was the angle from which the *Vanguard* saw it and reported accordingly.

But two of the Interviewees, Haruna and Momoh, have also noted that most of the Nigerian newspapers exhibit a basic characteristic which is that, apart from reporting these national stories, most of which, are based on what government officials have said or done, such officials are never asked any questions to throw more light on very pertinent national issues.[467]

A sample of some that were published throughout the period under study, starting first with the privately-owned newspapers, is:

"Akinyemi's charge to new envoys", (*Vanguard*, 2/6/87), where the newspaper reported thus:

> "The External Affairs Minister, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, yesterday in Lagos called on Nigeria's Ambassadors to promote actively the country's economic interests as well as its political, social and cultural interests ..."

It was also typical of the federal government-owned newspapers to publish stories whose sources were government officials, as seen in one front page headline story:

"Economic survival: Fifth plan is the nation's last chance", which was attributed to

[467] Read Interviewees: T. Momoh on pp.188-189; O. Farouk Ibrahim and M. Haruna on p.190 under the heading: "Misleading the reader: Bias, prejudices and editorial as fact"; also see Macebuh, 2001: 1 & 2).

Nigeria's Minister of Petroleum and Energy, Professor Tam David-West by the *New Nigerian* in its edition of 3/6/85 read as follows:

> "The fifth National Development Plan is expected to be Nigeria's last chance of transforming its economy to provide the last hope of the Blackman in a world of changing technology and cut-throat competition. The Minister of Petroleum and Energy, Professor Tam David-West, made this assertion in Port-Harcourt, while addressing ...staff of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) at a seminar ..."

Given the almost apocalyptic headline, no further points are made about the wastage of the country's oil wealth hitherto. Nevertheless, the important point raised by Interviewees Haruna and Momoh above is that, most of the time; the newspapers do not ask these officials any critical questions. A typical case in point is the following story which appeared as the front page lead of the federal government-owned *New Nigerian* on 3/6/87 titled:

"105,752 died in road accidents in 15 years - Alhaji Abubakar".

The story merely focussed on what the Nigerian Minister of Works and Housing, Alhaji Abubakar Umar, told journalists during a press conference in Lagos, to brief them about the activities of his Ministry. Some passages from the story read as follows:

> "A total of 105,752 persons died in this country in 469,178 reported cases of road accidents in the last 15 years, the Minister of Works and Housing, Alhaji Abubakar Umar, has disclosed. He also said 360,714 persons were injured. The Minister ... said that statistics available on road accidents within that period showed that in every four motor accidents, there was at least one death and in every recorded accident, there must be one injured person ... He said that 1976 had the highest accident cases with 40,881, followed by 1982 with 37,094, while 1971 had the lowest record of 17,584 cases..."

Even then, the privately-owned newspapers do not fair any better, as the front page story of the *National Concord* edition of 15/6/85, quoted below shows.

"Gov wants civil service bodies amended",

The newspaper reported that:

> "A military governor has advocated the restructuring of the civil service commission at both Federal and state levels in the country. Under the proposed exercise, emphasis should be placed on giving reward for merits. This was the suggestion of the Plateau state Governor, Navy Captain Samuel Atukum, Jos yesterday, while addressing a nine-man study group on the re-organisation of the Federal civil service. [He] said that the nation's search for a resilient and result-oriented civil service would not stop until something positive was achieved ..."

The important point to stress here is that what is common to all these stories is their focus on mainly national issues. This comes through in the slant that these newspapers give to most of the stories that they run. Some of the other stories, whose contents were national that the newspapers published, during this period were:
Firstly in privately-owned newspapers:

"Police blamed for prison congestion", *Vanguard*, 15/6/85;

"Industrialists advise leaders on national issues", *The Guardian*, 4/6/85;

"Nigerians favour 2-party system", *National Concord*, 28/6/87;

"Govt, civil servants to meet over purge order", *The Guardian*, 14/6/87;

"66 executed in Nigeria - Amnesty", *National Concord*, 6/6/85 (back page);

"21 draft laws before AFRC [Armed Forces Ruling Council] for approval", *The Guardian*, 6/6/87.

And secondly, in federal government-owned newspapers:

"EPI[468] children immunised in 17 states, *New Nigerian*, 7/6/85;

"Review pension tax - Directors urge govt", *Daily Times*, 1/6/85;

[468] Extended Programme on Immunisation (EPI), a national health initiative.

"Enhance Nigeria's image abroad - Tony Momoh [Nigeria's Information Minister] appeals", *New Nigerian*, 4/6/87;
"Can't we brew indigenous beer?", *Daily Times*, 3/6/85;

"Kalu [Nigeria's Minister of National Planning] wants indigenisation law reviewed", *Daily Times*, 4/6/87.

8.3b "Senior Police Officer on suspension" and "Questions over payment to foreign creditors": Government and its institutions are subjects of press scrutiny

A major difference between the privately-owned newspapers and the government-owned newspapers in Nigeria is in the manner that they each conduct their activities. So, even though they both implement a similar editorial policy that focuses on national issues, they still differ in the way that they present the news. This is why, for instance, while the stories in government-owned newspapers, in most cases, are based on what government functionaries are doing or saying with no critical questions asked,[469] there is some evidence to show that the privately-owned newspapers do conduct some investigative journalism and publish stories that are attributed to independent sources, whether or not such would be damaging to the government. For instance:

"For alleged link with cocaine suspect - Senior Police Officer on Suspension"

The *National Concord* made this its front page lead on 4/6/85, and it could only be found in privately-owned newspapers as government-owned newspapers, which have to toe the official line, could hardly venture to publish issues that the government would want to keep away from the public. But the *National Concord* could afford to run the story thus:

> "A very senior police officer at the Police Force Headquarters, Lagos was suspended from duty last Friday, reliable sources hinted in Lagos yesterday" adding that "the sources said that the top police officers's suspension had something to do with his 'personal relationship' with one of the four suspects now being held by the police over illegal possession of cocaine."

[469] See Interviewees: T. Momoh, O. Farouk Ibrahim, and M. Haruna on pp188-190.

In the same vein, the privately-owned newspaper, *The Guardian* can expose the Nigerian government's ineptitude by running a story to the effect that Nigeria was going to lose N1billion on goods shipping following lack of scrutiny by the government. The thrust of *The Guardian* story was that, through its investigation, it discovered that as much as N1billion losses will be suffered by Nigeria under a series of trade agreements that Nigeria had concluded with other countries. In explaining how it reached this conclusion, *The Guardian*, said:

"Trade pacts with 30 nations - Nigeria may lose N1b on goods shipping".

> "Under normal circumstances, the agreements would have obeyed the national and international policy on shipping, which compels any country selling anything to this country, to transport at least 40 percent of it here aboard the Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL) ..."

The newspaper added that:

> "The policy initiated by the United Nations Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and ratified by Nigeria in 1975, is aimed at redressing the imbalance in the maritime trade, which was overwhelming[ly] against developing countries ..."

The newspaper went into detail to highlight the fact that, through acts of omission by the relevant Nigerian government department and officials, this was not done.

Also through a detailed investigation, *The Guardian* on 14/6/87 reported some lapses that it had found in the way that the Nigerian government managed its foreign exchange earnings, in the front page lead story titled:

"Questions over payment to foreign creditors"

The issue that the newspaper raised in the report was that the Nigerian government was paying 50 per cent of its foreign exchange earnings to foreign creditors instead of "the target of 30 percent of total foreign exchange earnings" it had planned for in its 1987 budget. The reason for this, according to what *The Guardian* said it was told by "financial experts", was because the Nigerian government made a deal with foreign creditors which was not to its advantage.

What has been sought to document in this chapter is how the Nigerian press generally behaves under an administration led by the Nigerian military. Using the events in June 1985 and June 1987 as case studies, it is quite evident that the Nigerian press are nationally focussed. What the examination in this chapter has therefore established is that the newspapers are able to do this because they operate within the centralised nature of a military administration. But this chapter also shows that it is only privately-owned newspapers that are able to conduct investigative journalism. The important point here is that military centralisation more strongly inhibits government-owned newspapers publishing stories against government – but rather offers a diet of puffs and non-critical items that do not address the real problems and concerns of the nation or its people. In the next chapter, the focus will be on how the press behaves when dealing with specific issues of national relevance.

CHAPTER NINE

Analysis of the activities of the Nigerian press under a military administration: Coverage of a specific issue - the 1989 SAP riots

The main aim in this chapter is to focus on how privately-owned and government-owned newspapers dealt with a specific issue in Nigeria, during the period covered by this research. One of the points made in the previous chapter was that Nigerian newspapers, government or private, often have a national focus during a military administration, especially because of the centralised nature of military government, as earlier discussed. But it was also noted that both government-owned and privately-owned newspapers differ in the way that they approach such national issues, particularly when they are contentious. The riots were one such issue that trailed the introduction by the Nigerian military of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), to redress the parlous Nigerian economy in 1989.

9.1 June 1989: The anti-SAP riots engulf the Nigerian nation

In respect of how the newspapers reported the SAP riots that engulfed Nigeria in June 1989, the government-owned newspapers (state and federal) took a different angle to reporting the crisis compared to the privately-owned newspapers. The government newspapers mainly took the editorial slant to publish the sort of stories that would favour the government and also explain the government's position or the action that the government was taking on the issue. Jeter et al (1996: 31) note that African journalists working in particularly government-owned newspapers tend to adopt a careerist[470] rather than a professional approach to news and consequently ensure their job security. In effect they are often very uncritical of government when reporting about issues that could be detrimental to the government.

The privately-owned newspapers, on the other hand, adopted the editorial policy of

[470] Journalists in privately-owned newspapers also adopt careerist attitudes in some respects because of the limitations of ownership control of newspapers, whether private's or government's. Read the views of Haruna, 1987; also read the views of fieldwork interviewees on p.152 under the heading: "The impact of ownership on the press".

giving a wider and more multi-faceted coverage of the crisis. In other words, although their major pre-occupation during this period was to report what was actually happening, which was that the Nigerian public was anti-SAP and therefore engaged in what became very violent demonstrations against the policy and the military government that introduced it, they also reported what the government said about the SAP controversy (Jeter, et al, 1996: 27-32).

Therefore, to reflect these two different editorial approaches employed by the newspapers during this period, their activities are examined according to particular editorial slants on:

(a) The outbreak of the riots;

(b) The statement made by the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC);

(c) The official position of the government,

9.1a "Lagos burns" and "No cause for alarm": Private and Government newspapers give a different spin to same crisis

When the Nigerian state was enmeshed in anti-SAP protests during the first week of June 1989, the differences in the way that privately-owned newspapers and government-owned newspapers report crisis against government policy, were particularly apparent. While the former concentrated on describing what occurred during the crisis, the latter chose not only to denounce the protesters but also followed the path of simply reporting to show that the situation was under control. For instance, read how the newspapers reported the crisis on the first day of June 1989.

The privately-owned newspapers ran front page headlines such as:

"Lagos burns ... As anti-SAP riots spread", *National Concord*", 1/6/89;

"Demonstrators, police in fierce battle as protests spread to Lagos", *Vanguard*, 1/6/89 and;

"Dark Wednesday: Lagos writhes in chaos as protests spread"

- Four persons feared dead
- Public buildings burnt
- Telephone booths vandalised", *The Guardian*, 1/6/89.

But while reporting the same incident on the same day, the government-owned newspapers splashed front page headlines like:

"Situation returns to normal ... No cause for alarm - Rasaki [Military Governor of Lagos state]", *Daily Times*, 1/6/89 and;
"Hooligans exploit students' demonstration", *New Nigerian*, 1/6/89.

Some passages from one newspaper each from the two categories of newspaper ownership in Nigeria make the point clearer. Part of *The Guardian* story titled "Dark Wednesday: Lagos writhes in pain as protests spread" read thus:

> THUGS, urchins and idle hands held sway on Lagos streets yesterday as Nigeria's capital city joined the roll of university towns scorched by students' protests against government's economic policies.
> A profile of the riot, which began at about 6 a.m., showed that:
> - no fewer than four persons died during clashes between security men and the mob;
> - public buildings were partially burnt. Those affected included the Lagos State Development and Property Corporation's (LSDPC) head offices ... the Inland Revenue office ... and police stations in Ilasamaja, Ipaja and Oshodi;
> - detainees freed from police cells;
> - telephone booths were vandalised; and
> - private and commercial vehicles, some owned by the Lagos State Government, were damaged.

By contrast, the government-owned *Daily Times*' story, "Situation returns to normal ... No cause for alarm - Rasaki", reads as follows:

> "THE situation in Lagos has been brought back to normal and there is no cause for alarm, Governor Raji Rasaki of Lagos State has assured.
> Reacting to the spate of mob actions in Lagos yesterday culminating in the destruction of property in some parts of Lagos, the Governor said the security agents have brought the situation under control.
> He commended the security agents for their restraint and discipline in handling the situation ...
> The governor then assured all peace-loving people of Lagos State that there is no [need to] fear again as the situation has been brought under control and efforts is being intensified to completely rout those who seem bent in [sic] creating chaos in the state ..."

9.1b "NLC supports crisis" versus "NLC condemns looting": The newspapers

make a stand on the statement made by the NLC

Another difference that becomes clear in the editorial directions during the SAP crisis was the slant that both the privately-owned and government-owned newspapers gave to the statement of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) on the crisis. The main issues raised in the statement made on behalf of the NLC, by its President, Mr Paschal Bafyau, were:

- That the Nigerian government should see the crisis in "its real social context" which is the "deep-rooted economic and social crisis which most Nigerians, especially the working people, the urban and rural poor are currently undergoing";

- That even though the NLC did not support the destruction and looting of public and private property, the government should show restraint; government officials should stop extolling the benefits of government's economic policies because their utterances ridiculed the "concrete hardship in which most Nigerians are currently engulfed" (see *The Guardian* story on the NLC on 2/6/89, back page).

To the privately-owned newspapers therefore, the statement meant:

"NLC gives support", *Vanguard*, 2/6/89, front page lead;
"A natural reaction, Says NLC", *Daily Champion*, 2/6/89, front page;
"NLC calls for restraint in govt's handling of riots", *The Guardian*, 2/6/89, back page.

However, the angle from which the government-owned newspapers reported the NLC's statement was different. They were not only interested in following the official line but also ensured that its reports tended towards ensuring a possible diffusion of the tension rather than aggravate it.

The *New Nigerian*, on 2/6/89, led on its front page with the story:

"NLC CONDEMNS LOOTING, DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY", and reported

that:

> THE Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has condemned the destruction and looting of public and private property in Lagos last Wednesday.
>
> The NLC President, Mr Paschal Bafyau in a statement in Lagos yesterday urged workers and their trade unions to exercise restraint over the current economic situation in the country.
>
> He said that workers must exercise restraint 'in order to allow for a collective and responsible approach towards the present crisis'.

On the same day, the *Daily Times* made the story one of the two lead stories on its front page under the title: "Watch your words! NLC warns public servants".

> PUBLIC functionaries should desist from making pronouncements which tend to ridicule the hardship Nigerians are going through, the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) said in Lagos yesterday.
>
> In a statement issued and signed by the NLC president, Mr Paschal Bafyau, the congress expressed concern over the reaction of Nigerian students to the deep-rooted economic and social crises, which most Nigerians, especially workers, the urban and rural poor are presently facing.

9.1c Reporting what the military authority said

Perhaps the best evidence that the privately-owned newspapers offered wider coverage of the crisis was in the way they reported the government's pronouncements on the crisis. For instance, on 1/6/89, *The Guardian* and *Vanguard* still respectively found space on their front pages to report what the Lagos state of Nigeria government said as the crisis raged, under the headlines:

"Governor [Raji Rasaki, military governor of Lagos state] says situation is under control"; and,

"LASG [Lagos state government] issues statement on the protest".

It was also in the same manner that the privately-owned newspapers treated what was said by the Nigerian President, General Ibrahim Babangida, during the crisis. This is

seen in the headlines on the front pages of the privately-owned newspapers on 3/6/89:

"Babangida now speaks on riot - Every Nigerian has the right to make himself heard, he says", *Vanguard*;

"President concedes students' right to speak", *The Guardian*;

"Babangida speaks on riots", *National Concord.*

Again on 6/6/89, a day after the Nigerian President, Ibrahim Babangida (IBB) inaugurated the Nigerian Armed Forces Consultative Council (AFCA) - a communication channel between the Nigerian Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) and the military, the privately-owned newspapers made sure what the Nigerian leader said on that occasion was given coverage. Their front page headlines on that day read:

"Riots meant to ruin the nation, says Babangida; Detractors plan to humiliate military out of power; SAP, a smokescreen for the riot, will continue; Businessmen, politicians and commission agents blamed", *The Guardian*;

"No going back on SAP - IBB", *Daily Champion*;

"We are targets of public assault - IBB ... President tells of growing animosity against military men", *Vanguard*;

"No alternative to SAP - IBB", *National Concord.*

What has been covered in this chapter is how the Nigerian press covers an important national issue, this time the riots that engulfed the Nigerian nation in 1989. Even though the event occurred during a military administration, when in most cases (as discussed earlier) the press is nationally focussed; there were major differences between the privately-owned and government-owned presses. While for instance, government-owned newspapers report the government's side of events, to favour and protect the government, the privately-owned newspapers adopt a more balanced editorial policy by reporting stories that are not only critical of government but also

the government's side.

What has therefore been established is that when a sensitive national issue degenerates into a crisis, the government-owned newspapers clearly behave differently. The issue is that the control factor comes into effect as the government uses its own newspapers to support and protect its own position. However, the privately-owned newspapers are critical of government's position and adopt an editorial stance that is pluralistic.

While this chapter has examined the coverage of a clearly domestic agenda, the following chapter looks at subjects that place Nigeria in international contexts, and in which the press, whatever its ownership, may be seen to have a more closely aligned position. The contrast between the two chapters is therefore in sharp relief: division and unity.

CHAPTER TEN

The Nigerian Press and Collective National Identity: 'Flagging' of the Nigerian nation - World Cup Triumph and hosting of the OAU Summit in 1991

In Chapters Six, Seven, Eight and Nine, it has been shown that, under different circumstances within the context of the Nigerian nation, the press (whether government or private), conduct and adjust their activities to reflect the particular issues that they are dealing with. And what is obvious from it all is that the type of administration and contentious issues are the major determinants of the kind of control that they are subjected to and therefore their editorial direction regarding various issues. In effect, on the evidence from the examination so far, it is safe to state that the Nigerian press adopts different editorial policies to deal with the various contentious issues which are the natural consequences of a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society like Nigeria's.

Consequently, they are hardly united on anything, irrespective of the type of administration (military or civilian), in place. This tends to give the impression that the press is incapable of promoting a sense of collective Nigerian national identity amongst Nigeria's nationality groups let alone play any integrative role within the Nigerian state.

However, in this chapter, the focus is on those issues that tend to bring the press together and which in the process, enable them to 'flag' the Nigerian nation and consequently promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity. The activities of the press in relation to two issues that are examined are:

- The press' coverage of Nigeria's triumph at the 1985 Under-17s world cup football tournament in Beijing, China, organised by FIFA; and,

Nigeria's hosting of the 27th Summit of the OAU, in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja

in 1991.

10.1 Nigeria win Under-17 World Soccer Tournament

The Nigerian press' reaction to the Nigerian team winning the 1985 FIFA Under-17 World Cup tournament, held in Beijing, is aptly captured in the way that they covered that milestone in Nigeria's soccer history during the week starting on Sunday 11/08/85 to Saturday 17/08/85. The feel good factor and the general celebrations that followed Nigeria's triumph at the tournament were phenomenal and unprecedented in Nigeria. Arguably, this was mainly due to the way that the Nigerian media in general and the Nigerian press in particular, covered the event. Starting from the day that the final was played till the day that the victorious Nigerian Under-17 national team (also known as Baby Eagles or Eaglets) returned to Nigeria, it was the Nigerian team's escapades at the tournament that dominated the front and back pages of the Nigerian press.

It was not possible to get each of the newspapers used for this study in order to learn how they individually covered the event. Nevertheless, the way that four of the newspapers which were readily available for documentation, namely, *The Guardian* and *National Concord* (privately-owned) and *Nigerian Observer* and *Nigerian Statesman* (government-owned), treated the issue in mid-August, 1985, is argued to be broadly representative. They all celebrated and flagged the Nigerian nation, thereby arousing, irrespective of ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds, a collective sense of Nigerian national identity.

To ascertain how this was achieved, two "categories of newspaper materials" (Soderlund et al 1980: 317) were examined: the front page and the editorials. While the front pages clearly show the papers' priorities, the purpose was to take further how the newspapers, in their editorial comments, interpreted the World Cup triumph and what it meant to Nigeria. The examination was under the following themes:

(1) The press' coverage of the final day of the tournament;
(2) The press' coverage after the Nigerian Under-17 national team defeated West

Germany to win the World Cup; and,
(3) Editorial comments following World Cup victory.

Experts on the Nigerian press have noted the unity of purpose that the press exhibits when it covers issues or events that involve Nigeria (Read interviewees on pp.203-206; also see Dare, 1997: 543-4).[471] They identify with the Nigerian nation, mobilise the populace and give support to the government of the day. They use specific events (Billig, 1995: Chapter 1), such as the World Cup triumph, to flag the Nigerian nation. The most effective way that they do this is through rhetoric and the manner in which they cast the story headlines (van Dijk: 1991: 50-1). This was clearly evident in their coverage of Nigeria's Under-17 football team's triumph at the FIFA World Cup.

10.1a Selling Nigeria to Nigerians - It's 'us' against 'them': "Nigeria versus West Germany" and "Nigeria to conquer the world"

It's the little words - 'we', 'this' and 'here' - which the press employs to address and present news to their readers as members of the nation that matters (Billig, M., 1995: 11 & 94). This fires up 'banal nationalism' in the citizenry, but crucially promotes a sense of collective national identity. These were the characteristics that the Nigerian press exhibited on the 11th August 1985 when the final match of the tournament was played in Beijing (sometimes Peking in the Nigerian press). All the press were united in using the tournament to flag the Nigerian nation at every opportunity. In reporting the event, they portrayed it as being between 'us' (the Nigerian Baby Eagles) and 'them' (the West Germans). Some of the headlines on that day read:

> "World Cup Final Day: Nigeria makes soccer history ... Baby Eagles versus W. Germany in Peking" (*National Concord*).

In the story, the newspaper acknowledged that, even though:

> "... West Germany is a country to reckon with in the world of football" [However, in this world cup final], "... the Germans will meet their Waterloo against the Baby Eagles" (*National Concord*, 11/8/85, p. 15).

On that same day, under the caption: "Nigeria set to conquer the world" *The*

[471] Read particularly the views of Interviewees: H. Odukomaiya; T. Momoh, and Al-Bashir.

Guardian, let it be known that there was no doubt that:

> "The Germans have a reputation for getting their timing right ... [as] they get the results when it matters ... [yet] that reputation will however be debunked [as] the Eagles stretch their wings to the limits and fly before the Germans shoot" (*The Guardian*, lead, 11/8/85, back page).

And to *The Nigerian Observer*, under the caption: "World cup Finale: Give it to Eaglets", it is a day that:

> "Nigeria's ... Baby Eagles will ... lock horns with their West Germany counterparts in the finals of the Kodak-sponsored World Cup tournament in Peking China" (*Sunday Observer*, 11/8/85, p.15).

As all the headlines on that final day of the tournament suggest, the intention of the newspapers was to portray Nigeria as positively as possible to the public, make them feel Nigerian and whip up in them a sense of national pride and joy. This was clearly the angle from which *The Guardian* reported the event under the same headline for that day, as is evident in some passages from the story:

> "Nigeria set to conquer the world"
>
> Today is different. For the first time in the history of a World soccer tournament, put together by the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) ... Nigeria's green-white-green flag will wave proudly against the Chinese skies in a rare showing in the nation's short football history.
>
> Who should not be overjoyed at the feat of the young lads now dubbed Baby Eagles? Who will not marvel at their glowing display in this maiden FIFA Under-17 World Cup?
>
> Expectations are high and Nigerians at home are gearing up for that moment when (the Nigerian team) ... will lift up the glittering trophy amidst the brilliant flash and glare of television cameras (*The Guardian*, lead, 11/8/85, back page).

The *Nigerian Statesman* also noted in its own story titled: "D-day for Baby Eagles" the joy and pride that the Baby Eagles have brought Nigerians through their exploits at the tournament, and added that the final match to be played between Nigeria and West Germany was the last hurdle they will clear

"... on their way to making history - to put Nigeria on the world soccer map", (*Sunday Statesman*, lead, 1/8/85, p.1).

10.1b A celebration of Nigeria: "A day of Glory: Nigeria conquers the world"; "World bows to Nigeria"; and, "Nigeria wins world cup"

In the Nigerian press, the term 'Nigeria' in this circumstance was elevated to the forefront of all the news items that they featured on their pages, while reporting the victory of the Nigerian team over their West German counterparts. Further, it was a celebration of Nigeria and anything Nigerian. This was particularly noticeable in the first paragraph of the report about the Nigerian team's triumph at the final by virtually all the newspapers. For instance, *The Guardian*, on that day, screamed on its front page:

"A Day of Glory: Nigeria goes to the East and conquers the World"

NIGERIA's soccer ambassadors, the U-17 Eagles, yesterday ended their historic and glorious campaign for world honours in flourish, defeating West Germany 2-0 in the maiden finals of the FIFA U-17 World Cup decided at the Workers Stadium in Beijing, China (*The Guardian*, lead, 12/08/85, p.1).

The *National Concord* on its part, splashed across its front page the headline:

"SOCCER WORLD BOWS TO NIGERIA: Baby Eagles beat Germany 2-0"

NIGERIA made history yesterday in china by snatching the inaugural Under-17 World Youth Soccer Championship at the hand of an unbelieving West Germany (*National Concord*, lead, 12/08/85, p.1).

As for *The Nigerian Observer*, the front page lead was:

"NIGERIA MAKES SOCCER HISTORY ... wins world cup"

NIGERIA has won the U-17 World Cup football competition.
The Nigerian team otherwise called 'Baby Eagles' defeated their West Germany counterparts by 2-0 in the finals played yesterday in Peking, China (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 2/08/85, p.1).

The way that the newspapers reported the events after the victory, leading to the

triumphant entry of the team into Nigeria with the World Cup trophy, also showed how the newspapers used the occasion to foster a Nigerian national identity by referring to the players, also referred to as 'World Golden Eaglets', as "Nigerian soccer heroes". A state government-owned newspaper, the *Nigerian Statesman*, captured the character exhibited by the press on this occasion with its front page story on Wednesday, 14/08/85. Captioned: "Nigerians await Baby Eagles today", the newspaper reported:

> "The general mood in the country after last Sunday's unprecedented spectacular World Cup victory by an African side, the Baby Eagles, in China can best be described as triumphant and festive.
> Nigerians have been basking in the glory and pride brought about by the Baby Eagles who are now the best under-17 soccer lads in the world ...
> What Nigerians are eagerly looking forward to is the arrival of the new football kings ..."

In line with 'the general mood in the country', on the day that they were scheduled to return to Nigeria, all the other newspapers ran such stories as:

> "Beautiful Babies, welcome"

> "A clever child is the delight of his father. Nigeria, proud of her little children, is going out in all her grandeur today to receive the under-17 Eagles ... (*The Guardian*, lead, 14/08/85, p.1).

The only story that the *National Concord* published on its front page that day, was captioned: "ALL HAIL BABY EAGLES", and the first paragraph read:

> "A unique reception awaits Nigeria's newly-crowned world, youths soccer champions, Baby Eagles, when they return home today from their epoch-making campaign, in China".

And when the team finally arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, the press used it as an occasion to celebrate Nigeria's 'soccer heroes', as all the front page headlines published amply show:

"Bounteous rewards for soccer heroes" (*The Guardian*, lead, 15/08/85, p.1).

"HEROES WELCOME" (*The Nigerian Observer*, lead, 15/08/85, p.1).

"Millions cheer in Baby Eagles ... Lagos in carnival mood as heroes ride in triumph through major roads" (*Nigerian Statesman*, lead, 15/08/85, p.1).

"HEROIC WELCOME FOR CHAMPIONS ... Renamed 'World Golden Eaglets'" (*National Concord*, lead, 15/08/85, p.1).

Significantly, the occasion also presented the Nigerian press with the opportunity to show that sports can serve as a unifying factor, in a multi-ethnic entity like Nigeria. In this endeavour, they became the messenger and the 'conduit by which' (Billig, 1995: 11) to report to the Nigerian public, any statement stressing how sports can be used, to instil in Nigerians, a sense of collective national identity. One of the team managers of the victorious soccer team, Mr Christian Chukwu, was so overwhelmed by the way that Nigerians, irrespective of their ethnic background, responded with one voice to celebrate Nigeria that he noted:

> "Now I am convinced we are Nigerians" ('Heroic welcome for champions ... Renamed 'World Golden Eaglets', *National Concord*, 15/08/85, pp. 1 & 13).

To complement the sentiments expressed by Mr Chukwu, the then Military Governor of Lagos State, Group Captain Gbolahan Mudasiru, stated thus:

> "As we rejoiced [sic] at the historic achievement of our soccer heroes, Nigerians should seize this golden opportunity to reflect on the tremendous impact which sports victory in the international scene could have on the image of a country and the role of sports as a unifying factor" ('Educate the players to the highest level, pleads father', *The Guardian*, 15/08/85, pp. 1&2).

For Nigeria's then Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari, the 'Baby Eagles' victory was a testimony to what Nigeria and Nigerians can collectively achieve. Addressing the 'Baby Eagles', he noted:

> "Your collective achievement has amply demonstrated what we can do on our own given proper harnessing of our human and material resources.
> I would therefore, like to commend your very splendid and exemplary performance to all Nigerians ..." ('Bounteous rewards for soccer heroes', *The Guardian*, 15/08/85, pp. 1&2).

Indeed, the Nigerian federal military government also recognised the need to use the

home coming event of the Baby Eagles to promote a sense of collective national identity among the jubilant and joyful Nigerian public. It granted its civil servants the liberty to miss about three and half hours of work to enable them to participate in the welcoming ceremony for the nation's soccer heroes. *The Nigerian Observer*, for instance, on 14/08/85, reported the government's gesture under the title "Reception for Baby Eagles" on its front page:

> "In order to enable public servants participate in the reception being organised for the members of ...**Nigeria's** youngest national team, the Baby Eagles, the federal military government has directed that work will resume in all government offices, including federal parastatals in Lagos area at 12 noon today instead of the normal resumption time of 7.30 am" (Emphasis added).

But when *The Nigerian Observer* added that "it is therefore vital for the public servants to seize the opportunity of the free working period to express their appreciation by joining other **Nigerians** to welcome the victorious **Young Nigerian** World Soccer Champions" (emphasis added), it showed how on such occasion, the Nigerian press can mobilise the Nigerian populace and arouse in them a sense of collective national identity.

The sense of national feeling and national pride in the soccer heroes was so high that they were even declared the property of government, as exemplified in *The Guardian's* front page report of 17/08/85:

> "Golden Eaglets belong to govt, says Omeruah"
>
> "No member of the World Golden Eaglets will be allowed to play for any clubside as they are the property of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria", said Sports Minister, Emeka Omeruah. He was speaking at a dinner in honour of the Eaglets on Wednesday at the National Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos.
>
> The Minister, who described the victory of the Eaglets as the greatest gift to Nigeria on the occasion of her 25th anniversary, said the Eaglets had brought home a shining light which every Nigerian had been experiencing.

10.1c Editorial comment: Press arouses a sense of national feeling, pride and identity in Nigerians

Importantly, the Nigerian press' interpretation of the success of the Nigerian youth soccer team at the World Cup tournament, in terms of their role in the promotion of a Nigerian national identity, was also very evident in their editorial comments afterwards. Typical was that in *The Guardian*, published on page 8 of its edition of Wednesday, 14/08/85. Most of the Editorial is quoted below, because it is a clear illustration of the way that the Nigerian press uses some momentous occasions to arouse a sense of national feeling, pride and identity in Nigerians:

"A magical moment"

"TODAY in Lagos, **the shine of the Nigerian sun** will be different. The streets, already swept clean by our new environmental consciousness, will evince a polished dignity. Even if it rains, the skies will bear no significant clouds.

Today, austerity does not exist. There is no unemployment. No crime. No harsh decrees. No injustice. **For the first time since we danced** on [sic] the streets **on December 31, 1983.**[472] **Nigeria is one.**

Today is different, and it is good to be a Nigerian. PROUD is the word. We are thrusting our chests out at the world in self-acclamation, for Nigeria are world champions, the very first champions of the Kodak-sponsored Under-17 world soccer tournament.

At the Murtala Muhammed Airport in Lagos, **the heroes will stroll into the ecstatic embrace of their government and countrymen.** The boys of Sebastian Brodericks, Christian Chukwu and Bala Shamaki, who stunned the world in China with smooth and confident palm-wine soccer, will meet **Nigeria worshipping at their feet.**

It is an unusual, magical moment, and the boys have earned all the accolades they will be presented with. **Theirs is a unique achievement for Nigeria** and for Africa.

Naturally, **Nigerians - ever anxious to win -** are asking: what next? They are even more anxious to know what is being arranged to ensure that **this, indeed, is remembered as Nigeria's arrival in the big league ...**

To the Baby Eagles, we say: Keep at it. The challenge before you is to surpass your own record. **But you have shown Nigeria that you have the heart to perform as Eagles in *full* flight.** And you know your country best: **we do nothing in halves.** You cannot look back now.

Congratulations." (Emphasis added).

The highlighted parts show how newspapers can address their readers, in the words of

[472] This was the day that the military overthrew the civilian administration that had been in place since 1979 when Nigeria's second republic commenced. Nigerians were so over-joyed that the military terminated the rancorous and destabilising activities of the politicians that they danced in the streets.

Billig (1995: 11 & 94),[473] "as members of the nation [and] ... present news that takes for granted the existence of the world of nations":

"Today in Lagos, the shine of the Nigerian sun will be different";
"... the heroes will stroll into the ecstatic embrace of their government and countrymen";
"Theirs is a unique achievement for Nigeria"; and,
"We do nothing in halves".

Such "rhetoric" is always used with a persuasive intent (van Dijk, 1991: 209). So, *The Guardian* used them as a reminder to Nigerians to not only savour the victory but to identify with it, "for Nigeria are world champions, the very first champion of the...Under-17 world soccer tournament".

This is banal nationalism and, as emphasised by Billig (1995: 11 & 94), it occurs in a situation where, for instance, newspapers employ a routine 'deixis'[474], which is continually pointing to Nigeria as the homeland of the reader ..." It was no surprise then that *The Guardian* told its readers that the success of the Nigerian team has created an atmosphere to make Nigerians think and believe that:

"Nigeria is one";
"It is good to be a Nigerian"; and that the victory signals,
"Nigeria's arrival in the big league.

But Billig (Ibid), as indicated above, also stresses that it is the "little words", often overlooked, that are "the crucial words of banal nationalism". *The Guardian*, for instance, let it be known that "'we' (Nigerians) are thrusting 'our' chests at the world ..."; "'we' (Nigerians), say: Keep at it"; and "'we' (Nigerians), danced on December 31, 1983 ..."

[473] See p.38-39 above for a fuller discussion of this.
[474] The Chambers Dictionary (1994) defines 'deixis'as: "The use of words relating to the time and place of utterance, e.g personal pronouns,demonstrative adverbs, adjectives and pronouns."

10.2 The 27th OAU Summit in Abuja

Beyond using the Under-17 FIFA World Cup tournament to 'flag' the Nigerian nation and promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity, the Nigerian press also used the hosting of the 27th Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1991 to serve the same purpose.

Earlier, we noted that a fundamental characteristic of all Nigerian newspapers, whether private or government, is their common editorial policy of showing support for the government when dealing with international events or issues involving Nigeria. In 1991, the Nigerian military administration, under the leadership of General Ibrahim Babangida, hosted the 27th Summit of Heads of States and Governments of the OAU in the city of Abuja, the capital. How the newspapers covered this event, vis-à-vis the way they celebrated the Nigerian nation, is the subject examined here. The hosting of the OAU Summit by Nigeria in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja in June 1991 saw all the Nigerian newspapers exhibit a common sense of purpose, which was to showcase Nigeria to the Nigerian public and the delegates from other parts of the African continent attending the conference... They did this by giving clear support and coverage to the President, General Ibrahim Babangida, who, as a result of Nigeria hosting the Summit, was elected Chairman of the OAU. How the press 'flagged' the Nigerian nation during this period will form the basis of this part of this chapter.

10.2a Coverage of the opening ceremony of the OAU Summit

When the 27th summit of the OAU opened on 03/06/91, it was all pomp and pageantry and the Nigerian press seized on the occasion to advertise Nigeria. There was little variation in their approach. The agenda for the press was to sell Nigeria to the world and, on this; they were united in making Nigerians feel a sense of pride and belonging.[475] Both government-owned and privately-owned newspapers shared this sentiment and were reflected in the 'style' and 'rhetoric' they used to report the news.

The privately-owned *National Concord* screamed on its front page:

[475] See Dare 1997: 543-544; see also pages 203-206 for the views of the Interviewees on this.

"Abuja hosts Africa ... as historic summit begins"

The federal government-owned *Daily Times* followed suit and splashed on its front page:

"OAU in historic rebirth today

- Leaders to sign Economic Treaty
- IBB becomes chairman

As for the state government-owned *The Observer*, the front page headline was:

"OAU to discuss sit-tight leaders"

These headlines, apart from drawing attention to the fact that Nigeria was hosting the OAU, their content also extolled Nigeria as a nation for being the first to attract so many heads of State and Governments to attend a Summit, a feat that was unprecedented. To underscore this point, the *National Concord*, for instance, reported under its headline, thus:

> "NIGERIA's nascent capital, Abuja, is the proud host today of no fewer than 35 African leaders as the 27th summit of the OAU takes off.
>
> A near full house is expected at the International Conference Centre, Abuja as President Ibrahim Babangida assumes the chairmanship of the continental body ..."

This was a

> "... diplomatic success recorded by Nigeria in bringing a record number of African heads of state to an OUA summit."

The *Daily Times*, on its part, reported that:

> "The Federal Capital Territory has moved from a quiet city to a bubbling one of beauty with banners, buntings and flags all over the place.
>
> The imposing International Conference Centre has been retouched and further decorated with pieces of Nigeria's cultural artefacts depicting the various civilisations of the kingdoms of Benin, Oyo and Igbo-Ukwu among

others ..."

Echoing the same sentiments, *The Observer* noted:

> "... Abuja is enveloped in festive mood; African leaders will also have the rare opportunity of witnessing one of Africa's largest and most ambitious experiments in city development ..."

10.2b Coverage of the activities of President Babangida

During the Summit, one of the objectives that they also aimed to achieve was using the occasion to show the African continent the virtues of the Nigerian nation and its leadership. In this endeavour, the press also elevated Babangida's acronym (IBB), to the forefront of news reporting, for instance, in reporting about the Nigerian leader assuming the leadership of the OAU:

"IBB elected OAU Chairman", *The Statesman*, lead, 05/06/91, p.1;
"IBB takes over the chair", *National Concord*, 04/06/91, p.1
"Babangida heads OAU", *The Observer*, lead, 04/06/91, p.1).

Similarly, stating what was said by the Nigerian leader during the Summit, it was obvious that the Nigerian leader was being portrayed as pre-eminent in Africa, someone setting the agenda for the continent and giving it hope, thereby uplifting the continent from its economic and political paralysis. For instance, the following front page leads stories:

"IBB sets agenda for Africa", *The Observer*, 05/06/91;

"IBB hopeful of Africa's future", *The Observer*, 07/06/91;

"IBB unfolds programme ... as OAU chairman", *The Statesman*, 06/06/91;

"IBB pledges to uplift Africa", *Daily Times*, 04/06/91;

"IBB to bear torch of democracy", *Vanguard*, 05/06/91;

"Don't resist democracy-IBB urges African leaders", *Daily Champion*, 05/06/91;

"IBB releases action plan...As OAU chairman", *National Concord*, 05/06/91.

It is perhaps no wonder that, at the end of it all, the Nigerian leader enthused:

"I'M PROUD OF **NIGERIANS** (emphasis added)", *New Nigerian*, 07/06/91, front page lead, where the newspaper reported the President as saying that:

> "... the performance of the (Nigerian) officials had shed more light on the mood of the nation to prove to the world that **Nigerians** were aware of their responsibilities ..." (emphasis added).

Reflecting this, *The Observer* reported what the Nigerian President said at the end of the Summit, leading with the following headline on its front page:

"IBB hopeful of Africa's future", 07/06/91.

It then noted him as saying that his chairmanship of the OAU "was the beginning of a re-awakening, the re-birth of Africa determined to hold its own in the comity of nations."

In this chapter, it has been shown that the Nigerian press promotes Nigerian national identity through its employment of special events and occasions involving the Nigerian nation, particularly at the international level, to 'flag' the nation. And this is in spite of the fact that contentious issues within the Nigerian nation create an atmosphere that tends to encourage the press to promote nationality and other group interests. This is an aspect of the Nigerian press that is mostly emphasised in the literature to denounce the press as partisan and therefore incapable of playing an integrative role in Nigeria. Nonetheless, the two events discussed here bring into sharp relief the way the Nigerian press – whether private, state or federal – can signal pride in, and reinforce, Nigeria as a united entity. In this sense, it is no longer what

Billig calls 'banal' nationalism, but 'is also to be understood as a form of life' (1995: 60). In these circumstances, Nigeria as an entity is real to Nigerians.

The next chapter offers the conclusions to this study, bringing together the many strands brought out in the chapters above.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conclusion

The task that I set out to do in this research was an enquiry into two major issues in Nigeria, namely:

- How can Nigeria be made out of the different nationality groups that constitute the Nigerian state? Given the nature and character of the Nigerian state, this question has triggered a debate about how to achieve national integration and unity.

- How can the different nationalities express their individual identity and at the same time have a sense of collective Nigerian national identity?

Having established these issues, the question then was through which institution, in the Nigerian nation, can they be actualised? To answer this question, this study chose the Nigerian press for two main reasons:

Firstly, because of its historical link with the evolution of the Nigerian state (Nnaemeka et al. 1989a);[476] and,

Secondly, because the media in general, and the press in particular, can promote national identity in the way and manner it 'flags' and 'reinforces' the nation (Billig 1995: 11)[477]

What I have tried to do towards the research objective was to undertake a detailed analysis of the context of the Nigerian press. The breadth of the issues involved was premised on the reasoning that any analysis aimed at evaluating the role that the press plays within the Nigerian state must be informed by the nature and character of its socio-economic and political contexts. Although there is literature on the role the press has played in national integration and unity none has looked at how the press, through its activities or content, promoted a collective Nigerian national identity.

[476] See also Golding and Elliot, 1979: 21; and the views of interviewees on pp.126-128 above.
[477] See also Fitzgerald 1991: 193-211; Anderson 1991; Brookes 1999.

To achieve the research objectives, two methodologies, namely: Intensive/In-depth Interviews and qualitative content analysis were employed. The interview approach was used to gain an insight into the Nigerian press' background and how it conducts its activities. Accordingly, I sampled and interviewed thirteen experts, who are or have been involved and responsible for the press' content, namely practising or retired journalists (see chapter four above)...I also undertook a qualitative content analysis of particular aspects of the coverage of the press.to explore how such impact on the overall Nigeria's quest for national integration and unity. In order to do this I examined ten days of its coverage in the sixth month of the year beginning from 1983, including the first seven days, followed by every seventh day till the end of the month (i.e. 1-7, 14th, 21st, and 28th), (see chapter four). To cut down on the amount of materials covering the ten-year period of the study, the same procedure was applied to the sixth month of every other year after 1983, that is, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991 and 1993

This chapter will therefore be analysed in six parts in the following order:

- Summary of the major findings from this research.
- Reflections on the key concepts and ideas used in this study as they relate to the Nigerian press.
- Reflections on my methodologies.
- Some suggestions for ways forward for doing research on the Nigerian press in the future.
- A coda, to look back and see whether there have been some major changes over the past nine and a half years to alter the major findings of this research.

11.1 The Major Findings

11.1a Summary of findings from the Intensive/In-depth interviews

The interview was used to seek expert opinions on three main issues about the Nigerian press namely:

1. Its nature and the context within which it operates.
2. Whether the context has influence on the role it plays within it.
3. Whether through its role, it can promote a collective Nigerian national identity.

All the main issues in the literature on the Nigerian press, as they relate to national integration and unity, were confirmed by the interviews. Where there is a difference however is that, although much of the literature does portray the Nigerian press as incapable of contributing to Nigeria's national integration and unity, the interviews show that the press' role in national integration and unity is performed through, firstly, representing the diverse nationalities within the Nigerian state and secondly, promoting a collective Nigerian national identity, using some momentous occasions involving the state. But what was very useful from the literature for the interview analysis is the extent to which the Nigerian press' national influence and effectiveness is linked with the socio-political and economic environment within which it operates. So to discuss the substantive issues that emerged from the interviews, the following themes are focussed upon:

- The nature and character of the Nigerian press.
- The context of the Nigerian press and the role it plays in its activities.
- The manner in which the Nigerian press promotes a collective Nigerian national identity and therefore national integration and unity.

The interviews confirmed that certain activities of the Nigerian press serve as obstacles in the way it can fulfil its constitutional role of promoting Nigeria's national integration and unity. One of the enduring verdicts on the Nigerian press' behaviours and activities from the literature is posited by Omu (1978: 248-250), who remarked

that the Nigerian press provides 'a remarkable example of overzealousness and irresponsible partisanship and recklessness'. From the interviews, the lack of professionalism in the Nigerian press has tended to exacerbate the press' character, as Omu has described. This aspect of the press is recognised by the interviewees as subjective and self-imposed but which has nevertheless blighted the press' functions (Read interviewees, pp.175-178 & 179-183)

But overall, certain patterns and behaviours in the press are identified in the interviews to explain its general nature and character. In the literature, mass media practitioners and owners are described as using media for their political objectives and motivations that detract the press from the objectives of national integration and unity. The interviews found that these manifest themselves in the form of (a) the press being established to serve selfish political purposes at the expense of national objectives (Read interviewees, pp.175-178); (b) high levels of corruption that lead media practitioners to compromise professional standards (Read interviewees, pp.181-183); and, (c) the press being divisive and promoting ethnic cleavages detrimental to national cohesion (Read interviewees, pp.182-183)..

Most notably, when discussing the activities of the press which could negate national integration and unity, the literature particularly draws a link with how the press is limited by geographical, economic, social and political parochialism. This is what is said to generally account for the lack of professionalism in much of the Nigerian press institution (Read interviewees, pp.184-188). The interviews confirmed this and reveal that the press is "very biased and prejudiced" because in its activities, it shows double standards and panders to ethnic sentiments and loyalties (Read interviewees, pp.185-190).

This view aligns with one of the substantive findings from the interviews, which is that there is a relationship between the Nigerian context and the activities and behaviours of the Nigerian press. The literature focuses on how the historical development of Nigeria and the peculiarities of the Nigerian context (see Chick 1971; Grant 1971) have impacted negatively on the press. Further, the interviews show that the lapses in the press are structural, a creature of the post-colonial nature of the Nigerian state, which has caused and continues to reinforce such press tendencies

(Read interviewees, pp.157 & 162-168). Indeed, one of the features of a post-colonial state is the absence of clearly defined state roles (Nnaemeka et al. eds. 1989a & b) in its institutions, thereby making them susceptible to the propagation of narrow and selfish interests. This is confirmed by the interviews and reveals that the Nigerian press merely reflects problems that permeate the fabric of the Nigerian state (Read interviewees, pp.172-174).

The literature on the impact of the control factor on the Nigerian press (see Nnaemeka et al, 1989a: 111) are also supported by the interviews. Ownership control of the Nigerian press, be it government or private; during military or civilian administration, is another major determinant of the nature and character of the press and therefore its editorial direction. The interviewees note that the newspapers are tools which their owners use to promote sundry selfish interests and therefore the journalists have to toe the proprietors' line, irrespective of the damages that such might cause to issues of national integration and unity. Nevertheless, it should also be added that both the literature and the interview analysis show that ownership influence on press behaviour has diminished in certain respects as some newspapers, notably privately-owned ones, are being set up in response to new socio-economic realities (Omu, 1996: 9-12), which place the viability and survival of the newspapers above ownership interests or control, thereby making them more professional (Read interviewee, p.179). The interview analysis stressed the benefits of such a development to issues relating to national integration and unity (See "The control factor in the Nigerian press", 191-194).

However, what is unique about the findings from the interviews is that it revealed what is generally lacking in the literature on the Nigerian press' role in national integration and unity, which is through its role in promoting nationality interests and using specific occasions to promote a collective Nigerian national identity. In the main, both the literature analysis and the interview analysis acknowledge that the Nigerian press has been very much involved and engaged in promoting national integration and unity in Nigeria (read interviewees, pp.158-161). Where they differ, however, is the process through which this is achieved. The literature associates national integration and unity with the ability to reflect Nigerianness and national character in all aspects of Nigerian national institutions. Typically, the press' role in

this endeavour is usually analysed against the backdrop of the classical view of national identity. In effect, national identity and therefore national integration and unity, is attained in a situation where the state is seen as a static and natural phenomenon to be reproduced and continued in a particular manner depicted in a national character that is historically associated with it (see Brookes 1999)

Not surprisingly, in the Nigerian case, the dominant issues in the literature when researching about the Nigerian press' role in national integration and unity are seen from the point of view of what part it has played in the creation and upholding of the integrity of the Nigerian state and the maintenance of its national character (see, for instance, Momoh 1987; Dare 1985 and Ogunade 1982). And the verdict on the press is that because of its historical antecedents, it is very divisive and propagates some negative tendencies which are antithetical to national integration and unity (see Oyovbaire 2000: 99-112). In that case, any attempt to promote ethnic identity and nationality interests is viewed as detrimental to national integration and unity. But the interview analysis showed that the press is able to promote national identity and therefore national integration and unity by promoting nationality perspectives and interests (Read interviewees, pp.158-161),[478] and by 'flagging' and mobilising the different nationality groups to support the Nigerian state during special events involving the state in an international context (Read interviewees, pp.203-207).

This aspect of the Nigerian press' function is in congruence with the view that national identity is not static but simply a process of identifying with the state, and is continually in process rather than being a synonym for the expression of a fixed and eternal character of the state (Brookes, 1999: 248-9).[479] Understood this way, the interviews reveal that the press is actually very active in certain circumstances in fostering Nigerian integration and unity by promoting a collective Nigerian national identity. (Read interviewees, pp. 203-207 under the caption: "Where press reflects national outlook and promotes a collective national identity. Specifically, read the views of Darah; pp.204 & 205; Odukomaiya, 205 & 206; Momoh, 206 & 207; Al-Bashir 206; Amuka-Pemu 205) As noted, one of the criticisms against the Nigerian

[478] Also read, specifically, the views of Interviewees: Dr. G.G. Darah on pp.204 and 205; Mr Sam Amuka on pp.172 & 205; and Chief H. Odukomaiya on pp. 205 & 206.
[479] See also Schlesinger, 1991a & b, Hall 1991a & b; Billig, 1995.

press is that because it promotes sectionalism or nationality interests, it destroys any sense of national identity in the different nationality groups within the Nigerian state. Yet the main thrust of the interviews is that the press that is sectional and able to represent nationality perspectives, can indeed still promote a sense of national identity amongst different groups within any socio-political context (Read interviewees, pp. 162-164 under the caption: "Nigerian press reflects nationality perspectives"; also see Fitzgerald, 1991; Schlesinger, 1991a: 191).

This is what has been identified by the interviews as the inevitable path that the Nigerian press has to tread in order to promote Nigeria's stated national objective of achieving unity within diversity. For instance, from the interviews, it is known that the Nigerian press is able to identify what is national and sectional and acts accordingly (Read interviewees, pp. 158-161 and 204-207). And within a multicultural context, the interviews confirm this to be one of the ways that the Nigerian press contributes to national cohesion. Billig (1995: 60) introduced the term 'banal nationalism' to explain how the "nation is indicated or 'flagged', in the lives of its citizenry" and how, ultimately, the citizens "possess ways of talking about nationhood". The way the Nigerian press 'flags' the Nigerian state when Nigeria is involved with another country falls into this category, and the interviews confirm that the Nigerian press uses mostly international issues[480] to achieve this purpose and in the process promotes a collective Nigerian national identity (Read interviewees, 204-207).

11.1b Summary of findings from the qualitative analysis of the newspaper coverage

The examination of the press coverage was embarked upon in order to assess and evaluate what the Nigerian press does in practice vis-à-vis the literature as they relate to the press. I focussed on how the newspapers treated issues of fundamental importance to the overall national goal of integration and unity of the Nigerian state. For the purposes of this study, the subjects examined here concerned elections and related socio-political and economic issues.

[480] Note in particular, the points made by Interviewees: Chief H. Odukomaiya on p.206; Tony Momoh, and Al-Bashir on pp. 206-207.

Additionally, in order to do this effectively, I was particularly interested in knowing what determines the nature of the news or the factors that influence the news that is published by the newspapers (see the questions raised in Chapter Four, p.114).

With these as my points of departure, the analysis identified four main characteristics common to the Nigerian press and each of them formed the subtitles under which the major findings were discussed:

1. Government-owned newspapers promote the interests of the ruling political party to the detriment of the opposition during elections and electioneering.
2. Many of the newspapers are non-partisan in their editorial policies when there is a military administration in place.
3. Newspapers campaign against any administration that tries to abort the democratic will of the people.
4. Newspapers use international issues/events and other non-contentious issues within the Nigerian state to promote a sense of collective national identity amongst Nigerians.

To analyse these themes as they relate to the activities of the newspapers, the 'philosophical contexts of Africa's mass media' as enunciated by Jeter et al (1996: 11), was very helpful. In their study of the evolution of the mass media in Africa, Jeter et al concluded that there are four main issues common to them: Firstly, they are tools of political parties; secondly, they are used as instruments for legitimizing governments; thirdly, they can become instruments for demonstrating the disapproval of repressive political systems; and, fourthly, they can play a unifying role because African governments emphasise need for integration.

These, as broadly echoed by Ruijter's (1989: 57-69) submissions on the characteristics of government-media relations in Africa, were also very useful to this study. For instance, based on his analysis, government-media relations in Africa are: Manipulative, because official sources constitute the news; Collaborative, because there is inter-dependency between state and media; Supportive, of the state; and, Preventive, because there are stumbling blocks in the media's attempt to play the

watchdog role.

11.1c Government-owned newspapers: A tool of ruling political parties

In 1983, when the civilian administration organised the general elections, the way the government-owned newspapers reported events during this period supported Jeter et al's first point that they are mainly used as tools to promote the interests of the ruling political parties, whether at the state or federal level. The editors had apparently no say in what was published in the newspapers because the government saw government newspapers as instruments for the ruling political party to use to promote its own interests at the expense of the opposition parties (Read interviewee Agbese, pp.153-154).[481] This is also confirmed by Ruijter's (1989) analysis to the effect that, in Africa, the mass media are 'manipulative' because what constitutes the bulk of the news is from government sources or officials. The activities of the press in June 1983 show how the government manipulated the press to achieve its own ends, to the detriment of political opponents.

But how did the privately-owned newspapers fair during the 1983 general elections in Nigeria? The only privately-owned newspapers then were the *National Concord* and *The Guardian*. While Dare (1997: 544) notes that "when a newspaper is owned by a politician or political party, it will have to reflect the political preferences of its proprietor",[482] though this was true in the case of the first three years of the *National Concord* (1980-1982), when its proprietor (Chief Abiola) was a staunch member of the NPN, the ruling political party at the federal level during Nigeria's second republic,[483]

However, when Abiola resigned his membership of the NPN in 1982, this research showed the *National Concord,* after that year, as an example of a newspaper used as a tool of a politically-motivated proprietor. The newspaper changed its editorial outlook by publishing: (1) anti-NPN controlled federal government stories, and (2) non-partisan and other stories based on investigative journalism (see: Chapter six

[481] See also Dare 1997: 543.
[482] Also see Oyovbaire 2000: 103.
[483] See, for instance, Nnaemeka et al, 1989a: 408.

under"Privately-owned newspapers". and appendix XV) On the latter point, *The Guardian* behaved the same way as the National Concord. But on the other hand *The Guardian* was different because it had no political loyalty as it was established at the time that new economic realities were beginning to evolve in Nigeria, and its commitment to those objective factors within the Nigerian environment made it relatively independent of political partisanship and associations. (Read interviewees: Jose, pp. 179-180; Odukomaiya, p. 161).

However, what is important about the way that the government or private newspapers conduct their activities, is that whether it is during the period of elections or when there are other significant socio-political developments, the newspapers are faced with 'preventive' measures to block their attempts to play the watchdog role for the Nigerian nation. This characteristic of government-media relation in Africa, as identified by Ruijter (1989), was confirmed by the analysis (Read nterviewees: Odukomaiya, pp. 149 & 150; Ibrahim, 149; Darah, 150 & 152; Agbese, 153-154; Izeze, 152-153). Through various measures, the government affects the newspapers' inclination to professionalism. Indeed, Jeter et al (1996: 30), note that because newspapers depend so much on government's policy, regarding their instruments of trade, they exhibit careerist/job security moves, rather than professional tendencies.

Although the analyis of this period confirmed this to be the case, it could be misleading to base the evaluation of the press' role in Nigeria on that argument, given the context within which it operates. It is an almost inevitable consequence of the legal and political context that hamstrings the press from being effective -producing a sort of vicious circle brought about by a self-serving elite, immature or weak national instititutions and divisive ethnic barriers (Read interviewees: Farouk Ibrahim, 139; Odukomaiya, 140; Momoh, 140; Muhammadu, 141; Agbese, 147; and interviewees: pp.158-162; 162-163; also see Oyedele, 1994: 516; Ihonvbere, 1989; Nnaemeka et al, 1989a; Ake, 1978). But in spite of these, this study also confirmed that such shortcomings of the press did not hinder its ability to instil in Nigerians a sense of collective Nigerian national identity by using international events and other non-contentious issues to 'flag' and 'celebrate' the Nigerian state.

11.1d Newspapers and Military Administration: a platform for national

focus/policy

What the analysis has also shown is that there is a tendency by the newspapers, government or private, to be nationally focussed in their editorial policies when there is a military administration in Nigeria (see table four in Chapter Four and appendix XVI). Osuntokun (1989) attributes this to the centralised nature of the military administration. But on this issue, this study benefited more from Pratt's (1991: 221-232) thoughts and Jeter et al's (1996) point as they relate to the editorial contents of both private and state media in Africa. They both reason that there is a similarity between them because the media play a unifying role in accordance with African governments' emphasis on the need for integration. This is always the military's slogan after they seize power from a democratically-elected civilian government, who they usually accuse of perpetuating divisive tendencies and threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria because of their debilitating struggle for political power (see Odetola 1982). The Nigerian press is made to share the military's promise to unite the Nigerian nation (Read interviewees under the title: "The Nigerian press and military intervention in Nigerian politics", pp.144-149).

The way that the Nigerian newspapers treated all aspects of the 1993 presidential election organised by the military administration, as part of its political engineering programme to usher in Nigeria's Third Republic, falls into this category. The pre-occupation of the newspapers was for the election to be successfully concluded, as part of the process to build a democratically strong and united Nigerian nation. On this score, Ruijter's characterisation of the media, as being 'supportive of the legal and underpinnings of the state', was confirmed.

11.1e Nigerian press: defender of democratic will of the people/instrument against oppression

In Jeter et al's (1996), thesis on the philosophical contexts of African mass media, it is noted that the newspapers are used "as instruments for demonstrating the disapproval of indigenous repressive political systems" (p.11; also see table 7, Chapter Four). Nigerian media experts (Ajuluchukwu, 2000; Macebuh, 2000) also describe the Nigerian press as instruments of protest against very repressive military governments

in Nigeria. These were very useful to me in examining the activities of the Nigerian press before, during and after the June 12, 1993 Nigerian presidential election. (See how the press reacted against the annulment of the election in Chapter Seven under the title: "Reporting the annulment of the June 12 election: 'Nigerians reject fresh elections' and 'The Peoples' will must prevail', pp. 251-255; also on anti-military feelings in the press'). The press' behaviour during this period was against the military administration's decision to annul the result of the election, which was deemed to have been free and fair and won by the candidate of the SDP, Chief MKO Abiola (now late). The press saw the annulment as a repressive measure by the military to remain in the mainstream of Nigeria's political system in perpetuity. Such a stance confirms that the press can be very active in protecting the will of the Nigerian people, democratically expressed. This aspect of the Nigerian press' behaviour is also confirmed by the views of the interviewees and the thoughts of Nigerian media experts, as noted above. Essentially, many of the interviewees maintain that the press acted as the political party in the absence of democratic government in Nigeria against the military and therefore defended the interests of the groups within the Nigerian nation. Referring to this circumstance, for instance, Darah (pp. 151-152 above), recalls:

> *The press in Nigeria is almost the last institution to hold on. It was so on December 31 1983, when General Muhammadu Buhari came, till 1993 when General Ibrahim Babangida messed up. There were no political parties. There were no non-governmental agencies. All the battles were waged inside Newspapers. It was the Military versus the rest of Nigeria. When General Buhari promulgated his draconian laws, the press was the first victim. Journalists like Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson, both of the Guardian Newspapers, were the first victims. Did they relent because of that? No! The press has made life uncomfortable for governments that toyed with the issues of development. The government of General Buhari couldn't last.* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***

But what also came out clearly from the examination, was how the ownership influence was a crucial factor in the way that the Nigerian press reacted to the annulment of the election. There is a difference between what the government-owned press and the privately-owned press did in this regard. And it is that when a military administration takes a stand against the will of the majority, in an important national

issue like a democratic election, the government-owned newspapers are accordingly manipulated by their owners to tow the official line. The privately-owned newspapers, on the other hand, adopt editorial positions which are anti-government. So, while the government-owned newspapers were full of stories trying to explain and rationalise the government's position on the issue (see table 3, Chapter Four), the privately-owned newspapers gave coverage to anti-government protests that demanded that the will of the Nigerian people must be restored (see table 7, Chapter Four).

So, in the main, it was the privately-owned press that galvanised and mobilised the populace against the military (Macebuh 2000; Ajuluchukwu 2000: 45) and the fall-out is still being felt more than ten years after. And according to Odukomaiya (see p.205 above), the experiences of the Nigerian press under repressive military regimes are so bad that no matter how poor a democratically elected government would be, the press will mobilise the people against any attempt by the military to seize power again.

11.1f Nigerian press and international issues: promoter of collective national identity

In examining the activities of the press in this respect, it was found that although contentious issues within the Nigerian nation pitch the Nigerian press into different camps, representing groups and other interests, it is very enthusiastic in making a united stand on international events in the interest of the nation. This is confirmed by the views of fieldwork interviewees as stated below:

> *On international issues, the Nigerian media are united. But on domestic issues, the Nigerian media can tear the Nigerian nation apart.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***
>
> *When it comes to international issues involving Nigeria and other countries, you can trust all sections of the press to speak with one voice.* ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *National integration is reflected in only one aspect of the life of our nation and that is when, for instance, Nigeria has a contest with other countries, like international football matches, international boxing, and so on ...* ***(Tony Momoh: Interview in Lagos)***

It is at the international level that the Nigerian press is able to promote the idea of a

Nigerian nation and instil in Nigerians a sense of collective national identity (also see Dare, 1997: 544). This was the case in 1985 and 1991, when the Nigerian under-17 team won the world cup in China and when Nigeria hosted the 27th Summit of the OAU, respectively. To know how this was done, this study benefited from the ideas of Billig (1995: 11, 60 & 94) and Brookes (1999: 261). The Nigerian press used the two occasions to 'flag' and promote the Nigerian nation. Brookes (1999: 261) has stated that, "through the evocation of images and representations of explicit nationalism", the press "encourages common-sense identification with the nation as the dominant form of identity". The way the press cast the headlines, the prominence that they gave to the stories about the two events and the feel good factor about the Nigerian nation that was generated afterwards, brought about a sense of collective Nigerian national identity. For instance, after Nigeria's world cup victory at the under-17 level, the lead headlines in the newspapers were about Nigeria as in:

> "Soccer World Bows to Nigeria" (*National Concord*: 12 August, 1985);
> "Nigeria Goes to the East and Conquers the World" (*The Guardian*: 12 August, 1985); "Nigeria Makes Soccer History ... Wins World Cup" (*The Nigerian Observer*: 12/08/85);
> "Eaglets herald Nigeria's World Leadership?" (*National Concord*: 19/08/85);
> "God is a Nigerian" (*National Concord*: 5/01/84, p.3).

The fact that the whole nation was so caught up in a celebratory mood overwhelmed one of the coaching crew of the victorious youths that he enthused:

> "Now I am convinced we are Nigerians" ('Heroic welcome for champions ... Renamed 'World Golden Eaglets', *National Concord*, 15/08/85, pp. 1 & 13).

And part of the editorial of *The Guardian* (Nigerian) newspaper read:

> Today is different, and it is good to be a Nigerian. PROUD is the word. We are thrusting our chests out at the world in self-acclamation, for Nigeria are world champions (*The Guardian*, 14/08/85, p. 8).

The then military governor of ;Lagos state of Nigeria (one of the thirty-six states that make up the Nigerian federation), Group Captain Gbolahan Mudasiru was also convinced about what such achievement meant for the psyche of Nigerians that he admonished them to:

> "...seize this golden opportunity to reflect on the tremendous impact which

sports victory in the international scene could have on the image of a country and the role of sports as a unifying factor" (*The Guardian*, 15/08/85, pp. 1&2).

When Nigeria hosted the 27th OAU Summit in Abuja[484] in June 1991, Nigeria's then Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida was impressed with encouraging mood in the state helped by the coverage in the press that he stated:

> "I'M PROUD OF **NIGERIANS**", (adding that)..."the performance of the (Nigerian) officials had shed more light on the mood of the nation to prove to the world that **Nigerians** were aware of their responsibilities ..." (emphasis added, *New Nigerian*, lead, 07/06/91, p.1).

11.2 Reflections on key concepts and ideas on study of Nigerian press

The aim in this section is to reflect on the key concepts and ideas about the study of an institution like the press within a post-colonial state as Nigeria and their implications for the major findings of this research. Three main issues that will be focussed upon for this purpose relate to the following:

- A partisan and sectional press;
- Military centralisation and its impact on press activities;
- Using Western theories to study and analyse African institutions.

11.2a The partisan and sectional press

The interview analysis showed that this is true of the Nigerian press. This verdict is mostly informed by the actions of the press, particularly during Nigeria's first republic (1966-1970), when the press was manipulated by the ownership to promote narrow and divisive tendencies. The result was the destructive Nigerian civil war (1967-1970). Some of the fieldwork interviewees, for instance, note:

> *That appeared to have been the last straw that broke the camel's back for the Nigerian press, as they no longer had any pretensions of unity. It became a*

[484] Abuja city is the capital of the federal republic of Nigeria.

case of 'to thy tent Oh! Israel' (Chief Odukomaiya: Fieldwork interview in Lagos).

*After independence...[the] newspapers saw issues from the point of view of their owners...as a result of ethnicity and the struggle for power by the political leaders... They all thought along the line of what they will gain sectionally, rather than nationally... And so the newspapers took their cues from there... (and) promoted narrow and parochial, ethnic and regional self-interests." **(Turi Muhammadu. Interview in Kaduna)***

Based on that, critics of the press have often argued that it is not the vehicle for promoting a sense of national identity and therefore Nigeria's ultimate objective of national integration. For instance, in the words of Farouk Ibrahim:

*Overall if you ask me to rate the Nigerian Press in terms of their contribution to national integration, I would say that there is no Nigerian press. I'd prefer to refer to them as [separate] media houses ... [Thus] I wouldn't refer to the press here as an institution – [However,] if there is a Nigerian nation, there is a Nigerian press. We are building a Nigerian nation; we are trying to build a [pan-national] press. **(Interview in Kaduna).***

This is also one criticism common to most of the literature on the Nigerian press. Typical is the argument advanced by Oyovbaire (2000: 99), to the effect that the Nigerian press in its agenda, is generally partisan in its target and objective.

However, this perspective generally discounts the impact of the Nigerian context on the behaviour of the press. Yet this is a crucial factor if the role that the press plays within the Nigerian nation is to be fully understood. But this cannot be done unless we are certain about the type of press we want. True, the press is sectional and partisan. But can a Nigerian press really avoid such tendencies? Wouldn't it be more beneficial to focus on the different ways through which the press contributes to national integration in Nigeria? This research has shown that if one looks at different periods in the life of the Nigerian nation, it would be discovered that the press' role is dynamic: it responds to circumstances, as is evidenced by the fact that it behaved differently between a military and a civilian administration, and the way it uses important occasions to 'flag' the Nigerian nation.

Both the interview and the examination of the press' activities achieved this objective. The interview analysis as already noted showed that the press perform various role within the Nigerian state, ranging from being tools in the hands of their respective proprietors to flagging the state and fighting for it to remain united and indivisible The typical way that the press has done this is mostly captured in the following remarks by some of the fieldwork interviewees:

> *... you have this regional emphasis. But overall you cannot find a Nigerian newspaper that has on its own crusaded for dismemberment of Nigeria...* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *The country is divided on ethnic, economic and social grounds. But none of these divisions wants a separation.* ***(Sam Amuka-Pemu. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *There is partisanship in the Nigerian press. There is regional partisanship. There is ideological partisanship.* ***(G.G. Darah. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *Regional attitudes dictate how newspapers behave. These are some of the problems we have in Nigeria. Nigeria is [effectively] more than one country.* ***(Mohammed Ibrahim. Interview in Lagos).***
>
> *You can see the biases [in] ... the Nigerian media ... [but none] has come out to propagate the break-up of Nigeria.* ***(Al-Bashir. Interview in Kaduna).***

Many of the interviewees agree that there are certain issues which the Nigerian press has often used to reflect a national outlook and therefore mobilise Nigerians and instil a sense of Nigerian national identity in them. Chief Odukomaiya's description of the Nigerian press aptly captures this fundamental essence of the character of the Nigerian press:

> *The press has always done that whenever the issues at stake do not pertain to any particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved are not contentious and do not border on the interest of a particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved do not relate to any particular religion, whenever the issues involved do not border on, for instance, gender, the press could rise up and speak with one voice ... The press spoke with one voice when we were fighting for independence. But once independence was won, of course everybody went his own way. When we fought against the Military, the press spoke with one voice...* ***(Henry Odukomaiya. Interview in Lagos).***

Evidence from examining the activities of the press also confirms this. In particular, while their partisanship is clearly obvious during elections and electioneering (see

Chapter six), their quest to promote a collective Nigerian national identity is also evident in the way they use events involving Nigeria with other countries to flag the state (see chapter ten). These analyses are borne out by Jeter et al (1996: 11; Ruijter, 1989: 57-69)...

So to evaluate the role of the press, there is the need to focus on the specifics so it can be obvious how different circumstances dictate what the press does and how these impact on the Nigerian national integration project. In other words, the success of the press is a function of its ability within Nigeria's multi-cultural context to promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity and consequently Nigerian national integration. The ability of the Nigerian press to perform this task is amply demonstrated by the examples of what it did when Nigeria won the under-17 World Cup and when Nigeria hosted the OAU Summit in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja in 1991 as on both occasions it promoted and 'flagged' the Nigerian nation. This tendency of the press to use such international issues to instil a sense of national identity in Nigerians is also confirmed by one of the major findings from the interviews (see pp.198-200 above).

Given these realities, we can begin to ask whether it matters if the press that is partisan and sectional through promoting nationality perspectives, for instance, lacks the ability to promote Nigerian national identity and national integration. The interviewees agree that the way to national integration in Nigeria is through recognition of nationalities to express themselves within the context of the Nigerian state; and see the press as a catalyst in this process. They therefore do not see the press representing the interests of particular groups or interests as necessarily partisan, sectional or divisive because this is the only way that the nationality perspectives can be heard in a multi-cultural set up like Nigeria's. In an era of multiple identities (Hall, 1991a & b), the press has been shown to be a 'homogenizer' (Fitzgerald, 1991), in a context where nationalities are not encumbered in expressing their identities and a recognition of that is a prelude to integration (Schlesinger, 1991a & b). In this respect, the role of the Nigerian press is not a negative and should be encouraged and reinforced.

11.2b Military centralisation and its impact on press activities

One crucial impact of a military administration on the press is making it nationally focussed. We have seen how the military ethos of centralisation has contributed to this. For instance, during a civilian administration, the Nigerian press is overwhelmingly pre-occupied with carrying out the directives of its owners, irrespective of the damage that might do to the socio-political process (see Chapter Six). But they do not behave the same way during a military era (See Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine). This is not to say that the owners do not influence the newspaper's editorial policies in a military regime. However, while partisanship dictates much of what the newspapers (whether state or federal) publish during a civilian administration, the centralised nature of military administration ensures that each of the newspapers sees the entire Nigeria as its constituency, first and foremost. The press is made to share the military's promise to unite Nigeria, which the civilian political class is unable to do due to the debilitating struggle for political power. This was very much the came during Nigeria's civil war as attested to by Mohammed Ibrahim:

> *"The press supported the government (military government's policy to keep Nigeria one) during the civil war years. They ... propagated national unity, they propagated reconciliation and restructuring and so forth ... they campaigned for a strong central government"* (***Interview in Kaduna; also see*** Osuntokun, 1989).

But of what relevance was military centralisation, as a concept, to this study's objective? My main interest was in finding out how the press, through its activities, ultimately contributes to the national integration of the multi-nationalities that constitute the Nigerian state. On this score, military centralisation was not very useful, since one of the central themes of this study is how the press contributes to national integration through promoting nationality interests. Although the analysis of the coverage showed that the Nigerian press is mostly nationally focussed during a military regime, it was however very detrimental to the concept of nationality or federalism, on which the Nigerian constitution is based because during military administration state government-owned newspapers tend to focus more on national rather than local news/interests... Experts on the Nigerian constitution contend that the Nigerian military destroyed federalism in Nigeria (Ezomon 2001), with all the consequences for the maturing of the major institutions of the Nigerian state, of which

the press is one. With local issues determined nationally, that proved detrimental to the press' ability to essentially articulate the interests of the various nationalities within the Nigerian federation A typical example, as revealed in the interview, is the case of the military government's take-over of *New Nigerian* which undermined the newspaper's position as representing the northern Nigeria perspectives. According to Darah:

> *The **New Nigerian** was very critical of government [from] 1975. From a nationalist point of view, it reflected the northern point of view, which was legitimate ... It had a regional interest. It was not against national integration. It was conservative but it never said they didn't want Nigeria. It was the Muritala/Obasanjo administration that appropriated the newspaper in 1975... Since then, [its] role as media for articulating... position [of the northern part of Nigeria], has been weakened almost irredeemably **(Interview in Lagos).***

Centralisation did not bring about objectivity because government newspapers operated within the confines of official lines (Osuntokun p. 113; also see Dare, 1997). This led to ethnic rivalry as ethnic nationalism erupted (see Ekeh 2001; Madunagu 2000a ;). Indeed, the surge in the demand for autonomy[485] for ethnic nationality groups, since the disengagement of the military from Nigerian body politic in May 1999, (Madunagu, 2000b; Enahoro, 1996),[486] is seen as one of the consequences of this military mode of administration. So in the end, military centralisation was counter-productive because it did not recognise Nigeria's diversity which, as one of the major findings from the interviews also showed, is required to actualise the Nigerian state's fundamental objective of unity and integration.

11.2c Using Western theories to study and analyse African institutions

What normally confronts anyone doing research on African institutions is the expectation that such research should be informed by theories and concepts based on African realities. Usually this means that they should be formulated out of the African values and needs. And so any attempt made to use western theories and concepts to analyse the African situation is frowned upon. With regard to doing research on

[485] This is the reason behind the call for a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to be convened to resolve the Nigerian question of how to move the nation forward.
[486] Also see the editorial in *The Guardian* (Nigerian) online edition of 29/12/04, titled: "Organising a national dialogue".

African media institutions, for example, this is what is at the heart of the call for Afrocentric media. There have been some suggestions in Nigeria for a change to the journalism curriculum as a way of ensuring that the media become more useful and effective to the Nigerian nation (Williams 2002). There is also the talk about the need for a development journalism model to replace the current practice, which is derived from a colonial legacy (see Jeter et al 1996: 39-41).

It has been argued that in the age of globalisation, it is impossible for the press to ignore issues of global significance whose ramifications, in any case, would determine the extent to which, for instance, the Nigerian press can reform and perform. And in spite of the critique of post-modernism, there can hardly be any doubt that the world is linked together by common interests and values (Billig, 1995: 128-153). These include human rights, climate change, refugee problems, wars, the environment, famine, and drought, etc. These are issues that determine and affect world events today. Indeed some African post-colonial experts have actually reasoned that the fact that the African context is post-colonial does not warrant a call for autochthonous culture because we are all linked together in an age of globalisation. Even then, Smith (1991: 111-112) has acknowledged that Western colonialists created these states, that are expected to compete within the international arena in accordance with universal rules and regulations. We have seen, for instance, how the debt problems and Nigeria's commitment to the free market economy have adversely affected the Nigerian press. And of course, there is the issue of colonial legacy with all its ramifications and impacts on the direction of the Nigerian media institutions (see, for instance, Golden and Elliot, 1979).

Quite justifiably, then, if any research about any African institution is to be complete, they have to be understood through a knowledge of the African experiences of contacts with Western Europe that culminated in colonialism, neo-colonialism, post-colonialism and now post-modernism (see, for instance, Muller and Tomaselli, 1990: 302; Smith, 1991). Indeed, many prominent African researchers have acknowledged that it will be nigh impossible not to apply western theories to study African institutions, given the fact that they came about as a result of the African continent's association with the western world. For instance, Tomaselli's contention is that Westen "models, theories and paradigms" are useful for the study of the African

situation as far as cognisance is taken of the African "local ways of making sense and doing things" (1998: 145). Other prominent African researchers have also argued along the same line (See, for instance, the 'post-colonialism' arguments in Ashcroft, et al. 1989; and Ashcroft et al. eds. 1995).

I felt quite comfortable therefore to employ some key western concepts and theories for this study. They were relevant as they sharpened my inquiries regarding what is useful in evaluating the press' role in national identity. And it became obvious that national identity is hardly static, because specific events under different circumstances can be used to celebrate the nation and promote national identity (Brookes, 1999). Taking Schlesinger's (1991a & b) and Fitzgerald's (1991) postulations or Billig's (1995), 'banal nationalism' and Brookes' (1999) work on the British press' role in British national identity also, it became clear to me that unity is possible within diversity and they were used to justify the idea that a Nigerian press representing nationality or group interests can also promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity. With the benefit of their insightful studies, I was able to focus on specific events that occurred in Nigeria within the ten-year period covered by this study and how the Nigerian press, irrespective of the contentious issues that pitch them into various camps, used such events to 'flag' the nation and celebrate 'Nigerianness' (see Chapter Ten). With particular reference to Brookes' work, it was beneficial in the debate about whether the location of most of the Nigerian press in the so-called Lagos/Ibadan axis-southwestern part of Nigeria (see Oyovbaire, 2000: 111 [end notes 3]), jeopardises the press' ability to reflect the various interests within a pluralistic society like Nigeria's. It does not because what Brookes found was that even though the British press is mainly located in London, its ability to celebrate the British nation as the dominant form of identity is not diminished.

11.3 Reflections on Methodology

Conducting research in Nigeria created some peculiar problems. These have been discussed earlier (see Chapter Four). It is for this same reason that it is worthwhile for me to reflect on the methodologies employed for this study. Apparently, using intensive interviews and qualitative content analysis has its own strengths and

weaknesses. The interviewee, for instance, recalls knowledge and is therefore selective in his/her choice of answers. In other words, what the interviewee says cannot be considered as the gospel truth for the simple reason that when people talk about the past, their memory is selective and also whoever is speaking is not always neutral.[487] But one of the ways that this was dealt with in this research was the effort that was made to ensure that all those that were interviewed were experts (Lindlof, 1995) on the Nigerian press, by virtue of being journalists in the past or having specialist knowledge about the press in one form or another. And the very fact that their views were borne out by the findings from examining the coverage by the press shows the immense benefit of the interview method to this study.

But interviewing only journalists also has its own downside. This was, however, not done deliberately. The non-journalists that I contacted saw the study as mainly a technical issue which required certain expertise. Even some academics in Nigerian universities,[488] would not make themselves available for interview. The journalists, on the other hand, were clearly more forthcoming and ready to participate. This probably had something to do with the fact that I was once a practising journalist in Nigeria, which perhaps afforded me some privileged access, and enabled their insights to be invaluable.

A major weakness of my qualitative method used for analysing the content of the newspapers is that there were no archives where comprehensive activities of the press, to enable a complete evaluation of its contribution to Nigerian integration, could be found. Not all the newspapers in each period that was sampled were available for examination. This was also compounded by the number of missing pages in those newspapers that were available in the library or archive. This made it impossible for me to apply the scientific methods to sample not only the newspapers but the articles to be analysed. So on the basis of convenience I could only use what was available. This strategy worked because the themes I was looking for were in the newspapers that I found. However, the shortcomings of my methodology were ameliorated by the

[487] These ideas are based on the series of discussions and tutorials that I had with my second supervisor, Dr Rod Brookes in September, 2001.
[488] I approached Professor Ralph Akinfeleye and Professor Luke Uka Uche, both of the University of Lagos, and also Dr. Yusuf Bala Usman of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. None of them was forthcoming for interview.

nature of the focus of this study - looking at the two patterns of ownership of the press in Nigeria. This entailed determining the editorial policies of government-owned and privately-owned newspapers over time. What I did then was to look for different themes that explain the press' behaviour in private and government newspapers. And the fact that some newspapers were available in each category of ownership, throughout the different period that was sampled, is argued as sufficient for this purpose.

The examination of the coverage also made it possible to focus on specific issues and found that, irrespective of the type of administration in Nigeria, the press uses particular events or occasions to 'flag' the Nigerian state and promotes a sense of collective Nigerian national identity amongst its constituent parts. These are the issues on which the press is not handicapped by divisive internal politics and narrow ethnic and ownership interests. However, the question could be raised that by looking at specific issues, events that happened before and after were omitted. But it is argued here that the issues examined in this study did not require follow-up regarding what happened after. With the specific issues, the focus was on how the editorial policies that the press adopted at a particular point in time instilled a sense of collective national identity in Nigerians and therefore the positive consequences that such had on Nigeria's national goal of unity and integration.

11.4 Areas for further research

There are many dimensions to the role that the Nigerian press plays in the Nigerian state. In effect, to understand its role, every aspect of its activities and behaviours has to be examined. However, this study has covered only one aspect because the focus was mainly on how the newspapers, through their coverage, were able to promote a sense of collective Nigerian national identity, which is its contribution to the objective of achieving national integration and unity, as delineated in the constitution. However, to do that meant that no consideration was given to the production and reception aspects of the press. Yet it is argued that it would be impossible for such a study to cover all issues relating to the research objective here. Nonetheless, what goes into the production of press content is important, and I have touched on this indirectly earlier

by dwelling in detail on how the Nigerian context influences the nature and activities of the press.

Future studies could be carried out to focus specifically on what the overall impact of press production is on Nigeria's national goal of integration and unity. For instance, given the research period, this study covered mostly the role of the press in promoting Nigerian national identity during a military administration. One of the characteristics exhibited by the press during this period is its national focus - where the nature of military administration is responsible for this. Yet this cannot be used to gauge the activities of the press at all times. Of the ten-year period (1983-1993) covered; only in 1983 was there a democratically-elected civilian administration in place. Therefore, a possible area of research is how the press will generally behave and promote a Nigerian national identity when there is a democratically-elected civilian administration in Nigeria.

As noted above, a reception study was not considered, despite their importance as the consumers of the newspaper content. It would have been poignant to learn their verdicts on the effectiveness of the press in promoting a sense of collective Nigerian national identity. I have indicated earlier that various studies have confirmed that the press does influence the way we think (see, for instance, Miller et al 1998: 211). However, while audience study is important, its absence does not necessarily diminish the result of a study that considered only press content regarding their activities. Nevertheless, a useful area of enquiry would be readership research about the way they see the role of the press in Nigeria's quest for national integration and unity.

I also stated earlier that because of the problems of doing research in Nigeria, caused by non-availability of comprehensive research materials, it is not possible to conduct a really scientific research under such circumstance. Consequently most researches are carried out with an agenda to use what is available. There is the possibility that this situation might change in the future making it possible for scientific researches to be carried out within the Nigerian context. Without such studies it would be impossible to fully evaluate the contributions of a national institution, like the press, to issues that border on national integration/developments.

Another area that could be of interest for further research is the impact of new media (web 2.0) on the way that the Nigerian press is going to interact with its audience in the future. There is a whole new development regarding citizen journalism and social interaction between the press and its audience is no longer a one-way street. Knowledge of these will be essential to determine how the Nigerian press can react to extant social realities in trying to fulfil its constitutional role.

11.5 Coda

I embarked on this project nine and a half years ago and it covers the period 1983 to 1993. The aim was to use the period as a case study to determine the role that the Nigerian press can play in promoting a sense of collective Nigerian national identity amongst Nigerians, and in the process enhance Nigeria's national integration and unity. Apparently, so many changes would have occurred since I started doing this study and there could be concern that most of its findings are dated and therefore less significant in understanding the Nigerian press' role today vis-à-vis my research objective. This is what I intend to address in this section. But to do it successfully, it is important to commence against the backdrop of the factors / issues that defined the environment within which the press operated between 1983 and 1993. The main issues that have been identified in this study relate to:

1. Ownership control of the press and its effect on the general activities of the press.
2. Government policies which manifest in various ways to limit the effectiveness of the press.

Given these two factors, it was common during 1983 to 1993 for:

- Government to manipulate the press through its control of all the instruments that the press needs to ensure its continued existence, particularly with respect to the supply of newsprint;
- Government to deny freedom to press practitioners through harsh decrees to curb their activities;
- Editors to be sacked for failing to toe official line; and

- Security operatives to arrest journalists and close down media houses.

The question then is, have there been any changes to such realities of the press since all these years? Having carefully observed the Nigerian press over this nine and a half years period, it is quite amazing to see how things have not only remained the same, they have indeed become worse. Sample the following recent headlines, as published in the online edition of *The Guardian* (Nigerian) newspaper, detailing the travails of the Nigerian press within the Nigerian context:

"NUJ wants govt to reduce cost of newsprint" (24/09/03).

"Chikelu,[489] others list travails of media as NPAN clocks 40" (24/10/03).

"The rising cost of newsprint" (Editorial - 02/09/05).

"Closure of AIT and RayPower[490]" (25/10/05).

"VAT on newspapers and magazines" (Editorial - 24/03/06).

"Security Agents Arrest Journalists in Bayelsa, Rivers[491]" (18/06/06).

"The SSS Versus Newspapers" (Editorial – 14/01/07).

"Press freedom... Nigeria tops list of violators" (22/01/07).

"Africa in search of stronger media, better society" (22/01/07).

Nothing confirms these more than the communiqué that came out of a three-day workshop organised in Lagos between October 18 and 20, 2005 by the World Bank Institute (WBI) in Washington D.C., in partnership with Media Rights Agenda (MRA), "to examine Media Institutions and Capacity in Nigeria". Published, under

[489] Chief Chukwuemeka Chikelu is Nigeria's Minister of Information and National Orientation.
[490] Africa Independent Television (AIT) and RayPower FM (Radio) stations are private broadcasting houses operated by Daar Communications Limited (Nigeria).
[491] Bayelsa and Rivers are two of the thirty-six states that constitute the Nigerian Federation.

the title: "In Lagos, experts put the Fourth Estate of the Realm on the slab", in the online edition of *The Guardian* newspaper on Friday, 28/10/05, it substantiates the notion that the context of the Nigerian press has remained virtually the same over the years. For our purpose, part of it is quoted extensively below:

> "The present legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks for media practice in Nigeria inhibit media freedom and freedom of expression and should be reviewed. This should include the repeal of repressive laws which have been carried over from the colonial and military eras, the reform of regulatory institutions established under those laws, and the entrenchment of a philosophy which recognises that a free, independent and professional media is an essential element of a democratic society...
>
> "In order to ensure the independence of the media, all state-owned media outlets, whether owned by Federal or State Governments, should be transformed into genuine public service media with their independence from government, commercial or partisan interests guaranteed by law and in practice...
>
> "Media practitioners require access to information to be able to effectively discharge the responsibility imposed on them by section 22 of the 1999 Constitution to uphold the accountability of the Government to the people.

The article goes on to discuss "various legal provisions and institutional practices of public bodies impede access to information" for journalists and citizens, suggesting that the government should therefore "immediately pass into law the Freedom of Information Bill, which has been pending before the Legislature since 1999 ..." In dreary, but all too familiar terms (seen in the period of this research), the article comments on how the "harsh economic climate in the country" has affected most Nigerians ability to buy newspapers. It then perhaps slightly simplistically points to the need for the government to adopt policies that "will improve the economic circumstances and purchasing power of Nigerians and consequently the fortunes of the media".

However, although the press' environment has remained largely the same, with respect to my research objectives, some of the changes that have taken place since 1997 are worth stating:

- Nigeria has been under a democratic civilian administration only since May, 1999;

- Some of the newspapers chosen for this study, most notably the *National Concord* and *Daily Sketch*, have folded;
- The Nigerian Federal Government has taken steps to privatise its own newspapers, *Daily Times* and *New Nigerian.*

But these developments are not significant to the overall objective of this study, for three main reasons:

- The first is because research was done to determine the role that the press institution can play in promoting national identity within a post-colonial and multi-cultural set up like the Nigerian state;
- The second is because my interest was in understanding what constitutes the Nigerian press, in terms of the context within which it operates and its structure and ownership pattern;
- Following from that, the third reason is because the newspapers were chosen on the basis of ownership and therefore the interest group they served, if any. In other words, they were not documented individually but divided into privately-owned newspapers, state government-owned newspapers and federal government-owned newspapers.

Typically, in which case, the fact that a privately-owned newspaper folds, like the *National Concord* or a government-owned newspaper, like the *Daily Sketch*, could not be a hindrance to finding out the role that the Nigerian press, in general, can play in relation to my stated research objective. The major findings from the qualitative analysis of the activities of the press between 1983 and 1993, was that the Nigerian press 'flagged' and promoted the Nigerian nation, using mostly international issues, irrespective of the context of the press during that period. The context has remained largely the same, so too has that role of the Nigerian press. Nevertheless the point should be made that this was only in circumstances that allowed this because narrow sectional interests commonly intervened to inhibit this process, making the press sometimes to serve as mouthpieces for the military or civilian government or owners' ethnic loyalty.

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APPENDICES

(I). A Sample of the open-ended questions for interviewees

The experts on the Nigerian media were asked open-ended questions which centred on the research question. The purpose for doing this was to ensure that they were not restricted to a particular set of questions that would make it impossible for follow-up questions to be asked. A sample of the open-ended questions that were posed is as follows:

1 What is the relationship between the historical development of Nigeria and the activities of the Nigerian mass media?

2. Do you think that the press can/should promote national unity? If "yes" why? And if "no" why?

3. What role did the public and private presses play in the pre- and post-independence era till 1983?

4. What would you suggest has promoted or hindered the presses' ability to fulfil its constitutional role?

5. How, in your own view, have the presses responded to issues that centre on the formulation of Nigeria's national identity? Or put differently, what is the relationship between the activities of the presses and their role in promoting a Nigerian national identity?

6. Have there been specific circumstances where the Nigerian press promoted and celebrated Nigeria, thereby instilling in Nigerians a sense of national/collective identity?

7. Does ownership impact, in any way, on the way that the press treat issues that border on national unity?

8. How have government policies impacted on the development of the press and its performance in nation building?

(II). This Editorial Comment was published on the front page of the SUNDAY Observer, Vol. XV. No. 833, August 28, 1983.

COMMENT

"WHERE WE STAND"

"SOMETIME last week two National Dailies co-incidentally 'contrived' a humour and unleased it on the OBSERVER GROUP OF NEWSPAPERS.

THE humour had to do with what they called the 'U-Turn' of the OBSERVER Newspapers since the results of the elections were declared and Dr. Osaigbovo Ogbemudia won the Governorship ticket in Bendel.

ANOTHER state-owned newspaper, the NIGERIAN HERALD was also a victim of this expensive joke – the incumbent Governor in Kwara having been defeated

AS colleagues in arms however we take such jokes kindly and with equal sense of humour.

NEVERTHELESS, a few things need to be tidied up to complete this joke.

THE OBSERVER Group of Newspapers was founded during the military era, by Dr. Osaigbovo Ogbemudia himself;

THE paper grew, served the people of this state, Nigerians and the military regime itself, in consonance with the texture and demands of military rule

JOURNALISTS had to contend to understand and adjust themselves and their practice to the requirements of a democratic government with opposition etc and draw the line between that and the decrees, edicts etc of a military regime in which they were now to operate.

THIS was the time Dr. Osaigbovo Ogbemudia's government gave birth to the OBSERVER Group.

THE OBSERVER Editorial policy was dictated by the Board of Directors and of course, it was left for the practising journalists to carry out their duty in accordance with this policy.

THE Level of journalism in the OBSERVER was high and the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon usually referred interviewers to 'read everything about that...in the OBSERVER'.

THE OBSERVER therefore won the hearts of the people, State and the Federal Government.

THE post-military era saw the arrival of the Unity Party of Nigeria with its four cardinal programmes and Professor Ambrose Alli as Chief Executive to preside over the implementation of these programmes in the state

THE people of Bendel state hailed these programmes and the OBSERVER Group lost no time in associating itself very closely with these programmes.

THE Group not only stood firmly with Governor Alli to publicise the activities of his government, but also did a lot to project his person as Chief Executive.

WHILE doing this, the journalist in OBSERVER did not lose sight of their other duty, i.e., that of being the people's watchdog.

WE served Governor Alli, his government and the people faithfully and loyally.

NOW, Time And Tide Have Changed.

DR. Ogbemudia swept into victory at the polls in the August 13 Governorship elections.

IN His usual characteristic dynamism and administrative brilliance, he has given what political analysts saw as the core of his government policy, come October 1, 1983.

DR. Ogbemudia is not a stranger in Government, having ruled this state very successfully from 20th September 1967 to July 1975.

GOVERNMENT is a continuing process, but individual heads may change.

IT will therefore be a stupendous joke the other way round for the OBSERVER Newspapers to deny Dr. Ogbemudia the same hand of co-operation which it extended to Professor Alli.

THERE is no doubt that Dr. Ogbemudia's acceptance speech had all the ingredients of a change which no sane journalist could afford to let go unpublished.

BESIDES, the OBSERVER must in all honesty pledge its belief in and loyalty to the in-coming administration.

TO do otherwise will amount to dishonesty.

DR. Ogbemudia, as head of the in-coming administration, is assured of our fullest support, co-operation, loyalty and dedication in giving maximum publicity to his Government's programmes.

DR. Ogbemudia, as head of the in-coming administration has our unalloyed pledge of projecting him to the satisfaction of Bendelites, Nigerians and all good-

spirited people wherever they may be.

IN the various messages of congratulations already sent to the Governor-elect, some few concrete suggestions have been made, designed for good governance and the achievement of invaluable goals.

WE will, as time goes on, begin to sift these pieces of advice and suggestions for the attention of the Governor-elect.

FINALLY, the 'U-Turn' is very necessary in terms of our set objectives – publicising Government activities and educating the people.

FOR now, Dr. Ogbemudia has emerged the Governor-elect and no journalist, no matter his recalcitrant stance, should stand in the way of loyalty and dedication to the cause which this great son of Nigeria has set himself to fight for Bendel.

NO apologies for the 'U-Turn'"

(III). The Social Context of Sampled Newspapers at a Glance

STATE GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPERS

A. Daily Sketch-1964

-Published by the Sketch publications

-Owned by four states: Oyo, Ogun, Osun, and Ondo that were carved out of the former western region, home to the Yorubas, one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria.

-A regional newspaper mostly read by the Yorubas.

-Conservative and popular among the older generation

-Appeals to Yoruba interests

-Dabbles into national politics every now and then.

-Others: Sunday Sketch (weekly)

B. The Nigerian Observer-1968

-Published by Bendel State Newspaper Corporation

-Owned by the Edo and Delta states that was carved out of the former Bendel State.

-A regional newspaper

-Conservative and appeals mainly to local interests

-Others: Sunday Observer (weekly)

C. Nigerian Statesman-1976 (now The Statesman)

-Published by Imo State Newspaper Corporation

-A regional newspaper

-Conservative, serves the interests of the Ibo ethnic group and appeals to local interests

-Others: Sunday Statesman (Weekly)

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT -OWNED NEWSPAPERS

A. Daily Times-1926

-Published by the Daily Times of Nigeria Ltd (DTN)

-Oldest and largest circulating newspaper

-Could be grouped as conservative. Popular with the older generation.

-Used to be very neutral but its credibility was seriously dented during the second republic when it was virtually made the mouthpiece of the ruling party.

-Other publications of DTN: Sunday Times (weekly), West Africa (weekly news feature international magazine), Evening Times

B. New Nigerian-1966

-Published by New Nigerian Newspapers Ltd (NNL)

-Established by the then northern region government

-Very conservative and very forceful in its promotion of the interest of the predominantly Muslim North

-Popular with the northern elite and the older age group

-Read also by some southern educated elite because it is an authority on northern interest and also on the direction Nigerian politics is heading.

-Not a mass circulating newspaper but the few that reaches the public makes a lot of impact.

-Others: Sunday New Nigerian (weekly) and *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* (thrice weekly)

PRIVATELY-OWNED NEWSPAPERS

A. The Guardian-1983

-Published by Guardian Press Ltd

-National daily read in all nooks and corners of the country

-Revolutionised Nigerian journalism

-Liberal and very popular among the educated elite

-Read by both young and old and very influential

-Others: The Guardian, Sunday; The African Guardian (weekly news feature magazine), The Guardian Express (Evening), Lagos Life

-Ethnic origin of the publisher: Urhobo (Delta state)

B.Vanguard-1984

-Published by Vanguard Media Ltd

-National daily and widely circulated

-Read by all age groups

-Liberal

-Others: Sunday Vanguard (weekly)

-Ethnic origin of the publisher: Itsekiri (Delta state)

C. National Concord-1980

-Published by Concord Press Ltd

-National and widely circulated

-Liberal and read by all age group

-Its national outlook has changed since 1993 when the general elections won by its publisher late Chief Abiola was annulled by the military. Tends to appeal more now to sectional interest of the Yorubas

-Others: Sunday Concord (weekly), African Concord (weekly news feature magazine)

-Ethnic origin of the publisher: Yoruba (Ondo, Ogun, Osun, Oyo and Lagos states)

D. Daily Champion-1988

-Published by Champion Press Ltd

-A national newspaper but does not also shy away from promoting the Ibo cause.

-Reaches all parts of the country

-Liberal and read by all age groups

-Others: Sunday champion (weekly)

-Ethnic origin of the publisher: Ibo (Enugu, Anambra, Imo and Abia state).

(IV) Attempts made to secure an interview with Chief Alade Odunewu

EA (Speaking through an intercom installed on the gate in his house in the Surulere area of Lagos, Nigeria): Hello!

A voice from inside the house responded thus: 'Who are you?

EA: I am Eghosa Aimufua, a PhD research student from Cardiff University in the UK.

Voice: What do you want?

EA: Is this Alhaji Odunewu's house?

Voice: Yes!

EA: Okay! I am here in Lagos doing the fieldwork for my project which is on the role of the Nigerian press in promoting a Nigerian national identity. I'd like to do an interview with you regarding this project, sir.

Voice (A pause): Oh! Chief is not in. This is his brother speaking.

EA: Right! But please do you know when he is going to be about, so I can book an appointment to see him?

Voice: I don't know, but come back later.

The conversation stopped at that point. But I went back three times, within a week, and on each occasion was unable to secure an interview, either because 'he is ill' or 'he is out of town'. However, on my third visit, his 'Butler' came out and whispered something to me: "You know, '*oga*'[492] does not like doing interviews. Don't waste your time".

[492] The term "oga" is used to refer to a man of wealth, authority and influence in the Nigerian society

(V) Profiles of Interviewees[493]

The next part of this chapter will be devoted to a brief profile of each of the fieldwork interviewees. The interviews were conducted in Nigeria, over a four-month period, from November, 2000 to February, 2001.

Mr Sam Amuka-Pemu

Veteran journalist, co-founder of the *Punch* Newspaper and now publisher of *Vanguard* newspapers and Chairman of Vanguard Media Limited. He was the first journalist to own a newspaper, Mr Amuka is a member of the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN). He is from a minority ethnic group (Itsekiris [Southwest]).

Prince Tony Momoh

The "Newswatch Who's Who in Nigeria", describes him as "legal practitioner, lawyer, journalist, and administrator". But more importantly, his inside knowledge of the mass media has made him one of the foremost commentators on most issues relating to the media in Nigeria. Apart from the books he has written on the Nigerian mass media, Prince Momoh has also contributed several articles to journals and magazines dealing with the media in Nigeria.

He served as editor of *Spear* magazine, 1967-71 and *Daily Times*, 1976-80. Between 1982 and 1984 he was General Manager, Planning/Development of *Daily Times*. He became Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture in 1986 and held the post until 1990. Prince Momoh was President, Nigeria Guild of Editors from 1976-78 and Chairman, African Conference of Information Ministers, 1988-90. A Fellow of the Commonwealth Journalists Association and member, International Press Institute, Prince Momoh also served as Chairman, Nigerian Press Merit Awards Committee in 1997.

[493] Additional materials used for compiling the profiles were taken from: Makinde, Bankole ed. 2001. *Newswatch WHO'S WHO in Nigeria.* Lagos, Nigeria. Newswatch Books Limited.and "A directory of the Nigerian Media: Media World Year Book, 1994. A publication of Diamond Publications Limited, Lagos.

Alhaji Babatunde Jose

Alhaji Jose is popularly referred to in Nigeria as "the doyen of Nigerian journalism". This is in recognition of the contributions he has made to the journalism profession. His wealth of knowledge of the Nigerian mass media is documented in one of his books titled: "Walking a Tight Rope", which was published in 1987 by the University Press, Ibadan, Nigeria. His career as a journalist started in 1941 when he was appointed Technical Trainee in *Daily Times* of Nigeria until 1946. He rose through the ranks and became Editor of the newspaper in 1957, a post which he held until 1962. From 1962 to 1976 he served as the Managing Director of the newspaper. Alhaji Jose is also very knowledgeable about the electronic media in Nigeria, having served on the Board of Governors, Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) (now Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), between 1965 and 1966; and as Chairman, Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) from 1977-80 and 1984-86.

His wealth of experience also stems from his posts as Director or Chairman of various companies and banks in Nigeria and also as member of different committees that successive Nigerian governments have set up over the years to address various controversial issues. One of these was the "Presidential Committee on the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) (from February 1986), established to douse the controversy that erupted after it was revealed that Nigeria has become a full member of the OIC, which is dominated by Islamic states.

Mr Emeka Izeze

Mr Izeze from 1999 till date has been the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief of *The Guardian* newspapers, the flagship of Nigerian journalism. He is a member of Nigeria Guild of Editors and from 1997-98, he served as a member of "Vision 2010 Committee" which was set up by the military government led by General Sani Abacha (late), and charged with the task of recommending the path of socio-political and economic growth for Nigeria. A career journalist, he has served in various newspapers and magazine outfits both in Nigeria and abroad. As recorded in "Newswatch Who's Who in Nigeria", Mr Izeze was "appointed News Editor, *Sunday Graphic*, Benin City,

1982-84; Assistant News Editor, *The Guardian*, 1984-85; Associate Editor, *New African* Magazine, London, 1985; News Editor, *The Guardian on Sunday*, 1985-88; Editor, *The Guardian on Sunday*, 1988-92; and Editor, *The Guardian*, 1992-99".

Dr. Godini Gabriel Darah

Apart from being a journalist, Dr. Darah is also an academic and a politician. He was a member of the defunct Socialist Party Workers, Farmers and Youth. He has served as a lecturer in some Nigerian universities, such as University of Ibadan, University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and Ogun State University. He currently holds a professorial post at Delta State University, Nigeria and has since 1992 been a "Visiting Professor, African Folklore, Department of African-American Studies, Northern University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA" (Author Year: pp. 415-416). Dr. Darah's interest in writing saw him serving as a member of the Editorial Board of: (1) Nigerian Academy of Arts, Science and Technology, from 1976-80, and (2) Ife Studies on African Literature and Arts; and Editorial Consultant, *Daily Times* of Nigeria PLC, from 1989-91.

But his stint as a practising journalist in Nigeria really kicked off in 1992, when he was appointed Chairman, Editorial Board, *Daily Times* of Nigeria until 1995 when he resigned to join *The Guardian* Newspapers Limited as Editorial Page Editor. He remained in that position until 1999 when he became Chairman of the Editorial Board of *The Guardian* Newspapers Limited. It was from this position that he left to take up his Professorial post at Delta State University, Nigeria.

Chief Duro Onabule

Onabule is a renowned journalist who began his professional career in 1961 when he was appointed a reporter with the now defunct *Daily Express*, Lagos. Between then and 1985-1993, when he served as the Chief Press Secretary to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Chief Onabule worked in different newspapers in Nigeria. He served variously as Staff Reporter, Correspondent, Columnist, Editor and Editorial Board Member in such Nigerian newspapers as *Daily Sketch*, *Daily Times* and *National Concord*. He is not only well

informed about how the Nigerian government operates, having been an insider, his career in journalism also makes him an informed commentator on the mass media in Nigeria

Mr Dan Agbese

Mr Agbese is a journalist who is held in very high esteem in Nigeria. Experienced and well grounded on issues relating to the Nigerian mass media, part of his resume, as recorded in "Newswatch Who's Who in Nigeria", reads as follows: "Staff Writer, *New Nigerian* newspaper, 1967-70; Chief Sub-Editor, *The Nigerian Standard*, Jos, 1974-76; Assistant Editor, *The Nigerian Standard*, 1976-78; Editor, *The Nigerian Standard*, 1978-80; General Manager, Radio Benue, Makurdi, 1980; Special Adviser and Director of Information, Benue State, 1980-82; Editor, *New Nigerian*, Kaduna, 1982-84; co-founder and managing editor, *Newswatch* Magazine, Lagos, 1984-86; appointed Deputy Editor-in Chief/Deputy Chief Executive, *Newswatch*, Lagos1986-1994; Editor-in-Chief, *Newswatch*, Lagos, since 1994; Director, Nigerian Magazines Limited, United Kingdom".

Malam Mohammed Haruna

Journalist and publisher, Malam Haruna served in various editorial and executive positions in the *New Nigerian* newspapers limited between 1975 and 1989. After his time as the Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* newspapers limited form 1985-1989, Malam Haruna left to become the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief, Citizens Communications limited in 1989. He was appointed Chief Press Secretary to the Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, of Nigeria, 1998-99. He is a member of the Nigerian Guild of Editors and the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria.

Abdul Karim Al-Bashir

Al-Bashir as a journalist has had experience in the electronic and print media. He was appointed Editor, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), 1974-75; Editor 1, FRCN, Kaduna1975-77; Senior Editor, FRCN, Kaduna, 1977-78; Executive Editor,

FRCN, Kaduna, 1978-80; Controller, Current Affairs, FRCN, Kaduna, 1980-82; General Manager, FRCN, Yola (Gongola State), 1982-84; Manager, News and Current Affairs, FRCN, Yola, 1984-86; Managing Director, Old Gongola Press Limited, Yola, 1986-88; Editor, The *Democrat* newspapers, Kaduna, 1988-89. He served as Editor-in-Chief of the same newspaper in 1989 before being appointed Chairman, Gongola Press Limited, now Adamawa Press Limited, Publisher of *Weekly Scope*.

Chief Henry Odukomaiya

Chief Odukomaiya is a veteran journalist whose outstanding contribution to the journalism profession in Nigeria includes his involvement in the establishment of two of Nigeria's most successful national newspapers namely, *National Concord* and *Daily Champion*. He began his journalism career in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana), moved to Nigeria in the early sixties and later in 1969, was appointed the Editor of *Daily Times*, a position he maintained till 1972, before he served as the Deputy Chief Executive of the *Daily Tmes* of Nigeria between 1973 and 1976. From 1979-1981, he was the Managing Director, Editor-in-Chief of the Concord Group, publisher of the *National Concord* newspapers. He left the Concord Group in the early eighties to help set up the *Champion* newspapers, where he remained as the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief until 1995.

Alhaji Turi Muhammadu

Alhaji Muhammadu started his career in journalism in 1969 as Executive Assistant, *New Nigerian* Newspapers limited. He was made the Managing Editor of the newspaper's Lagos office in 1972 until 1973. Between 1974 and 1976, he served as Editor of the *New Nigerian* newspapers after which he became the Managing Director of the newspaper from 1976-80. Alhaji Muhammadu has recently authored a book titled: "Courage and Conviction. New Nigerian: The First Twenty Years". His knowledge of the mass media in Nigeria also stem from the fact that he also served as Chairman, Implementation sub-committee for the Commercialisation of_the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), 1989-90; Chairman, *Daily Times* of Nigeria, 1991; Chairman, Citizen Communication Limited, 1989-95; and Director, Nigerian

Television (NTV), Sokoto, from 1976-77.

Alhaji Mohammed Ibrahim

Alhaji Ibrahim's area of expertise is in broadcasting. However, his inside knowledge of how the Nigerian government operates, having served in government for more than twenty years, makes him an invaluable source of information about the mass media in Nigeria. Before his post as the Director-General of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) which, he held for more than three years, he was the Director-General, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), 1989; Managing Director, NTA Network News, 1981-83. Alhaji Ibrahim has also served as President, Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and his major productions include "Radio as a Campaign Instrument", which he presented as a Convocation Lecture at the University of Maiduguri, in 1990.

Dr Omar Farouk-Ibrahim

Dr Ibrahim is a political scientist and his position as the Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* Newspapers, started in 1999. His appointment by Nigeria's President, General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd), was part of the government's plan to revive the newspaper which, over the years, as a result of government interference in its operation, has dropped in sales and become virtually economically unviable. As one former Managing Director of the *New Nigerian* put it, the *New Nigerian*, under Dr Ibrahim, "has become a good newspaper. I hope he will keep it up" (Muhammadu, 2000: 365).

(VI) Newspapers and dates available/unavailable for Analysis

Year	Available Newspapers	Dates Unavailable in June	Dates Sampled
1983	*National Concord*	9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,15,22,29
	The Guardian	1-4,6-11,13-18,20-25,27-30	5,12,19,26
	Daily Times	5,12	1-4,6,7,14,21,28
	New Nigerian	26,28-30	1-7,14,21,28
	Nigerian Statesman	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Daily Sketch	5,12,19,25	1-7,14,21,28
	Nigerian Observer	25,29	1-7,14,21,28
1985	*Vanguard*	7	2-6,15,23,30
	The Guardian	24	1-7,14,21,28
	National Concord	9,28	1-7,15,22,30
	New Nigerian	1,2,4,8,9,15,16,19,22-24,29,30	3,5,6,7,10,11,12,14,28
	Daily Times	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Nigerian Observer	2,9,16,23,29,30	1,3-8,14,17,28
	Nigerian Statesman	23	1-7,14,21,28
	Daily Sketch	6	1-8,15,22,29
1987	*Nigerian Statesman*	Nil	1-7,14,28
	Daily Sketch	12	1-7,14,21,28
	Nigerian Observer	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	The Guardian	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Vanguard	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	National Concord	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Daily Times	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	New Nigerian	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
1989	*Nigerian Statesman*	1,2,4,11,18,23,25	3,5-10,19,28,29
	Daily Times	7,8	1-6,9,16,23,30
	New Nigerian	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Vanguard	8	1-7,16,23,30
	National Concord	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
	Daily Champion	1,4,11,18,25,29	2,3,5-9,17,27
	The Guardian	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
1991	*The Observer*	1,2,8,9,12,15,16,22,23,28-30	3-7,10,11,14,21,27
	The Statesman	1-4,9,16,23,27,28,30	5-8,10,11,14,21,29
	Daily Times	24,26	1-7,14,21,28
	New Nigerian	1-5,9,16,18,23,24,30	6-8,10-14,21,28
	Daily Champion	1-4,7,9,13,16,23,25,27,28,30	5,6,8,10-12,14,21,29
	Vanguard	1-4	5-11,14,21,28

	National Concord	Nil	1-7,14,21,28
1993	*The Guardian*	13	1-7,14,21,28
	Vanguard	3,17,19,22,24,29,30	1-7,14,21,28
	National Concord	13,22,28	1-7,14,21,27
	Daily Champion	2,4-7,9-13,16,19,20,24-28,30	3,8,14,15,17,18,21,29
	The Statesman	4-6,13,20,27	1-3,7-1014,21,28
	Daily Sketch	1,2,4-6,9,12,13,15-30	3,7,8,10,11,14
	New Nigerian	6,12,13,27	2-5,7,8,14,21,28
	Daily Times	5,6,9,12,13,19,20,23,26,27	2-4,7,8,10,11,14,21,28

(VII) Transcripts of Interviews

(VIIA) A CHAT WITH **UNCLE SAM**, LAGOS ON TUESDAY 19/12/00

Q: **The Nigerian press**

The Nigerian Press is not pre-occupied with whether we have a country or not. There are many grievances about the present Nigerian structure. Various groups in the country are complaining that they are marginalised. These should be reflected and are being reflected in the Press. The present federal structure is not workable. The Press is in the forefront to change it.

The Press is predominantly Southwest. It is Lagos-based.

Q: **On Ownership**

Wherever the owners come from, whatever their experiences, whatever their purpose in setting up newspaper, they have one thing in common, they want to see it prosper.

If you take the *Champion* newspaper and see it as reflecting a particular bias or is promoting the interest of the Ibos, that should not be seen as an abnormal position. Look, the Iboman is an Iboman. He has grievances and these are going to be aired by a newspaper owned by an Ibo because they feel they have been marginalised.

Q: **On divisions within the country**

The country is divided on ethnic, economic and social grounds. But none of these divisions wants a separation. Each one is opting for a better share of the cake. They now talk of national conference. These are the views that are reflected in the Nigerian Press.

Q: **On the *New Nigerian***

It is only natural that *New Nigerian* has to speak for the North. It has always been a Northern paper propagating a Northern bias. The Federal government did not start the newspaper. It was the Northern government that started it.

Q: **On the OIC**

It did not affect our lives the way Sharia has done. When the OIC issue came up, the Press could not stop the Babangida government from going ahead with it. The administration was essentially Muslim. The Press spoke against the membership of the Organisation but the government was still sending representatives to attend the meetings.

The Press has not been instrumental to propagating any religion. It has only reacted to what politicians have done.

Q: **On Revenue Allocation**

The Press is divided between North and South. If you get more you don't complain. Until 1999 nobody heard the North complaining. They do now because they are not in power.

The Press will behave and react in accordance with what the situation calls for.

Q: **On the census**

Everything should be traced to sectional interest. What is national has become sectional. No people you will call national as such. People's lives are touched, depending on where they come from, by issues.

(VIIB) INTERVIEW WITH **MALAM MOHAMMED HARUNA**, FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR, NEW NIGERIAN AT THE AUDITORIUM OF AREWA HOUSE, KADUNA ON SATURDAY 27/01/01

Q: The Contribution of the Nigerian Press to National Integration and their Ability to Foster a Sense of National Identity among Nigerians.

It's a tricky question because it's more like a mixed bag thing. The Press has stood up to tyranny in the sense that they reported freely and so on and so forth and put tyrants whether they are civilians or military on their toes. At the same time some of the way we have reported, if it were left to the Press, Nigeria would have gone to pieces. Because sometimes some of the headlines you see are really divisive headlines. They distort facts about whole sections of the country. Sometimes they tell barefaced lies and so on and so forth. So you have this mixed bag kind of situation.

Q: What is Responsible for this in Your Own Opinion?

Well I think quite a number of things. I think the main thing is that we tend to be prisoners of our sources. I guess it's by definition the nature of the Nigerian media...We just report the political actors. If they are from our own side of the country we just report what they say without asking critical questions and so on. So it's basically prejudiced. And reporters ought to be able to overcome prejudice because everybody has his/her own prejudice.

Q: Does that have to do With the Nature of the Nigerian Society?

I am not sure it has to do with the nature of the Nigerian society because there is no society that does not have divisive elements within it. Every society, because societies are not monolithic, they have differences in religion, differences in language and so on and so forth. So it is not enough to say because those divisive elements are there, then you just merely reflect it.

As a reporter or as a journalist, you are supposed to go beyond that. You are supposed to overcome your prejudices and be able to reflect as objectively as is humanly possible. Since we are prisoners of our sources the only way the only way you will be able to report facts fairly objectively as possible is to report from all aspects. In other words, all the divisions in society, if there is a crisis, talk to all sides on the crisis and so on. But you find that all too often we report from only one side of the issue.

Q: Is it that the Nigerian Journalists do not know that or just because of the Historical Development of Nigeria?

That's not enough. If you say you are a Pressman, you know the mission you have, which is not to simply reflect the divisions in society but to try and overcome them, amplify the good in society. We don't say don't reflect the bad in society, because then you will not be realistic. But the essence is to look at them and then try and find ways in which you can overcome them. So for me I don't think there is anything inherent in

the nature of the Nigerian or inherent in the nature of the Nigerian society either as an individual or part of society that we continue to harp on things that are divisive. It's just that we are just, maybe lazy, I don't know.

Q: On the Whole How Would You Rate the Nigerian Press vis-à-vis it's Historical Development?

I don't know about historical development because history starts today. I mean because if you say because things have happened this way previously, and so we should continue in that way. Then you will never change. But history is about change. Okay you had that kind of past- was it good for Nigeria, was it bad for Nigeria? So if we have been reporting our prejudices down the years, it's time that we stopped that.

So if you ask me, on the whole what is the performance of the Press, it's not a black or white thing. It depends. In terms of standing up to dictatorship they've done well. But in terms of bringing about a national cohesion, they've done very badly.

Q: But Some People would say that to have a Society is not to have the absence of Division.

It depends on how you report things. If you report things factually and objectively, I would personally have no problem with that. If you take for instance the issue of Sharia, if all the time you keep distorting things...you don't even understand what Sharia is all about. But all the time you see it from the negative point of view. It's like you have a brief, always look for the negative-so you just report only the negative sides. I mean that is not helpful for national integration or unity.

Because you are dealing with an issue, which is very central, which is the hardcore of somebody's livelihood, his beliefs etc. And all your approach to it is to tell lies about it is to ridicule it. Now if you do that you are not helping national unity. But you can disagree with it; you can disagree completely with the value system of Sharia but at the same time report as objectively as factually as possible. Now you don't see that in the Nigerian Press.

So this is the point I am making. It's not that we shouldn't have a different point of view. That's why you are a Christian that's why you are not a Muslim that's why I am a Muslim. So I have no problem with that. I should be able to relate with you, respect your values as a Christian. You should be able to relate to me and respect my values as a Muslim. And the only way I know you would do that is if you report things factually.

Q: If You Look At Specific Issues Say Revenue Allocation-How would you rate the Nigerian Press?

It's the same thing. I am for revenue, which reflects the character... In other words, when you look at our constitution, when it comes to revenue allocation for example there are so many factors-derivation, population and so on and so forth. So all these are weighted and then it's a mix of this that finally informs the formula which you use in sharing revenue.

But the central issue is this Derivation thing. I don't think anybody has any problem with Derivation. But it depends on how you define Derivation. Even among the Southern states, for instance, some of them see resource control as oh! Let's have Value-Added-Tax (VAT). Some of them see it as ah! It's oil. This again takes me back to the point I am making about the way the Press report from an ill-informed position.

Take this issue of revenue allocation for example. Everybody tends to focus on oil as if oil is the national economy. And if reporters care to learn about elementary economics, they would know that inasmuch as it is important, it contributes about 90% of our current account. But current account is just one aspect...When you take the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country; oil contributes only less than certainly 20%. Between Agriculture and Livestock, they contribute more than 45% of the GDP. And yet everybody is focussing on oil. And therefore you are distorting the whole national economy and you are reporting in such a way that people think oh! if you don't produce oil you have no right to certain things and so on and so forth. So we should report with balance, we should report with knowledge. And a lot of the time we don't do it. We don't even arm ourselves, as reporters, with basic knowledge about these things so that when you report, you will know that you are not just reporting sentiments.

Q: On Ownership.

Naturally there would be differences because everybody has his own perspectives. But at the same time you must realise that by now there is a common factor, which is that everybody is now agreed that the less government you have the better. Even people from the Northern part of the country who fear that because they don't have enough resources and therefore may be short-changed in buying up all the assets, agree that there is no stopping privatisation. But it depends on how you go about it. If you go about it in such a way that at the end of it all, the national assets are not cornered by one section of the country. I think this is something, which is shared by all.

This Federal Character thing for instance, you will find that people are always for it. The only thing is that, you see, in the armed forces you will say let's have Federal Character because I think the Northerners dominate that. But when it comes to other things you'd say, no, no, no let's not have Federal Character, let's have merit. And then the Northerners would begin to say, ah! When it comes to acquiring the assets you'd say let's have Federal Character but if it is the armed forces, simply because you think we are in the dominant position which may be an illusion, then it's let's not have Federal Character.

But the *New Nigerian* which we are gathered here this morning to celebrate in the sense that we are telling its history in the last twenty years is the prime champion of Federal Character. It's one of the things it was able to succeed in doing because it championed the cause of Federal Character and at the end of the day it was put in the constitution. At least there is a consensus that there is a need for Federal Character, the quarrel is about how you implement it.

Q: Does Ownership influence the way the Press Perform?

You don't set up a newspaper and give it to somebody to just write anything he wants. There are certain interests you wanted to protect in the first place whether the owner is an individual or is government. So naturally those things would be there. But there is always the overall national interest. That's difficult to interpret because we would have our perspectives on what it is. But the important thing is that you should try and get all the perspectives when you are reporting and not just your own perspective. When you do that you then report it and allow the reader to be the judge of where to draw the line or the balance of all these things.

Everybody would always have a perspective. I have one you have one. But if you want to report you should reflect all the sides to an issue and let the reader be the judge. But when you want to come and write your Editorial or you want to comment, then it's clear that it's your perspective that you are now writing about. In that case you can write only your perspective. But invariably you find that among Pressmen all too often they even pretend that their comment is a fact.

Q: Government Policies and the Press.

For instance at a technical level, poor communication, even the cost of production for newspapers, all these are hindrances. But for me the greatest hindrance is prejudice. This is the one we seem unable to overcome. We are all too often blinded by our prejudices whether they are religious or ethnic and so on and so forth. They come right through in our reports. For me this is the greatest obstacle. There are other obstacles but they are easy to overcome. Even the prejudice is easy to overcome; it's just that we don't exert ourselves to overcome it. All it requires is balance.

Naturally the value system of the Press and the government is kind of antithetical. Whereas the Press' central value system is to report it all, the central value system of government is to keep our secrets secret. So to that extent that conflict could be there. But still if you look at the history of the Nigerian Press, it's one of the freest in the world. When people say it's the freest in Africa, I would say it goes beyond Africa. We have problems, we are jailed, and there are decrees that are anti-press and so on and so forth. But because of sheer practice, sheer experience of history, the Press, in spite of all these still tend to report.

If for instance you are to take every libel case to court, I am sure most newspapers would shut down because we report with such abandon that we seem to ignore all the rules. So we are free in spite of whatever government policies. The Government shuts down newspapers grab Editors etc yet the Nigerian Press still remains free.

Q: Going by the Policy Statement of the *New Nigerian* from its inception, how would you rate the Newspaper vis-à-vis our quest for national integration?

I would rate the New Nigerian very high. The central theme was, to quote the late Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello: "Truth is the greatest weapon". That value nobody would quarrel with because it's a universal value. Now how you implement that value some may have quarrels with but the New Nigerian has stood true to that value, for at least the first twenty years.

Q: Talking about the Northern Islamic values...

Absolutely no quarrels with that insofar as that do not denigrate non-Islamic values. And it doesn't. Some of the best staff we have had is Christians. In fact we have had Christian Managing Directors. We have had Christian Editors. Down the line we have had many Christians serving in New Nigerian and I don't think they had any problem with the contents of the New Nigerian because as much as possible it was balanced.

Q: What about National Integration when you are out to promote one value?

There is always a collection of values. In any case let's face it tell me which newspaper does not have a value. Take the Daily Times for instance, is it not Federal government-owned. People perceive it as largely Christian and yet the Federal government owns it. People have no quarrel with that so, why do you have quarrel with New Nigerian if it propagates an essentially Islamic value. The New Nigerian has not gone out of its way to say look! This Islam is our official religion.

But there is no newspaper in the world, which does not try to reflect what it thinks, is the core value of the majority of its readers. There is none. So it's the same thing with New Nigerian. So because I propagate my own standpoint of view that is not to say that I am saying it is either that or let's split. No I am saying, this is the value by which I live that is the value by which you live, let's find a common ground so that on certain common issues we will move together. And I don't think you would quarrel with that.

(VIIC) INTERVIEW WITH **CHIEF (PRINCE) HENRY O. ODUKOMAIYA**, FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, CHAMPION NEWSPAPERS LTD, ON SATURDAY 17/02/01 IN LAGOS.

Q: How would you assess the Nigerian press during the pre-independence and post-independence period?

The role of the press prior to independence in 1960 was very significant. You must recall that Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe set up the Zikist Group of Newspapers. It started with the *West African Pilot*, then the *Comet* and a number of other newspapers, which have now gone into extinction but which at that time played a catalytic role of gingering people up to their rights. They made them aware that they were in bondage because a lot of people did not even know that they were in bondage. A lot of people took it for granted that the British were there and that they would be there forever. But with the arrival from the United Kingdom of people like Herbert Silas Macaulay, Bode Thomas and also the advent of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and then Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, when he arrived from the United States in 1937, first going to the Gold Coast, now Ghana, they took the steps to sensitise Nigerians to their rights and the need for them to fight the British colonialists for independence. When Dr. Azikiwe came back to Nigeria after he had worked in the Gold Coast, he joined the political fray. Well it was not so much a political fray then as it was the NYM that was very active but Dr. Azikiwe thought that one way he could make his role felt very much was to set up the *West African Pilot*. And from the *West African Pilot*, he went ahead to set up some other newspapers in Ibadan, in the East and in the North.

So it was up to the press at that time to drum the beat of nationalism, to get people to be aware that the nation was in bondage, that Nigeria was not free and that the British had no right to be here. They nevertheless acknowledged that when the British came particularly towards the end of the 18th century and early in the 19th century as the Royal Niger Company (RNC) which later became the United African Company (UAC), they also brought Christianity in the year 1842. And that along with Christianity came some manifest signs of civilisation as it was Christianity that was the precursor of Western education. Given this reality, the nationalists realised that it was only natural for people who had imbibed Christianity and Western ways of life to accept and admire the British, but they took it upon themselves to remind such people that the British still had no right to be here. As the number of people who were conscious of this fact was very insignificant, it behoved on people like Dr. Azikiwe, Sir Ernest Ikoli and the Odemo of Ishara, who were all founders of the NYM, to be in the vanguard of Nigerian nationalism. They had mushroom presses with which to spread their ideas but the real nationalist press that they had was the *West African Pilot*, then later the *Daily Service* and not much longer the *Nigerian Tribune* in 1949.

So the role of the press lay principally in galvanising the people, getting them to know their rights, crystallising their views and letting the people know that, even though the British brought electricity, the railway etc, the fact that they still subjugated us was enough to neutralise all that they did. So it was up to the press to crystallise the nationalist instinct in the nation and the role of the press in that regard was played very significantly by the *West African Pilot* and other newspapers set up by Dr. Azikiwe and the *Daily Service* which was set up by the NYM and then latterly the *Nigerian Tribune* in 1949. Now I joined the *Daily Times* in 1957, which was pre-

independence, after I left Ghana that year. But by the time I joined the Nigerian press, most people were fully aware of their rights and the fight for independence was getting to a crescendo, it was getting to its peak because the constitutional conferences had been held and a definite date had been fixed for Nigeria's independence. As a matter of fact, as at that time two Regions, the Eastern and the Western, had become self-governing. Only the Northern Region became self-governing at a later date.

Q: And then after independence what happened? No doubt, the nationalists co-operated among themselves and used the medium of the press to conscientise the people against British colonial rule. But were there divisive forces within then?

Of course there were. You can trust the British people. But let me tell you that the various forces that combined to fight the British imperialism between 1946 and the 1950s before independence were mainly the Labour Movement, which was set up by the British, the political movements and the press. Chief Michael Imoudu, who used the Nigerian Railway which was the biggest parastatal then, headed the Labour Movement. As a matter of fact the Nigerian Railway pre-dated the Nigerian Civil Service, which was much smaller, but the Nigerian Railway was the unifying force for the whole country.

But when independence came in 1960, what you call the divisive forces naturally set in. These divisive forces were also there before independence because from the NYM, sprung up political parties such as the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC), the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, which pre-dated the Action Group (AG). The AG was formed in 1949, while Egbe Omo Oduduwa came into existence in 1945. The Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) was formed in 1951. Now as much as possible, these major political groupings tried to cover up the chasm between them for the purpose of the struggle for Nigeria's independence. But as soon as Nigeria's independence had been won, it became obvious that each of these parties had to go their own separate ways, particularly as each of them had different areas of the country under their control. The AG was in control of the Western Region and the NCNC controlled the Eastern Region while the NPC controlled the Northern Region. But by far the most dominant of the three parties, was the NCNC because it had a substantial following in the North through the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), it also had a substantial following in the West through the Grande Alliance. And of course it was almost entirely in control of the Eastern Region. So after independence the first election that was fought was the one in 1964. For that election there were these three parties and some other minor parties. Each of the three major parties knew it was impossible for each of them to win a dominant majority, so they tried to go into alliance. The NPC did not make any pretensions about it being a nation-wide party and the name of the party said it all, Northern Peoples Congress. They were satisfied with winning the Northern States because they knew if they did that they would be in a commanding position to control the Central Government and all they tried to do was that. They would have done that successfully but for the fact that the AG had its own minority party in the North which was the United Middle Belt Congress headed by Joseph Tarka and the NCNC had the NEPU in alliance with Malam Aminu Kano.

Q: My interest really is how the press fits into all these.

Yes it was through the press that the activities of the political parties became known. So the press by itself did very little but by mirroring public opinion, by reporting what was going on in the polity it made its impact felt. It was not supposed to do more than that anyway after all one of the major functions of the press is to report what is going on and to inform and to entertain and to educate.

The Nigerian press did not do anything untoward until the first post-independent election in 1964 which was won, one must concede, by the NPC in alliance with the NCNC as they agreed to form a coalition government. Much as Chief Obafemi Awolowo tried to get the NCNC leader to form an alliance with him, superior forces were at play and it was not possible for that to happen. And in any case before that election Chief Awolowo had already been incarcerated. But as at the time of the next election which was in 1965, the Nigerian press consisted mainly of the *Daily Times*, the *West African Pilot*, the *Daily Service*, the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Morning Post*. There were of course Regional newspapers, which confined themselves mainly to their areas. For instance there was the *Tafiki Kwabo* in the North; there was also the *Nigerian Citizen* in Zaria also in the North. There was the Eastern *Nigerian Outlook* in the East and as I have already mentioned, the Niger*ian Tribune* in the West, in Ibadan. There was a newspaper called the *Echo* in the area that later became known as the Mid-West. But the newspapers that were in evidence were mainly the *Daily Times*, the *West African Pilot*, the *Daily Service* and the *Morning Post*. The *Morning Post*, unfortunately, did not play a very good role. I remember the national strike of 1964 or 1965 (Find out). Ebenezer Williams (Chief Abiodun Aloba) founded the *Morning Post* for the Federal Government. Now the role that Chief Aloba made the *Morning Post* to play at that time was unfortunately a very bad role. There was the *Morning Post*, which was to all intents and purposes reported that the workers had called off their strikes which, was definitely not true. So what the striking workers then did was to the *Morning Post* and set the place on fire. But because of the superior forces of the Nigeria Police Force, the fire was extinguished before too much damage had been done. But already because of that situation the workers boycotted the *Morning Post* following which the days of the *Morning Post* became numbered and so by the time the Army came in early 1966 the *Morning Post* had gone into extinction.

So the only newspapers that were in existence and which we could call the Nigerian press, were the *Daily Times*, the *Daily Service*, the *West African Pilot*, the *Nigerian Tribune*, the *Nigerian Citizen* in Zaria and the *Gaskiya Tafiki Kwabo* in Kaduna both in the North, the *Nigerian Outlook* in the East and the *Echo* in the Mid-West, combined in their various ways to mirror public opinion to the extent that every political party knew what was going on in the country. That was practically what the press was, as far as the first years of independence were concerned. At that time the *Daily Times* was still managing to play the significant role of independence because don't forget that then, the *Daily Times* was still privately owned. As a matter of fact, by 1963/64 the *Daily Times* became the first Newspaper Company to be quoted on the Stock Exchange. The other newspapers except the *Morning Post* owned by the Federal Government were privately owned. Although the *Northern Regional Government owned the Nigerian Citizen*, it appeared that that Government didn't control the newspaper, as it was apparent that the Editors of the *Nigerian Citizen*

allowed the newspaper to be run properly.

But by 15th January 1966 when Major Kaduna Nzeogwu-led coup d'etat took place, I must tell you that the first thing that everybody did was to welcome the coup because if consider the immediate happenings before the coup, everybody was happy that the Army had come to topple the politicians. For instance there was this *Wetie* (Explain what it means) in the West where election was unabashedly rigged and even the Federal election was alleged to have been rigged too; there was the incarceration of Chief Obafemi Awolowo etc. So it was no surprise that most people jumped for joy in 1966 to welcome the Military coup. But that was short-lived because as at that time, Major-General Aguiyi Ironsi, who was the most senior officer in the Nigerian Armed Forces took over the leadership of the Federal Military Government. At that particular time Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe the Governor-General of Nigeria, was away on holidays in England. The acting Governor-General was the Speaker of the Senate (Nwafor Orizu? Find out) but instead of the remnants of the Federal Government rising up to resist the coup, they surrendered and allowed Major-General Ironsi to over the Government. What Major-General Ironsi did for the first six months was to run the Government as a Unitary Government.

It was at that time that the role of the press became manifest because the ownership structure of the various presses began to show in the things that they published and printed. The Daily Times was trying to play a role between the various forces trying to pretend that it did not belong to any of the groups. But there it was the *Daily Times* could not so much hide its pretensions. But because I was very much part of the *Daily Times* at that time, I can tell you that a lot of people who knew what was happening thought that the leadership of the *Daily Times* had been bought over. The Chairman of the *Daily Times* at that time was Alhaji Babatunde Jose and a lot of people thought that he was pro-Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) led by Chief Ladoke Akintola. But when the Army came they killed Chief Akintola, they killed Chief Okotie-Eboh (Find out what his position was in the First Republic), they killed the Prime-Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa, they killed the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello and they also killed a number of Army Officers. So when Major-General Ironsi took over and started to roll out decrees, these decrees, unfortunately, had the effect of crystallising a lot of discontent against the new Military regime all over the country. The Northern leaders began to meet secretly even though politics was banned and during their secret meetings they made it known that they were going to resist what appeared to them to be the discriminatory manner in which the first coup was executed. So there and then some of the players in the current historical dispensation, who were in the Army at that time, like retired General Theophilus Y. Danjuma, who at that time was a Captain or a Major, went after Major-General Ironsi who was on a tour of the Provinces as there called then, with Ibadan as his first major call. T. Y. Danjuma led a group of 31 Army Officers to Ibadan and rounded up the Military Governor Fajuyi (Find out his full name and rank) and demanded that he surrendered his guest the Military Head of State, Major-General Ironsi. Fajuyi refused saying that whatever was going to happen to Ironsi should happen to him also. So they took the two of them and killed them.

That appeared to have been the last straw that broke the camel's back for the Nigerian press, as they no longer had any pretensions of unity. It became a case of 'to thy tent Oh! Israel'. During the period of Military administration starting from 1966, the press

had no freedom, well they had some freedom but the freedom was suppressed. So the role of the press at that time had to dovetail towards the ability to just managing to exist. It had to suppress its personality, it had to pretend to be loyal to the government of the day, and otherwise it would be closed down. That was what happened until 1975 when General Muritala Muhammed overthrew General Yakubu Gowon's regime. But not long after the new regime took over power, General Muhammed announced the Federal Government take-over of the *Daily Times*. I was still there. In fact he announced the seizure of the *Daily Times* and said that the Federal Government was taking over controlling interest in the *Daily Times*. Of course that was done to muzzle the *Daily Times*, emasculate it and made sure that it did not have any independence. Don't forget that at that time the *Daily Times* was by far the strongest and the most viable of all the newspapers in the country. So once that was done all the other newspapers had to take their cue. So it can safely be said that until 1979 when the Military handed over power to a democratically elected Government led by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, there was not any measure freedom for the Nigerian press.

Q: Going by the various events that you have highlighted and which have apparently shaped the Nigerian press over the years, would you say that the press should have avoided being sucked into that kind of situation given the fact that their role in society should be unity and not disruptive and destructive regional or tribal politics? In other words, would it have been possible or not for the press to have risen above that level of partisanship?

Well yes but you have to look at the structure of ownership of the press itself. As I have already told you, even though the *Morning Post* newspaper which was set up by the Federal Government lived for only a few years from 1960-1964 and died a premature death, there were some Regional Governments which also had their own newspapers. So it was natural for such newspapers to support the ownership. But at the Federal level during the time that we are talking about, the *West African Pilot* was still in existence and it was still somewhat vibrant. The *Nigerian Tribune* was still very vibrant and it has always been within certain degree of limitations. The *New Nigerian* was set up in January 1966 and it was as if it was planned to coincide with the Military take-over of Government few days after in January 1966, but I can tell you that it was merely propitious, it had nothing to do with coup at all.

So all the newspapers were there all right, but because of the various degrees of schisms that existed in the various parts of the country, they could not play many roles by way of integration. They could not play any integrative role because each of the newspapers had its own limitations. So the reason the Nigerian press could not play much integrative role was because Nigerian politics itself was sharply divided along ethnic lines. Don't forget that by 1963, the Western Region was split into two when the Mid-West was carved out of it. Then by 1967, at the commencement of the Biafran war, the Military Government led by Gowon also created 12 more States in order to emasculate the Eastern Region which, was trying to secede from Nigeria. By that action he removed the carpet or rug from under the feet of the Biafran leader, Colonel Emeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. But when the war ended the way it ended in 1970, there were so many cleavages in the Nigerian political system and the various Nigerian presses acted along that line. Not even the *Daily Times* could be immune from partisanship and in any case the Federal Government had already acquired the

Daily Times by then. Indeed the restructuring of the *Daily Times* by the Government became effective in 1976 when the topmost 15 Officers, Managers and Directors including myself, were swept off the scene. The Managing Director, Alhaji Babatunde Jose, was forced to go on retirement together with the rest of us. I think it was the thinking of the Federal Government that if the top 15 0fficers were allowed to carry on they might do things that might not be pleasant to the Government. So we were all retired. These were some of the things that made it difficult for the press to play any major role towards national integration.

Q: As someone who has always been involved in the ownership structure of newspapers like the *National Concord* and the *Champion*, what would you say is really the motivation for setting up newspapers?

I can say something about this because, as you have already acknowledged, I have been involved in the setting up of at least two national newspapers and I have worked with their proprietors. The motivation for Chief Moshood K. O. Abiola (National Concord Proprietor) was first and foremost political. Chief Abiola set up the Concord Press in 1979, the Company was incorporated in 1979 but the newspaper itself came into being on March 1, 1980. Now the major ambition, the major aim of Chief Abiola was, as I have already stated, political. He wanted a newspaper that would be able to spotlight and highlight the political activities of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) which was the ruling party during that period, of which he was a very staunch member. The NPN thought that it needed a newspaper to fight its cause and Chief Abiola offered to set up that newspaper. So although the newspaper was set up principally or should I say initially to support the NPN, within a matter of months, he himself and the leadership of the NPN fell out and he relinquished that aspect of his control over the Concord newspaper structure. Then from that time onward, the newspaper became a mouthpiece for the propagation of whatever the philosophy of Chief Abiola was. Indeed it was only between three to six months that Chief Abiola really used his newspaper to support the NPN.

And your question was what was their motivation for setting up newspapers? The motivation of people setting up newspapers at that time was first to be relevant and in being relevant they had in mind political calculations. Some of them might not have had the intention of going into politics but they wanted to be able to be reckoned with as Kingmakers. In the case of Chief Abiola, he wanted not only to be a Kingmaker; he wanted to be a King himself if the opportunity offered itself. And the other newspaper that was set up at that time...

Q: Like the *Guardian* newspaper by Chief Alex Ibru?

Very good and thank you for bringing in the *Guardian*. Well, the motivation for Chief Ibru was certainly not political at all. Chief Ibru was not political. What was apparent at that time that the Guardian was being set up was the *Daily Times* had already been taken-over by the Federal Government, the *Nigerian Tribune*, of course belonged to the Awolowo group, the *National Concord* belonged to Chief Abiola, the *New Nigerian* was supposedly owned by the Federal Government but it was still fighting the Northern cause and so Chief Ibru saw that there was a very, very good opportunity for a newspaper which, did not play any partisan role to succeed. So the first newspaper in modern times in Nigeria to really come out as an independent

newspaper was the *Guardian.*

Q: It had no interests to protect, economic or otherwise?

Well I can't vouch for that at all because even though the *Guardian* does not belong to the Ibru Group as such but because the proprietor of the *Guardian* of the Ibru family that owns the Ibru Group, naturally it has some economic interests to protect. But the protection of these economic interests was not the raison d'être for setting up the *Guardian* newspapers.

Q: On the whole one could say that there is hardly any newspaper established without any ulterior motive. But the point I am interested in actually is how can the Nigerian press play an effective role in society without being encumbered by whatever interest lie behind their establishment?

Well if you look at the issue of integration, everybody starts from a nucleus. Even if you are thinking of integrating the whole of Nigeria you have to start from a place, you must have a root. Therefore, if you have a root, you can then shoot out from the root and go ahead to start playing the integrative role. The only newspaper that I can tell you was probably set up to do that was the *Guardian.* The other national newspaper, the *Champion*, which I also helped to set up, has as its proprietor, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu. You know as at that time, the *West African Pilot*, which had an Iboman, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as its proprietor, had already gone into extinction and so Chief Iwuanyanwu thought that the Ibo race stood to be marginalised if there was no voice to speak on their behalf. The only voices that were available to them at that time only existed in their own part of the country, which was the East. For instance newspapers like the *Nigerian Statesman* and the *Daily Star* were published from Owerri in the East and so they were regional or local newspapers. So Chief Iwuanyanwu wanted a newspaper which would be a nationally accepted newspaper but which would start off by protecting the rights of the Ibo nation, the Ibo cause. So to the extent that the *Champion* Group of newspapers was set up by an Ibo man, in Lagos and not in the East, where the proprietor comes from, you can say that the *Champion* newspapers had some integrative tendencies, unlike the *Nigerian Tribune* which was set up by a Yoruba man in Ibadan and has always remained in that Yoruba part of the country, and unlike the New Nigerian which was set up by the Northern Regional government in Kaduna. The philosophy had to do with the intention of the proprietor to use the newspaper to integrate the Ibo man into the Nigerian society.

Q: Was that clearly stated in the Mission Statement?

Yes, it was. It said: 'Starting with the Ibo nation.' In effect the *Champion* newspaper was set up by an Ibo man, using the newspaper to promote the interest of the Ibo nation within the context of the Nigerian State. The newspaper first came out on October 1, 1988 and that Mission Statement is there for you to read and understand. So to that extent you can say that the *Champion* and also the *Guardian* had their own role and they did play the role of national integration and even now they are still doing so.

Q: What Government policies do you think have aided or hindered the Nigerian press?

Within the past 15 years the restrictions placed in the way of newspapers, are very subtle. For instance newsprint has become a very scarce commodity even though the Federal purported to have set up a newsprint firm at Oku-Iboku in Aqua Ibom State in 1980, that industry has existed only in the breach. It is there and even when it was in its full bloom, what it was producing was not enough for the Nigerian newspapers to consume. Over the past twelve years, Oku-Iboku has gone, perhaps not into extinction, but has become moribund. The present Federal Government, according to President Olusegun Obasanjo, has come up with a substantial sum of money to resuscitate Oku-Iboku, but as we are talking now, it has not been resuscitated. Now as if that was not enough, the Federal Government is imposing a very high and prohibitive duty on the importation of newsprint. Well there is nothing discriminatory or in favour or against the press but the imposition of prohibitive duties on the importation of the raw materials used by the press by the Federal Government, is bound to have a very deleterious effect on the press.

The Federal Government also has passed very draconian Nigerian press laws. In 1988, (Check the proper year) for instance, when Prince Tony Momoh, a former journalist, was the Minister of Information, the Government passed the Nigerian press law. You see, unfortunately, the Government always finds it convenient to use journalists to pass some of these draconian laws against the press. But the Nigerian press law is now being reviewed. So these are some of the direct and subtle ways the Government has tried to restrict the press. I wouldn't say that any of the laws has aided the press in any manner; rather they had tried to emasculate the press.

Then also you think of what they have imposed on anybody wishing to set up a newspaper. They have passed a law to the effect that anybody that wants to set up a newspaper must pay an amount close to one Million Naira (N1m) to the Federal Government and to the Government of the State from which you want to set up and operate the newspaper. I can tell you that no newspaper has obeyed that law. They have been waiting for the Government to take them to court so they could fight their cause but the Federal Government even during the dark days of General Sani Abacha, have not had enough courage to enforce the law.

Q: So there are no laws that one could say have aided the press in the performance of its duties in this country?

I don't know of any.

Q: Would you say that Nigeria is a nation-state yet?

We are trying to be one

Q: Could that be affecting the press too?

It could be affecting the press. But the answer to your question is that Nigeria is on the verge of becoming a nation-state and the Nigerian press is rallying to the support of the Government in this respect.

Q: How would you rate the role of the press on such issues as the Organisation of

Islamic Conference (OIC), Revenue Allocation, Census and Federal Character vis-à-vis what they are supposed to do in terms of promoting national integration?

OIC, Sharia, Revenue Allocation, Census, Federal Character etc are all issues on which it is impossible for the press to really speak with one voice. It is not possible because the press is representative of all sectors of the Nigerian community. The press for instance speaks for the Ibos, speaks for the Yorubas, and speaks for the Hausa/Fulani, Kanuris and the ethnic minorities. If you are talking of a specific segment of the press, yes, I can tell you what they have done. But talking of the press as a whole, the press as a whole cannot speak on any of these issues with one voice because the issues are very contentious. OIC, Sharia, Revenue Allocation, the Census or even the Federal Character or come nearer home, the issue of Sovereign National Conference or National Conference, all of these are issues for which it is impossible for the Nigerian press to speak with one voice.

Q: But they are supposed to rise above ethnic or regional sentiments and see issues on the basis of how it is going to benefit us nationally?

We haven't reached that stage and I do not see which society has reached that stage where the ideal is the one that is preached and implemented. So it is not yet in Nigeria. Every newspaper has to have its own standard and also its own limit-limitations of its authority and limitations of its vision. So because of this it is almost impossible to find a situation in which all the newspapers will agree to decry or to disclaim or to applaud any particular matter. Of course there have been some instances. For instance when General Abacha died, it was convenient for everybody to shout that that 'Goggled one' was a tyrant, he was a dictator, he was a thief, he was a common criminal, all of that, but when he was alive nobody had the courage to do that. When his successor, General Abdusalam Abubakar was there too nobody had the courage to disparage him because discretion is the better part of valour. So I won't say that it is possible to see the press or use the press as one unit.

Q: When then could the press come out as one for the nation? Are there specific issues you cite?

Yes, there are. I mean, for instance, the press spoke with one voice when we were fighting for independence. But once independence was won, of course everybody went his own way. When we fought against the Military, the press spoke with one voice. For instance now the press would rise up against any coup, no matter the section of the press, even including the New Nigerian. They would rise up to condemn the coup if ever there was any attempt. But if the coup succeeds, of course, they will not be able to. However while the coup is in the making, they would condemn it. Soldiers have often told us that they are wise enough to know that when they won't get a favourable reception from the population, they do not stage a coup. So for now, if any group of soldiers tries to stage a coup, they will not get a good reception from the press. They will not, I can tell you that.

Q: Would you also say that is true when it comes to issues between Nigeria and other countries?

Of course the press would speak with one voice. That is still another variant of nationalism, isn't it? When it comes to international issues involving Nigeria and other countries, you can trust all sections of the press to speak with one voice.

Q: Would you say, in summary, that the press has instilled in Nigerians, a sense of national identity in any way?

The press has always done that whenever the issues at stake do not pertain to any particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved are not contentious and do not border on the interest of a particular ethnic group, whenever the issues involved do not relate to any particular religion, whenever the issues involved do not border on for instance, gender, the press could rise up and speak with one voice.

(VIID) INTERVIEW WITH **ALHAJI MOHAMMED IBRAHIM**, FORMER DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FEDERAL RADIO CORPORATION OF NIGERIA (FRCN) AND NIGERIAN TELEVISION AUTHORITY (NTA) ON SATURDAY 27/01/01 IN KADUNA.

Q: The Nigerian press and their role in national integration. Let's look at the press in pre-independent Nigeria and then post-independent Nigeria. Their role then, what happened after independence and the role that they are playing now.

The Nigerian press pre-independent was largely under-developed. Under-developed in the sense that there weren't many of them. We had the *Tribune*, the *West African Pilot*, the *Daily Times*, and the *Nigerian Citizen* as it was then and the concern was the struggle for independence, supporting the political leadership, the political parties, promoting regionalism rather than federalism as a matter of fact.

But the only common denominator at the time was to kick the British out in a most peaceful manner. They highlighted developments but their concern was largely more from the regional perspective. One could say that there was only one national newspaper, which was privately- owned, the *Daily Times,* which was circulated to every part of the country along with the sister, the *Sunday Times*. They were the best known newspapers. Paradoxically, they were partly British-owned and partly Nigerian-owned.

But coming over to independence, after they have succeeded in getting rid of the British as peacefully as possible, the issue now was national unity, national integration and national cohesion. We had a situation whereby the political structure of Nigeria was largely based on regionalism. People identified more with their regions than being Nigerians in particular. But the newspapers played a responsible role. And I think it had to do with nature of the Nigerian society-magnanimity, compromise, understanding, so that brinkmanship was largely avoided. They never promoted disintegration.

The political parties attempted to own newspapers-if you remember the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), had a newspaper published in Kano and the Federal government owned a newspaper- the *Morning Post*. These newspapers never really survived but the changes that were taking place in the country gave room for more newspapers to be established. The Tribune became stronger and the *Daily Times* became widely circulated. The *Morning Post* was really in difficulties. Circulation was less and the quality of the printing was not particularly good for people to buy. So there were more concentrated on those that were circulating largely within and outside the country. In the Northern part of the country, we saw the demise of the *Daily Mail* owned by... we saw the demise of the Nigerian Citizen owned by the Northern Nigerian government which later gave birth to the *New Nigerian* newspaper, which remained a very strong voice, a very veritable source of information because of strong editorial, and a strong advocate of national unity and protecting the interest of the North, in the context of one Nigeria.

Then we saw attempt by people to set up a privately-owned newspaper. Unfortunately such attempt did not succeed. So other than the *Tribune* and the *Daily Times*, there weren't any other Nigerian newspaper which was not government-owned. We knew

that when the *Morning Post* was dead, the Federal government did not venture into owning newspaper until after the 1975 change of government when the government, led by Muritala-Obasanjo decided to take-over the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian* newspapers.

Now after this, what role was the press playing? We saw how much they supported the government, during the civil war years, how much they propagated national unity, how much they propagated reconciliation and restructuring and so forth. How much they campaigned for a strong central government, especially under the 1979 constitution.

The greatest credit of the Nigerian media is the fact that they fought the military. They tried as much as possible to get rid of the military to handover power to the civilians. Now the 1979 constitution because of the outcome of the election some found it very difficult to accept Shagari as the elected president of this country because of the nature of the victory. Some newspapers were looking at that government as a lame duck government, weak and not enjoying the support of the overall majority of Nigerians. But the press enjoyed some relative freedom. They criticised the government's extravagance, they criticised the government's recklessness, they criticised the government's inaction in some direction but they also agreed with the government in its programme of Green Revolution which led to a massive action in the Agricultural sector. We very well knew that that government popularised farming in every part of the country. No other government did better than that in terms of bringing people to participate in a particular government policy. But because of the nature of the divisiveness, the Shagari government did not enjoy the kind of support from the Nigerian press.

So when Buhari took over in, they applauded the take-over. Then they suddenly realised that, after all, Buhari was not a friend of the press, bringing draconian measures to instil discipline. And one of the most difficult things to achieve in this country is to discipline the Nigerian press. We are reckless, we find it difficult to conform and we think that we are perfect and everybody is wrong. This is one of the major problems of the Nigerian press. Now having said that Buhari went away, he was overthrown; Babangida took-over the government. There were changes, major structural changes in every aspect of human life in this country, in the economy etc. The government introduced the structural adjustment programme but still the Nigerian press did not find it easy to be hostile to the Babangida government. It was after the June 12, 1993 election, that the Nigerian press really fought that government and contributed to the demise and the exit of President Ibrahim Babangida. They campaigned against the Interim National Government (ING) of Ernest Shonekan. They proclaimed that one illegitimate. They showed their annoyance against the annulment of the election. They showed their annoyance against some of the repressive measures, which the government of Babangida was pursuing against the press and other Nigerians.

What became worse was also, Abacha came, applauded by the military because there was instability in the country. And they felt, well Abacha has now come, at least there should be some element of stability. But instability continued until such a time when we realised that Abacha had dug in and there was nothing anybody could do except to conform to the wishes of the government of the day. So the Nigerian tolerated

Abacha's government not because they wanted to but because they were afraid of what might have happened or what could happen to them. Detention was rampant, even journalists were not spared; other anti-government forces were also not spared. They were able not to be too critical because they the consequences were there. So we continued limping on.

We have a veritable press, it has expanded, and more newspapers have come on to the streets. If you look at the last twenty years, more newspapers have come into the street in Nigeria-claiming to be national newspapers, projecting themselves as champion of Nigeria's democracy, Nigeria's national integration and pretending to be the champions of the common man. And you cannot deny that role to the press. You have to give them credit, they have done well, they are doing very well and I am sure they will continue to do well.

Today, I think Nigeria has the largest circulation of newspapers and magazines in the whole of Black Africa. This is a credit to us. What we require now is the expansion of the readership. They have a problem of circulation. It's not easy for a newspaper to cover the whole of Nigeria, to print in Lagos and reach Maiduguri or Sokoto or even Calabar the following day. It's not their fault; it's the fault of the system. Transportation in Nigeria is still underdeveloped. We do not have a good rail system. We do not have good air services that they can pick the edition at 9.00pm in Lagos; drop it in Kano, Maiduguri, Sokoto Calabar or Enugu. So generally the newspapers are delayed until the following day. If we can get over that weakness, I think the circulation of newspapers will improve tremendously.

Q: Why did you say that the newspapers pretend to be national newspapers?

Everywhere in the world there is a fine dividing line between the quality press and tabloid-the popular newspapers or magazines or whatever. In Nigeria today you don't find that fine dividing line. You can distinctly draw a line between the London Daily Mirror, The Express, and the Mail on one side; the Guardian, the Telegraph, the Times on the other. These are quality presses; these are tabloids, which are more concerned with sensational issues, human stories more than anything else. In Nigeria we don't have that fine dividing distinction.

If you take the Guardian (Nigerian), for instance, it attempts to be a national newspaper. But if you take the Triumph, for instance, it's a newspaper based in Kano, the circulation, probably does not go beyond Abuja. The Kano State government owns the Triumph. So that you find all of them are struggling to be at the centre. We do not have what you call regional newspapers, which you can develop to cater for regional interests or local interests. Everybody is struggling to go into the centre. Everybody is discussing national issues instead of concentrating on regional or local or state issues, which are relevant to the people of that particular area. So we don't have that fine dividing line and I am sure it will take sometime before we develop that kind of press-where we can have the Guardian, the New Nigerian, maybe the Champion, Tribune probably are quality newspapers; Vanguard, Punch, and others are tabloids, which are more concerned with human interest stories and so on.

But unfortunately, all the newspapers, you can take them-Guardian, Champion, Tribune, Vanguard, Daily Times, Sketch, National Interest- they are all, as I said,

pretending to be national newspapers.

Q: Is that a plus or a minus?

I think it's a minus because we are neglecting certain specific aspects where those newspapers ought to play. Such aspects of our lives which they could concentrate on. Such aspects of our policies and politics which they could concentrate on and leave the rest to others.

Q: Like what?

Let's say out of each geographical zone that you could have one strong national newspaper. If you take the *Guardian* for instance, it could emerge as a strong national newspaper. If you take the *Champion*, it can also emerge as a strong national newspaper. If you take the New Nigerian, you can develop it to be a major national newspaper. So you can select some of these newspapers and say alright-the owners of these newspapers ought to be able to develop them to be the national newspapers of Nigeria-three, four five of them instead of everybody-it's just like jumping into a swimming pool with the same kind of incompetence, the same kind of players, everybody is there but really there is nobody who has perfected the way and manner it should take.

Q: But why is that so?

I think it's the nature of the Nigerian society and also the nature of the ownership. Nature of the ownership in the sense that if you look at the-only in the last twenty years were we able to get privately-owned newspapers other than the *Daily Times* which was taken over later by the Federal government. The Guardian came up as a private initiative. *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *Champion*, *ThisDay, National Interest*, all these came out as privately-owned media organisations. ThisDay is a direct competitor, I would say, to the *Guardian.* In terms of the quality of contents, in terms of objectives, in terms of mission statement, they are basically at par. So these can develop as two major national newspapers in Nigeria New Nigerian can join them, Tribune can join them, and Champion can join them. So at the end of the day, you have something like three, four or five newspapers which are really national. Pick up the Guardian, read their editorial on this particular national issue, compare it with what New Nigerian is saying, compare it with Champion is saying etc.

So it depends on the way you look at it. Regional attitudes dictate how newspapers behave. These are so9me of the problems we have in Nigeria. Nigeria is more than one country.

Q: Is it a deliberate thing that they are all striving to be national newspapers to the effect that today, there is not what one could call regional or local newspapers?

Let me put it to you this way. There is the general belief that any newspaper, which is not published in Lagos, will not enjoy the kind of circulation it should enjoy, will not have the advertising revenue it requires etc. So this is one of the considerations, which they have described to show that, yes! -They publish in Kano, it should circulate also

in Lagos; they publish in Kaduna but it also circulates in Lagos; they publish in Calabar but it also circulates in Lagos. This is where the pretension is as I keep saying. That they pretend to be national newspapers because of advertising revenue, no more, no less.

If they are able to develop the market within their locality, generate as much revenue as possible, diversify their printing business, then they will no business going into the national platform. They will survive as regional newspapers. Everywhere, regional newspapers survive. In the United Kingdom, the *Glasgow Herald* is there; the *Yorkshire Post* is there, *Sheffield Telegraph* etc. These are regional newspapers. They have developed compared to *The Guardian* (London), *The Independent*, *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, or *The Mail*. So this is what I'd like to see in Nigeria. Newspapers that are clearly national, newspapers that are clearly regional, newspapers that are clearly State or local. So if you want to place your advertisement, you know exactly where to go. If I am selling a Car in Kaduna, I want a local newspaper to place my adverts. I have a house to rent out; I don't want to put it in a newspaper, which will carry the advert to Lagos. I will look for a newspaper in Kaduna.

So these are some of the issues the newspapers themselves have to concentrate on. Concentrate, in the sense that struggling to go into the national circulation is not easy. They don't have the distribution network to be able to do it.

Q: If we have newspapers to promote certain interests-regional, State or local-How will that affect their role in performing national integration or unity?

There is no harm. Any newspaper, whether regional, local, State or Federal, can still promote national unity. The issue is you don't have to sit down here and say, alright, we don't need Nigeria as a country. Nobody would do that. But there is a fine dividing line. Because of the peculiar nature of our country, the enormous size, it's not easy for every newspaper to be a national newspaper.

Let me give you one typical example. In 1984, I was invited by the then Governor of Cross River State, Don Archibong, to come and take a look at the problem of *The Chronicle.* I went and looked at the problem of *The Chronicle.* It was costing him two hundred Naira a copy to print at that time even though the newspaper sold for about 20 Kobo and they were only printing five thousand copies. They had an office in Kaduna; they had an office in Lagos, an office in Ibadan, Enugu, Port-Harcourt etc. I said look, you have no business covering those States, concentrate as a regional newspaper-Enugu, Port-Harcourt, Calabar-don't bother about Lagos, about Kaduna and the other far places. When you acquire the wherewithal, when you acquire the national clout, you can gradually, automatically move into Lagos. Only then you will survive. But the moment you continue to operate in Calabar and hope to sell in Sokoto because you have people over there, it doesn't make sense.

So we looked at the newspaper, looked at the company, restructured it and worked out a strategy for them to follow, so that by the second year of their operation, they ought to be able to succeed, and then the third year they should be able to say that we are doing fine, the commercial and printing department is doing well, we think we can do without your subvention. Now this is government-owned newspaper. But if you are a private initiator and you run the newspaper in such a manner, the newspaper will

collapse. *The Reporter*, which was set up by the late Musa Yar' Adua around 1992, has closed down. But since then *The Weekly Trust* started operation. It has done well. They have now started a daily newspaper, printed in Kaduna. But it takes time to develop, but they cannot continue pretending to be national newspapers, they are not. They can continue as regional newspapers, it's healthy, and it's good for the country.

Q: Are there some dynamics that we don't know about that influence the way the press operate in Nigeria?

Well, he who pays the piper dictates the tune and this is as true as ever in this country. Let me give you an example. Nobody can write in the *Guardian* to condemn the Fish industry or the shipping industry. Nobody could write in the *National Concord* of those days condemning the telephone services in Nigeria. It's not possible. So that's the reality. There are certain dynamics; there are certain underground, subterranean pressure here and there, watchful and remotely control how these newspapers operate. We may not know them but certainly they are there. If you tell me the New Nigerian is not remotely controlled by some other forces, I will say you are a liar because I believe it is. The same with the *Times*, the same with the Tribune. There are certain interests that they look after. The moment they begin to abandon those interests, then it is no longer New Nigerian, it is no longer *Tribune*, or it is no longer *Champion.*

Q: To what extent do such undercurrents affect the ability of the press to promote a sense of national identity or unity among Nigerians?

You have to consider the interest of the owner, whether we like it or not. Time was when the ownership structure was entirely government. Today it is not. The newspapers that are government-controlled are not doing well-The New Nigerian, the Daily Times, the Sketch, and the Nigerian Observer etc.

Q: Why are they not doing well?

Because they are not given the freedom to operate. Time was when the *Daily Times* was the *Daily Times*. The moment it became Federal government-controlled and Federal government manipulation, people abandoned the Daily Times and went somewhere else. At a time the Daily Times circulated over three hundred thousand copies per day. Today I am sure the Daily Times is not able to circulate up to twenty thousand copies simply because it is a megaphone of government.

Q: Are there other reasons why people will abandon government newspapers?

They see the *Daily Times* as the propaganda arm of the government-whether popular or unpopular. It is the role of newspapers to educate, inform and entertain. It is not their role to propagate. They can propagate for instance a national course-national integration, national unity. But when you can't even criticise government for whatever it does, then people are not interested. People want to see a newspaper that is independent New Nigerian made a name at the time it made a name, because it was strong, it was authoritative, it was independent of government. Even the government was afraid of the *New Nigerian* and the Nigerian public was protected. But the moment it became a megaphone of government, people abandoned the newspaper, the same with the *Daily Times* etc. They went for the *Guardian*, they went for the

National Concord, they went for the *Champion*, and they went for *Vanguard*. Once you lose your readership, it is difficult to bring them back. It is not easy.

Q: But even the private newspapers, as you have mentioned, also have special interests that they protect...

Yes they have special interests but people feel more attracted when you attack government. Believe you me, Nigerians feel more impressed when a newspaper confronts government, whether privately- owned or government-owned... And that is why people say when you start a newspaper, make sure there is a controversy and that controversy will sell the newspaper. Nigerians are looking forward to sensationalism. That is why newspapers like the *Tempo* are selling.

Q: Are they doing the right thing?

Well whether they are doing the right thing, it's not for me to determine. It's for the readership to determine. This is not the problem with the newspapers; it's us Nigerians. People generally tend to believe what they read and see on the pages of newspapers and that's our problem. We find it difficult to draw a distinction. They cast a sensational headline and you read the body of the story, it's a different story entirely. But because it would sell, the newspapers continue in that fashion.

Q: That's not the problem of the Nigerian people but that of the journalists that sensationalise issues. Isn't it the role of the press, for instance to ensure that what it publishes is a true reflection of what is happening and not just to sensationalise?

No! No! No! No! Many of them do not publish what they think is a true reflection of what is happening.

Q: Why that?

Because their main concern is to sell the newspapers. Selling the newspapers is much more important than publishing accurate reports.

Q: Isn't that a hindrance to their ability to promote national integration and identity?

It is, it is. Under normal circumstances, in any normal country, sensationalising issues in order to sell is not the role of the press. But what do you do?

Q: Why did you say "in any normal country"?

Nigeria is not a normal country. We believe in sensationalism. We believe in half-truths and there is no sincerity. So people just play to the gallery. Whatever is published, people will buy it, whatever rubbish is published, people will buy it. They are there; the junk magazines are selling.

Q: So would you say that, going by what the press has done, the Nigerian would readily identify with the country Nigeria?

We certainly identify with Nigeria. We like Nigeria.

Q: Has the press promoted that? Or is the press responsible for that?

Yes, they have. Nobody, no newspaper in this country has ever promoted disintegration. They may criticise the structure, they may say we like adjustments here and there but no newspaper in this country has concentrated on how to break-up this country. The question of national unity is uppermost in the eyes of every newspaper in this country. Of course they may express their displeasure to say that either one part of the country is not being treated well, either we need to concentrate no such and such area, either it should be so and so, but really national unity, national integration, has always been uppermost in the minds of Nigerian newspapers. The moment they begin to talk of disintegration, there will be hues and cries of condemnation. People will condemn them because nobody wants it.

Q: Let us look at specific issues like the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Sharia, Revenue Allocation, and Census and rate how the Nigerian press has performed as they affect national integration and national identity.

OIC has nothing to do with Sharia. OIC is an organisation. Whether you are 100% Muslim or not, you are free to join OIC. It is the Nigerian media and the Nigerian people who made it look as if it is whatever... Successive governments of Nigeria realise that it is an added source of soft loan for development without any strings attached. Sometimes, the loans are interest-free. It has nothing to do with religion. It's just because a group of Islamic countries came together and said that, each country with a Muslim population, no matter how small is free to join. Uganda is a member of OIC, Kenya is a member of OIC, and South Africa is a member of OIC. These countries are predominantly Christian. So these are the distinctions the Nigerian press has failed to make on this issue for their own reason.

Q: Why then did President Babangida take Nigeria into the OIC, in a rather surreptitious manner, in 1986?

No! No! No! No! Let me put it this way: Babangida did not make Nigeria a full member of the OIC. There are two categories of membership: - You can be an observer or be a full or be a full member. In the same vein, if you want you can keep an Ambassador in the Vatican. Nigeria has a mission in the Vatican. There is no reason why it cannot become a member of the OIC. Government as at the time Nigeria became member of the OIC, failed to explain to the people. They should have said, 'being a member of the OIC does not mean you will be called upon to accept anything or whatever. It's an avenue for soft loans etc'.

Now the Sharia issue, I must admit, has been over-dramatised. Over-dramatised in the sense that, yes, we had Sharia before independence. After independence, Sardauna of Sokoto set up a committee to advise him on how to fashion a harmonious relationship between Christians, Muslims, and Animists. Before we use to have three systems of law: -The Common law, which was done by the Magistrate court; the Sharia law, which was administered by the Alkalis; and the Mixed courts, which catered for those who may not wish to go to the Alkali courts or the Magistrate courts but more like a

traditional court.

So the Sardauna set up that committee to examine what kind of legal system which will cater for the variety of our people because of our diversity, because of our religious differences etc. They came up with a penal code and they invited Jurists from Pakistan, from Sudan, leading Jurists from the United Kingdom and our own Jurists here. And they sat down and came up with a penal code which became effective in the Northern state from 1962 up to 1999, when some states to think of introducing Sharia in their domain.

Now, in any society, change is difficult to accommodate. So it is not easy to change from penal code to Islamic Sharia law in any part of this country because you are bound to face resistance, either from Muslims or from Christians or from both. There is a growing number of Muslims, who believe that there is no need for any state in this country to introduce the Sharia legal system, that whatever they are going to introduce, is well taken care of by the penal code. But we are talking of politics. The Military did introduce the Sharia legal system because they didn't have any mandate. It is the politicians. Ahmadu Bello the politician rejected the Islamic legal system, I told you, because he thought this was not in the interest of the entire Northern states. Individual states in the new dispensation, some of them campaigned that they will introduce the Sharia legal system, it was part of their manifesto. This is the problem.

Q: The role of the Nigerian press in all this...?

The Nigerian press has a duty to criticise, to appraise, and to educate so that those who are non-Muslims will understand what the Sharia is all about. They are free to criticise which I think they have, but sometimes sensationally.

Q: Are they then promoting disunity by so doing?

I wouldn't say that they are promoting disunity. They are criticising the implementation of a particular policy in some states by certain governments. It's quite legitimate for them to do that. As far as I am concerned, they are free to criticise, to condemn, to analyse, but in some cases, there is over-sensationalism. And I can recall very well, one of the leading legal luminaries in this country being interviewed by the BBC African service on the Sharia issue, giving specific example of a woman who was fined or imprisoned in Niger state, because she was selling Beer against Islamic legal system. Now what my respected legal luminary forgot to remember was that even in a Christian state, selling Beer or selling alcohol without a license is illegal. You can't go anywhere in this country or anywhere in the world and just begin to sell liquor without a license. You have to have a license, whether off-license or on-license; you have to have it. The fact that that woman was taken to court and penalised for selling Beer doesn't mean that because she is a Christian, she should not be penalised. She required a license to sell and that was what the legal luminary failed to point out, when the BBC interviewed him. So these are some of the misleading criticisms which normally come out. Yes, the law says, you can't sell unless you have a license.

Q: Was she jailed because she didn't have a license or because the state says, there is Sharia, and so you are not allowed to sell alcohol?

She was jailed for two reasons: one, she contravened the law because the Sharia legal system says you can't sell Beer in that area; and two, she was selling without a license.

Q: What about the role of the press on the question of Census and Revenue Allocation?

The computerised system employed by the National Population Commission (NPC) seems to have taken care of some of the objections in the 1991 census. It is not easy to count the Nigerian population. A typical example is where people leave home as early as 5.00am or 6.00am to go to work and may not come back until 9.00pm or 10.00pm at night. So many children are growing up without knowing their fathers. They see them only at weekends. And it is not easy to count such people. Nigerians are market people.

Q: Would you say that the Census has been politicised?

The press politicised the issue. It was not done by anybody. I don't think anybody should waste his time talking about that. The issue is politicised by the press and not by anybody else. Let us take a typical example: Census has been conducted in Nigeria since 1911. In those days, our people were running away because the more people you had in your household, the higher the tax that you were supposed to pay. In that case it was always like that. And even when our people were running away, there was never a time when the Southern part of the country had more population than the Northern part. The press is showing total ignorance of Nigeria. Let me give you one typical example. We are looking forward to the day when the National Identity Card will be introduced. We are not against it. And I can tell you that it will confirm whatever census figures we have in this country. A lot of people in the Riverine area areas are never properly counted. They are always over-counted, always over-counted. Rivers State does not have the kind of population they are talking about. So does Bayelsa. That I can tell you.

Q: So the National ID will reveal everything?

Yes! Keep this date, the 27th day of January 2001 and say that I interviewed Alhaji Mohammed Ibrahim and he told me this.

Q: Government policies and the press?

I was a practitioner. I was in the system for over 30years. Let me tell you this: All governments are liars, whether military or civilian. All government, at any given time, would want to use the press for their maximum advantage. All government would want to ride on the back of the press to reach the population. All governments would want to manipulate the press for their objectives. And Nigerian governments, in the last forty years, have behaved in this manner. Even today, President Obasanjo is using the press to reach the people. Our main concern now should be to encourage the press to remain the watchdog of society, the eye of the Nigerian society, the defender of the under-privileged, the protector of the weak and to ensure that democracy, the rule of law, justice and fairplay are really established in this country, and become the norm in

the society.

Q: Any formula by which the press can achieve that?

There is no need for any formula. We have a responsible press. We have an over-zealous press. There is exuberance, youthful exuberance on the part of the press. Really there is no need for any agenda, for any guidance. They understand their role to protect the integrity of Nigeria, to promote cohesion and understanding, to promote peaceful co-existence. Nobody is preaching violence. The presses know their role. The only thing I would say is, let them reduce or minimise sensationalism. I think the Nigerian press is on the right track. There is variety. Objectivity, in some cases is out of the question. Partisanship in some cases, yes, you cannot deny them that right because of the structure and the ownership of the Nigerian media. So I believe they are on the right track.

Q: What role does external factor play in all this?

Well it's difficult to say. There are those who think that some of the media is being manipulated from outside. I don't have any evidence to suggest that there is external influence or manipulation. I will hate to believe that there is, but I hope there isn't.

(VIIE) INTERVIEW WITH **PRINCE TONY MOMOH**, FORMER MINISTER OF INFORMATION, ON MONDAY 12/02/01 IN LAGOS.

Q: Could you assess the Nigerian press pre-independence and post-independence in terms of their contribution to national integration and in effect their ability to instil in Nigerians a sense of national identity?

The Nigerian press was about a hundred years old when Nigeria became independent in 1960. If you look back, Reverend Townsend published the first newspaper in Nigeria, which was not really Nigeria then, in Egba land in 1859. So from 1859 to 1959 was a hundred years old and one year after Nigerian press was a hundred years old, Nigeria became independent. So I always say that the Nigerian press is one hundred years older than Nigeria as an independent country and therefore should be able to tell Nigeria what it is that make for successful integration. But in 1914, we had the amalgamation of the North and the South and that geographical space has remained substantially the same. 97,000 communities occupy this geographical space, more than 370 nationality groups or national groups. But officially we say 250 nationality groups, out of which we have the major three-Hausa/Fulani, Ibo, and Yoruba. These major three have tried to dictate what Nigeria should be. Unfortunately they have not come to a recognition from experience that its' impossible to reduce the number to less than three. The civil war proved it; we could not wipe out Biafra. The Action Group (AG) crisis in the West proved it, we cannot undermine the Yoruba nor is it possible to undermine the Hausa/Fulani who themselves have been trying to undermine the other people and make them play a second fiddle. When we talk of the potentials of all the others put together, they have as population more than the three. So these groups or nationalities have more in common with themselves as nationalities, as ethnic groups than with a nation. We have not really developed a national outlook.

So in looking at Nigeria recently, in a paper on the "Media and Democracy" in May 2000, I argued that we must look at Nigeria through the media from a perspective of the reflections of nationalities rather than the national group. I have also argued at some other fora that Nigeria has fourteen years to be one hundred years a geographical space, not as integrated people because we are not an integrated people. Nigeria is not a nation in the sense of Nigerians automatically and involuntarily reflecting and manifesting a national outlook. We don't have it. Everybody, every national group is looking at Nigeria from its own nationality window. I am an Edo man and if I seek to be more national in outlook than the Yoruba man, it is because that is consistent with a minority group. A minority group cannot reflect its minority status in a huge market place where it has no voice. So its objectivity is reflected, defined and dictated by that minority status, so you have nothing to be proud about (Laughter). So the Yoruba man automatically sees Nigeria from the Yoruba perspective, the Hausa man sees Nigeria from the Hausa perspective and the Ibo man sees Nigeria from the Ibo perspective. In other words, by perspective I mean the worldview and if you now look at the press, the press is a medium and a medium is a channel and this channel bears a message, it reflects a message.

A newspaper is a newspaper just like any other newspaper but it is what it carries that gives it the status that gives it the clout. *ThisDay* is *ThisDay* because of what is in *ThisDay*. *The Guardian* is the *Guardian* because of what is in the *Guardian*. The

Nigerian Tribune is the *Nigerian Tribune* because of what is in the *Nigerian Tribune*. I have a television set in my house; however, you cannot call my television set the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The fact is that my television set is a television set but when you press a button, you see NTA and you define NTA by the programmes of the NTA. You define Channels by the programmes of Channels. You define AIT, MINAJ, DBN and MITV by their programmes. So when now you see NTA, you even tend to associate the television set with NTA, unless you change the channel. So we shouldn't see a medium from an angle than it really is, which is that it is a medium, a channel and therefore that channel has a bias and it is a bias dictated by ownership. The ownership pattern of the media in Nigeria is constitutionally grounded. Section 39 of our Constitution (1999), which was section 36 of the 1979 Constitution, says that you can own, establish and operate a medium to impact opinion and ideas and information, only that Broadcasting will be owned by Government and then private involvement will be dictated by Government and the National Assembly. That's what the Constitution guarantees.

But having guaranteed ownership of a medium, you can go back to Chapter 2 of the Constitution, which defines the duties of the polity, and it says that that chapter, which deals with the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, is not justiciable. But that does not mean it is a useless part of the Constitution because no part of the Constitution is useless. Every part of the Constitution defines what should happen to that part and Chapter 2 which defines what Government must do says that the media must monitor governance on behalf of the people. That's section 32. So how do you now marry ownership structure which says you can own you can own, establish and operate, technically do what you like with the medium, how do you reconcile that with the responsibility that as a medium you must monitor governance. There seems to be a contradiction but when you read them together there is no contradiction. If you want to establish a limited liability company, for instance, you look at the Companies and Allied Matters Act and it tells you the procedure, what to do. So too our Constitution tells you what to do when you want to establish a medium called the newspaper, which is that you must be for monitoring governance. So that monitoring of governance subsumes the right to own, establish and operate. However you do not just operate a medium to terrorise everybody, as there are rules you must abide by. That's where ethics of the profession comes in.

So while you have the publishers and the owners taking charge of ownership and running it as a business, the ethics of the business will be protected by the professionals of the business and that's the journalists. So the journalists ensures that the road is travelled by vehicles that are road worthy, in other words all the rules of publications are maintained. What appears in newspapers is not a love letter where you can write anything but there are rules of publications and those rules must be obeyed. Ownership structure in Nigeria is exercised through the right to own and you have private ownership- the *Guardian*, *ThisDay*, *National Concord* etc and public ownership, like the *Daily Times* and Broadcasting station although since deregulation in 1993, there have also emerged private Broadcasting stations. Of course now that we are back to politics there will emerge more political party ownership of the media. So those are the ownership patterns that we have in the polity. But the control pattern is through ownership because when you own you control as he pays the piper must dictate the tune. Control also is through patronage as for instance if I put adverts in your newspaper or if I give you subventions, you must reflect my perspectives. So

you can see the business angle to control. Then the final control is through policy, which is you must obey the laws of the land. For instance in Nigeria we have the newspaper Acts-The Newspaper Ordinance 1917, Amendments 1964, Newspaper Registration Decrees, the Nigerian Press Council Decree etc. These are the laws of the polity. There is the law of Defamation, the law of Sedition, the law of contempt and the Official Secrets Acts etc. These are all control through policy because they regulate publications. One can also talk about control through ethics or professional control, which is that you must do it through ethics. Indeed, ethics is not a national thing; it is an international thing because the media now has international status. There is a basic minimum of performance of media men which no country has a right to undermine.

So having looked at all these, now what do you see in the Nigerian situation? The Nigerian situation is that the media reflects the nationality perspective because they are owned and owners have put nobody in doubt that they are in control and so it must reflect their perspectives and the perspective that is being reflected in Nigeria is the so-called Western perspective which is called the Lagos/Ibadan worldview. That worldview is a function of the outgoing nature of the Yoruba people, the business enterprising nature of the Yoruba and, of course, the Ibo and the Southerners generally. But the fact is that the Northerners are not extroverts, their religion has affected their way of life and so theirs is reflected in silent manifestation of life and their religion does not even encourage singing your praises. Their belief is that you should not let your right hand know what your left hand has done and that is their perspective to life. They do not even see anything good in investing in newspapers. Their philosophy is: "My work will speak for itself or it will speak for me." But that's not what should happen. At least 5% of what you put in a project should be used in publicising it. So the Nigerian situation is dominated by the Western view which is exhibitionist. So if for instance you want to give somebody ten thousand Naira (N10, 000), you will not give it to him by post, you come to the public and paste it on his forehead and let the cameras click and that is the worldview that has affected the Nigerian press.

The Nigerian press therefore is not a national press although laws have been made to make it so. For instance bringing all the Television stations in Nigeria together into the NTA in the 1970s was meant to promote a national perspective. But all that changed when the Military handed-over power to the civilians after the general elections of 1979 which saw different political parties Federal Government and the various States. So in order for each of these States to have a voice and also to ensure that their own perspectives were expressed in the country, they had to establish their own Television stations. That was how the law that Television Broadcasting is a monopoly of the Federal Government was breached. But the fact is there was no doubt about it that if you look at the NTA Act, it was meant to ensure that broadcasting became a national issue that would promote a national perspective. So that was the only attempt, I could see that really positively gravitated to promoting a national outlook. But the fact is that tried as we had done, all the newspapers have always reflected the worldview of their owners or the environment in which they operated and that is the Lagos environment, the business environment, the Yoruba environment. So we have no national press. We have nationality presses

Q: What implication does that have for national integration?

The implication is national disintegration. That's why I have been shouting that we have just fourteen years to integrate Nigeria and to integrate Nigeria, you must develop national institutions. I have even preached Nigeria at that point of convergence where you can identify the cultural and the constitutional, which is the senatorial level. The Senatorial level is the only effective level where the nationality perspective can be undermined because it is sub-nationality level. For instance you see that as an Edo man the only thing that will make me undermine Edo is Afemai and if you are Ishan, Ishan; then if you are Bini, then Bini. So you will love Bini Edo south, more than Edo State. It's as simple as that because there is nothing on earth that would make you love Nigeria more than Edo State, you will never do it. When there is a challenge to Edo State, all of us will go home. I was the Assistant Editor of the Daily Times when the Biafran Army entered the then Mid-West State (Of which Edo was a part) in 1966 and I said I was going home to fight. People were amazed that I said that because, to them, I was just a journalist and so I should remain in Lagos and be publishing what was happening. But I said no that the Biafrans should not enter my State and I can tell you that a whole Battalion of Auchi (Afemai) people joined the Army at that time to ensure that the Biafrans were routed from the State. The Army Officers, who led the war against the Biafrans in the State, included Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, a Bini (Edo) man.

This is also true of other tribes in Nigeria. The Egba love Egbaland more than Yorubaland, the Ijebu people love Ijebuland more than Yorubaland. The people of Ogun State will love Ogun State more than Yorubaland. Abia State loves Abia State more than Iboland. So these are the worldviews within the country. Even when you go back to the family level where for instance you have different mothers, the children of the same mother will team up against the children of the woman even though they are of the same father. A nation is a family writ large but the largeness of the Nigerian nation had not exceeded the nationality level.

Q: I would still like to explore this issue of national integration further. When we talk about national integration, does it mean the absence of quarrels, agitation etc among the different groups within the polity?

No, no, no, no, no. Incidentally, the national that we are talking about is achievable through defining those things that will bring us together as a nation. In other words we must recognise diversity, the diversities of the nationality groups in the Nigerian nation. We should reflect those diversities but we must also recognise that there are overriding interests that define us as a nation and respect those interests. Since the Republican Constitution of 1963, we have only had a Constitution with a Federal structure and therefore the integration the integration of the Nigerian nation will be reflected when we successfully float a Nigerian dream which, I must add, is already documented but not yet articulated. That is why I have always said that the media have a responsibility to articulate the Nigerian dream which is Chapter two of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is known as the "Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy." That is what constitutes the Nigerian dream and it is our own definition of the Nigerian interests. It defines what everybody must do. It says that sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria and not to one part of it. It says that through the Constitution, the people of Nigeria have delegated power to those in

Government and that these powers delegated must be shared among three, which is those who make laws, those who interpret laws, and those who execute the laws. In other words, the powers are shared among the Legislature, the Executive and the judiciary but the people are saying that these powers are being delegated to those who find themselves in that and according to Section 13 of the Constitution, they must succumb to, abide by, and embrace the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy in the area of education, in the area of social policy, in the area of the polity, in the area of the economy, in the area of the environment, in the area of culture, in the area of foreign policy, they are all there. That is the Nigerian dream and that is what the press must promote to have a national perspective to issues.

Now the Nigerian press is pre-occupied with such terms as: 'It says'; 'They say'. The press is not pre-occupied with calling people to order or calling people to do what they promised to do. How much does the Nigerian press look at the previous budgets to see that the commitments in the budgets have been met? How much does the Nigerian press go after the projects that have been awarded in contracts to see how the contractors are performing in the different fields? How much has the press pursued the legislators to take them on, on the regulations that they are passing? How much has the Nigerian press studied the Constitution themselves since they are supposed to hold everybody accountable to the people in the performance of the duties imposed on those in Government by the people through the Constitution? How much has the press looked at the Code of Ethics? That Code, for instance, provides that no public officer should have a foreign account and yet everybody has a foreign account. The Attorney-General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ajibola, (Confirm if he was the Attorney-General then) said recently that the British Parliament was not with the Nigerian Government in accessing the money deposited in British Banks, amounting to about Four hundred billion Naira (N400billion), by corrupt Nigerian leaders. Well, Britain says that nothing could be done from its own end unless there are criminal charges. But the press does not need criminal charges. All you have to put before Britain is that these corrupt public officials in Nigeria have no right to open foreign accounts and that the breach of the Code of Conduct in the Constitution, which is also a law, is forfeiture. So if any official has a foreign account, it is forfeited to the Federal Government and you point to the section in the Constitution. But the fact is that the Nigerian press, believe in selective disclosures, selective justice. All of them have foreign accounts but they only want the accounts of those who are no longer in favourite position, those who are no longer in Government. But why shouldn't everybody's accounts be opened? So we are in a dilemma.

Why can't the press pursue all these things? They are all documented. If we pursue these things, I believe we can achieve national integration. But national integration is reflected in only one aspect of the life of our nation and that is when, for instance, Nigeria has a contest with other countries like international football matches, international boxing, war with Cameroun over the Bakassi peninsular and so no and so forth. So it's not that it is totally absent when stages of contest occur in the polity, it's inevitable that all those areas of control through ownership of the press will take its place. If it's a political party, in those days (The First Republic), you couldn't have expected the *West African Pilot*, whose proprietor, Dr Nnamdi Aziwiwe, was also the leader of the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC), to start congratulating the Action Group (AG) or its leader, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the

Opposition leader. Likewise too, you couldn't have expected the *Nigerian Tribune*, which was owned by Chief Awolowo, to support the NCNC or Dr Azikiwe. That wouldn't be objective because objectivity is defined by how much you reflect your mission statement. The *Nigerian Tribune*, for instance, was there to protect the AG and the Awolowo family. If it was protecting Dr Azikiwe to the detriment of Chief Awolowo then it was no longer objective. There is no other way of defining objectivity. If I give you ten stories to choose from and I have the same ten stories, another have the same ten stories, the rules of objectivity demands that we sought them out to see how they reflect balance and so and so forth. But our choices will be different because there is subjectivity in assessing objectivity.

Q: You have talked about the nation being a family writ large... (He interrupts)

Incidentally, as long as you see the nation as a family writ large, you can argue that there is no nation on earth. So it is in that context that Nigeria is not a nation. But if you look at a nation from the perspective of the integrative role of the press, such as would reflect in the ways of life of the people, then you will see that unless you look at the contest between Nigeria and other countries, you cannot say that Nigeria is nation. It is only at that level of Nigeria versus others that you can say that Nigeria is a nation because all Nigerians are one in protecting the interest of Nigeria against other countries. But when it comes to contest of States within Nigeria, you cannot be talking of a nation because each of the 36 States of the Federation will reflect their own interests. It's inevitable; you cannot be talking of the nation at that level. Then when it comes to contests within the States, each Senatorial District (Three in every State) will fight for its own interests because at that level you cannot be talking the interests of the nation or even the interests of the State. Then within the Senatorial Districts each division will be fighting for its own stake. Edo North in Edo State, for instance, we have three Divisions, Akoko-Edo, Etsako and Owan. You have to see how the representatives of each Division, do battle to put forward the interests of their respective divisions. Then when you come to the Divisions, take for instance the Etsako Division, it has within it 36 Clans, each with a Clan Head and you have to see how the Traditional rulers fight for their respective Clan interests. Move on to the Clan level and then take the Auchi Clan where I come from; we have 42 villages and each village fight for its own interests. Then go to each Village, you have families who will be fighting for their own interests. Go to the families, then each of the children will be fighting for their own interests. So you cannot really define the interests of the nation from the family unit's level because you can only talk of the interests of the families at the family unit level, interests of the States at the State unit level but interests of Nigeria at the level of the country.

So at that level, yes, the Nigerian press is even very patriotic. Therefore, we must look at the level from which we want to define national reflection or from which we want to know how Nigeria is reflected. But once you start talking of integration, I am saying that we have not really worked hard at integrating because the institutions are not working to integrate Nigeria. The divisions are still there. The three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) that are in control, still even want to reduce the number to less than three. They don't even believe that we are more than 300. They think they are one. The Ibos think that there is no other apart from the Ibos, the same thing too with the Hausa/Fulanis; they don't feel guilty cheating others. Even look at the Yorubas now; they didn't even vote for Olusegun Obasanjo during the presidential

election yet they don't feel guilty taking most of the positions. That's the problem.

Q: Is that why the press is behaving the way it is behaving?

That's exactly what I am saying. It is behaving the way it is behaving because of the ownership. The Nigerian press is being controlled through ownership and my point is that the press can overcome it by looking at the role the press is to play and that is clearly spelt out in Chapter 2 of the Nigerian Constitution. Let the professionals tell the owners and be successful in telling the owners that there is a conditionality for their owning which is that the press must monitor governance on behalf of the people. In other words the press becomes the press becomes the people's voice. Even at that level it is relative but if we have national newspapers, then each of them must work to ensure that what is there in Chapter two is what advises their perspectives and worldview.

Q: But would you say that there is anywhere in the world, where the ownership is detached from the activities of a newspaper?

No, no, no, no but the fact is that the impact on ownership is the ethics of the profession, the business customs and habits then policies of Government and of course the environment itself. For instance, as a professional, if you say I should run someone down, I would say, no, I am not going to do that until I hear from him. That's the impact of ethics. It is drawn up and it tells you what you must do which is that you are to publish facts because the law of Defamation, protects the man I am being asked to run down. The same thing if I am asked to run down a government. I would respond, as a professional by saying that there is the law of sedition and that the things I am being asked to publish, is covered by Official Secrets Acts. Of course there is also the law of treason. So you see that all these impact on exuberant ownership.

Q: But what could the journalist do if he is not able to influence any change at in that respect?

But he can, he can. You see that's why I'm saying that the Nigerian journalist, although constitutionally an agent, must be a professional. I have always been calling for that but whenever I meet the journalist they tell me that there are other people willing to their jobs if they insist strictly on being professional in their duties and as a result they are sacked. Take the *Republic* newspaper which had about three Editors within six months because what the proprietor wanted them to do, many of them didn't want to do. After one month they just revolt because of the journalist in them and he would change them. He was changing them and of course the *Republic* newspaper died. Some people are willing to answer the name of Editor but the fact is that the journalist in them will emerge one day.

Q: It seems to me that you are placing the onus to change on the journalists themselves... (He interrupts)

Yes!

Q: But it is the owners that I think have to change if we are going to make any

headway as far as the press' ability to contribute to national integration is concerned.

I am placing it on the journalist because the Constitution places it on the journalist.

Q: But then there is the issue of job security and of course, the environment. So how does he live up to the standards of his profession within a country like Nigeria?

What you are saying is that if you cannot help it, steal.

Q: No, no, no, no.

That's what you are saying. I don't know if you read my column yesterday (Sunday, 11/02/01). Please go and read it. I write a column every Sunday, for the *Vanguard* newspapers. The one for yesterday (*Sunday Vanguard*, 11/20/01) was titled: 'Watch it Mr Journalist'. There I discussed the complaints about journalists now especially those on beat journalism like the National Assembly Correspondents, the Sports Writers Association of Nigeria etc. For instance people are complaining that journalists demand for such things as brown envelops (Bribes/Monetary rewards) as they perform their duties. But then the journalists' argument is that a labourer is worthy of his hire and that if the proprietor doesn't pay them, then someone must pay them. In fact some of the proprietors don't pay well and some don't even pay at all for months. But the proprietors are saying that if the journalists are accusing them of not paying them for two years why then are they still there? In other words if they are not gaining, why can't they resign and go away?

These are the complaints; these are the criticisms against the journalists. The point I am trying to make is that this is not good for the press. Constitutionally, the press is the Fourth Estate of the Realm and it is not because the press is a business, it is because the press is a profession and the pressmen are professionals. If the other three Estates collude as they normally do, the press cannot do the same because it is the agent of the people. So the press has a job to do and the journalists cannot do their job professionally, they don't have to remain in the profession. It is a very tempting profession and a journalist can easily be corrupted but at the end of the day he loses his credibility. Now what is happening is that many Nigerian journalists go after contracts and they favour anyone from whom they can get the contracts. Even the proprietors champion these things and they set up newspapers in order for them to get contracts. They feature you so that you will give them contracts. So what we are now witnessing in Nigeria is that the newspapers that should monitor governance have become the clout for the contractor to get contracts.

Q: But isn't that a reflection of the entire society?

It is a reflection of the entire society but we are talking of the press. I have said that we have no right to undermine the international image of the media because the media has an international image. It has an international code pattern and you must accept that you are a professional. Why is it that you have enemies of the press world-wide? Why is it that anything happening to a journalist is published world-wide overnight? It's because every journalist is the neighbour of every other journalist; he is his

brother's keeper. More than any other professional, the journalist is protected world-wide. So why shouldn't the Nigerian journalist behave? In some places or countries, you cannot even take a gift or take a ride from a politician but here in Nigeria the journalists are demanding it. It's unfortunate that there are lots and lots of problems but the fact is that we have to see how we get over them. Even if we cannot get over them, we must recognise them rather than make them part and parcel of our lives otherwise what is the difference between them and us? Why would the people say, through the constitution that the courts cannot exercise all the powers? Section 6, sub-section 6C says that the court can do anything except looking into what is happening in Chapter 2. Then section 32 says that the press will monitor what is happening in Chapter 2. Go and read Chapter two of the Constitution; it's a joy; it's so rich; it's the richest part of the Constitution. I call it the Bill of Duties. It says monitor the performance of duties and the implication is that you are not entitled to any rights unless you perform duties in our polity. So the Constitution should remind us of what we are supposed to do. The journalists should perform duties and call everybody to order on behalf of the people. The day the press does that, that will be the day we will be on the road to national because that would mean that then press is leaving up to its constitutional responsibility which, is the national dream of Nigeria as reflected in Chapter 2. That is the safest way to integration and we have 14 years to do it otherwise we will be a hundred years old as integrated space without integrated people or country.

Q: If that doesn't happen in the next 14 years, what would be the implications for the corporate entity of Nigeria?

It would affect the corporate entity of this country and that is why I am saying that failure to achieve integration will lead to disintegration

Q: How much has foreign influence got to do with the developments within Nigeria now and therefore the consequences for the Nigerian press?

I have just written my column for the Vanguard newspapers and it is titled: "Deny the Debts". Basically what I am saying is that Nigeria should deny the debts because no capacity to make them. We had no legal capacity, we had no economic capacity and we had no social capacity. We were not told what the implication of what we were signing was before we signed the agreement for the loans. But as it is now obvious to us, the implication for signing such documentation, which was meant to be shorthand loans, was that our children and their children would be paying debts. We borrowed $3.5billion dollars in the 70's and at that time the rate of exchange was $2 dollars to N1 but since then we have been paying through our nose. In fact we have paid $13.6billion dollars; we still owe $28billion dollars and the going exchange rate of the Naira is more than N100 to $1dollar. That is the Western world for you. They made us sign the documents without telling us the implications and so we didn't have the legal capacity and indeed, they even drafted the agreement, our own was to sign. We did not have the economic capacity to pay because we were on the receiving end. We were expected to meet the basic needs of our people but because of the debts we had to pay back we didn't have enough for our people. Yet and at the same time, our creditors were threatening us that unless we paid, they were not going to give us spare parts for our machines etc. Then when we now paid the debts what happened? They devalued our currency before they gave us the next loan and as a result of all these,

our economy is now completely messed up. This is affecting every facet of our lives including the press. So to that extent I would say that foreign influence is very real.

Q: Specifically, I would like to know what your thoughts are on the Nigerian press, before and after independence in 1960?

The orientation of the Nigerian press has been British; adversarial. The press' own mission before independence was to work and drive out the British from Nigeria, which they did because it was a nationalist press. The press has striven to be nationalist since independence and it has seen itself to be successful only when it is opposed to Government and Nigerians seem to be interested in opposing Government. Nigerians seem not to believe Governments because of the corruption they have come to associate with Government and the fact that we have lots of things to hide because of failure of accountability. But the press has not really helped in sustaining accountability and then the Government in newspapering and broadcasting or rather the Government in ownership has not really helped matters because if you look at the Edicts or the Laws establishing these presses, you will be surprised that they are meant to promote the activities of the same Government. In effect if any Editor wants to be a journalist and does not promote the activities of the Government, he loses his job.

So the press has not been focussed to see issues from a national perspective and institutions in Nigeria have not entrenched that type of training. Educationally, we are not trained to love Nigeria. What we have in our educational setting is not a continuation of our cultural upbringing. What we learn in the family is not what we sustain in the school system; a brand new thing comes when we go to school. For instance, they tell us not to speak our language and if you speak your language which, they call vernacular, you are fined. I grew up not being fluent in Auchi and I am not quite sure if you can speak your own language Bini for five minutes without using English. So we are discouraged and yet we are authentic when we speak in our own native dialect. If we speak in a language that is foreign, we cannot think deeply. So all these things do not get us focussed. But if we had based our own upbringing in the family system through the school system, we would be more genuine today and we can now reflect certain perspectives.

So we inherited opposition from Britain because the British person is opposed to the British Government and we are sustaining it through independence. Therefore we have not really helped to build institutions that are native to Nigeria and those institutions that are native to Nigeria and can be sustained are traditional institutions. We have not managed the traditional institutions very well. What did the political system do instead? Take the AG, for instance, it reduced the Obas (Traditional rulers) in the Western region to one-penny Oba and undermined the whole traditional institutions. We don't have a democracy as it is known in the Western world in our traditional institutions. You are born a ruler and you can be there for forty years. If you do well you are there and if you don't do well the people have a way of eliminating you which is even more authentic than the way we vote people out in a democracy. In fact, in our own case, people we should vote out in a democracy are even rigged into power. So many of these things are not sustaining; we have had a very, very questionable heritage from our colonial past. We have been sustaining an illusion, the illusion of freedom since independence. There is nothing like freedom;

it's been who pays the piper dictates the tune.

Q: What then can the press do?

The press is only a reflector and the reflector is reflecting a reflection. The reflector is the journalist; he is reflecting a reflection and that reflection is what the British had bequeathed to us in the educational system, which we imbibed. We even go abroad to reinforce these things and bring them here and perpetrate them. So we are reflecting mirrors still reflecting. In other words, we are no substances that are reflected in mirrors. We should be substances; we should be palpable people, touchable people and not illusions.

Q: How are we going to do that in the present circumstances, not just nationally but globally?

We have to refocus. The type of leadership that should be given should be one of self-reliance; use what we have to get what we want. But the fact is that we want to get what we want even by borrowing. I have already talked about the exhibitionist culture that we have here. For instance you go to the Bank, borrow money, you don't pay the loan but you go and paste it on the forehead of a musician. When the people see you in a big flashy car, they see you in a big house, they see you with women, they see you flying all over the place, then they say you have made it and that you have money. But the fact of the matter is most of these people don't just have the money. In fact their way of life is even reflecting at the national level. Most of the things we spent our money on in the 80's were consumer goods.

Q: What should the press do in such a situation?

The press can do something to change the situation. All we need is education. You know there is the saying that if you want to build the City, first build the man. If you want change in the polity, first build the professional and the professional is part of the polity. So first build people of the polity. The journalist must build himself on the basis of what the society builds. So the society must build itself. I mean independence must be meaningful in the Nigerian polity.

Q: In which case there is nothing the Nigerian journalist can do as far as the Nigerian situation remains in the current situation?

You cannot say because everybody failed then that is your defence for failure. For instance, nobody thought me this perspective; I sat down to read and arrive at the conclusions I am drawing. If I had based what I am saying on the basis of my degree in journalism, I won't be saying all these things. They will be meaningless because that's not what I was thought at school. This is what I have come to know based on my own self-development. Many of the things that we are thought in school are rubbish; they are reflecting a perspective strange to us.

Q: How would you rate the newspapers that I am looking at in terms of what you have been saying?

The most genuine of them was the *New Nigerian* because it reflected a Northern

perspective and did not deny it. It said: "We are Nigerians from the North". That is, in the debate in the Nigerian polity, it will represent the North, but where Nigeria is with any other country, it will represent Nigeria.

This is the point that I have been making which is that you must recognise the diversities as a basis for promoting national integration. It is inevitable that each of the newspapers should do so to reflect their own diversities. You can only talk of integration internationally. Or let us put it this way; you don't see a particular State newspaper running down the Federal Government but you can see a particular newspaper running down another State in competition with another State but only opposing the Federal Government when the Federal Government undermines the interest of the State. For instance many States have taken the Federal Government to court over the issue of Revenue Allocation and the Derivation Principle. But that is not national disintegration; it is simply addressing the issue. If you ask me about the newspapers have each responded to other issues such as Census; Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), I would say that their own stand had been a reflection of the nationality group that dominate their place of operation. For instance, you see that in Lagos area, what the Yoruba view is what dominates the presses in Lagos area in spite of ownership. The *Vanguard*, the *Guardian*, *ThisDay*, *Champion*, even the *Daily times*, all reflect the Yoruba worldview by and large because the readership is Yoruba (Western Nigeria). The Yorubas read newspapers more than any other group in Nigeria. As Editor of the *Daily Times*, the copies we were circulating in the Mushin area of Lagos were more than all the newspapers we were selling in the whole of the Northern part of the country. When I was Editor of the *Daily Times*, the print run was about 350,000. We were not circulating up to 30,000 in the North.

Q: So what you are saying is that it is good for national integration if the newspapers address the different issues from their own regional or nationality perspective?

It's inevitable; it's good for national integration. It is important that we address the issues as they affect the components of the nation. National integration does not mean unanimity of opinion. National integration means recognising all the component parts of a nation and attending to their needs and they too making sacrifices in the interest of the nation. Each of the nationality groups is its own brother's keeper but you can only be your brother's keeper, when you know where you have brothers. However, what is happening now is that the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria don't even know that they have brothers; they are even creating enemies of the other two.

Q: Can you identify issues in which the Nigerian press has been united particularly when they involve other countries?

ECOMOG (The fighting Armed Forces of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]) readily comes to mind. Nigeria spearheaded ECOWAS' military effort to bring peace to Liberia, through the ECOMOG and so when it comes to that issue, Nigerians are in support of Nigerians. If you also take the issue of the Bakassi Peninsular, which is the border dispute between Nigeria and the Camerouns, Nigerians are always united in their support of the Government. In sports it is the same. There is no unanimity on the OIC issue because it reflects the religious perspectives of nationalities and of course there is a division between the Christian

perspective and the Islamic perspective on this issue. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that supports the debt burden of Nigeria. They are in support of Nigeria in this area. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that is opposed to the price of oil at the international level because we are interested. There is no newspaper in Nigeria that is opposed to Nigeria's place in the Commonwealth and in the United Nations. There is no newspaper in Nigeria, no medium in Nigeria that is opposed to our Nigerian President or Government in relation to any other Government in the world.

So if you look at the social area, the cultural area, and the economic area, you will see that we have national focus. Even educationally, bad as our schools are, it's more difficult to enter a Nigerian University than any other University anywhere else in the world. But unfortunately, in the area of consumption, we still prefer foreign goods and the Nigerian press is not helping in that regard maybe because they cannot even sustain themselves without importation as everything that they use, ranging from ink to newsprint, are all imported.

Q: So in your own view there is no national newspaper in Nigeria?

No, you have nationality newspapers.

Q: Would you call the Guardian a nationality newspaper, for instance?

No, I think I am being too strict when I say nationality newspapers. The *Daily Times* is a national newspaper; the *Guardian* is a national newspaper; *ThisDay* is a national newspaper; *Concord* is a national newspaper; *Champion* is a national newspaper; *Vanguard* is a national newspaper; *Post Express* is a national newspaper etc. But the fact is that they reflect certain worldviews. The *Champion* and the *Post Express*, for instance, reflect the Ibo worldview. The *Vanguard* and the *Guardian* do not reflect Delta worldview for the simple reason that the minority worldview is of no consequence in a place as large as Nigeria and it does not pay to reflect a minority worldview. Another thing is that these newspapers are more of businesses that will give clout than newspapers set up to express a particular point of view or worldview of the owner. So they provide clout for contracts for the owners. For instance, the *Champion* newspaper provides clout for Chief Iwuanyanwu, it's proprietor to gain access. Or take the proprietor *ThisDay* newspaper, who would normally invite Nduka Obaigbena to a place? There are many of Obaigbena's colleagues who can't get an invitation for anything but because he owns a newspaper, that makes a difference. It's as simple as that.

What this therefore is that the journalist has more work to do when someone uses the medium as a clout, because where his own interests or survival are involved, he will simply tell the journalist not to publish the story.

Q: But it will be difficult for the journalist to come up with a newspaper that will be professionally run. It will almost be impossible to find anywhere in the world where a newspaper is going to be run that way without certain interests being protected?

That is very true. It is not even there in the United States (US). What was common to all the African-American newspaper houses I visited in the US in 1978 was the

absence of advertisements because it is the Jewish establishment that has money to advertise. They didn't advertise in African-American newspapers so they all looked anaemic, no resources, and no money, denied and deprived.

Q: That is what is likely to happen to any group of journalist who would want to run a newspaper professionally and based on the requirements of Chapter 2 of the Nigerian Constitution. So how will they survive?

The fact is that was how *Newswatch* magazine came out; that was how *TheNews* came out and that was how *Tell* came out. What are they doing today? They are surviving not because they are professionals but because they have an approach to doing business. Once you become a businessman, to that extent, you compromise your professional status.

Q: So there is always going to be the issue that people will compromise in order to survive instead of doing a strictly professional job?

It's always there. What are you looking for then? What you are looking for is a utopia. You can only give guidelines just like Chapter 2. What's in Chapter 2 cannot be achieved; it's only a guide to activity in the polity. For instance, some people believe that we are working here on earth so we could go to heaven. But the fact is that we cannot be in heaven on earth; you must die before you go to heaven. However, you must work for heaven right here on earth so that when you die, you can then start going there. So this thing is a heavenly dream. What you are talking about is a heavenly dream. How much of it can we do below as it is done above? We can only try; it becomes a dream, an ideal you must strive for. You can't achieve an ideal otherwise it's not an ideal. An ideal can never be achieved.

(VIIF) INTERVIEW WITH **AL-BASHIR** ON SUNDAY 21/01/01 IN KADUNA.

Q: On the background of the Nigerian press.

Up to 1937, the media in Nigerian politics-we had about eight seasoned newspapers and none of them survived up to the time the *West African Pilot* came on the scene around 1937. Then between that period and 1960, and of the newspapers that appeared since this period, the one that lasted longer, are the newspapers within the Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe's newspaper empire. And they all collapsed. Dr. Azikiwe had about twelve titles or so and they all collapsed by 1967. Chief Obafemi Awolowo had more but you see people never gave prominence to them, because they were regionally based. But the Awolowo media empire also had fifteen or more titles and there are only two of them now-that is the Nigerian Tribune and the Yoruba version.

So I looked at the collapse of the Nigerian media and I discovered that between that period 1857 roughly to about 1970, about 370 Dailies and Magazines, none of them could survive and I was trying to look at what was responsible for that and there are quite a number of reasons. And you know we have had also the same kind of turbulence in the growth of the media during that period. So briefly, that has been the state of the Nigerian press and I think they have something to do with the perception: What do they want? What do they establish newspapers for? Is it for political purposes or as an economic venture? If you establish a newspaper as an economic venture then you know what is involved. If you establish a newspaper as apolitical venture, then you know also what you are into.

And you'd discover, for instance that up here in the North- I'll give you an example: Typical is *The Democrat.* You know the man is in business, he is a contractor, and he is a building contractor. Now a lot of the percentage of his earnings or of his activities comes from the government. And because he depends on the government, he doesn't want anything bad written about government. So the newspaper relied too much on government. From the very beginning, the journalists were not given very free hand to operate and I think when I got there the circulation was just about twenty-something thousand. But within six months or one year of our coming, we were able to raise circulation to about one hundred and eighty thousand. But then again, you see, pressure was put on me to favour government and all that. And I said if we continue on that path, the newspaper was going to collapse and it collapsed. You can see also the same pattern when Chief MKO Abiola started having disagreements with government, even during the time of President Babangida. And you will agree with me that Chief Abiola was not a manufacturer, he was a service provider in the sense of the contracts he had with the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL). So government was threatening him and things like that. And in the process he was appealing and preaching to his Editors. That was why those who established *Newswatch*, *Tell*, and *TheNEWS*, left him. They discovered that the pressure being out on them was such that would compromise their professional duties. So they left and that was how *National Concord* became what it is now.

What I am trying to say is that these are some of the causes of the failure of the Nigerian media, particularly those established for political purposes. They established it because they were looking up to government. They were 100% dependent on the government for the success of their business and because of that, they would always

want the newspapers to sing the praises of government and the moment this is not so, government would clamp down on them. I remember particularly what happened to *The Democrat* during the time of General Sani Abacha. They even wanted to arrest the publisher and jail all of us particularly when we wrote a critical Editorial, which we tagged: "The State of the Nation". It was very critical of government. In fact they took out a paid advertisement to condemn that Editorial. Yes, the Federal government did that. It was in the *New Nigerian*, it was in the Daily Times, and it was in all the newspapers. And we knew that that was going to be the end of The Democrat. And so they refused to pay the publisher for the contract he got from the government. Indeed the contracts were executed during the time of President Babangida. So when General Abacha came in, he saw the publisher as a Babangida man. And secondly, when we wrote that Editorial-you know one thing about government is that, you can be singing their praises ninety-nine times, but the moment you don't sing their praises, one time, that one time will count more against you than even the ninety-nine times.

So these are part of the reasons for failure. You know when you lean on government, that is to say, when you are running a newspaper and the source of finance of that newspaper is from the amount of money you get through contracts from government and particularly when you are not in productive service but rather supplying services, you are going to face problems because they are going to tie down your money. In those circumstances hardly can a newspaper survive. And that was part of the problem we had with the General Abacha regime and consequently we had to close down in September 1997. In the case of the *Tribune*, it was essentially established as a political organ, and to a large extent *Tribune* had come to be accepted amongst its core readers. I do remember Bola Ige once made a statement saying whatever you read in Tribune is the correct position. So it has come to be accepted. And there are some people when they see *Tribune* collapsing; they give *Tribune* some money to assist it because of the position it is occupying. So *Tribune* is a very distinct newspaper. We've seen the newspaper survive in the sense that it is not only the owner that actually supports it, but other well wishers, you know, what they call the Awoists. They won't like the *Tribune* to go down. And to the best of my knowledge they have never challenged everything that the Tribune says.

By the time we closed down in the *Democrat*, we were not able to collect our... revenue from the Northern government amounting to about seventy-eight million Naira (N78m) [inaudible sound -the amount not so certain]. Then we had greater problems with the advertisers in Lagos. It was about fifty-seven million Naira (N57m) [inaudible]. Each time we go to them, they would prefer to go to court. So we had almost about one hundred and forty million Naira (N140m) tied down.

Q: Why did advertisers in Lagos not pay you?

You see the problem with them is that once they collect this money, they want to invest it say in a fixed deposit account. And then when you go to them, they will give you a lot of problems. We had to go through the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), to get some of them to pay us. But up to the time we closed down we were not able to collect sixty-seven million Naira (N67m). Why, because the moment we go to them, they will say take us to court, take us to court, take us to court. And it is not only the Democrat that is facing this problem with the advertisers. Virtually all the newspapers have the same problem. That was why the NPAN at one

stage decided to patronise people like me who are not within the mainstream of the advertising agencies. They give this people, the agencies, 15%. However they give us 10%, so they prefer coming to us because they we pay them directly before they even carry our products or whatever. That is not the case with the advertising agencies because most of the times they will like to keep the money in a fixed deposit account, and then they will be giving excuses that they have not collected the money from the person who placed the advertisement. You cannot go to the person direct because you are not dealing with him. But we discovered that. And when we contacted some of these people, they said look, this is the game this advert people play. So this was another problem we faced.

There is also the issue of, well let me use the word poverty and let me illustrate to you. In 1997 when we closed down I think the average worker was receiving one thousand, five hundred Naira (N1500m), per month. At that time the cover prices were between thirty Naira (N30) to forty Naira (N40). Now if you are going to buy one newspaper, you are now going to put down about nine hundred Naira (N900) per month for one newspaper. And here is a person earning one thousand, five hundred Naira, spending nine hundred Naira (N900) a month for one newspaper. If you check the average Nigerian, By I mean those on level 10 to 12 and... So the low earning capacity of the average Nigerian affected the sale of newspapers. And what were they doing, they would go to the vendor, you know, they even formed an informal Newspapers Readers Association (NRA). So they will go to a vendor in the morning, sit down there with him, go through all the newspaers, then at the end of the day, they will give the vendor thirty Nara (N30) or twenty Naira (20) and he will accept it because the vendors have no liability for unsold.

So because of the poverty level of the Nigerian, the low capacity earning of the Nigerian, the newspapers were not selling. The few that the government buys for its top civil servants were even reduced. There was a time the Federal government issued a directive that only permanent secretary and above should be supplied with two newspapers. Before then they were given ten to fifteen newspapers maximum. That was no longer the case. Government itself could not afford it because cover prices were going up. And cover prices were going up because the raw materials for the production of newspapers were going up. In 1988, when I joined the *Democrat*, I think a ton of newsprint was selling for about four thousand (N4000) or five thousand Naira (N5000). I think it was seven thousand Naira (N7000). But let us put it roughly at seven thousand to ten thousand Naira (N7000-N10000). By the time we closed, a tonne was seventy thousand to seventy-five thousand Naira (N70000-N75000). So within a period of nine years, you can see how the price has jumped and that also was the case with all the other raw materials. So we had to increase the cover price.

And at a point I was arguing, in one of our editorial meetings and management meetings, that if we increase the cover price we are not going to get a lot of people to buy the newspaper that the best we could do was to increase the advert page. But the argument they advanced was that only few people advertised and so if you dot increase your cover price and expect something from adverts, the newspaper was going to collapse. But then again if you increase your cover price, the very person whom you hope will be reading your newspaper will not be doing so. So there was this kind of the impact of the economic situation in the country which reduced the circulation of the newspapers.

I do remember, as a graduate after my National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) in 1974, I started on a salary of one hundred and twenty Naira (N120), a month. I was buying all the newspapers. Each sold for about three kobo (3k) or so. At least then I could afford about four or five newspapers. But even as Editor-In-Chief of the *Democrat*, I could not afford that much because I realised that a sizeable percentage of my money was going into the newspapers. Yet I had responsibility for my children, I had responsibility for feeding the family and what was my salary-Twelve thousand Naira (12,000). That was the salary then. And you have to take your child to the private school because the public schools are virtually doing nothing. I know for instance, that I spent one hundred and twenty thousand Naira (N120,000) between November last year and this year, on one of my children, who is reading medicine in Jos. So where will I get the money to buy a newspaper? She in fact phoned me yesterday (27/01/01) to say that she has two more books to buy and one is twenty-seven thousand Naira (27,000). Yes, there was one I bought recently also, that one was thirty-seven Naira (N37, 000).

So you can see how the economic status of the Nigerian situation undermines the purchase of newspapers and consequently the closure of some of these newspapers. As much as possible, in order to survive, you have to establish a separate venture like a commercial printing exercise to support the newspapers. Basically, these were part of the problems. The readership in the North is very, very, low and it has not been able to match the listenership of radio. In 1997/98, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) released a report and said that after Tibet in China, the highest listenership of radio in the world is Northern Nigeria. If you wake up in the morning and see the people going to the Mosque or wherever, you will see them stick to the radio. You go to the market it's the same thing. The *Boloro man*, who is following his cattle, in fact, he makes a dress for his radio and he slings it over his shoulders and he moves with it. So the listenership of radio is very high. They can hardly miss any radio programme-Voice of America (VOA) Hausa service, BBC Hausa service, German Hausa service, and China Hausa service. All these Hausa service stations have audience in Northern Nigeria. So when it comes to discussing international issues with these people, particularly the traders, you will be surprised at their knowledge of what is happening in the world. It is not from the newspapers that they get their information, it is from the radio. So there is a very, very powerful radio listenership in the North to the extent that newspaper has become more or less an elite kind of media of communication.

Ask the elite themselves, those who are on level 10 and above, ask them and they will tell you that. I'll give you a typical example again. I do commentary on Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) Kaduna and of course, I manage newspapers. Now I will write an Editorial for my newspaper and then the Sunday Editorial for FRCN, Kaduna and they will say, oh, my God, we listened to your Editorial, how can we get a copy? And I'll say, buy the *Democrat*. So a lot of them do not even buy newspapers. Even the so-called elite, the educated elite, very few of them buy newspapers, unless there is a controversy-election result are coming, yes, -ministers are going to be announced, yes-policies are going to be given, yes. Apart from that, no, they don't care about newspapers. So that attitude also impact on the newspapers produced here in the North. And I say a newspaper attracts its immediate environment, if you know what I mean. And so when it does not attract its immediate environment, you don't

expect it to be more influential outside its own environment. These are some of the factors militating against the Nigerian press.

Q: How would you rate Nigerian Press' efforts or role in promoting national integration or national identity?

To the best of my knowledge, except for pre-independence era and during the Nigerian civil war, there has not been concrete evidence of the Nigerian media deliberately striving to build, what I call, the national effort. There have been pockets of instances. I remember, for instance, during the drought in the North, the Daily Times then under Alhaji Babatunde Jose, established a Fund to assist drought victims and it was a very successful enterprise which involved everybody from various parts of the country. Over the years the tendency of the Nigerian media has been the construction of, what I call ethnic cleavages or regional cleavages. Unfortunately, that has been the case and particularly with the rising tide of ethnic nationalism, the situation has become pathetic in terms of the media injecting in terms of the media injecting a sense of national unity. I'll sight an instance for you: When I left the Democrat in 1992, I joined the Ciroma campaign organisation as National Director of Publicity and when the 23 first eleven was announced by Babangida, Alhaji Tofa who was then competing with Chief MKO Abiola, was asked the question, whether he has appealed to Ciroma for support, he made this remark: Let me quote him-He said: "With or without Alhaji Adamu Ciroma, I will win the election". So we assembled all our directors from the various parts of the country and said all of us are going to campaign for Chief Abiola. That is we would use the Ciroma political machine to campaign for Chief Abiola, which we did. Now after the annulment of the election, Ciroma made a remark. He was asked: Did Abiola win or not? And he said Abiola won fair and square and to deny Abiola his victory is to deny the electorate their choice. Prominent members of the Ciroma camp also came out to things in the same vein. So I was contacted through my friend, Dr. Bala Usman, to use my influence in FRCN Kaduna, to write articles and other things, you know, to support the national course of the Abiola victory. I said that is not an issue; after all I was a member of the Ciroma campaign organisation. And I said one thing I would advice, is that they should get some prominent people from the South to please talk to our media friends in the South because once they start seeing this thing as a Northern agenda and start insulting Northerners, we can never have our way on FRCN, Kaduna. Why? Because some of these people will be coming back and using the same media here to say, this is what we are saying, in spite of what we have done.

So they agreed and they told me they have met with Chief Bisi Onabanjo and some other prominent figures in the South. One week after, the harassment started coming, not against the Military but even against the Northerners that stood behind Abiola. And I went to Dr. Bala Usman and said look: This is the problem, the FRCN has started saying now that aha, this is what they are saying and we are using the FRCN to promote Abiola. So Dr. Usman promised me that he was going back to tell Chief Abiola that if they continued in such an aggressive manner, insulting, inciting people, left, right and centre, you know, including those who stood for Chief Abiola, then how can we now guarantee their continued support. Because this people will say: To hell with you, we did this, we did that for Chief Abiola and all we are getting is insult. And that was the beginning of the collapse of June 12. They could not control what they were saying. And here in the North, we became incapacitated by the anger of the

people against what the newspapers were writing in the South. And we know in the case of Alhaji Bashir Tofa, for instance, he lost even in his own Ward and Chief Abiola won everywhere through the efforts of people like General Yar'Adua (rtd) and Alhaji Adamu Ciroma as I have already told you, of whose campaign organisation, I was an inner member.

So we had wanted to use the political machine to build Chief Abiola up as a national figure. And all of a sudden, because of the attitude of our colleagues in the South, who saw it differently and misinformed the public. Late General Hassan Usman Katsina, I remember at one time said to me: I commend your effort for writing for writing for the FRCN consistently and calling for support for Chief Abiola, please continue. So we were getting this goodwill and then this national goodwill was broken down painfully, by the attitude of some of our colleagues down there in the South. They started attacking not even the Military, but the very people that supported Chief Abiola, even the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Dasuki. One of the reasons why General Sani Abacha dethroned him was because of his insistence that Chief Abiola should be given his mandate. But look at what they were saying about him. If you knew what they were saying about Alhaji Dasuki and what he did...Even Alhaji Dasuki actually wrote a letter to President Babangida but the letter was intercepted by the Abacha and Diya group, who pretended that they were the ones who were actually in support of Chief Abiola when in fact they were not. Now they started insulting people like Alhaji Dasuki whom we knew actually did everything possible to put pressure on President Babangida to give Chief Abiola his mandate.

That was one of the mistakes that we (Press) made. If we had rallied together...I told Dr. Usman that all he should do was to organise a meeting of prominent Editors from the North, prominent Editors from the South and let us meet and adopt a common strategy to support our cause. I don't know whether he did it or not but I think that could have saved the problem. Because of the misconceptions we were having, they could have told them the actual thing on the ground here. So you see, in a way, I always say that they are responsible for the downfall of June 12 because of their attitude, because of the way they were carrying on and it made some of here who were in support of June 12 to go back to our shell. Even at a point, Alhaji Balarabe Musa said that 'because of the attitude of these people who are now in support of June 12, that he himself now decided to become quiet. So you see, even Alhaji Balarabe Musa whom they knew has been so consistent in his support of June 12 was being insulted. So he too fell back. I am saying these to illustrate to you the false steps the media has been taking to regionalise a lot of things. They have never seen these things from the point of view of you and from the point of view of me.

Let me give you a typical example of the Sharia. There was an unfortunate incident that happened when some young boys went into a house and lashed an Ibo person who was selling Beer. In the first place it is against the law of the Sharia. I am a Muslim. If I smuggle a Beer into my parlour and start drinking it, nobody has a right to enter my house. If you knock at my door and say *Asalaamalekun* and I refuse to answer, you have no right to enter. So you cannot go into somebody's house to try and find a fault. So even on that basis these boys were wrong. This man was selling the Beer inside his house; they had no right to go there. So what they did was wrong. Then there was a case in the same newspaper where they described how the Bakassi Boys caught a supposed thief and then they started by cutting his two hands, cut his

two legs, throwing out his eyes, slashing his throat and then they burnt him. The story about the lashing of the man in Kano and the story about the Bakassi Boys appeared in the *Post Express*. But they described what happened in Kano as barbaric and not what happened to the man who was slashed into pieces. You can see the biases that militate against the Nigerian media playing a unifying role because they see things from their own perspective rather than from the national perspective. That is part of the problems that we have. There are other occasions and particularly the matter became worse with June 12.

Now we know for instance that some newspapers, when Northerners were attacked in 1994, they wrote commending, you know...the Tribune from the West for instance... for attacking the ordinary Northerners. What was his own on June 12? I am giving you these as instances as to why the Nigerian media is becoming difficult. And when ThisDay, went on a familiarisation tour of the country recently (January 2001), they were surprised at what the people in Kaduna, Kano, Jos were saying. And the blame had been the media. We have not been out actually to promote a Nigerian image. The only time we do that is when Nigeria is externally attacked. On the Bakassi Peninsular border dispute with Cameroon, we are united. No doubt about that. When anybody threatens Nigeria, like when our people were mistreated in Libya or in South Africa, the Nigerian media is united. There was a time people said our people were being attacked in Libya and I said yes, because the Libyans know that we attack ourselves here. And that because they think we attack ourselves here, we cannot be united to defend a Nigerian person. On international issues, the Nigerian media is united. But on domestic issues, the Nigerian media can tear the Nigerian nation apart. That has been my own honest observation of the Nigerian media, except on very few occasions, like I said.

There was no doubt about their role during the pre-independence period. We carried the war against colonialism to the post-independence era. And the division became worse particularly since 1952, when the division between the East and the West started. But I can even go further to say that the break-up of the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC), which was started by Nigerian students way back in 1944 or thereabout was the beginning of this division within the Nigerian political milieu, which was copied by the media. Because at that time the independent media were politically motivated, they were not able to get out of the shell of their controllers, they saw themselves as the megaphones of their owners. Even post-independence, the media came on the stage creating this kind of division. That break-up of the NCNC came up when one of their members who was a member of the Lagos State Council was going abroad. And so there was a contest between Adesanya, who later became an Oba and Ernest Ikoli. Zik's faction supported Adesanya and Awolowo's faction supported Ikoli. Ikoli won and the Zik's faction walked out, citing electoral rigging. That was the beginning of the division within the country. The various newspapers took sides along that line. That was the beginning. NCNC then was the only uniting political movement established by Nigerian students and Zik and Awolowo joined later. Then because of this quarrel, they broke up. So Nigerian students again went back to these people and said: Please come back, but it was never to be. But because the media were following more the dictates of their owners, they went further to knife the NCNC. So at the end of the day, when NCNC came to contest election, it was more or less an Ibo outfit rather than the national outfit which it was before. If we remember, the NCNC was able to travel to all parts

of this country to mobilise money, to go and meet with the officials of the colonial government, and everybody subscribed to that. They were in the North, they were in the East and they were in the West. So it was a national movement at that time. Suddenly, because of this division within the political leadership, the media failed, despite the efforts of the Nigerian Youths and the Nigerian students to unify the political forces. The media fuelled the division between Awolowo and Azikiwe, fuelled division between the Ibos and the Yorubas at that time.

During the 1953 constitutional meeting in Lagos, over the proposal by Chief Anthony Enahoro, for self-government in 1956. Then the Northern delegation said yes, we appreciate that, we will support the West on self-government in 1956 and also the East in 1956. But they said please, it would not be possible for us because we don't have the manpower to run the administration. And they disagreed. Then the media again came in. Instead of trying to see the position of this people and harmonise it, what we they did was to cause severe division again. So temporarily, they brought Awolowo and Azikiwe together against the Northern delegation. Professor Adesanya said something in his book to the effect that there was a delegation sent by the Action Group (AG) just about three weeks after the Northern delegation, was stoned in Lagos and police had to be brought to protect them...Then the AG sent a delegation to Kano to campaign in 1953 and the media again followed with the insults. And so when the AG delegation got to Kano, before they were even allowed to campaign, they were attacked. Consequently about seven people became victims in 1953. I am narrating to you this episode in order for you to know how the Nigeria media gas been causing all this kind of things.

Division was in the Nigerian political system. I have already told you about the NCNC episode. Then what happened in 1966? In 1966 after the coup, the *Drum* magazine carried a caricature of the Sardauna of Sokoto kneeling before Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu (Major Nzeogwu led the first Nigerian coup on January 15, 1966) and that was at a time when there was tension in the country and they wrote so many other things. The painful thing was that the Nigerian media was able to promote this kind of thing when people thought this coup was... (Inaudible) We could have resisted the Army at that time but we thought otherwise and the Nigerian media supported the Army. When Alhaji Shehu Shagari was re-elected President in 1983, the *Nigerian Tribune*, for three months after October 1983, kept on its front page and more or less calling on the Military to overthrow the administration of President Shagari because they believed Chief Obafemi Awolowo to have won the election. When the Military struck again on December 31, 1983, the *Nigerian Tribune* again carried an Editorial commending the Nigerian Military for overthrowing the democratically elected government of President Shehu Shagari. And then Chief Awolowo issued a statement, and that is why I always commend this man (Chief Awolowo), and said that the *Nigerian Tribune* made a mistake because we don't know where the Military take-over will lead Nigeria to and in fact where it is going to end. Then the Punch again carried the same Editorial supporting the position of the Nigerian Tribune. The new Military ruler, General Muhammadu Buhari was asked on the BBC, when he was saying that the Nigerian politicians were messing up, whether he brought it to the attention of the politicians. He said no, because the Nigerian media, according to him, had told them everything. So in other words, the ground had been softened for them (the Military) before they struck.

Now these are some of the things that the Nigerian media has been doing to make it difficult for our people... Go to the market: By God if you go to the market, the people live happily together and help one another. The Ibo man will tell the Hausa man to look after his wares while he out somewhere in the market and the Hausa man will do it and vice-versa. The same thing too with the Yoruba trader or other traders from the various ethnic groups that make-up Nigeria. These are the ways these people interact in our various markets. But we, the so-called elite shout and cause divisions because of our selfish interests. Just go to the market either in Kano, either in Aba, either in Enugu, either in Lagos; you will see the unity of the ordinary Nigerian. But the Nigerian media will continue to cause disruptions among our various peoples. So there have been deliberate attempts by the media to cause crises.

I will cite another example again. There was a report about an incident, which I witnessed, carried in one of the newspapers. I went to the Kaduna market on that very day in 1996 and the Muslims were having their afternoon prayers when somebody sneaked into the market and stole something. Luckily one Ibo trader who was there got hold of him and other Ibo traders in the same market also came around and helped him apprehend the culprit. After the afternoon prayers, the Ibo traders handed him to the Hausa traders saying the man was caught trying to steal their wares while they were praying. Some traders said beat him and some others said, no, let us hand him over to the police. Eventually they took him over to the police. Four days after, I read in the *Nigerian Tribune* that the police saved violence between the Ibos and the Hausas in Kaduna. Then I met the reporter who is from Southern Kaduna and asked him: 'Why did you file the story in that way?' You greeted me in that market, you saw what happened, the Ibo man, in fact, assisted the Hausa man in catching that thief and they took him to the police. So, why did report that it was about a clash between the Ibos and the Hausas in the market? And he said to me: 'Sir, by God that was not the report I sent'. He said that after he sent his report his Head Office asked him to slant the story in that way but he declined and said he could not do that because it was not true. He said they even promised him additional two hundred Naira (N200) at that time should he slant the story in that way. He refused. But they went ahead and wrote the story the way that they wanted anyway.

Another recent example involved the *Punch.* And this was about the appointment of an Imam for the big Mosque here in Kaduna. And this is a man who has a Masters degree in Islamic studies. So the youths were very happy because he is a very young man just over thirty years old. They were happy that such a knowledgeable person and a young man, for the first time, has been appointed an Imam. And so when the Sultan of Sokoto came to Kaduna, they marched to him to praise him for appointing a young and educated man. Then in reporting that story, some of the newspapers stated that some youths went and harassed the Sultan of Sokoto. Now the reporter of the Punch was there and so wrote about exactly what he saw, which was that, the youths went to praise the Sultan. But the other reporters put pressure on him to write in the same way that wrote stating that these people went to attack the Sultan...But the *Punch* reporter refused...

So these are some of the instances of how we in the media... (Inaudible). From Kaduna here for instance, the slightest thing that affects the North, we will not look at it from the point of view of other Nigerians. No, but from the point of view of interest of the North and promote it along the same line without even caring about what will

happen to our brothers down there in the South. When I left the FRCN Kaduna, well, I still maintain a very good rapport with them...In 1994 there was a report that was sent in from Lagos by their correspondents, and the Managing Director called me into his office and he was narrating how some Northerners were killed in Lagos. And I said to him, if you carry this story- at that time a lot of Northerners were moving away from Lagos, a lot including the soldiers were sending their families home. When soldiers start sending their families away from where they are, then you can know how grave the situation really is. So I said to the Managing Director that if he carried the report as it is, then we couldn't guarantee the safety of the Southerners here in the North. I added that left to me, what we should do is to get the FRCN correspondent in Lagos and let him deny the story because the rumour was already in town. So we got him on the line and we told him how he should present the story to say that this is a lie, there is nothing there, all the Northerners are all right, and nobody has been killed. But we knew for sure that some Northerners had been killed. So you see we had to tell lies in order to save lives, which is against the ethics of journalism. But I insist that where a report will lead to the killing of one life, I would prefer that I tell a lie because I will save the life.

Now we are so much attached to the political enclave to which we belong and this blurs our minds towards issues of national cohesion. I commend, for instance, *ThisDay* and *National Interest* and *Daily Trust.* They are giving us a kind of vital image of what the Nigerian nation is. I can commend them so far. *Newswatch* magazine is in the same position with these newspapers. These are the first newspapers that I buy before I consider other newspapers, yes. They are making us to see light at the end of the tunnel. You can know their biases, which is all right. I am not saying that they should not be biased. Naturally, human beings are with all types of biases whether we like it or not. That is natural. But then let your biases not overrule your mind or your judgement as a professional journalist. Because one thing that many of us, professional journalists, don't understand is the responsibility that is placed on our shoulders. It is so much. You can kill thousands of Nigerians, using your pen as a journalist. You can destroy the reputations of individuals using your pen as a journalist. That, we don't seem to appreciate. We delight in say if there is a problem in Kaduna; we magnify it to the extent that it becomes something else in the eyes of the public.

There is also this newspaper, *Champion.* One thing that impresses me about *Champion* is that even when its proprietor, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, was contesting for the presidency in 1992/93, the newspaper never went all out to promote Chief Iwuanynawu over the other contestants. If you check the *Champion* during that election period, you will be impressed with the *Champion* because they saw Chief Iwuanyanwu as any of the other presidential candidates. They didn't give him any prominence over the others. Very, very few newspapers you can see in the manner that the *Champion* did it. My problem with the *Champion* is that its print size is so small. That was also why I dropped the *Guardian* (Nigerian). Their print size is so small and if I want to read them, I'll have to strain my eyes etc.

So when we are talking of, like I said, the *Newswatch*, *National Interest*, *ThisDay*, *Daily Trust*, *Champion*, I have tremendous respect for the fairness of these publications. I rate them as one of the fair publications. The *Guardian* is there but the *Guardian* is very trickish. Anybody reading the *Guardian* will have to be a little bit

clever to be able to understand the meaning of one word between another. But the above-mentioned publications, I rate as the best we have so far in terms of trying to see the opinion of the other side. They will carry what you write. If you write something Islamic, they will carry it. If you write something Christian, they will carry it. That is fairness in a way. I am just giving this as an example. But not the others, I mean somebody will deliberately tell lies against you even if you tell them what exactly the true position is. Take the case of General Muhammadu Buhari (former Military Head of State 1984-1985), for instance. When General Buhari said that the Sharia issue was never discussed at the level of the National Council of State (NCS), they insulted him saying he is a Muslim zealot. Two weeks after, General Yakubu Gowon (former Military Head of State 1966-1975), who is also a member of the NCS, came out to say that, yes, General Buhari was right and that they never discussed the issue of Sharia at that meeting, the discussion was between the Vice-president and the Governors. None of the newspapers carried it. So you can understand what I mean.

So we have hope that there are some newspapers emerging, as I have already told you, that can see the Nigerian as a Nigerian. They look at you not in terms of your own tribe but in terms of your humanity, in terms of you as a human being, in terms of me as a human being. And also as a human being belonging to the Nigerian nation. There are these newspapers coming out and I think, over time it is going to grow. Because, at the moment, everybody knows that. Go out, find out for yourself, and ask some people here: Which newspapers do you buy? Which newspapers do you read? Even if you are walking along the street, ask them and they will tell you. As recently as one week ago, there was a meeting here, they wanted to gather some newspapers and take it upon themselves to be buying and be burning these newspapers in Kaduna. We said no, we want the newspapers; we want those ones you think you don't want because they carry false stories. We said, we want them because we ant their perspectives. We had to persuade them. And it was a meeting of very serious minded people. They said they were going to organise and be buying and burning these newspapers because of what they perceive these newspapers to be. When *ThisDay* came during their familiarisation tour, the number of prominent people that greeted *ThisDay* here at Arewa House (Kaduna) was extraordinary. I can tell you that if it was some other newspapers, they will hardly get that kind of reception, except if people would like to tell them what they fill about them. But they perceive *ThisDay* as a newspaper that is at least fair to them.

So there is no doubt, as much as we can see some of the defects of the Nigerian media in terms of their willingness to build national bridges across the Nigerian terrain, there are definitely a number of newspapers that are coming up that are dedicated to this cause and they have been doing their best to really see the other point of view. If you look, I don't know whether you were in the country then, the controversy between President Olusegun Obasanjo and the National Assembly. Virtually all the newspapers, except these ones that I have told you about, were against the House of Representatives. They saw everything that the Executive did as the right thing. But these other newspapers were able to see the point of view of the House of Representatives also. They came out to say that we are undermining our democracy by not presenting the point of view of the House of Representatives in a fair manner because as they explained it, the only difference between democracy and dictatorship is the National Assembly. All other structures are there. If the Military comes today, the Executive will remain, the Judiciary will remain, but the National Assembly will

go and that is the end of the matter. So these other newspapers were able to see the perspectives of the National Assembly. They discussed and condemned the excesses of the Presidency; they condemned the excesses of the National Assembly and blamed the two sides for their lapses here and there. But not most of the newspapers that saw the National Assembly as an institution to be crucified at all cost. So you see a bias on one side without the willingness to listen to the other side.

Q: Would you say any of these newspapers, in spite of their biases, have called for the dismemberment of the Nigerian nation?

No, no. Well, there is one, there is one, not directly but it said it would prefer Nigeria to be ruled by the English. That it would be preferable for the English to come back.

Q: Which newspaper was that?

The *Nigerian Tribune*. Yes!

Q: When was that? Recently?

Around 1994/95.

Q: Really?

Yes, around 1994/95. They said we'd prefer the English to come back than for Babangida to rule for even one day.

Q: Abacha? Abacha was there then. (General Sani Abacha was Military Head of State from 17th November1993 to 8th June 1998).

Yes, Abacha was the one in power at that time. That was 1994. Either 1994 or 1995. You see I have some of these newspaper cuttings, I don't know whether they are in the office or not. Most of these things I am telling you are in newspaper cuttings, which I filed or stored. But most of these files I am only just beginning to sort out and I will bind them so that if you people like you come around I can pinpoint the newspapers. But let me say that the *Nigerian Tribune* published that statement not as a policy. It was a columnist that actually wrote that and it was published in the *Nigerian Tribune*. Now you cannot take the position of a columnist to mean the position of a newspaper, except if you read the same in the Editorial of a newspaper. I will appreciate if you can get the *Megaforce* column of the *Nigerian Tribune*. That was the name of the column. It was an anonymous column but we knew from the very beginning that Adewale Thompson wrote it. Quite recently he admitted that he was the one who was actually writing the column.

Q: Who is Adewale Thompson?

He is one of the prominent members of the Alliance for Democracy (AD) *Afenifere* group. And he was writing this column in the *Nigerian Tribune.* It would be very, very interesting if you can get copies of the *Megaforce* in the *Nigerian Tribune.*

Q: Was it published everyday?

No, it was a weekly column. It was published every Sunday. That column will give you an idea to the very question that you have asked me. To the best of my knowledge the need for Nigeria to remain united has been emphasised by all the newspapers. To the best of my knowledge, this need has been emphasised by all of them in different perspectives. There has never been any Editorial in a newspaper calling for the break-up of Nigeria. But they have been encouraging certain elements to say it without they themselves saying it. I made a distinction between what the newspaper says and what the newspaper carries. There are some newspapers that tend to encourage the break-up but then at a general level, all the newspapers have come to agree that it is not easy for us to call for the dismemberment of Nigeria without even talking about the consequences. The consequences of breaking up are more serious than the consequences of remaining together. That has been agreed generally by all Nigerian newspapers. That is why they are calling for restructuring-National Conference, Sovereign National Conference (SNC) etc. But what people are saying is that: What do you mean by a SNC? We can have a Conference but at the end of the day, and I must admit that is my own position, so long as we have allowed ourselves to go by the provisions of the 1999 Constitution, then we have to follow the provisions of that Constitution in order to change the Constitution itself. Because whatever comes out of the SNC, will have to become part of our national law, which is the Constitution. The decision from there can now be taken to the National Assembly for adoption. But when you say Sovereign National Conference, indirectly you are saying that President Olusegun Obasanjo will not have a say or the elected people will not have a say. Now we are going to have a super-structure above and over the present structure, which we have on the ground. So to answer your question, in a nutshell, no Nigerian newspaper has come out to propagate the break-up of Nigeria, no. What they have done is to propagate the weakening of the Nigerian structure.

Q: How would you rate their treatment of such issues like Revenue Allocation, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Federal Character etc?

Let me talk about the issue of Revenue Allocation. The thing is that it is quite appropriate for a fair formula to be applied. That would make all the components of Nigeria to wake up and do what they are supposed to do. If you look at, for instance, what we have here at the moment in the North-I was discussing with the Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria and he was telling me that about 70% of the newsprint in the United States (US) was manufactured from the raw material ... (inaudible). And that raw material he talked about is formally grown here in the northern part of Nigeria. So what I am trying to say is that when certain people are pulling themselves back, it is because they don't want to revive their own economic potentials. So that was why I was praying for the US to impose sanctions on Nigeria in those days in order for Nigerians to realise their potentials. When you are pushed to the wall and you have nothing doing, you will know how to survive. So this principle of revenue sharing, of resource controls, honestly, personally I believe in it. Because it will now make every part of Nigeria to gear itself up, to start producing its own revenue resources. I believe every part of the country should contribute to the central fund, based on what each has. But my fear is this: If this resource control issue comes up and that is the general feeling here, the tendency at the moment is for the Northern people, the Northern government to say, well, what are the resources that we have? The resources that we

have are our agricultural resources; we are going to impose tax on any product leaving here to the other components of the Federating States. That again is going to affect the economy; it is going to affect the economy of the individual. The tendency will be that we are going to have buffer zone, say for instance, along the routes. So that any goods coming out of Adamawa State, the Adamawa state government will say we are going to charge because these are the only resources that we have. The same goods will move to Plateau State, the Plateau state government again will say we are going to charge you. Then by the time it gets to Benue State and cross over to Lagos, you can imagine what the price of the goods will be.

That is exactly what the issue of resource control is going to lead to. That is my fear and consequently, it is going to have a kind of negative effect on the ordinary Nigerian, who now will have to pay so much for one product or good. Say for instance they are selling a cow at say fifty-five thousand Naira (N55, 000), by the time it gets to Lagos, it will be in the region of about ninety thousand Naira (N90, 000). In 1994, when the crisis started I was invited to deliver a lecture at Otta, Ogun State (Southwest, Nigeria) and I met some of my colleagues. At that time I have ceased to be the General Manager of FRCN, Yola, but I met my colleague who was also General Manager from Ondo. And he said to me: You Northerner, Al-Bashir, where have you been? You Northerners, do you know what you have done to us? I said no. And he said that by God a chicken is now selling at fifteen thousand Naira (N15, 000), because the Northerners refused to move Cows, refused to move their goods down to the South. And he added that he had to use one thousand Naira (N1,000) to buy tomatoes to cook just a meal for his family. Now my illustration is that if you go to the extent of this resource control and those people who are now dependent on agriculture and they know that they supply almost 70% of the grains and other agricultural products to other parts of the country, they will say: Well, we have no alternative but to impose tariff on agricultural to the other components of the federation. And the likely consequences are that the Northern States will say; we are going to establish a buffer zone along the corridor and all the charges will be made there and will be distributed among the Northern States because that is what they are going to depend on. Now for instance, they will say in the Benue border, in the Kwara border, we are going to have representatives from each to be collecting taxes from all the products that will be moving across the borders to other parts of the country. This is my only worry about this resource control issue. And they are likely to embark on that because they have to find the means to sustain themselves. Of course the other good advantage is that now they will have to gear themselves up. If it becomes resource control the Federal government will no longer have control over the minerals. And according to statistics 70% of the mineral deposit is here in Nigeria. For instance we know of the coal in Enugu and the people of Enugu will say than God we are going to develop our resources, others will say they are going to develop their own resources etc. The internal trading system at the end of the day will develop the economy but it will collapse because you are going to import products from other parts of the country at exorbitant prices. But by and large it will be good at the end of the day for us to try and see how it will work. That is one.

The second thing that is going to impact on the system is the landmass. 72% of the landmass we have in Nigeria is in the North. Now in the area where they are talking about resource control, for instance, which is alright, the problem between the Ijaws and the Itsekiris, is land. The Itsekiris are no more developed than the Ijaws and the

Ijaws are no more developed than the Itsekiris. But their common enemy is not the Ijaw, is not the Itsekiri, and is not the Oil Company that they are talking about. Ask them: Why are you now fighting yourselves when neither the Ataman nor the Itsekiri man is oppressing the other. The simple reason is this: It is over the scarcity of land. That is the only reason why they are fighting themselves. The Oxonian knows that when he was killing his Ogoni brother, that his Ogoni brother was not the one oppressing him. Now when the Itsekiris and the Ijaws have been busy killing themselves, it is not the Itsekiris that are oppressing the Ijaws, it is not the Ijaws that are oppressing the Itsekiris, the only reason why they are fighting themselves is over a piece of land. You will go there and you will find a very small space between Ilaje and Ijaye. (Names inaudible), in Ondo State, the land is not as big as my house but not less than one thousand five hundred (15,000) people, were killed in one day over that land. So you will also find a situation where there will be massive movement at the end of the day, whether you like it or not, because population explosion is already taking place in the South. Then you think of the Ibos. Someone made a statement last year that after the so-called Hausa-Fulani, the Ibos are the second largest group in Northern Nigeria, which is true. If you combine, for instance, the population of the Kanuris who are two million, and the population of the Tivs who are three million, there are definitely more than five million Ibos in the North. So the Ibos have come to stay in the North and what are you going to do with them? Now those who see land as their only resource might say: Well this land belongs to an Ibo man and so instead of paying land tenement of one hundred thousand Naira (N100, 000), he is now going to pay land tenement of one million Naira (N1m). These are the issues that I have been trying to make Nigerians understand-that is the dynamics and some of the consequences of how some of these things are going to play out.

Q: You mean the press is not playing that role?

No they are not. They are looking at it from only one point of view. They have failed to go into greater details of what are going to be the consequences. If you ask any Northerner in Yoruba land or in Enugu to come to the North he will tell you he does not know anybody in the North. It is the same answer the Ibo people here or the Yoruba people here in the North will give you if you ask them to go to their respective areas in the South. Go to Funtua, go to Kano, some of them became Commissioners or Permanent Secretaries-they don't know anything about that place you call West or East, they only know Kano. And by God when you speak to them you will never know that they have Yoruba blood or Ibo blood in them. One of them became the Managing Director of Arewa, one of the biggest conglomerates belonging to all the Northern States. Yet he became a Managing Director there. What are you going to do to all these people? But consequently they are going to be affected by this resource control issue because somebody will start tracing their history and say: These people came here so and so years ago, they don't belong to this area and so we are going to charge them for our resources that they are using. In fact the greatest resource that God has given the human being is land.

Q: So what are you trying to say regarding the Nigerian press and the Nigerian question?

What I am trying to say is that the media has not been able to highlight the dynamics, the salient points involved in some of these issues. For instance what are going to be

the reactions of those people who don't have oil, not only in the North, but also people in the South who don't have oil?

Q: How would you describe the relationship between the press and the government?

Are you talking in terms of legal policies or in terms of administrative policies?

Q: Both really.

Well, the press laws are there. During the time of General Muhammadu Buhari those press laws were really very harsh. But I think on a general note that the press laws have never hindered the Nigerian media from operating. They have that latitude to do a lot of things. During the Buhari era it was entirely a different matter. It was actually a very harsh situation. But I think the Nigerian governments have not been relying on the press laws to take hold of the Nigerian media. They have been relying on what I call "ethnic incentives" to get control of the Nigerian media.

Q: Could you expatiate on that?

The way the governments use the press is to exploit the ethnic sentiments of the Nigerian media. They will get people from your own area to support their own person, they will get people from my own area to support their own person and then they will make the Nigerian media get involved. After this they will sit back and watch as if they are not aware of what is happening. We know for instance when some of us were approached to sing certain songs that will favour the government. The Nigerian government has been engaged in this kind of practice.

Q: Say for instance that you have a newspaper in Yoruba land...

Yes they will say that everything about President Obasanjo is right. Now when the Ibos are talking about marginalisation, they will be kicking against it. They have never sat down to ask themselves the question: Why are the Ibos saying that they are being marginalised?

Q: Are you talking here about the entire press?

Yes, the entire presses. They are all engaged in this. But once their man is there, automatically, they believe that they are there also, which is not the case.

Q: You mean the presses from the Yoruba area are campaigning against the Ibos for talking about marginalisation?

Yes, because they know it will affect President Obasanjo. They will now be insulting people from this part of the country (North), grouping everybody together as Hausa-Fulani, saying that they are responsible for everything. By the way, I am not Hausa-Fulani man. I belong to the smallest tribe in Nigeria, very, very far in the northern part of the country. I am from Adamawa. I belong to the Kigi (Inaudible) tribe, which is not Hausa. 90% of my people don't speak Hausa. Now they will say this Hausa people etc. And to the best of my knowledge, about 70% of my people are Christians.

There was a time I told Dr Doyin Okupe, the former spokesman for President Obasanjo that he normally goes to Lagos and meet his brothers there (Dr. Doyin Okupe is from one of Nigeria's majority ethnic groups, the Yorubas) and that because of the concentration of the press down there in the South, they tend to forget the smaller newspapers here in the North. But like I have already told you because some of these newspapers from the South are biased, the smaller newspapers here in the North have become the gospel for the people because they reflect fairly their own views. So there was a time I told him to move around in this part of the country to see the Editors of these other smaller newspapers. And that he should not just go to Lagos or Ibadan and think that newspapers do not exist in other parts of the country like Kaduna or in the Ibo areas of Enugu or Aba etc. So there has been this kind of ethnic sentiments and loyalty in Nigerian newspapers. Now take the issue of democracy. Former military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida, has been the object of insults by some of the media in recent times. Their grouse against General Babangida is that he is allegedly planning to stand as a presidential candidate in the 2003 general elections even though the man himself has never said that. But they say General Babangida has no right to contest and yet the media say they are promoting democracy. The best they could do if they so dislike the man, is to campaign against him and ensure that he is defeated in the election. It is not for the media to say that General Babangida must not contest when there is no law banning him. But they are campaigning against General Babangida because he might contest the presidential election against the incumbent President Obasanjo.

But overall there is no deliberate government policy to hinder the operations of the press. There was an attempt during the Babangida era to make sure that a newspaper produced in Kaduna must not circulate beyond the Kaduna border. And that also a newspaper produced in Lagos must not circulate beyond Lagos, must not circulate beyond Ibadan. And we said no; we will never subscribe to that.

Q: And you say this was during the Babangida era?

No, I beg your pardon; it was during the General Sani Abacha era. That regime came up with a draft which, tried to limit the circulation of the Nigerian press. And Prince Tony Momoh, former Minister of Information under General Babangida, wrote on that particular issue, condemning it. I remember the title of his article was: "The danger you face." The Abachà regime wanted a new law that would control the press and limit its power to circulate within certain zones. That was the time that they wanted to curtail cross-border movement of the Nigerian press. But the Military could not go to the extent of promulgating the draft law into law because we kicked against it and they could not even enforce it. They were not in a position to enforce it and no Nigerian press was going to enforce that. To that extent, yes, there was an attempt to actually muzzle the circulation of the press along that line. So by and large, I don't think there has been any law promulgated, apart from Decree 4, under the regime of General Buhari, to hinder the press in its operation. But the Nigerian press itself was muzzling itself up internally and playing to the gallery of those in power. That was the mistake they made.

Who is Al-Bashir?

My name is Abdukarim Al-Bashir. I was born in Baza, in Michika Local Government Area in 1947. Briefly, I went to ABU, Zaria and graduated in 1973 with a Political Science degree. In 1973/74, I did my NYSC. Then I joined FRCN, Kaduna in 1974. That has been my period in journalism. I was there for 18 years. I rose to the rank of General Manager, FRCN, Yola. I later went to the Democrat newspaper to become the pioneer Editor of the Daily. Apparently at the moment, I can describe myself as the acting Managing Director of the newspaper, because virtually the MD is not a media man, he is a businessman. I have been to Israel to attend Advanced Management course. I also attended Advanced Administrative course ASCON and some other courses in various institutions.

(VIIG) INTERVIEW WITH **CHIEF DURO ONABULE**, FORMER CHIEF PRESS SECRETARY TO FORMER PRESIDENT GENERAL IBRAHIM BABANGIDA ON THURSDAY 15/02/01, IN LAGOS

Q: My research interest is in the area of the Nigerian press and how their activities over the years have impacted on issues of national integration and national identity. I wouldn't say that I have specific questions to ask in this regard but I am going to rely on your experience and what you have observed as somebody who has been in Government, as somebody who has been outside Government and of course as somebody who has been in journalism. So you have a wealth of experience as the performance of the press is concerned and which I'd like to tap into. But if you don't mind, I would prefer you to start by looking at the Nigerian press pre-independence and also post-independence.

A: In colonial Nigeria, the press was at least to some extent, a popular sector. It was very nationalistic maybe at that time we had what I call a common foe, the colonialists. There was not much trace of ethnic or regional divisions maybe because Lagos was the capital and virtually the entire press was based here in Lagos. At some stages there were fissures, sectionalism but the *West African Pilot* was at that time nationalistic in some of its postures whereas the *Daily Service* had no qualms in championing Yoruba cause. In the case of the *West African Pilot*, it had the semblance of nationalism but at the end of the day, whether you like it or not, as Papa Awo (Late Chief Obafemi Awolowo) once said, you are from your local Government area first before being a Nigerian. And whatever your nationalist instincts are, there comes a time when if your own group is having difficulties, you just have to abandon your nationalistic fervour to defend your people as I did in 1994/95, at the height of the June 12, 1993 presidential election crisis. Top Yorubas were in disarray either in exile or in detention and at that point a top Northerner; Mamman Nasir (Confirm the exact name) who was then Chairman of the Constitutional Committee charged that the Yorubas are always the cause of the problems in Nigeria that the Yorubas brought down the Interim National Government (ING) led by Chief Ernest Shonekan. I had to abandon my nationalism and come in at that point to defend the Yorubas because I couldn't take it. Yorubas are noted for criticisms, as they believe that you don't just go out and accept everything. I am not saying that the Yoruba people are perfect but on the average when they feel very strongly about anything, they are far, far better standing up for what they believe in than other groups in the country.

What was the issue involved? He said that we brought down Chief Shonekan. We have no regrets about that because the issue is that Shonekan was not the one voted for. The man we voted for was Chief M.K.O Abiola and unlike other ethnic groups in the country, only the Yorubas can adopt that position even though Chief Shonekan himself is a Yoruba man. Other ethnic groups, if Chief Shonekan belonged to them, would have forgotten about Chief Abiola because they will say that he, Chief Shonekan was still their own. So if it affects other individuals or someone else in the future, if we did that against Chief Shonekan we will do it against anybody. The Yoruba group is about the only group in the country that does not shy away or does not loose any chance to react to any situation. Somehow we also have the advantage of the media being in our own part of the country. Even when the newspapers are not owned by Yorubas, like the *Guardian*, like the *Vanguard*, you will notice that most of the contributors are Yorubas because they cannot shy away from reacting to any

situation. At times they are misguided in their response but the fact remains that they air their grievances. On the other hand our brothers in the North, because of their culture, because of their subservience to whoever is at the top, don't query authorities. We don't do that in Yorubaland, we query authorities and to some extent the Easterners (The Ibos) also do it, they now query authorities. Right from the days of Chief Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Yorubas and the Ibos have reacted to situations. The views were not very entrenched along ethnic lines until after the elections in... The situation was not also helped by the fact that those who inherited power at independence were those I call our Northern brothers who don't normally react to situations. So they are always surprised that the other groups do that. So because of that unchecked freedom of the other groups in the country to make their views known, gradually the press became, even if unconsciously, tribally inclined.

Prime-Minister Alhaji Tafawa Balewa had no voice until the Federal Government, which he headed, set up a newspaper called the *Morning Post*. But then it's not enough to set up a newspaper, unless you have overwhelming circulation and of course, this day supported by advertisement revenue, no newspaper can survive. So Prime-Minister Balewa did not have that with the *Morning Post* and the newspaper had to collapse while the Nigerian Tribune, set up by Chief Awolowo while in the Opposition as the leader of the Action Group (AG), was making headway. Other private newspapers like the *Punch,* the *Vanguard,* and the *Guardian* were set up but they still remain at best Southern voice and that is always against the North. But the *National Concord* came in on the nationalist scale because even though a Yoruba man set it up, it did not come out to support the Yoruba cause. In fact the newspaper was defending a Northerner, President Shehu Shagari. But because it was owned by a Yoruba man and based in Lagos, it was considered a taboo for the Concord Group of newspapers to oppose the Yoruba mainstream. The emergence of the Concord Group of newspapers, therefore, substantially eroded the erstwhile seeming impregnable leadership in Yoruba land but at a higher price. The place was burnt down, vehicles were attacked and the staff also were harassed, abused, alienated and defamed in other sections of the press. But the Concord Group maintained its posture and because of the financial strength of the publisher, it survived that period until he himself quit politics and that provided sudden expansion, influence, increased circulation and then patronage for the newspaper. To a large extent the newspaper maintained its national status but then on politics, they took sides. Not that it supported the other side but it abandoned its original ally. So I would say that the newspaper survived by refusing to support or stand by its original position which was to support the activities of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) and the President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari

The press also had a lot of impact on Nigeria particularly on the eve of Military intervention in the Nigerian political system in 1966 and the subsequent civil war against the declaration of the Republic of Biafra by the Ibos. The press had an impact because the other side of the civil war, the Ibos who were fighting for the actualisation of the Republic of Biafra were so handicapped in terms of their to the press to put their own views through to the rest of the country. Suddenly because of the pattern of the coup, the pattern of the killings as a result of the Military coup of January 15, 1966, a section of the country felt aggrieved while another section was indifferent, that the Western part of the country. Meanwhile, the Easterners (Mainly the Ibos) somewhat tactlessly believed that it had conquered what it believed was the major political obstacle in the country, that is the Northern leadership. In the process, a

section of the Nigerian press, that is the New Nigerian, really inflamed the situation. They inflamed the situation to such an extent that the repercussions of the earlier coup were inevitable. The newspaper whipped up sentiments, whipped up emotions, whipped up anger among the Northerners against the Ibos with result that there were tribal killings and then the counter-coup of July 29, 1966 (Check the proper date). With that tension in the country it appeared that the country was going to go into pieces with two outright enemies (The North and the West) now found suddenly a common enemy in the East. Meanwhile because of the crisis and the mass exodus of Easterners from Lagos and from other parts of the country, they had virtually no medium to put across their own side of the story. In the process the media in the other parts of the country, particularly in Lagos, and in any case, the *New Nigerian* also had a base in Lagos, and they all simply suffocated the East's side of the story so that they had no medium. Whether such imbalance influenced the outcome of the war is what I don't know but in any case, the press coverage here in Lagos, largely determined the stand of the outside world towards the civil war at that time.

There is also the aspect of how the press influenced Nigerians to favour Military take-over of Government in 1966. That's another long story because after the coup and counter-coup and the civil war, the press, in the absence of politicians, now suddenly or gradually built up anger against Military rule, either because of prolonged Military rule without the prospect of returning to civilian rule again or because of the misconduct of some Military officers which alienated public sympathy. That went on until 1979 when the Military returned power to a democratically elected Government. But suddenly all the hopes of those who fought and campaigned for civilian rule that they would be in control of Government after Military rule in 1979 became frustrated again either by fate or through manipulations by the Military. The Army returned to the barracks in 1979 but the rivalry among politicians, that is those who lost the elections and those who won became so intense that it was inevitable that something must happen. That was how General Muhammadu Buhari came to assume power after the Military coup of December 31, 1983. Again prolonged Military rule from that time until 1993 also eventually alienated the media and the public.

All along the media will always create the atmosphere or the tension for the Military to intervene rightly or wrongly. The tension, the atmosphere is always there for the Military to use as an excuse to intervene and the media were always guilty at that time of believing that they will use the Military to change Government. Either, one, because they believed that eventually, their own will be there or two, that they probably believed that having invited the Military in, the new leaders will just be there for a short time, organise elections and then hand-over power to the civilians. But none of these materialised for obvious reasons. One, in the case of the Military, any coup is high treason and any soldier involved in any would have to be sure that he would succeed because if he failed, he would be executed for treason. So because of that I think it was always unrealistic of the press to expect that any officer, who organised a coup to change a Government, would then shortly afterwards hand-over power to the next person. He cannot risk his life for nothing hence they were always staying long with series of unending transition programmes. That has been the weakness of the media.

But the one weakness of the press that has been surprising, if not disappointing, is the either double standard or partiality in the press. In 1986, there was this crisis about

Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). There were so many agitations against what was called the sneaking in of Nigeria into the OIC the General Babangida administration to such an extent that the then number two in the administration was asked by journalists at the airport in Lagos about the issue. He just said that for all he knew the issue of Nigeria's membership of the OIC was not discussed at the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), the highest ruling body of that administration. So you see even if they did not discuss the issue at the AFRC, the man was ready to say so openly, although I believed he should have been more tactful. He should have raised the issue at the AFRC that why was the issue not discussed there first before Nigeria became a member of the OIC. And to some extent that ordinary statement that Commodore Ukiwe made to reporters at the airport, destabilised the country. He may not have meant it that way. Maybe he thought he was being blunt but whether a Military officer can be blunt to disown the action of his superior officer is what I don't know. When he said it the Nigerian press hailed him as a hero. They saw him as a man of principle because the press is largely Christian-controlled and is based in the South.

Then last year the Sharia matter came out. Obviously the issue was not discussed at the National Council of State (NCS) [Remember to indicate what the NCS does and those who are members] meeting which, in any case is not a legislative body but a purely advisory body. So they met, we were not there and therefore we couldn't have known what they discussed but events later happened. However before the NCS met President Obasanjo described as unconstitutional the introduction of the Sharia, by some States in the northern part of the country. So he got the Vice-President Alhaji Abubakar Atiku, to hold another meeting with the State Governors on the issue and I think the Vice-president pleaded with the States concerned to play down the Sharia issue or abandon it altogether. You will agree with me that anyone's reaction to the Sharia issue would be influenced by what part of the country you are from. So while one part of the country might consider it taboo, another part would see it as an article of faith. Therefore for some Governors, abandoning or playing it down might not create problems for them, there were substantial other Governors, who if they abandoned the Sharia in their States, meant trouble for them. So in their meeting with Vice-President Atiku, they simply said all right, since the Sharia issue is not in the Exclusive Legislative List and therefore a State matter, the States were acting legally by introducing Sharia law in their own jurisdiction. The idea after their meeting was that although they would not object to any advise offered by the Vice-President, they would nevertheless still go back to their own States and do what they felt was within their jurisdiction to do.

So when the NCS met on the Sharia issue, President Obasanjo sought to know from the Vice-President what the outcome of his meeting with the State Governors was. The Vice-President then replied that the Governors had agreed that the Sharia issue should be played down or abandoned. As I have said, for the Southerners or the Christian members of the NCS, there was no problem with such a feedback from the Vice-President to the President on the outcome of his meeting with the Governors. But for the Muslim members of the NCS, most of them did not see such conclusion reached with Governors as equivalent to a general decision approved or discussed by the NCS. To them and rightly too, the NCS did debate and come up with a decision on the Sharia question. So General Muhammadu Buhari, a member of the NCS came out and admitted before the media that the issue was not discussed by the NCS.

Another member, Alhaji Shehu Shagari, also said that any decision reached by the NCS was not binding on the States as its role was merely advisory and which is the truth under the Constitution. The NCS is not a legislative body because you cannot call former Heads of State to come and legislate for the country, they can only advise. So Alhaji Shagari and General Buhari were both correct to say that the NCS did not discuss the issue. Now the entire media that only in 1986 hailed Commodore Ukiwe as being principled, now turned round to condemn General Buhari and Alhaji Shagari for the same thing obviously because of their own part of the country.

Still on the double standards of the Nigerian press, I'd like to talk about the way they have treated the current President, Obasanjo, since the day he handed-over power to a democratically elected civilian Government, while he was still a Military Head of State in 1979. When he left office in 1979, the Nigerian press took Obasanjo, a Southerner and Yoruba, as the darling of the Nigerian press. He spared none of his successors as he criticised almost every move that they made every policy that they introduced. He did not spare President Shagari, he did not spare General Buhari and he was most devastating towards General Babangida. All of them ignored him. Then he thought he could continue it with General Sani Abacha and, of course he had his problems with General Abacha who incarcerated him. But through God's divine the same Obasanjo, maybe God had judgement on him, is now back in Government. First of all, when he was going to contest the same Nigerian press opposed him saying that he was being sponsored by the Military, that he was being sponsored by the North and that he was even being sponsored by General Babangida. The Nigerian press as a whole came out against him and supported his fellow Southerner, Chief Olu Falae. (Do not forget to indicate the names of the political parties that contested the election in 1999) Indeed the press saw Chief Falae as the representative of the South as against Obasanjo whom they saw as a stooge of the Northerners.

But as soon as he won the election and assumed office as President, he started running into problems as he encountered criticisms on various issues. Now he was being given just a little dose of the poison he gave his successors after he left office as a Military Head of State in 1979 as people were criticising him and talking about the marginalisation of the North and the marginalisation of the Ibos in the current political dispensation. However the same media, the same Nigerian press that opposed his candidacy for President, have now made a U-turn and embraced the same Obasanjo that they dismissed as a stooge of the Northerners, as their own man. To the Nigerian press, nobody should criticise President Obasanjo and that nothing should happen to him. In fact they have even gone as far as saying that President Obasanjo is being criticised because he has stepped on the toes of powerful Northerners. That is the Nigerian press for you. When Obasanjo as ex-Head of State, was criticising Northerners in Government, the Nigerian press did not say Obasanjo was criticising those Northerners because they stepped on his toes. But in any case, even if it was true, then those on whose toes he too has stepped, on should be equally right to criticise him and if it was not true, then it shouldn't be true also that Northerners are criticising him because he stepped on their toes. The Nigerian press should realise that President Obasanjo is being criticised just like every other Government anywhere else in the World.

Q: Why do you think the Nigerian press is like that? Why do they have this double standard that you've talked about?

Again I think it is a character issue. Most of the young ones now writing in the press were born in the era of tribal politics and so there is hardly anything nationalistic about them. They are so narrow-minded. They cannot view any issue from a national perspective. They only view issues from a very narrow and tribal perspective. Always one part of the country is wrong and that is the North or the East while the other part, the West, is always right. Even within the Western and Yoruba part of the country, only the Awo group (Those who were the followers of the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo and who still believe in his philosophy) or the Awo idea is the correct one and anything different is wrong. Like most people already know, the press is based and operated from a particular area or part of any country. In the United States, (US) for instance, the press is mostly based in New York, in England or the United Kingdom, (UK) it is based in London and equally in Nigeria the press is based in Lagos. Fortunately for the Americans, even though there are divisions within the country, there is not much of ethnic politics, not even along race lines like Blacks and Whites. The same thing in the UK where you have the Welsh, the Scots and the Irish, yet on every issue it is always the UK first. For instance, the two major political parties in the UK are each supported by newspapers sympathetic to their cause but they do not hesitate to criticise them whenever they do anything they regard as not being in the best interest of the people of the UK.

But unfortunately for us in Nigeria we don't have that kind of press. As I have already stated, the press in this country is mainly based in Lagos, in the South, particularly in the Yoruba area and unfortunately it is that Yoruba area that has continued to determine the character of the Nigerian press. Some of us who are from the Yoruba area have tried to write from a national perspective because number one, we have the advantage of age and secondly we have got a sound education.

Q: How can the Nigerian press rise above the level of tribal sentiments etc?

From my experience with the Concord Group of Newspapers, the entire Yoruba press before the Concord newspapers hit the newspaper stand in 1980 was just personality through Chief Awolowo. Most, if not all the people in the Yoruba press, belonged to the Awo group. But when the Concord newspapers came out, we were able to curtail that substantially and were able to balance the political arguments in Yoruba land. If we are to extend that to the North then there will be a balance in the Nigeria press. Well like I have said, culturally, it will not be easy to achieve. Easterners and Westerners are by nature self-critical, either it is one group against the other or within the same group, there are people against one another and it is strongest in Yoruba land. It is not entirely the same with our Ibo brothers but they are building up to it gradually. But nationally, I don't see the possibility of the same level of self-criticism becoming a feature of both the North and the South. Maybe it will take some time for the North to imbibe that culture of self-criticism. These are some of the issues that have shaped the Nigerian press.

But also for any medium to succeed in Nigeria, particularly the print medium, certain factors are very essential which are one, readership; two, advertisements which, of course the readership will generate; three, and very important, the location. You may not like it but there is nothing you can do about it because God has made it so. Lagos is the place for any print medium in this country. Unfortunately, our Northern

brothers, because of the way they grew up, not just this generation of Northerners, they hardly move out of the North to invest outside. In any case, for a print medium to succeed you have to invest also and people in the North don't seem to have the culture of long-term investment. For them, it is cash and carry business: Do the business today, sell the newspapers today, make your ten million Naira (N10m) that's what they do. Long-term investment, they don't do it and that is what the media industry requires to succeed and they won't do that.

Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, the publisher of the Champion Newspapers Limited, who is from the Eastern part of the country and an Ibo man, dared to invest in Lagos. I advised him and I told him that if he established his newspaper in Owerri, the capital of his home State, it will never succeed and won't take-off. He has tried two or three provincial newspapers in the past and they did not make it. But the very fact of locating the *Champion* newspapers in Lagos gave it the status of a national newspaper, even if it sells only five thousand copies. However if he had located it at Owerri and sold one million copies a day, nobody would reckon with it and nobody would know that it exists. That's the problem with for our Northern brothers because they hardly move out to invest elsewhere. Maybe they might choose to invest in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) but again, if you locate a newspaper in Abuja, it won't make it. Lagos is the place. Secondly, our Northern brothers don't have reading habit. As long as they do not have reading habit, as long as they don't invest outside the North, particularly in Lagos and as long as they do not want to invest in the media industry, they will continue to be handicapped. Their literacy level is also very low compared to the South. This affects them too and as far as one can see, there seems to no prospect of that position changing for a very long time to come. Their priority is Koranic studies while Western education is secondary. Whereas in the Southern part of the country, the quest for western education is unquenchable.

Q: If the press has to operate within the context that you have just described, what then is the prospect for the press to play the role of national integration?

Even if the press makes a genuine effort to play that role, there is still the need for the prospect of education to improve in the North so that more people could read and write. In fact there is not much a newspaper can do to integrate a country if the people to be integrated cannot read and write.

Q: Those issues have to be resolved first?

Yes and the situation is not even helped by the low purchasing power of most of the people in the North. The cover prices of newspapers are now so high that most Nigerians are not able to buy them. There is poverty everywhere in the country and our brothers in the North are more poverty-stricken than most Nigerians. So no matter what effort the press makes towards national integration, unless our brothers in the North improve their prospect for higher education and acquire reading habit and then have the purchasing power to buy the newspapers, there is not much the press can achieve.

Q; Are there instances of efforts aimed at promoting national integration that you can identify with the Nigerian press?

Unfortunately, I can't really say that there has been any because those that man the press now are largely young, inexperienced and unenlightened boys and girls. Their whole world starts and ends in Lagos. Many of them have never even been to Abuja for example. And the thing is somewhat incestuous. They acquired such misinformation that they peddle and such ignorance from their lecturers on the campus. Those lecturers do not teach the boys and girls what are necessary and what the true situation in the country really is. So the situation in the Nigerian press now is that most of the journalists are very ignorant and they don't know and even refused to know that they don't know. They need to be well educated because as a journalist, if you are going to be making judgmental statements, you must be very versed in history. If you want to make an assertion, you have to be sure of what you are saying.

Q: Your experiences in Government particularly as they relate to the Nigerian press. You dealt with the press for eight years as the Chief Press Secretary to the President of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria and so what was your experience with the Nigerian press from that position?

In my early years in Government, I had what I call matured people in charge of the press. Chief Segun Osoba, now Governor of Ogun State, was not only the Managing Director of the *Daily Times*; he was also the president of the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN). So I had the co-operation of the publishers as at that time. If for instance, there was any journalist in trouble with the Government, I will call the publisher of the newspaper of the journalist in question and ask to be given a few days to allow me sort out everything, using my connections in Government. Some newspaper used to whip up public sentiments against the Government by publishing on a daily basis on their front pages, stories about detained journalists. It was very common to see them publishing things like: 'First Day in Detention'; 'Second Day in Detention'; 'Third Day in Detention' etc. I told them that as long as they continued to publish things like that, they will enrage the authorities more and that the journalist they thought they were fighting for will not be released.

There was the case of a publisher whose Deputy Editor was being detained and when I called him, he banged the telephone on me saying I should not ask him to stop his Editor from publishing stories, on a daily basis, highlighting the plight of his Deputy Editor in detention. Well, I simply called the wife of the detained journalist to tell her what transpired between me and the publisher of her husband's newspaper. I went that far to make it known that the publisher did not take cognisance of the fact that we were dealing with a Military regime and not a democratic Government. The Military only knows and adopts iron tactics. On hearing from me the wife of the detained journalist went to the publisher herself and said she didn't want any more stories about her husband's detention carried in the newspaper anymore. The day after this incident the newspaper stopped carrying the story and when I intervened within Government circles, the journalist was released in no time. So you see you have to employ human relations and connections etc.

But in the latter part of my years in Government, there was this enormous growth in new publications, particularly magazines, in the country whose owners became Editors-in-Chief overnight. There were publishers without maturity, without experience but whose only interest in publishing was mainly to confront Government and defame public figures. The junk magazines in particular can defame anybody.

They pick on anybody and concoct stories. Anybody, including an armed robber can just get up, set up a newspaper and calls himself Editor-in-Chief and be defaming people. Even the so-called trained journalists, those of them with University degrees, are also misguided into believing that press freedom is a license to defame people. If you attempt to cause public insurrection using your newspaper, that is not allowed under the press law anywhere in the World. There are laws regulating our profession and 90% of the journalists and publishers in this country do not know that there are laws regulating the profession and once they are called to order, they will shouting there is no press freedom, the journalists are being harassed etc. Even in the UK, if a journalist commits contempt he will be charged to court. If you are charged to court to disclose the source of your information and you refuse, which is a professional ethic, you will be jailed and if you go to jail for it your colleagues will hold you in high esteem as a hero. The issue then is not that you haven't broken the law or that the court that sent you to jail is harassing the press; it is simply that you have been jailed for contempt of court. So we have to educate our people, our journalists to know what the law regulating the profession is all about. Whatever a journalist publishes, he has to prove that it is the truth. You don't just publish anything in the name of press freedom. That is not journalism.

My own colleague in the *National Concord* was (Name not given) was not doing anything wrong until they started publishing stories against her. Then she said: "Why are they doing this to me, after all I am one of them." But I said to her that that was how it feels like to be defamed. I said that 80% of what was being published in the *National Concord* is not true. I said until it affects you, that you don't know the blunder being published by these newspapers and magazines. So that is the situation in the Nigerian press today. Largely ignorant journalists who believe that there is no law regulating the profession dominate it. There is nowhere else in the World where that is true.

Q: On the whole how would you assess the ownership of the Nigerian press and its impact on the press' performance?

We have some publishers who use the press to blackmail Government and Ministers. Most of them are contractors, they are businessmen and they use their newspapers to blackmail when they want a particular contract. If they don't get the contract they use their newspaper to blackmail or sponsor another newspaper to do it for them. What they normally do is to cry foul that so and so has been awarded contracts against all regulations whereas when they were also awarded contracts against all regulations, it was all right. I am still looking for that publisher who has set up a newspaper for patriotic reasons. I don't know of any yet unlike in the colonial days. But the more worrying thing about the Nigerian press now is the high level of corruption. It is staggering. For all I know, as a journalist, if you have your daily assignment, the employer pays you transport money. Therefore you don't have any reason to start asking the hosts of wherever you go to cover assignments for transport money. But that is what the journalists do now unashamedly. It is so disgraceful. In fact this man Chief Ebenezer Williams (Aloba) who died recently, alluded to it. The first person to blow the whistle was Alhaji Babatunde Jose, on e of the doyen of Nigerian journalism. He asked the journalists who demanded money from him whether they knew who he was. You see if anybody could ask Alhaji Jose and Chief Williams for bribes, you could imagine the level to which Nigerian journalism has sunk. So to

some extent that has allowed even non-journalists to claim to be journalists because they now invade anywhere a press conference is being held and demand for bribes. You cannot organise a press conference today in this country and expect not to bribe journalists. But if I organise one and they demand for bribes, I won't give it to them.

Q: Maybe they won't publicise you...

Too bad and even at my level, I don't need to be publicised. Fortunately, I can write.

(VIIH) INTERVIEW WITH **ALHAJI MUHAMMADU TURI**, FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS IN KADUNA ON SUNDAY 28/01/01

Q: If you look at the Nigerian press pre-independence and post-independence, how would you describe the press?

As you know, the Nigerian press pre-independence was more interested in fighting the colonialists and more interested in making Nigeria become independent an independent nation. The question of national integration was not much the focus. But of course at the same time ethnicity was not the critical issue as it became after independence. So this is the way I see the press, pre-independence. Of course the press in the South, as even today, was in the majority. They were more critical of the colonialists than the *Nigerian Citizen*, which was the only newspaper really in the North then. There were other smaller ones, but it was the *Nigerian Citizen* that was very prominent and it was a government-owned newspaper.

After independence, the attention was turned to other various issues that arose. There were more regional considerations then than before independence. I think after independence, there was the issue of what should be the relationship between the regional governments and the Federal government. The Western regional government led by the Action Group (AG) was very critical of the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), which was in control of the Federal government. Later on the AG split into two. There was the Awolowo faction who wanted a thoroughgoing opposition against the Tafawa Balewa government. There was the Akintola group, which said that it was even better for the West to cooperate with the Federal government led by the NPC. Tafawa Balewa wanted to continue with the national government which came into effect following the coalition between the NPC and National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe that was starting to take form then. But the AG was very critical so the press took their cue from there to fuel the controversy.

Q: How did they do that? Were they leaning on one side or did they try to see the issue from a national point of view?

I wouldn't say from a national point of view. But I would say that they saw it from an ideological point of view.

Q: What ideology are we talking about?

Well, the ideology of opposition. The Daily Times, which though was a leading newspaper, was Yoruba-biased. Then there were AG's own newspapers, the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Daily Express.* Then on the other hand there was the West African Pilot, which was in support of the NCNC, and of course there was the eastern newspaper called the *Nigerian Outlook.*

Q: So what you are saying is that all these newspapers saw issues from the point of view of their owners?

Yes, exactly.

Q: Would you say then that as a result, they were not contributing to national unity and integration?

I think you should read the first chapter of my book where I discussed this in detail. (Give full details of the book in the note section)

Q: These newspapers were not able to carry over to the post-independent period, that singular purpose of co-operation that ensured the successful prosecution of the independence struggle?

Yes.

Q: Was there any particular reason for this?

Yes, it was as a result of ethnicity.

Q: Why ethnicity?

Let me put it this way. It was as a result of ethnicity and the struggle for power by the political leader. After independence, unfortunately, the political leaders were not as united as they were in their fight for Nigeria's independence. After independence every region kept to itself and whatever issues arose were seen from that narrow point of view. They all thought along the line of what they will gain sectionally, rather than nationally, particularly on the issue of the sharing of the national cake. And so the newspapers took their cues from there.

Q: Apart from these aforementioned issues, do you think there are other hindrances against the Nigerian press when it comes to the question of promoting national integration?

In my opinion, there were no hindrances, particularly in terms of government policies. During the Tafawa Balewa era in the First Republic, the freedom of the press was very much upheld. And then there was the coup in 1966 when Yakubu Gowon took over. But even after the coup, Gowon's government was quite fair to the press. So if there were hindrances, it was not as a result of deliberate government policies. Rather the newspapers promoted narrow and parochial ethnic and regional self-interests.

Q: If I say that one of the roles of the press in society is the promotion of national integration, how would you respond?

I think it is the role of the press to promote national integration. This is what we try to do in the *New Nigerian* newspaper. I would like to believe that the *New Nigerian*, at least during the period that I have studied, did strive for that goal. In its first Editorial, the *New Nigerian* promised to tell the truth all the time. It stated that it was not ashamed to be a Northern newspaper but that it would be so within the context of one Nigeria.

Q: Why should the press promote national integration?

Because up here in the North, we believe that there should be a united endeavour to develop the country while at the same time we should ensure that the national interest comes first.

Q: How will the press be able to identify the national interest when there are various interests ranging from ethnic, regional to religious interests in the country?

Well the national interest was well articulated after independence in 1960. There was the first national development plan, which articulated the national interest very well. Even the independence constitution spelt out very clearly what ought to be the national interest, like for instance unity, development, freedom, human rights etc. All these were in the constitution. There was also the provision for the States to develop at their own level because of the peculiarities in each of the regions. In fact the independence constitution was truly a Federal constitution. Even after the coup of 1966 it was because of the need for national unity that the then Yakubu Gowon administration went to war to bring the East into line with the common national aspiration of national integration. After the war, the administration came up with the second national development plan, which spelt out the various principles to be pursued by the Nigerian government, which included the promotion of a virile democracy etc. So there was never any doubt at all about what the national interest is or what ought to be the national interest.

Q: Would you that the ownership of the Nigerian newspapers played a role in the way that both private-owned and public-owned presses performed their role in society for instance?

Well all I know is that there is a difference in the way each of them operates. The government-owned newspapers like the *Daily Sketch* and the *Nigerian Observer* etc were established to look after the interests of the respective government that established them. But the New Nigerian was an exception. It is still one of the things that you researchers should find out about the newspaper. The *New Nigerian*, in the first twenty years, for instance, had a very national outlook. Indeed people were even surprised that even though it was a newspaper owned by the then Northern regional government, it expressed very pungent views, independent opinions and focussed on national issues and interests. Towards the end of the Gowon administration, the *New Nigerian* published a petition against Governor J. D. Gomwalk of Benue-Plateau State even though the Benue-Plateau State government was one of the owners of the *New Nigerian*.

But the privately owned newspapers operate in a different fashion. They have to survive first of all because they don't subsidies from the government. And so they should be free to publish independent opinions for people to buy them and also rely on them as carrying balanced views.

Q: If the *New Nigerian* performed its role creditably in promoting national rather than narrow or parochial interests in its first twenty years, when and how

did things start going wrong?

You see what happened was that in 1975, the Federal government took over the *New Nigerian* Newspapers. Nevertheless they still managed to keep their heads above waters in spite of its take-over by the Murtala/Obasanjo government. But during the regime of General Ibrahim Babangida (1985-1993), he appointed his own men to sing his own praises although one could argue that government interference with the *New Nigerian* did not actually start under General Babangida's government. Indeed the interference became manifest after Alhaji Shehu Shagari became President in 1979. However it was under the government of General Babangida that government interference with the *New Nigerian* became very clear and open. From then on people began to abandon the newspaper and the circulation really went down.

Q: And you think that the newspaper can still be revived?

Yes, of course. Under the current Managing Director, Dr. Farouk, the newspaper has been doing really well indeed. The circulation has gone up.

Q: But it is still a Federal government -owned newspaper?

Yes.

Q: So they don't appoint their own men anymore?

They do. President Olusegun Obasanjo appointed Dr Farouk. But it is your own integrity that you will bring to bear on the newspaper

Q: How would you rate the Nigerian press in their treatment of issues like the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Revenue Allocation and Census etc?

In order for you to understand how the press treats these issues, you have to go back to the period 1960-1966. In my book I tried to analysis of this period. Negative ethnic politics and sentiments overwhelmed it. Once you are aware of what happened during that period then you can understand all the reactions to the OIC issue. As far as I am concerned there is nothing new in the positions taken by the various newspapers on this issue. The newspapers reacted in accordance with the ownership interest. Their reactions were determined by their own geographical locations.

(VII I) INTERVIEW WITH **DR. G. G. DARAH**, CHAIRMAN, EDITORIAL BOARD, THE GUARDIAN NEWSPAPERS, LAGOS, NIGERIA, ON WEDNESDAY, 13/12/00.

Q: What is the Nigerian Press?

The Press is older than the country. The Press was not just a factor in the making of the country, it was a contributor. It was the Press that helped to define what you can call the Nigerian interest vis-à-vis colonial interest. At a point, in terms of historical epoch when it was required to distinguish between what the Nigerian people want and what the British imperialist wanted, it was the Press that articulated the Nigerian viewpoint.

So the Press grew up in the context of the evolution of the Nigerian State. It has a very close link to the Nigerian system. From the early 20s to the 60s, it was the Press that fought the British much more than you will find anywhere else in Africa where the leading lights were also politicians, a role exemplified by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who came from Ghana to Nigeria. The first thing he did was to set up a Newspaper. So he announced his own partisanship into the Nigerian struggle in 1937.

So the story of the Press and politician is unique. I don't think it is so in Kenya or anywhere else. The Nigerian one was peculiar. All major political figures were also major media figures. In the 19th century when there were Newspapers owned by Nigerians, they were very nationalistic. The Newspapers were very strident on the African question, economy, culture and the need to emancipate the African. These things were the real ideas of the time.

The first Editor of the Daily Times was Ernest Ikoli. In 1936, he was a member of the Nigerian Youth Movement. People like Herbert Macaulay were media figures while he was also a leading politician in the country. So there has always been this link between the Press and the political process in Nigeria.

Q: The Press pre-independence and post-independence

The historical moments are different, so the issues and the challenges are also different. Up to 1960, the boundaries were fairly well drawn. It was the period of anti-colonial struggle; it was Nigeria versus Britain essentially. So the terrain of combat, of clash of ideas was fairly well defined. I have not read the account of the Press in other African countries, but on a comparative note what you discover is that the most revolutionary; the most courageous involvement of the Press in anti-colonial struggle was the Nigerian Press. It was unprecedented in Africa. The Nigerian elite, the Lagos elite was sufficiently articulate to generate the readership or the reading public for the Newspapers. The Newspapers kept the politicians on their toes.

Q: On the civil war

It was the Press that saved Nigeria. We were all young then, but that period of '66, '68, '68, '69, the Press backed the Nigerian government. Not without criticism, but essentially, it stood with the Nigerian government in the interest of a united country.

In a way it was doing what the Press had done also during the anti-colonial period. When the various constitutions (Richardson, McPherson, Lyttleton), were trying to weaken the Nigerian State, balkanise the people, the Press was fighting to make Nigeria remain united; fighting the British and challenging British legislation that tended to weaken the country.

The Press in the colonial period took on a national unity outlook. If you look at the history of the Press in Nigeria, it has never compromised national unity. If it did the country would have gone to blazes. It is almost the last institution to hold on. It was so on December 31, 1983, when General Muhammadu Buhari came till 1993 when General Ibrahim Babangida messed up, it was the Press. There were no political parties. There were no NGOS. All the battles were waged inside Newspapers. It was the Military versus the rest of Nigeria.

When General Buhari came with his draconian laws, the Press was the first victim. Journalists like Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson, both of the Guardian Newspapers were the first victims. Did they relent because of that? No! The Press has made life uncomfortable for governments that toyed with the issues of development. The government of General Buhari couldn't last. Uptil now he still has not been able to interact with the Press. He sees the Press as a thorn in his own flesh.

Q: National Integration

There is no section of the Press that is indifferent to the issue of national integration. We don't have the Press divided the way you find in the United Kingdom, for example- Scottish national Newspaper just on its own- who is going to buy it here.

Although the Nigerian Press is very critical and almost irreverent, but when it comes to national integration, what the Press does is to combat the government for not doing it properly. Like you would find that the theme of national conference has been featuring since 1995. In fact it started in 1990 when Aka Bashorun was the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA).

The main trend in the Press is uncompromising on national integration. But their divisions or regional variations or attitudes- national integration as you would find in the Guardian, or the Tribune, or the Vanguard, or the Punch, is not synonymous with unitary dictatorship, is not synonymous with hegemonic superiority.

The Press wouldn't say we don't need Nigeria. But it will tell you that Nigeria will do better if you arrange it in this way or that way. So the main trend is for national integration. If the Press were to concentrate on and orchestrate the break-up of Nigeria, the politicians cannot hold it. From what I have seen, I was not in the media in, I was in the University system but I was a unionist, so I was partisan...since 1989, when I came, all the turbulence of June 12, 1993, I have integrated with the Press a lot.

I have told you that in general the Press fought General Buhari; we never gave him any more chance. The Press also fought second Republic President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari because the Press saw Shagari as one who didn't really merit the position. So from day one it was a hostile media that the government confronted. They never

allowed the government to rest. Perhaps it helped the government to do better.

But the Press was not advocating any division of the country. It was not asking for a break-up of the country. It was just saying that they wanted a more competent manager and that has remained constant. Buhari they fought. The Press welcomed President Ibrahim Babangida. He warmed his way to the Press because they saw him as a substitute to Buhari. Buhari's high-handedness was dividing the country; became irreconcilable and so the Press initially saw Babangida as somebody who would reverse that trend and they gave him full support until he himself betrayed that trust. And when he did, if you go back to the Newspapers and Magazines in 1993 from June, it was criticism. Uptill now he cannot attend media event.

So what was the Press interested in? It was not because Chief M.K.O ABIOS was the owner of National Concord. Concord was already weak by 1993. But the Press interpreted Abiola's victory as a process of national integration for breaking the myth that only some people from a part of the country can produce the President. Abiola broke that myth. It enhances the process of national integration that merit could be rewarded.

That was the way the Press handled it. Abiola may have spent money in public relations; I think the essential thing was that his own victory was reflective of further evolution of a more cohesive and a more balanced federation. That anybody could win election if he had the merit and a manifesto that would serve the interest of the country. That was what brought the Press into the fray. And it had never looked back since then.

Q: The Role of New Nigerian

It started as a private Newspaper called the Nigerian Citizen. A top politician owned it... It has never compromised national integration. It was partisan. It was very critical of government uptill 1975. From a nationalist point of view, it reflected the northern point of view, which was legitimate. The Tribune was not representing the northern part. Daily Times was not doing it effectively. There was no National Concord then; there was no Guardian.

The New Nigerian was the voice of the North. It had a regional interest. It was not against national integration. It was more conservative it in some interest. It never said they didn't want Nigeria. It was Murtala/Obasanjo administration that appropriated the Newspaper in 1975. The same they did with the Daily Times. Their role as media for articulating position has been weakened almost irredeemably.

So there is partisanship. There is regional partisanship. There is ideological partisanship. But from your general theme of national integration, you cannot say that New Nigerian do not play a role in it. During the civil war it was blast against Ojukwu about the secession.

From my own ideological position, I see all of them as currents tending toward a media river. The Tribune may take the position that Awo is never wrong. It may say that it's Western Nigeria or nothing but in doing that it is not saying it will supplant or

replace Nigeria with Western Nigeria. It's only saying that in view of the Nigeria that we want to stay in, it should favour Western Nigeria.

So you have this regional emphasis. But overall you cannot find a Nigerian Newspaper that has on its own crusaded for dismemberment of Nigeria. You won't find any. Newspapers have written very angry editorials but they all point to one thing that the fact that this government is taking so and so position is wrong. That this government should do better than it is doing. That is what Newspapers have been doing or engaging in.

Q: Government Policies

Government policies have always had a very negative effect. During civilian government after the British colonial era they the Press law in 1964. So the State has always wanted to handcuff the Press. They know the power. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe said the greatest fulfilment he had was that their editorials should make governors-general's breakfast go cold. That while reading it, they should abandon their breakfast.

Even during the civil war there were restrictions as to what to report. So the Press has operated in defiance of government policies. From what we have seen in the past ten years, even when regulations are made trying to suppress it, it goes underground.

Under General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha, they thought the Press how to operate without premises. Journals were published with no address. It has mastered working in a very hostile environment. It remains powerful any day. Governments can ignore it but at their own peril.

But the most important obstacle is the policies of government, which have made publishing a very hazardous and economically ruinous undertaking. Only few papers are able to survive on sales and advertisements. The others have to be supported by their owners with money. Inflation, the underdevelopment of the nation's infrastructure, the technological backwardness to the extent that except for the English we write, most of the things we use in the newspaper are sourced from abroad-newsprint, ink, every single item, the vehicles we use for conveying it etc. The business is excruciating, but the Press remains the irrepressible institution of civil society in the country, which everybody has to contend with.

I am of the view that because of the Press and the media in general that tyranny in Nigeria was contained. It is the cultural environment, which helps the multiplicity of the media. There are many ethnic groups, interest groups so you cannot put all of them in one position. That diversity helps the Press because there is always the legitimate point of view to hold and you would have audience.

No class in Nigeria has consumed all the other classes thoroughly as it is in Britain. No ethnic group has overcome the other ones. Everybody is still a contender. So this gives enough room for the Press to find operational terrain and to hold diversity of views which will be read. So it is not confusion but a multiplicity of voices and all the voices do not compromise on the question of national integration.

But because of different position as to what that integration would mean- since Ken

Saro-Wiwa and the Niger- Delta, you have found a new trend in articulation of national integration. Niger-Delta area has become a focal point both for local media and national media. And a new sense of militancy and radicalism has developed. And for anybody in the Niger-Delta now national integration should include equity, should include justice. The way national resources are being distributed now that's not national integration the way they want it.

So the Press too is responding to the evolution of these new ideas as they relate to social justice, democracy and freedom. Without those issues, the Press cannot exist. If there is no freedom, there is no expanded market the Press is restricted. So it always needs a stable national entity, stable national environment from which to practice. That's why it is intolerant of government that operates policies that hinder that market.

Q: Their Treatment of Issues (Census, Revenue Allocation etc)

There is sensationalism. But that is part of the gimmick of the Press for sustaining its own market. We cannot afford to be neutral. Take the census. Why should census be conducted and the figures are disputed? It is a statistical exercise. Objects that are accountable. But is... (manipulated) by those who have a hegemonic interest in the Government. So the Press will never agree with government on that How can we have a census and we don't have accurate figures. That one of 1991 is not true. When you walk in the streets of Lagos you will know that this place is not six million. But the figures are politically comfortable. So the Press is unforgiving on that. Newspapers may see the issue in different ways because we are coming from different national perspectives.

The fact that different newspapers handle it from different perspectives does not weaken the nation. If we don't have these debates how can you put government in check. The census started in 1931 when the British were rigging it. We cannot plan in this country. We don't know how many people who are going to be five years next year and that is already a matter settled in every country including Iceland.
So you begin to wonder, why does Nigeria not have an accurate census. Is it to safeguard national unity? Which unity are you safeguarding when the figures of the census are mischievous?

If there are different perspectives, it shows that there is dynamism in the country that the government has not been able to purchase the entire Press as to want everybody to say what the government has done is right. Division is necessary for the country to make progress. What does the U.K Parliament do? Is there a consensus between the Sun, the Guardian, the Times of London, and the Scottish newspapers? All of them are divided trying to find a consensus. After a long debate, they compel government or policy makers to take a course that is beneficial to more people. That's the role of the Press.

If the *New Nigerian* does not condemn the census that cannot be credited as a responsible journalism simply because it suits who? If the government of Zamfara or Sokoto does not know the number of people they have, how is it going to plan the hospital and the school system? And if a newspaper is supporting that, that is not responsible or professional.

Q: Organisation of Islamic Conference

The newspapers in the South and so on which are mainly Christian territory, saw the OIC as an affront on the sovereignty of Nigeria because Nigeria was smuggled into it by General Babangida in 1986. It was not featured in any meeting. Commodore Ebitu Ukiwe, the then Chief of General Staff, said it was not featured in the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC), and Ukiwe was sacked.

So if Nigeria wants to be a member of the OIC, it should publicly so declare. It is the manner of doing it that raised suspicion.

Q: Can New Nigerian's support for OIC create tension?

New Nigerian is free to support it because Islamic religion, which the policy follows or promotes, is the primary constituency of the New Nigerian.

Q: The Role of the Press

When we talk about the role of the Press, it doesn't mean the Press should behave like claptrap. The Press should reflect the dynamism and the divisiveness that is inherent in the multiple interest of the country. It must reflect it otherwise we won't be able to find the quality of thought, the quality of ideas in the country, if you are looking for a consensus all the time. The Press should reflect the dialectics and the controversies. It should not shield them because it becomes the mirror through which we evaluate the energies in the country.

Governments don't fall as a result of that. Countries don't collapse as a result instead they get strengthened. Nigeria is in that sense the America of Africa in terms of the media diversity. Nigeria is the United Nations of Africa because it has over 394 languages and each language is an interest group, each has its own heroes, its own leaders, and its own religion. We don't have enough newspapers in the country to cater for these interests. The more we have the merrier.

Q: Promoting a Sense of National Identity

During the moment of crisis in the country, 1959 election, there was polarisation-North, South, East. Then during the 1965/65 election there was a similar polarisation. It was not ethnic it was mostly regional. Then during the civil war, then the June 12 Abacha era-people took the position of "we" and "they" not in the sense of denying identity because this identity as I see it is made up of many colours. You can see Ohaneze now as a recent phenomenon representing elite interest or Afenifere or Odu'a Peoples Congress (OPC), these are only in recent times.

In the past the Press will always try to stand behind the people. The "we" "they" thing is usually people and government but sometimes it takes on ethnic or regional configuration when issues are at stake.

But Nigerian identity is never in question. On such matters there is no doubt. But political identities, cultural identities-there are other levels of identities sometimes

which come to the fore depending on the issue at stake.

Take the issue of OPEC, the Press will not compromise. If Charles Taylor of Liberia is showing ingratitude, read every Editorial. Identity is not one. It has many colours; it changes from time to time. Issues help to define it. But the overall interest of the country is not compromised.

Q: On Ownership

It does affect the Press. They are enterprises first and foremost. It cost money. People invest in them for different purposes. So ownership position is a factor because people who established them have their own ideological orientation.

(VIIJ) INTERVIEW WITH **DAN AGBESE** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF NEWSWATCH MAGAZINE ON 24/01/01

Q: The Nigerian Press Before and After Independence

Whatever I would say about the Press pre-independence would be almost eclectic because I was not in the Press then. I came into the Press during the military regime. But what I know about the period is that it is not vastly different from what we have now because each of the four regions owned a newspaper and the competition was among the political parties.

What role did each play in terms of national integration is not really very clear to me because it seems that each of these newspapers fought for the interest of the political parties and the governments that controlled them and so one would say that immediately after independence or before independence, the colonial masters were the enemies and it was easy then for the Press to have a single voice on issues affecting the nation. It was therefore to, if you read the Daily Times or the Sketch or the Nigerian Citizen, it was possible that in spite of the fact that they were attacking political opponents, they found a common ground in the sense that there was a common enemy that is the colonial master and everybody recognised the need for independence. So they were able to speak with one voice in of independence for the country.

Q: After Independence?

Well after that, the first fourteen years of military regime, what then happened was that the Press was subjected to a great deal of military indoctrination. And the indoctrination took the form that the civilians having been kicked out of office for various offences among which was corruption, nepotism and their inability to settle their own political rifts in the interest of the nation, the military were able to turn the Press more or less against the political class. And so the political class became the enemy of the nation.

So progressively the Press imbibed military indoctrination and began to act as if it was a natural thing to do that there was nothing good in the civilian. And that was the way the military could establish their own legitimacy, I believe. And so the Press was more or less a very strong instrument in the war against the political class waged by the military for a very long time.

And when we returned to civil rule in 1979, it took a very long time to re-orientate the Press to begin to look at the civilians as the new masters. So even though the military was no longer on the scene, they cast a long shadow over the nation. For the first four years of the civilian regime the military psyche was still very strong in the Press. And so it manifested like this: whatever disagreements however minor among politicians, was exaggerated and used as evidence that the politicians have learnt no lessons and they were still behaving the same way and therefore, they were not competent to rule the country.

By 1983 when we were going into the second term elections, the propaganda was very strong. And the propaganda was about corruption, blatant corruption in the

political establishment. It was therefore easy by the end of 1983 for the military to come back because the same problems were played up very much by the Press. It was played up in this way: the newspapers owned by the political parties fished in the ponds of their political opponents and whatever was wrong with the country was found in the backyard of other political parties. So it was terribly exaggerated. There was corruption but it was terribly exaggerated. And there is enough fact now to show that even if there was corruption the first and second republic, there was more corruption during the military regime.

But at the time it was easy to play these sentiments up because we expected that after the military, after the return to civil rule that everything would be totally different, the politicians would behave differently. But we didn't reckon with the fact that after fourteen years of being in the political wilderness, the new political class had a lot to learn plus the fact that there was a new political system the executive presidential system which was being grafted on to the parliamentary system.

And so the oldest politicians had experience in the parliamentary system and this was a new experience for them. The new politicians had no experience to fall back on and so nobody knew exactly how to behave. For the first four years there was a problem about that. But the Press did not understand that. That's my view. The press did not understand that because at the time there weren't many people in positions of responsibility in the Press who had gone all the way from the first republic through the military and all the way to the civilian regime. So nobody was guiding anybody. That was the problem we had.

Q: Would You Say Then That The Press Has Aided National Unity?

Well, the Press, yes in a way. But it seems to me that over the period of time the Press has not been able to muster the same voice in defence of national interest however defined.

The Press is very much playing the tune of not necessarily the owners but more importantly about sectional and regional interests. And it has hindered in some kind of way because when the Press is blatantly partisan, when the Press sees nothing wrong in a particular environment and sees everything wrong in another political environment, there is a problem. I thought we had come to a point where we should be able to look at statements made by politicians maturely and say to ourselves, would this be in the national interest? But we haven't reached that point at all. Maybe we think the more incendiary a politician is, we think the more radical that he is, and the more the Press favours him. So there is a problem.

Q: Any Particular Reason for That?

I suppose the reason is that although there is a new structure of ownership, in other words, you have more newspapers, radio, television owned by private individuals than we had in the first and second Republic, the ownership system is grafted, if you like an old system of looking at issues in our country.

In other words an Ibo man who owns a Press is still looking at basically the interest of the Ibo community and the same thing with the yoruba community and the same

thing, I suppose with the Hausa community. So they are unable to look at what things unite us and move at things that divide us.

Now under a military regime, it was easy to miss this point because the focus was against civilians wherever they came from. Now if you remove the military all of us find ourselves in different camps and playing the role that we think is expected of us in different camps.

Q: Let's Go To The Issue Of Public And Private Ownership Of The Press. How would you rate them in the Area of National Integration?

Except for *Newswatch* of which I am part owner, I haven't had the privilege of working for a privately owned newspaper. But it does seem to me from what I know that there isn't anything dramatically different. In the Government Press where I worked for a very long time during the military regime, it was relatively more comfortable in that environment than during the political era because... I'll give you an example: -

When I was in the New Nigerian, I think it was during the campaign of the 1983 elections and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe came to Kaduna for his presidential campaign and I sent a reporter and a photographer to the airport. They brought the story and with the photograph, I made it the back page lead. And it caused, shall I say a consternation within the ranks of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the then ruling party because nobody had done that before. I remember somebody writing and saying "Yes!" there is a change in the leadership and the direction of the New Nigerian.

And so, it was like... and my own defence had always been that the New Nigerian is publicly-owned newspaper and a government is different from the political party in control of the administration at any particular point in time. I have read the mission statement of the New Nigerian and nowhere does it say that you cannot give voice to a different political view. But it didn't go down too well.

Q: Why That?

Because they saw the New Nigerian as not merely a Federal Government-owned newspaper but because the NPN controlled the Federal Government, therefore, it was essentially a NPN newspaper and that an Editor of the Paper should recognise that. Unfortunately, I couldn't recognise that.

Q: In August 1983, During the Electioneering Campaign when you were The Editor of the New Nigerian, Only Adverts from the NPN Were Published. Why?

Well my own assumption, and I base it at what I knew at the time because I have no hard evidence for this since I was not involved in the advert department... but I assume the other political parties also assumed that since it was "a hostile territory", whatever they put out would either be submerged or be treated in a way that it would make it ineffective. So they didn't bother to place adverts there at all. There was no case of any advert being rejected from any other political party that I knew of. But I think it was based on assumption of "Why go there, they wouldn't treat you well anyway."

Because each time there was a Press conference by another political party, it was like at first when I got there, they were not involving the New Nigerian. When I opened the doors of the New Nigerian they felt happier and they did invite us and they came to my house to discuss with me.

Q: The Editorial Policy of the New Nigerian.

The Editorial policy of the New Nigerian was primarily to promote the interest of the North, to project the culture of the North within the context of a Nigerian Federation. In other words it's obliged to look at national issues through, if you like, the eye of the culture and politics of the North.

Q: Did That Hinder Your Job?

No it didn't, maybe because I am from the Middle Belt, I am a Christian and therefore I understood my conscience to be slightly different from a Moslem from Kano or Katsina. So I interpreted the policy as I thought it should be.

Q: How Would You Rate The New Nigerian In The Context Of What We Are Talking About-National Integration?

One of the strongest points of the New Nigerian has always been its Editorial. It's always been more objective than other newspaper. I was in the New Nigerian before the Federal Government took it over. So the New Nigerian saw itself immediately... because a few days after it was launched, the military struck... It therefore took on itself a new role as the voice of Nigeria. That's what happened and it maintained that all through until sometimes in the 80s when things weren't going too well for the Paper. But it maintained that strong voice because it was the strongest newspaper in support o9f the Federal Government during the civil war and it maintained that posture throughout the military regime.

And it was the first newspaper to insist that Gowon must handover. I remember when Gowon went back on his promise to handover in 1976; the New Nigerian began to run excerpts from Chinua Achebe's "A man of the people". So if you compare it with the Daily Times, or the Daily Sketch owned by the Western region, the Tribune owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Eastern Nigerian Outlook, it was much more nationalistic than all of them. Its posture was entirely Nigerian.

Q: Why the Change? Take OIC for Instance.

Well there must necessarily be a difference because the OIC is an Islamic religious issue and the New Nigerian is always looked at as the voice of Islam up there in the North. It's part of the culture the New Nigerian is supposed to promote. And so anything that affects the interest of Islam is supposed to be stoutly defended by the New Nigerian. It must take unapologetic position on the side of Islam.

You must understand the Muslim religious culture, which is that a Muslim cannot in public oppose whatever is done in the interest of Islam. He may have a private view but he must not express in public in opposition to it. That's the cultural background to

the Muslim society.

So in other words if the New Nigerian believed that the process of going to the OIC was wrong, the result has been achieved, that is Nigeria was in OIC, and so that was all it was concerned with and not the process of reaching there.

Q: Issue Of Revenue Allocation: Your Views on the Nigerian Press vis-à-vis Their Role in National Integration.

You see what happens anytime there is a major national policy... what happens first of all is a suspicion; it creates a suspicion in the mind of some. Gowon introduced the quota system by which it was supposed to help the less educationally advanced states not necessarily to catch up with the rest but to create opportunities for them to develop.

The South immediately put it under a heavy suspicion. And the suspicion was that Gowon was trying to hold back the South so that the North could catch up with it. But that was not the aim of the quota system.

And so Federal character is another name for quota system. So the Federal character was now introduced by the Obasanjo administration and put in our constitution. And it's supposed to do exactly what the quota system was supposed to do. In other words, everybody, at the Federal level, must be represented; every state must be represented. At the state level every section must be represented. At the local level every section must be represented in order to create some sense of belonging in all these levels of government.

But when there is a suspicion particularly a suspicion by the vocal minority, they tend to take over the views of the Press. And they hammer on it and such views more or less become the view of the Press at any particular point in time.

Now if you look at the application of the Federal character- we've done a series of stories on it holding the Federal Character Commission to the provisions of the law saying, this is what the law stipulates, this is the way the Federal character is implementing for that law and that we didn't think it was the right thing to do. But nobody outside of us and I am not being immodest about this, but nobody outside of us has been able to try to look at the implementation, the law setting up the Federal Character Commission and to look at its implementation.

They've always based their comments on suspicion that since the Federal Character Commission is headed by a Northerner it therefore follows that the law would necessarily favour the North and hold down the South. And then it's like why do you hold down the South, they are well empowered so you can't hold down them down.

But that's not what the Commission is supposed to do. What the Commission is supposed to do is to find opportunities for less educationally abundant states to have the opportunities to have their own people. In other words, even if you say bring ten people from each state of the Federation; there are some states that cannot produce the ten people that you require.

The Press would do well to first of all look at the law establishing or backing up the policy. The Press has a duty to look at the law to understand the law before it can understand the interpretation. So in every situation, including the revenue allocation, all that we know in the Press is simply that certain things are not right, you give more money to the states. Now it was so before the military regime. In the First Republic, we had the revenue allocation formula in favour of the states. The Derivation Principle was introduced by the military later on to redress the fact that more money is coming from certain sections of the country and they must be entitled to part of that money.

But there is a lot of ignorance on the part of the Press when you look at issues such as the Federal Character and Revenue Allocation formula. And because there is so much ignorance, the Press is unable to promote or either promote what is deemed to be in the interest of the nation or to even point out the flaws in the law or the application of the law. That is the problem that we have.

The level of education is a fact of historical development. It is not a fact of inability or Incapacity on the part of the individual. If you don't make conscious efforts to bring this people up then you are creating a problem. And the problem in the future will be greater because supposing some radical groups come up in a few years time and say this is not on, we are not going to accept that, you have a problem. So there must be a conscious effort to bring this people in at every level of government.

In 1986 or 1987 there was a mass retrenchment in the Police and about 30-35 of those who were retired came from the old Bendel state and people were arguing about that saying that there was ethnic cleansing. But the fact of the matter was that there were more of them at that level than people from other states of the federation. So necessarily it must affect more of them than it would affect other people. It was the same thing in 1975/1976 when they retired a whole lot of federal permanent secretaries. A whole lot of them came from that part of the country, so more of them were affected.

In other words this is something that goes on-it's a historical fact we cannot ignore. They were there, they were educated, they had opportunities and so they got in there. And the others you must have to bring them up in some kind of a way to give them a sense of belonging. There is no ethnic cleansing. Why is there cleansing where there is not ethnic subjugation. If ethnic cleansing makes a sense, ethnic subjugation would make greater sense because you are keeping this people down not because of their own fault but because of historical development that affects them in this kind of a way.

Q: What about the Census?

Again you have to look at it...In 1963 the desperation of the politicians to ensure that their region was seen to be highly populated-remember the East suddenly discovered a cluster of villages somewhere within its region. You may find it laughable but it underlined the degree of desperation. And I know that in 1963 and even during the last census, people were trying to bribe census officials in order to return a higher

mark than they found on the ground. In other words because we believe and this is the problem, that some degree of revenue allocation is tied to population, everybody wants to get a large chunk of that and so there is this kind of competition. If we had had some experience in education know that the census is merely a statistical guide for planning purposes, I believe our reaction to it will be totally different.

We won't get near the point of getting a correct census figures for the country for so long as it is seen essentially as a political issue. And the press is not helping because the Press understands it also as a political issue.

Q: How Has Government Policies Affected the Press' Performance?

I find this surprising. But the fact of the matter is the problem of the Nigerian Press is lack of government policies on how the Press can perform. Because there are no Press laws in the country more or less guiding the behaviour of the Press. And so we are subjected to arbitrariness on the part of those in power.

In 1987, when we (*Newswatch*) published stories based on the Cookey Report on what was supposed to be the political orientation for the country, we were proscribed for six months. It made sense to them. They then made a law; they brought out a decree backing the action. In otherwords before that we didn't breach a law but having taken the action, they had to legitimise it, they had to make a law backdating it. And a whole lot of things like that were done in a military regime. An action was taken first and then the action was criminalised and then the law was brought to back the action of the government.

It was the same thing when the army came in, in 1983/1984. A whole lot of politicians were put into jail for spending security votes. The vote was under the law, it was spent under the law and yet they criminalised it and made a law backdating it all the way to when they were in power. In other words if you look at that law, it was like we didn't have a government from October 1, 1979 to December 31, 1983. But nobody appears to look at the implication of that. The thing was that these guys were guilty therefore we have to deal with them. That is part of the problem.

And so it is not only the Press that this affects. It affects the Press more because in a situation, where as we all say in our Editorial "you seem to be juggling in the jungle"; there is a problem. If there is a law saying to you: this is what you can do and this is what you can't do, it's a lot easier to deal with because you know the law and you can skip around it. And it strengthens your hands because you can find a way of breaching the law but not doing so blatantly.

I'll tell you of decree 4 of 1984. Decree 4 of 1984, a lot of people didn't know this, derived from decree 11 of 1976 under Obasanjo and it's word for word. And decree 4, everybody thought it was obnoxious and all the rest of it, it was to protect public officers from being embarrassed. Some of the things the Press says was in the law were not in the law. But they didn't even see it. It was enough for them to say we cannot take it. They did not look at the law itself because if they did, it says no more than what the ethics of the profession prescribed that is, you must check your facts, you must give everybody a chance to have a say if the story affected them. That's all it says.

Q: What about Proscription?

It's arbitrariness. I mean what did the Guardian do? Or what did the Punch do? They didn't commit crimes and they didn't breach any Press law. But somebody simply said: what you are doing is offensive to me and so don't publish. If there is a law and if it says I am doing it under this law then they will go to court and say: no I have not breached the law. It will be a lot better.

But the problem is the absence of a law. And I would personally want to have a law to guide my behaviour so that if somebody challenges me I could challenge him in the court. The court can decide who is wrong and who is right. But in the cases just cited nothing of the sort. They criminalise your action and bring the law backing it up and you have no defence. That's the problem.

Q: The Press and June 12, 1993 Elections, etc.

They did a fantastic job in supporting June 12. I believe that. We were the first in *Newswatch* to write Editorial saying that the election must be upheld. But after the initial period the politicians now took over- because June 12 now became not necessarily a matter of principle fight or struggle, it became shall we say a "meal ticket". And so a whole lot of people got it there using the Press, trying to make us believe that they were fighting for the actualisation of June 12, whereas they were trying to reap where they did not sow. That was what was oddly about it.

And we gave in to too many sentiments about it instead of standing on the facts of the matter. For instance the June 12 was a principle and as I understood it and have always said, as far as I am concerned, it was a principle that when the people express their will through the ballot box no authority can annul that will. And that's the only principle by which we thought of June 12.

We should have stood on that. In other words, whether Abiola was alive or not, Abiola was a symbol of it, a beneficiary of it but Abiola was not the principle of June 12. The principle went far beyond Abiola so whether or not he was alive, June 12 ought to be actualised. But as soon as Abiola died nobody talked about June 12 anymore. That's the tragedy of it.

And so whatever role the Press played, the Press did not play that role to a logical conclusion. I would have liked to see a situation where we must say: look, these guys have been elected by the people they must be there, no matter the intervening variables, no matter who was in power from June 12 or even with Shonekan or an Abacha. If that was what we were fighting, even if it took ten years or twenty years, we must bring this people back just to ensure that this was the will of the people and it must be respected.

The Press did not appreciate the dynamics of June 12. They did not look at the principle of June 12. They looked at more or less the sentiments of June 12.

Q: How Would You Summarise the Press' Role in National Integration?

On the scale of perhaps a hundred, I could give the Press 60% in favour of that. It is not to say that they didn't have some failings. We did but overall we played a role that should be commended and must be remembered because the Press was operating under different circumstances. If somewhere along the line the Press lost its head, we must also appreciate the circumstances under which it operated.

Secondly, for instance, all through the military regime the Press was one institution that everybody looked up to. Unfortunately, although they looked up to the Press, they did not support the Press in the way they ought to support it. They saw it as an instrument that could be used by individuals but they did not think of supporting that individual and making it stronger.

Q: Foreign Influence?

I don't think there is much foreign influence on the Nigerian Press. You must know that foreign influence cast a shadow on our nation at every level. Our government tends to believe that they must seek foreign approval for their policies and actions. And so the Press tends to behave that way because during the bad days of Abacha administration, foreign organisations specifically awarded prizes to Nigerian journalists. And those prizes appeared to be thought of essentially for Nigeria, not prizes available to other journalists even in other difficult situations.

In other words, it was a tendency on their part to patronise the Nigerian Press and I found out that some of those awards were rather patronising-saying that okay you are doing a great job. Immediately that disappeared, you never heard of those prizes anymore. I think it was patronising.

(VIIK) INTERVIEW WITH **ALHAJI BABATUNDE JOSE** FORMER MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE DAILY TIMES, ON WEDNESDAY 14/02/01 IN LAGOS

Q: Your thoughts on the pre-independence and post-independence press.

The pre-independence press was very active in mobilising the public in the crusade against British colonial rule and for independence. They were owned almost largely by politicians, individuals and political parties who were nationalists. But they were unanimous that British rule was unacceptable and that the country has to become independent. I was part of that campaign. They were in three stages. The first stage was the pre-Zik nationalist press: The Egerton Shyngles, the Jacksons etc, they all started newspapers on their own, with their own money. They were the publishers, the Editors and sometimes a one-man Weekly newspaper. Not much news but opinions, editorials and articles all directed against British rule. That was at the beginning the last century.

The second stage was the advent of Herbert Macaulay's *Daily News* followed immediately by the *Daily Service*. Herbert Macaulay was the leader of what was then known as the National Democratic Party. The Daily Service was owned by the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) formed by young intelligentias, professionals from British universities. They'd not gone far when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe arrived from the United States of America (USA) to the Gold Coast (Ghana) and then to Nigeria where he started the *West African Pilot* whose motto was: "Show the light and the people will find the way." Dr Azikiwe's nationalism was of a different kind; it was not localised among the intelligentsias. They targeted the workers and tribal organisations all over the country. Herbert Macaulay's Democratic Party was Lagos-based. The NYM'S *Daily Service* was Lagos-based. But Dr Azikiwe targeted the whole country and appealed to the people regardless of their ethnic group or ethnicity and it was proper nationalism.

So, although the presses were united on the need for Nigeria's independence, they differed depending on the ownership. That is they were unanimous on the demand for independence and differed on the method to employ and the means to achieve that objective, Then certain events took place on the pursuit of that objective. They started to look at the means in terms of their tribes and the role and part which their tribe will play in it. The Yorubas felt that because they started early contacts with the British, they should reach the goal post first. Dr Azikiwe who had entirely a new idea was being pushed and urged by the Ibos that they should play a leading role and be the first to reach the goal post. The Northerners had no newspaper that can be talked about. They started *Tafiki Kwabo* , which was a vernacular newspaper and later they had the *Nigerian Citizen*, which was in English language. But they were not desperate for independence as the Southerners were. They realised their limitations in terms of human resources or the manpower to take the place to be left vacant by the British administrators. They were not opposed to independence but they were concerned about the timing. When we had the constitutional conference in Ibadan in 1950/51, where the political and traditional leaders of the three regions met, the Northerners said that they were not opposed to independence but that they didn't even have the manpower to man the public service. And whereas at that time the East and the West had Deputy Permanent Secretaries etc, the North didn't have any. And therefore they

said that they would want to slow down until the time that they would be ready. Consequently they said that the East and the West should start with self-government and that they would then start rapid manpower development of theirs by sending them to universities abroad and thereafter ask for self-government when they were ready.

So it was at that time also that tribal organisations emerged ostensibly to strengthen the political parties. The *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* was the forerunner of the Action Group (AG) political organisation. There was the Ibo State Union, which almost metamorphosed itself into the National Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC). There was the Ibibio State Union. Then we had the Northern Peoples Party, the Aminu Kano's Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) which was formed by the radicals and followed by what later became the Northern Peoples Congress (NPC) which was made up of the Aristocrats, the middle class and the holders of traditional offices in the Native Authority administration. The Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Alhaji Tafawa Balewa were senior officials of the Native Authority administration when they were elected into the Northern House of Assembly and to the Federal House of Representatives. That was the pattern and that was what was going on.

Q: I would like to explore further, the events that you said occurred during that period which apparently set in motion subsequent developments within the Nigerian socio-political landscape and which therefore affected the press.

Yes, there was the constitution that made provisions for three regions. The election was not to be on party basis rather it was to be conducted through electoral colleges from the town to the regional centres. In the South it was based on age while in the North it was through... (Inaudible). In the Yoruba West, and the West at that time also included the States now known as Edo, Delta, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti. So under that constitution people were elected to the Regional Assemblies through the Electoral College. Although once they were elected, they could declare for their own political parties. In the Western region elections were conducted. Lagos was then part of the West and late Dr Azikiwe, late Dr Olorunibe and late Prince Adedoyin were the three elected members to the Western House of Assembly on the platform of the NCNC. The constitution also provided for election to the House of Representatives using the Regional House of Assembly as Electoral College. So under that constitution three people have to be elected into the Federal House of Representatives. When the motion was called for, the Action Group (AG) subverted some members of the Nation Council of Nigeria and the Camerouns (NCNC) not to vote for Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe to go to the House of Representatives-Naked tribalism that an Ibo man should not represent Lagos in the Federal House of Representatives. That was the beginning of naked tribalism in Nigeria. And so Dr Azikiwe was denied the chance of going to the House of Representative because he was an Ibo man and not a Yoruba man. That led Dr Azikiwe to seek accommodation in the East through the NCNC. The party in the East that time was the United Independent Party (UNIP) and so the NCNC started a campaign to dislodge the UNIP. That was how Dr Azikiwe had to be elected into the Eastern House of Assembly in order to become elected into the Federal House of Representatives.

And so tribal politics became pronounced and that reflected in the Editorial policies of the newspapers owned by the political parties. The only newspaper that was not

affected was the *Daily Times* because it was then owned and controlled by the British that is the *Daily Mirror* of London. So all the newspapers in Dr Azikiwe's group also took the stand of tribal politics although that was moderated by the fact that the Zikist Movement, which was an offshoot of the NCNC, was made up of young men of all tribes. It moderated the effects of tribal politics in the newspapers but not enough to counter-balance it. So that was the beginning of multi-ethnic newspapers. When the Federal government of Prime-Minister Tafawa Balewa found that it was being attacked right, left and centre by the *Nigerian Tribune* owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, attacked by the *Eastern Outlook* owned by the Eastern regional government, attacked by the *West African Pilot* owned by Dr Azikiwe, he decided to set the Nigerian *National Morning Post.* He used the Government Press based at that time in Ajegunle, Apapa to publish it. But the people did not and still don't trust Government newspapers and so the *Morning Post* died because it was ineffective. That has been the pattern.

But another pattern emerged later. You find that a number of proprietors, rich Nigerians set up newspapers to advance their own political aims. And so you found that the Federal Government of the Second Republic, headed by Alhaji Shehu Shagari, tried to and indeed influenced the Editorial policy of the Federal Government-owned *Daily Times'* new reports. The Government made sure the Editors bent to the wishes of the Federal Government. What was happening then was a situation in which the Federal Government was constantly being attacked by the *Nigerian Tribune* because that newspaper, which was owned by Chief Awolowo, believed that Alhaji Shagari cheated Chief Awolowo to win the 1979 Presidential election (The Second Republic was from 1979-1983), which is not true. (Alhaji Shehu Shagari contested the 1979 Presidential election under the platform of the National Party of Nigeria [NPN] while Chief Obafemi Awolowo did under the platform of the Unity Party of Nigeria [UPN]) It was at that point in time that Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola came to the rescue of the Federal Government when he established the *National Concord* and used it to boost the Alhaji Shagari's Government. The Federal Government-owned *New Nigerian* was also supporting President Shagari. But the *Daily Sketch* was supporting Chief Awolowo (The *Daily Sketch* was founded by Chief Ladoke Akintola who used it as the mouthpiece of his Democratic Party, which was a breakaway from the Action Group, led by Chief Awolowo in the First Republic. The First Republic was from 1960-1966). So you found that the *National Concord* was backing the NPN-led Federal Government of President Shagari although where Chief Abiola's personal interests clashed with that of the Government, the *National Concord* would support Chief Abiola. That has been the pattern.

Q: So this is the context within which the press has to operate in Nigeria?

Yes, yes.

Q: Now would you say that that in a way is affecting national integration?

Oh, it's affecting national integration although now it is not pronounced because newspapers are now many and they have to find the support and the loyalty of readers. They can no longer publish newspapers just for the promotion of their proprietors. They have to make money and the cost of production is very high. So they have to amend their Editorial policies in a way that will be acceptable to their

readers. And that is why you find, for instance that even though the *Guardian* is owned by the Ibru brothers, they have to publish not to manifestly promote and satisfy the economic interests of the Ibru dynasty. It must target the Middle class. Chief Abiola, since his death or since before his travails, the National Concord too had to look after the interests of not only the Yorubas, in whose target area it is published but to also have a wider acceptance in circulation and to attract the advertisements and therefore get a good return for their investment. That has been the pattern.

Q: What would you consider as Nigerian national integration and how should the press promote that?

Well, Nigerian integration should be based first on the fact that we are not yet a nation and that we are only trying, we have been trying but we have not yet built a nation. During the time of Prime-Minister Balewa in the First Republic, when I was midway in my career in the journalism profession and ethnicity was not pronounced, I could travel to anywhere in the country and felt at home anywhere I went. I f I was travelling near Nnewi or Enugu, for instance, I would have a friend there, I didn't have to stay in a rest house. I would have a friend there who will say: 'Ah, *Baba* I saw you at the post office, what were you doing there, where are you resting, come to my house, come to my house.' And when they came to Lagos, they will also visit me. Tribalism, even at the end of the civil war in 1970, was not very much pronounced. I was at the head of the *Daily Times* before and during the civil war and we made provisions that our friends who were working in the *Daily Times* but who had to leave for the East because of the civil war and as a result became trapped there, should be paid their full salary when the war ended. And we paid them. Some of my very good friends in the years I served as the Eastern regional representative of the *Daily Times* came to Lagos to stay with me.

But tribalism in Nigeria is, when leaders fail at the national level, they pander to their ethnic sentiments. I believe that we have to accept the fact that we are a group of nations. I t is a difficult challenge but each, each nationality should be developed within their ability. In fact at independence we had a constitution which gave the centre power, but not too much power, and defined the functions of Federal and Regional Governments. The residual powers were with the Regions. We had three Regions in 1960 and later four in 1963 when the Mid-West Region was carved out of the Western Region. But now we have thirty-six States. It is unwieldy. They cannot sustain themselves and that as a result gave an all too powerful Federal Government. That was alright for a Military Government to have one chain of command where you have the General Officer Commander (GOC) and the Head of Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, who will give instructions to the Governor of a State. That simply cannot happen in the present democratic dispensation. We are still being ruled now as if we are still under a Military regime, although the constitution does not say so. But under the Independent Constitution, the Regional Governments had their legislatures, they had powers to disburse funds, and revenue allocation was based on derivation and need, and they could fund their own development using their own resources. But today, the State Governments are poor, they cannot run their governments, they are inefficient in generating internal funds and what they get on their won is not enough to pay even staff salaries. And so they have to wait for grants, for allocations from the Federal Government and that makes some of them irresponsible.

And so I believe that we should return to six geographical zones. I think we have come to accept now that there are six geo-political zones and that should be the unit of Government. We should have a constitution that should place the States under a geo-political zone to make them manageable. These zones will be the second tier of Government and they will deal directly with the States and then the fourth tier of Government will be the Local Government. By then we will have tribes that cut across zones, there will be overlapping and then there will be less stress on tribal units. It will take some time but ultimately we shall reach there.

Q: So that is how we are going to build a nation?

Oh yes, that is how we are going to build a nation

Q: How does the press come in here?

This is the thinking. People are thinking along that line. It is my own thinking. There are others who don't think this way. There are others who will tell you that the State system should continue. I don't believe that it should continue.

Q: You've talked about how the press became involved in ethnic politics in Nigeria. Given its position in society, how do you think that the press should rise above that level?

Oh, the press will be obliged in their own interest to rise above ethnic loyalty because the bigger the circulation, the more it will attract advertisement. And the more advertisement that you can attract, the more all other things will follow. Therefore, a newspaper that panders to the loyalty of its own ethnic group will be a small newspaper, will be a Regional newspaper. Although if a Regional newspaper could mange itself within its own area, with a smaller readership, it could still make a small profit. But a newspaper that wants to be national and make a much bigger profit will have to appeal to readers outside its own area. Well in the United States, they don't have national newspapers as such. Maybe there are three or four but they still have the names attached to a State. And because of technological development, they can print simultaneously in New York, in Seattle; the same newspaper and they are more powerful. The State newspapers still make money because literacy is very high. In our own case, literacy is poor or very low. If you publish an English language newspaper, you want to sell not only within your own catchment area, but also outside your catchment area where English language newspaper will sell.

Q: What role has Government policies towards the press played in the press' ability to promote national integration?

I will talk about my own experience, The Premier of the First Republic Alhaji Balewa, tried to build a nation in many ways. Because he presided over a coalition government that was controlled by the NPC, North and the NCNC, East, he realised that Nigeria is rested on a tripod, which included the West. And so, even though it was the Federal Government that had to raise grants to the West for developmental purposes, he still encouraged the West to go at its own pace of development. In effect, even though the Federal Government was formed by a coalition between the NPC,

North and the NCNC, East, it still affected, in a positive way, the lives of the people in the Western Region, which was controlled by the AG. So it seems to me that what we need is a Head of State, a Head of Government, that is manifestly detribalised and who will make appointments that will reflect the geographical zones and therefore not sacrifice efficiency and competence on the alter of tribal loyalties. If we started on that basis over the years and were allowed by the Military to make mistakes, I think we would have by now been on the move to national integration.

Q: What influence, do you think, the outside world, is having on the activities of the Nigerian press?

I will not underrate the interest of the outside world in our affairs because, economically, we are the biggest markets in Africa and they want to capture that market. And because of our history, because of our tendency for self-criticism which can be carried to self-destruction, we play into the hands of the outside world who want to exploit that for their own benefit. For instance I believe that we should carefully handle how to resolve the grievances of the Niger Delta areas because if it is not properly handled it might to other negative consequences. Seizing oil rigs, capturing workers, insisting that oil explorers must employ their own people, not just as catchment areas for general services, but that they need to put them in positions for which they are qualified or not. If it is carried too far, it can threaten the unity of the country because what might happen is that they will find supporters outside the country who will encourage them and in the process we will have another Biafra in our hands (The Republic of Biafra was declared in 1966 by the aggrieved Ibos of the Eastern Region, in the First Republic).

Q: **How does the press come in here?**

Well, if that happens, you will find that the presses outside that area will campaign for secession and some other presses will back them up.

Q: Now let's move on to issues like the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), Census, Revenue Allocation and have your opinion about how the presses have conducted themselves in treating them.

The OIC, for instance, is no longer an issue. We are already a member, just like any other non-Islamic countries.

Q: I am, for instance, particular about the presses treated the OIC issue knowing full well how sensitive an issue it is within the Nigerian context.

The ownership pattern affected the way each of the newspapers responded to the question of OIC. I believe that the *Guardian* was opposed to it, the *National Concord* was for it, the *New Nigerian* was for it, the *Champion* was against it and I think the *Vanguard* was also against it. So you found that their reactions were determined by the political stance or the political ambitions of their owners. In that respect it impacted negatively on the move towards national integration. The thing is whatever issue we have in Nigeria; it is a delicate game that we are playing.

Q: From what I have heard and read about, it is not the joining of the OIC that

is the issue. But rather it was the surreptitious manner it was done under the Babangida regime that has attracted suspicion and criticism. For instance, it has been suggested that if joining the OIC was for the good of the country, why was that regime not open about it. That was why the presses took the Babangida administration to task for making Nigeria a member of an Islamic organisation, without the consent of the majority of Nigerians. Even now it is even not still clear, whether or not; we are a member of the OIC.

Oh, it is taken for granted that we are a member of the OIC. General Babangida set up a Religious Affairs Committee, of which I was a member, to look into the matter and make recommendations...

Q: What was the report of that Committee? Was it published?

You won't find any report because in the end the Committee didn't work.

Q: Why did it not work?

Well, because both sides held very strongly to their strong views. For instance, the Muslim members of the Committee said that they saw nothing wrong in Nigeria's membership of the OIC. And the Christians said, well, if you see nothing wrong in Nigeria's membership of the OIC, then they saw no point in sitting down to discuss with the Muslims.

Q: And what did the Federal Government do about that?

They just laughed it off. And now, I think President Olusegun Obasanjo has set up another Committee. I don't see what will come out of it. And the matter has been compounded now or even made unworkable by the Sharia issue.

Q: A religious committee was set up and it could not reach a compromise, do you sense a time-bomb here, particularly given the way that the presses have reported and commented on the issue?

Time bomb, yes, but Nigeria is good at brinkmanship. When the Sharia issue started in Zamfara State, we all thought it was going to explode. I am a member of what is called the Concerned Citizens Committee and we have people from the South and the North and we decided that there is need for dialogue, a forum at which we will present various views on Sharia, starting from the fact that Sharia has been with us before and since the amalgamation in 1914 (The Southern and Northern protectorates of Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914 by Lord Lugard). The late Premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, when he found that the Northern minorities were complaining about Sharia, set up a Committee of eminent Jurists form Muslim countries, to look at the Sharia as enshrined in the Holy Koran and to look at how it can be modernised and codified. This was in response to the pressures from the ethnic minorities in the North, who complained that they were being harassed, victimised and jailed for offences that were not coded. There were arguments that under the human rights law, people cannot be dehumanised like cutting off their hands and their heads etc. So the Northern region's Premier (Who was also the Sardauna of Sokoto) set up that Committee to look at all the issues and it was that Committee that

produced what is now known as the Northern Penal code. In fact the criminal side of Sharia was codified and we have been using it since then and nobody complained. In 1978, when we had the Constituent Assembly, of which I was a member, the Sharia issue was raised again. And there came a compromise that any State that wanted Sharia in court of first instance should have it but that once they had it they should set up Sharia. Eventually after that, when Alhaji Shehu Shagari (A Muslim) was elected the Executive President of the Second Republic in 1979, there was no trouble about Sharia. General Muhammadu Buhari (A Muslim) succeeded President Shagari in 1984, after a Military coup, and there was no problem about Sharia. After General Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida (A Muslim) ruled for eight years, beginning from 1985 to 1993, and again there was no Sharia. Also, when General Sani Abacha (A Muslim) ruled from 1993 to 1998, there was no Sharia. General Abdusalam Abubakar (A Muslim) succeeded the late General Sani Abacha in 1998 and ruled till May 29th, 1999 when the newly democratically elected President Olusegun Obasanjo (A Christian) was sworn into office. And now that President Obasanjo is the country's ruler and people are talking about Sharia again. It has now become a crisis. And some people are saying why Sharia now? Sharia doesn't need to cause crisis. What has exacerbated the issue? What is not in the Penal code that should be there? Let us look at the Koran, the Sharia itself, what are the things in the Penal code that are not there? Let us consider it and see if we can make any addition to the Penal code. Nobody wants any crisis. And at that time when Zamfara State made Sharia a State law, everybody thought the country was going to blow up. But somehow, as I have already said, we are very good at brinkmanship.

Q: As a former top man of the Federal Government-owned *Daily Times* which is one of the newspapers I am looking at, what would you like to say about how government ownership impacted on your performance?

Well, there are two stages. The first stage was when I was a reporter at the *Daily Times* and later became its Editor. At that time the *Daily Times* was owned largely, and the Daily Mirror of London held majority of the equity. When I became the Managing Director in early1963, I said to the *Daily Mirror* of London that look, it is now three years since Nigeria's independence, they should set the motion in motion to divest their interest so that the *Daily Times* could be independent and they agreed. And we went to the Stock market and gradually we sold off the shares of the Daily Mirror. By 1973, we have sold them off completely and the *Daily Times* was owned entirely by Nigerians.

Then during the Murtala/Obasanjo administration in 1975, the Federal Government compulsorily acquired 60% of the shares. And now the same Federal Government in the year 2001 has discovered that it made a mistake by taking over the *Daily Times* and so it is talking about privatising it. And I guess that sometime very soon that will happen.

Q: Is that going to happen to the *New Nigerian* too?

The Federal Government has stated that the *New Nigerian* is one of those to be privatised. But the Northern Governors have said that the *New Nigerian* was founded by the then Northern Regional government in 1966 and that when the Murtala/Obasanjo administration took it over in 1975, it did not pay compensation.

And therefore, the Federal Government cannot now sell the newspaper because there will be the problem of who will get the money. They have therefore said that they, the Northern States, should be left alone to run the *New Nigerian*. Personally, I don't think that that will work.

Q: What was your own personal experience with the owners of the *Daily Times* in terms of editorial policy?

During the time that I was there nobody interfered.

Q: After the *Daily Mirror* divested its interests, the *Daily Times* came under private investors and after that it was taken over by the Federal Government. So under private investors and the Federal Government, what was the editorial policy of the *Daily Times* respectively?

Under private investors, the newspaper prospered. The readers trusted it and it was profitable. It had considerable power and influence.

Q: The newspaper was committed to national integration and national unity?

Oh yes, yes. As the Chairman/Managing Director, I made sure that my team was committed to the ideals of national integration. For instance I made sure the Editor of the Daily Times was Peter Enahoro, from Edo, that the Chief Accountant was from the East, that the Advertisement Manager was Mr. Alonge from Edo, that the position of the General Manager, Times Press was filled by a Yoruba man. And I went to Zaria and brought in Haruna Adamu, as the Political Editor. He had a first degree from Yale University in the United States of America. So we made sure that at our Editorial meetings, the nation was represented.

Q: And that too was reflected in the editorial policy of the newspaper?

Yes.

Q: What about the time when the newspaper came under the control of the Federal Government?

The Murtala/Obasanjo administration did not intervene. I can testify that it did not affect the editorial content and the editorial opinion of the newspaper. But after the Murtala/Obasanjo administration ended and the politicians came in 1979, the Federal Government started to interfere in the editorial policy of the Daily Times.

Q: On the whole how would you the Nigerian press in terms of their contribution to national integration?

On the whole, I think they have tried to gear their editorial policies towards fostering national integration within the context of the Nigerian environment. They realise that it is a united Nigeria that will make them prosper.

(VIIL) INTERVIEW WITH **EMEKA IZEZE** MD THE GUARDIAN (NIGERIAN) NEWSPAPERS, ON TUESDAY 23/01/01 IN LAGOS.

Q: How Government Policies Have Affected the Press

The policies of government must invariably affect any newspaper. How has it affected us? I don't think it has affected the media negatively as such. If anything it probably was aimed to affect the media negatively but it turned out making the media to find other means of survival.

Are we talking about the decrees of the military in those days? Are we talking about decree 4 or decree 2? What they did was to make the media grow more radical or become very more engaged in the political process. It then meant that anytime the government was seeking to enforce those laws, clamp down on the media, it became not a matter of law and order any longer. It becomes an issue of human rights and the violation of the freedom of people to express themselves and to publish newspapers and so on and so forth.

Yes it impacted on the Press in that, of course, it threatened a few people. We didn't have many newspapers emerging that time for obvious reasons. Nobody wanted to come publish a newspaper at a time when there were so many laws restricting the publication of newspapers. If you notice, not until recently did we start having many newspapers emerging. Actually it's become rather traditional that each time we have democratic rule, we have more newspapers emerging. And people who say that newspaper is an index of development in that sense are not far from the truth.

I can also say that some of the laws they made were also made in vain. The media council that the Babangida government came up with in 1988, the media just refused to respect that law. And because that government was in a quandary as to how to respond it didn't implement that law. That law died naturally. A new law had to come up and that new law was the draft of journalists and government together. What media practitioners said was that we don't want another court for journalists; we just want a Press council that will duel mostly on moral suasion, just as it is in Britain.

Q: What about Newsprint?

The easiest way to actually control newspapers was simply to get rid of newsprint. I said if they were smart enough they would never have to seal up any newspaper house, they would never have to arrest any journalist. They could have made it absolutely impossible for newspapers to publish by squeezing newspapers on newsprint. They didn't have that patience. Even what they did, they did it generally. So if they imposed tariff, they didn't impose any excessive tariff. What happened was that foreign exchange became scarcer and once it became that, people couldn't source foreign exchange to get newsprint. And even those who made it their business to import newsprint, they were unable to import as much as was needed in the market. And once supply is not meeting demand, the cost the cost will be going up. That was what happened.

Basically government did not go out of its way to squeeze newspapers using newsprint. But newspapers as of that time because the Naira was depreciating rather

fast and the revenue of newspapers were not improving significantly. Cover price even if you raised it wouldn't have gone too far. They couldn't raise advert rates because many newspapers are not surviving on adverts. Actually now only just a couple or so are surviving on adverts.

Q: Is the Duty of the Press to Promote National Integration/Unity?

It is part of the duty of the Press to promote national unity. And you do that not by becoming an accomplice with those politicians who have ulterior motives but by doing what you are meant to do. National unity is like a goal for all sections of society, that the Press happens to be one. It should foster national unity not in the sense of collaborating with those in power in order to foist it on the rest of society but by ensuring that anybody who belongs to this particular nation feels that his interests are being fairly represented. And that is what the Press should be doing.

Of course sometimes it tends to lead the Press in being one-sided and sectional or being tribal depending on what issue you are dealing with or which newspaper you are dealing with. In the long run what the media actually seeks to do is to foster national unity.

Q: Even When They Promote Tribal Sentiments?

Newspapers all over the world have their own political leanings. It doesn't matter where. The absence of ideology in our environment had made people to align with certain worldview, which may well be limited to their own ethnic area. Otherwise if we were in a society where you have very clear ideology, you find newspapers will be differentiated purely on the basis of ideology. Issues tend to dictate the reactions of people.

Let me give you an example. When we started talking about the issue of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, what I told our people here was that I am surprised that whenever it came to that, all the three major ethnic groups tend to agree. And I think until recently, they have always agreed that nothing should happen to the revenue allocation formula.

If you check, the people who actually seized the revenue from the states or the regions were people predominantly from the Southwest. They used it to fight a war and after fighting a war they kept it at the national level by which time oil had already been in ascendancy. They knew oil was going to make a lot more money for the nation. So the people producing oil, those in the periphery, they suffered for so long. And so when it became the issue of "what do you do to the issue of resources in your own environment", someone was beating his chest and saying if you people want to negotiate your oil you should come and negotiate with us.

So I said to them whenever it comes to them whenever it comes to the issue of oil, you find that the Hausa/Fulani, the Yoruba, and the Ibo, they all agree. And until recently I think what has happened is a political watershed in the sense that the East and the West have agreed to resource control. The South-South have only now managed to trade off and assert their own views-the other people who want decentralisation of power, the other people who want some form of confederation-

whatever arrangement that appears to have been accepted. So for that they themselves have accepted revenue control as a basis for negotiation at the federal level.

If you look at the media really, I agree with you entirely that the media is issue-specific. If you are talking of the issue of Sharia, you know where the Muslim people would lean on partially because the understanding of the Sharia still remains something that you don't find. I don't even see most people in the North themselves understanding what this Sharia particularly means.

Q: The OIC Issue Is Related To This Sharia Question

The OIC in my view, again, it was the surreptitious manner in which Nigeria got into it. Otherwise ordinarily you would have been able to explain it as an economic organisation but they appear to be using it for other purposes.

So the surreptitious nature of our entry into the OIC created all the hoopla that we have. And I think that the people who got us into it doing it surreptitiously meant that they did not have the best of interest. So you ask: have we examined what this is all about? If we haven't done so then it's too bad.

Q: The Press Reacted in Different Ways to the OIC Issue. That in a Way is a Recipe for Disunity in the Country. *New Nigerian* was for OIC, *The Guardian* tried to report all sides, the *Nigerian Tribune* was totally against etc.

Countries are not just built merely on the absence of disputes. In fact disputes tend to strengthen countries. People should disagree. It is in disagreement you tend to find a consensus. National unity is not necessarily damaged by disputes. People tend to look at it in such narrow prism. In fact you tend to strengthen the unity of the nation when you are able to eventually disagree so that you all end up forming a consensus.

Q: Des Ownership Affect their Ability to Expected Role in Society?

Oh yes. If government owns you invariably know how you are going to perform. And if a private company owns you, you will definitely not operate like a government newspaper. You operate on the basis of a private company which means primarily you are there as a company you want to make profit. The owner sees it as business not necessarily as a charity. But if you find some people who are philanthropists who don't care about making money then they would also end up telling you how to publish, what to publish, where to publish, who to attack and who not to attack.

The Press tends to be a vanguard of opinion. It gives voice to the voiceless or people who would otherwise have been voiceless. And what newspapers push out are baskets of ideas. The Press has helped to build the kind of ideas that have got us to where we are now which is accepting democracy as a legitimate and appropriate system of governing ourselves. There was also a time when you found in the Press people calling for very strong leaders.

Q: Foreign Influence and the Nigerian Press

Nigeria is not an island unto itself. What it means then is that invariably you can't live on your own. It is not just only in the physical aspect even at the level of ideas you still have to keep borrowing from outside. So foreign influence invariably affects how the Press behaves.

Q: The Guardian Profile

The Guardian is read by decision-makers. We want people to make up their minds about us. And I think they have invariably done that. Guardian is read by decision-maker in business, politics, and academia mostly. It's the newspaper meant for decision-makers, whether they are businessmen, professionals and aspiring decision-makers. The whole idea is to be able to help them in performing their assignments wherever they are. That is the audience we target. We call them the attentive audience.

(VIIM) INTERVIEW WITH **DR OMAR FAROUK IBRAHIM**, MANAGING DIRECTOR, NEW NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS IN KADUNA ON SUNDAY 28/01/01

Q: How Would You Rate the Press vis-à-vis the Issue in Question?

Every Press is a product of its milieu, the society and it defines itself in respect of what it finds itself in. In pre-colonial period the Press essentially saw its duty as that of fighting for Nigeria's independence. Having got the independence the Press really has not re-defined its role clearly. I think in the last dozen or so years there has been some refocusing. Most of the 60s, 70s and even in fact up to the 80s, the Press carried on with that anti-establishment position. It is the watchword of society because it fights for the common man, ensures that the government is run well and so on.

Post-colonial Press is supposed to be development-oriented, to assist the government run their administration better, define what is in the best interest of the country. I am not sure that the Nigerian Press really has been able to define its role in this respect. But again nobody establishes the media for nothing. Whether it's Radio, Television or Print, whether established by the Government or private entrepreneur, there is always an objective. It's almost always the case that if the objective of the proprietor is to benefit from the Government of the day you'll find that the Press is less critical of the activities of Government. If he thinks that he is not then the Press will be more critical.

Q: So because of that the Press has been unable to define its role in post-colonial Nigeria?

I believe that in the course of your discussion with people on the Nigerian Press, you must have been told somewhere that there isn't the Nigerian Press as such. We talk in Nigeria about the Southern-based Press and the Northern Press-their orientation is radically different. Our perceptions of the same national issues are different and it's not anything unnatural let's face it. Your location determines exactly what you see with most issues. It's the rule of thumb in journalism. You are located in the North where generally the culture, tradition and perception of Government are different from that of the South. So you can't fail to get these reflected on the pages of your newspapers.

You find that the difference is not really fundamental in the sense of their mutually exclusive interest. I think it has to do more with approach and method and tactics of getting across. I think that generally the Press in the South is not just aggressive but sometimes really less responsible. You can criticise public officers, you can disagree with people, in and outside of Government, but there are many ways of doing that. If you are criticising to ensure that mistakes are not repeated then that's fine. But if you are criticising simply to ridicule somebody, then I think it wouldn't help the Press' public image.

The Press is supposed to criticise with the objective of getting things done right. If you criticise and you don't get it done right then the purpose for which the criticism was made is not achieved. I think generally up here (in the North), yes the Press criticises but I think the language and the presentation is a lot more matured, a lot

more refined and a lot more responsible.

Q: You say that there is not what one could call "the Nigerian Press". I'd to explore that a little bit further. What would be "the Nigerian Press" in your own opinion?

You see you talk of the Nigerian Press when you have the Nigerian nation. Okay you talk of the U.S Press generally whether you are from the South, from the West or from the East. In such a situation there is always a common strand around every issue...

In Nigeria for now I think most journalists would say that well, if I have to use this information, if I have to withhold this information to destroy an opponent, fine. It doesn't really matter to them whether at the end of the day; such action would be against the national interest. I don't see this as something that will be there forever. I believe that as the nation matures, Nigerians will come to understand each other better. Then we will be able to have a Nigerian Press. But for now I think we have newspaper houses various media houses. When it comes to talking about the Press, there is so much difference between what the philosophy of the Press should be and what the practitioners in Nigeria do. There have been so many occasions when our newspapers and magazines have published blatant lies. They feel, well, we have to sell.

Q: Can you name them?

There are a few of them. A few years ago one of our respected newsmagazine wrote and published stories that it interviewed one of the 1990 coup plotters. And that it travelled to London to interview this person. It was splashed on the cover.

Then some other newspapers said! Bullshit that's not true. You didn't go anywhere. This guy came around all the newspaper houses saying and we didn't believe him.

So you see they didn't go to London to interview this guy. Somebody came around and said I am this, I was part of this, and I did this etc. He went to four different newsmagazine and they all said no! We are not going to publish this story. Eventually when he went to the *Newswatch* they agreed. They didn't want to say he came. They said their man in London interviewed him.

Now at the end of the day the credibility of the media, not just the *Newswatch*, is at stake. The people can say now, if *Newswatch* can say this and it is not true would it also be true what other newspapers or newsmagazines say. There are some things that you don't do in terms of blatant lies. Sometimes journalists sit in their newsroom, conjure things and write. Again for as long as we continue in this way people will be sceptical about what they read.

The trouble is that the government has after so many years failed and therefore anybody that attacks the Government or criticises the Government, the people identify with him. And also any institution that does that they identify with. Therefore the more of that you say the more readership you get.

Q: Let's go back to what you said in respect of a particular section of the Press

publishing falsehood irrespective of whether the issue will destroy the country. Are there particular issues you have in mind that could cause such destruction?

You see democracy allows for discourse, fight for what you believe is right. Governance in itself really is a question of authoritative allocation of values, what do you get and so on. There are many issues over which some parts of the country would say this is in our interest and other parts would say no, it is not in the national interest. Well this applies to every section of the country.

I'll give you an example- the Sharia issues. A number of States in the North that are predominantly Muslim argue that the common law that is practised in Nigeria is basically a canon law taken from the British and the British is essentially a Christian State. They can say that they are secular but the fact is underlying the whole system is the Church etc. It's a Christian State and the laws have their foundation in Christian foundation.

The Muslims say no, this is what our laws say. But 60 years of colonialism had ensured that those laws either have been removed completely or tampered with so much that they have lost any semblance of it. When they found out and say well 40 years after colonial rule if we disagree with the colonialists, now we are ruling ourselves how could we disagree with ourselves.

If one is a Muslim and wants to be ruled according to the Sharia, provided he doesn't go against the constitution or even if he goes against the constitution, does the constitution allow for the fundamental rights of the people to be ruled and judged according to their beliefs.

The Press was really the most hostile institution against the introduction of the Sharia. You sit and ask why did the Press do what it did? One, I think it's simply because we don't seem to understand the Constitution itself. If we do then we don't seem to think that others have a right to express their opinions and demand for what they believe is right and that the Nigerian state should be taken for what it is- a secular State.

Instead of the Press sitting down to address these issues it's like condemnation and condemnation all the time. The Southern Press has done this. The Northern Press generally, whether it is private or public has been more sympathetic basically because like I said earlier every Press is affected by its environment not necessarily because it wants to be its megaphone but because they share the same environment.

Q: The Ownership Question and the Impact on the Press' performance.

This newspaper (New Nigerian) is a government newspaper. Nobody establishes a newspaper, without Government or Private entrepreneur, without a purpose. That purpose or objective will be to inform or to sell some ideas to canvass an idea and so on. Of course those objectives would change from time to time. You may establish a newspaper essentially as a business to make money and if you go into politics you may end up having to use the newspaper for your political campaigns even if it is not making profits.

I think generally a Government-owned Press is perceived as a megaphone of the

Government all the time, it doesn't criticise Government and less than objective when it comes to presentation of facts and policies of Government. The key thing is that Government is still a critical factor in everything and therefore in each of these things, people want to know how the Government-controlled Press react to and report these issues.

In the past the New Nigerian although Government-controlled, Government-owned, had been very critical of Government when it had cause to think that the Government was wrong. You find that it's not true that Government ownership automatically muzzles the Press. Now I think that how Government-owned newspapers report or take sides on matters concerning Government is essentially a function of the persons running the newspapers. And sometimes Government-owned newspapers over-censor themselves. I can tell you sincerely since I came to this house (New Nigerian), nobody has ever asked why did you use this story, even though we have carried things quite critical of Government. Nobody has ever questioned our activities because it's believed that we are doing it in the national interest. And it's simply because we have our reasons and our facts. We say that Government is right here and Government is wrong there. I have said in the past that people feel uncomfortable that they don't want to be seen to be criticising the authority. Luckily at least since this regime came into power we do what we have to do to run a very good newspaper. In order to bring back the credibility of the newspaper if it means you have to say that the Government is wrong, wrong and wrong then say it as many times as is necessary.

But the difference is that when we criticise, we watch our language, we try to be a lot more responsible and a lot more mature. That's part of the tradition of this newspaper house and we have maintained it. Just outright condemnation we don't do that. In the past before government had say in 1975/76 and so no, this newspaper criticised Government over matters like Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), the posting of vice-chancellors etc. But we did so in a language that said yes! With the Government we disagree but it couldn't but respect the constitution.

Q: The New Nigerian is a rather unique newspaper going by its mission statement- to pursue the interest of the North. Wouldn't that lead to disintegration since other newspapers would also want to promote the interest of their areas etc?

That explains the decision of the Government to take0over the Newspaper in 1975. If you talk about the mission statement, first it was issued in 1966. By 1975 the Federal Government took over and the mandate was broadened because the Murtala/Obasanjo regime, at that time, said that this newspaper was too powerful to be a regional newspaper and that its mandate should be national. And of course since then it has changed and that is why we cover the whole country.

Q: Has that affected your ability to promote a particular agenda? Or how are you combining that with the regional agenda?

Even when the mission statement was released in 1966, I think the question of national unity and national interest was given great prominence. The North felt that it needed a voice. Most of the newspapers in the country then were produced in the South and the North felt it needed a voice so that both people from the North as well

as from the South will be able to know where stood on various issues.

You see in a Federal system, there is this contention almost always between the component units- people look at it first as what is in the best interest of my region. In a democracy it is the media that you use to fight and wage your battle for the allocation of various resources. You need for example, a newspaper to be able to show that between Sokoto and Maiduguri there is no road, between Maiduguri and Yobe the road is a death trap and so on and so forth.

No matter how many memos and circulars and letters you write to the Federal Government, in a democracy it is what becomes an issue, a national issue that gets immediate or priority attention. Therefore if all the newspapers are from the South and they are pointing at the problem of the South they would be seen as the only problems the other ones are not seen. To that extent I don't think that what they are doing is mutually exclusive.

Q: In your own view has the Press been able to foster a sense of national identity among Nigerians?

Well to the extent that each of these media organs report events across the country, it helps to kind of weld the Nigerian people. First of all you cannot talk of unity or a nation if people do not understand each other. You need to know, understand and appreciate your compatriots before you can have unity.

Q: And the Press is doing that?

Well to the extent that I can pick up any newspaper today and know what is happening in other parts of the country and empathise with them. On many occasions disasters have occurred in some parts of the country it's been projected as a national issue etc. It's the media that has done this.

Q: When will Nigeria become a nation?

When? We are getting there. There are, at least, among the younger generation of Nigerians a lot of interactions, a lot of coming together, a lot of integration and a lot more inter- ethnic marriage today than there were many years ago.

Q: Is there any document guiding us as to how to get to that goal?

I will make it very clear; no nation is built on documents. But our constitution makes it very clear that this is our aspiration- to build a nation. I think just like I said earlier that you don't just don't write that we are a nation and then we become a nation. We aspire; we work to become a nation. In working to become a nation the political leadership of any country has an important role to play. The Press has equally an important role to play.

My position on this matter is that in Nigeria, I think that media practitioners need to be educated to understand. First of all you have to accept that there is a need for the existence of the Nigerian nation. Sometimes some of them tend to write, let's go our separate ways. It's been written in the newspapers so many times.

Q: Which newspaper?

So many newspapers are involved in this practise.

Q: Are you talking about the newspapers or the columnists'?

Very good. When you talk of newspapers you cannot distinguish between the columnists and the reporters etc.

Q: Why do you think so?

You see if you go to the United Kingdom for example, take the Economist, it has a tradition. In the next 30, 40 and 100 years or so people know exactly where it stands on matters. To keep a column there, to report there, there is some giving. Let me tell you something; if you want to understand the American Constitution, you cannot do justice to it without going to read the Federalist papers. These two documents are very critical to an understanding of the American Constitution and the building of the American nation. The Constitution is a summation of all the arguments.

In the Nigerian context there have been Constitution Drafting Commissions, Constituent Assembly and so no. What is unclear is whether the amount of debate and the level of discourse were as wide. When people begin to question some things in the Constitution, for example, sometimes journalists are lazy, they need to go back and look at the documents that preceded the Constitution and see the arguments that informed that aspect of the Constitution. When you do that we don't have to be revisiting issues every now and then.

Q: Overall then how would you rate the Nigerian Press in terms of their contribution to national integration?

You see let me tell you, when you talk of the existence or non-existence of the Nigerian Press, yes they are media houses. The Press as an institution- if there is a Nigerian nation, there is a Nigerian Press. We are building a Nigerian nation; we are trying to build a Press.

(VIII) Ogbemudia's full statement on the establishment of The Nigerian Observer

"Early in April 1968, I had the pleasure and privilege of addressing the inaugural sitting of the Board of Directors of the Midwestern Newspapers Corporation, the owners and publishers of the *Nigerian Observer.*

"On that occasion, I told the Directors that the main aim for establishing the MIDWEST NEWSPAPERS CORPORATION is to print and publish a daily newspaper which will provide the means of informing the public of the intentions, programmes and policies of government and also as a medium of education, information, and the enlightenment of our people.

"I must hasten to say here that the news appearing on the OBSERVER does not reflect the view of the Government. Government publication will be indicated and properly titled.

"I further stressed to the Directors what I considered and still consider a very important aspect of the establishment of this newspaper, which is the independence and freedom of the *Nigerian Observer*...

"Although I am aware that this newspaper is Government sponsored, I am equally convinced that it must, if it is to discharge its great function effectively and efficiently, be free from Government control as to what it should write or not write.

"It must also be free to criticise any aspect of Government policy which it considers worthy of criticism in the interest of the public.

"I firmly believe that a newspaper such as the NIGERIAN OBSERVER established primarily to educate, inform and enlighten the people must be free and unfettered in the discharge of its responsibility.

"My belief in the freedom of this paper is fully enshrined in the Edict setting up the Corporation through the provision of a Board of Governors under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice of the State, assisted by the Chairman of the State Public Service Commission, the Leader of the local Bar Association, the chairman of the State's Apex Co-operative Organisation, and a recognised trade union leader.

"The function of this Board of Governors is to play the role of an effective

custodian of the integrity, independence, and freedom of the NIGERIAN OBSERVER.

"The Edict which sets up this MIDWEST NEWSPAPERS CORPORATION guarantees the complete freedom of the newspapers it will publish.

"Within the law, it gives the Editors of those newspapers the liberty to gather news, to spread enlightenment, and to speak their minds candidly (*The Nigerian Observer,* Monday, August 26, 1968, p. 7).

(IX)

Federal Government-owned Newspaper
A tool of party in power at the federal level
Examples showing anti-ruling party stories are non-existent

Daily Times

-President Shagari speaks at rally in Enugu: Nwobodo (NPP Governor of Anambra state) asked to explain use of N300m" (**lead, 6/6/83, p.1**).
-2 NPP commissioners join NPN" (**6/6/83, p. 1**).

-Akinloye [NPN Chairman] takes Awo [UPN leader] to task-'Tell the nation the source of N60m for UPN vehicles'" (**lead, 14/6/83, p. 1**).
-Police chiefs will be under Governors if I win (**lead 14/6/83 p.1**,.an electorally unimportant story credited to the national leader and presidential candidate of the NPP, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe).

New Nigerian

-Police recover 21,000 FEDECO forms. Scene: Residence of Press Secretary to Bendel State Gov [UPN-controlled state]" (**lead, 1/6/83, p.1**).

-Payment of party agents-PPA disagrees with Shagari's view (**lead, 3/6/83 p.1**).
-Shagari accuses Zik [NPP leader] of inconsistency (**6/6/83, p. 1**).

-Role in civil war explained: Why I starved Igbos-Awo" (**lead, 7/6/83**, a story harmless to electoral chances of ruling NPN, **p.1**).

-Awo was right to starve Igbos-Ajuluchukwu" (**lead, 21/6/83** a story harmless to electoral chances of NPN, **p.1**).

(X)

State Government-owned Newspaper
A tool of party in power
Examples of reports about non-political/national issues

The Nigerian Observer	*The Nigerian Statesman*	*Daily Sketch*
		-Thumb printing: FEDECO blames Police over poor turn-out" (**lead, 2/6/83, p.1**).
		-JUNIOR WORLD CUP: NIGERIA SHOCK USSR" (**lead, 6/6/83, p.1**).
		-Electoral law: CRUCIAL TALKS TODAY" (**lead, 21/6/83, p.1**).
		-ODIZOR's WINNING RUN ENDS", (**28/6/83, p.1**)..

(XI)

State Government-owned Newspapers
A tool of party in power
Examples of positive stories about ruling party

The Nigerian Observer	*The Nigerian Statesman*	*Daily Sketch*
-Shagari is enemy of Bendelites-He dispossessed us of N111m revenue since '79 -Alli" (**lead, 2/6/83, p.1**)	-Okpara did not perform better in 6 years as premier—Mbakwe (**lead, 2/6/83, p.1**).	-Plea to Police", a front page story that the newspaper published on **6/6/83**, it showed the UPN as a party committed to protecting the electoral process
-Awo [presidential candidate of the UPN] means prosperity-Prof Alli" (**lead, 5/6/83, p.1**).	-I seek 2nd term to complete my jobs-Mbakwe" (**4/6/83, p.1**).	
-Ogbemudia left no kobo-Gov Alli" (**lead, 28/6/83, p.1**).	-Unongo's advice to Police" (**2/6/83, p.1**);	
-Alli has great respect for Obas-Giwa Amu [a member of the UPN and former Solicitor-General of Bendel state]';	-We'll pass currency bill-Obi Wali (**6/6/83, p.1**);	
"Awo assured of victory";		
"V-P lacks home base" and;		
"UPN dominates Ika L-G area" -all credited to Mr Sule Uzum, the UPN candidate for the Federal House of Representative and published on,(**28/6/83, p.1**);		
-Alli has made name";	-DG'S quit won't affect party" (**7/6/83, p.1**), credited to the Secretary of the NPP in Plateau state, Alhaji Saidu Baba Toto.	
"Only Awo qualifies for presidency;		
"NPN sure to lose Bendel";		
"UPN set to drown other parties and;		
"Ogbemudia aborted Niger state" (**All front page stories on 21/6/83,** about what the Publicity Secretary of UPN in Bendel state, Mr Patrick Agbobu, said while promoting the UPN cause).		
	-Ugo polo field"; "Zik campaign in Imo state June 15-17" (**lead stories on 14/6/83, p.1**)	
	-Zik promises Effiong (**21/6/83, p.1**).	

(XII)

State Government-owned Newspaper
A tool of party in power
Examples of reports about rival party to promote ruling party

The Nigerian Observer	*The Nigerian Statesman*	*Daily Sketch*
-If I win presidential election: I'LL PURGE NTA-ZIK (Presidential candidate, NPP)' (**lead, 14 /6/83, p.1**).	-Don't vote for Ogbemudia-Ewharekuko', a story about the NPN and its governorship candidate in Bendel state published by *Nigerian Statesman* of the NPP-controlled Imo state of Nigeria on **7/6/83**, p.1, because it was in favour of NPP governorship candidate, Chief Daniel Ewharekuko, in Bendel state.	-Waves of harassment, terrorism, killings: PPA blames {NPN-controlled} FG" (**lead, 3/6/83, p.1**).
-Probe Green Revolution vote-Ogunsanya (National Chairman, NPP) (**14/6/83, p.1**).	-Effect of FEDECO's sequence on outcome of '83 polls: PPA very hopeful-Omoregie (**lead, 7/6/83, p.1**) credited to a UPN front liner, Dr. Nosa Omoregie.	-No way for accord-Zik" (**3/6/83, p.1**), credited to the Presidential candidate of the NPP, Dr Azikiwe on the occasion of the PPA summit in Lagos.
-NPP MPs join UPN (story about the NPP which *The Nigerian Observer* of the UPN controlled Bendel state published on **14/6/83, p.1**).		

(XIII)

Federal Government-owned Newspaper
A tool of party in power at the federal level
Examples of newspaper used as megaphone of party in power

Daily Times	*New Nigerian*
-Lagos is federal government baby: Developments are inherited from Central administration [not from UPN-controlled Lagos state government] (**lead, 3/6/83, p.1** credited to the NPN Presidential candidate President Shehu Shagari).	-"NPN'll take care of Lagos' (**3/6/83, p.1**).
-Shagari storms Campos square' (**lead, 3/6/83, p.1**).	
-Shagari made it with peace, "NPN will win comfortably", "Other achievements of Shehu's govt" (**lead story/headlines 21/6/83, p.1** credited to a member of the NPN and Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs, Alhaji Suleiman Takuma)..	-Opinion poll favours Shagari's re-election (**4/6/83, p.1**).

(XIV)

Government-owned and Privately-owned Newspapers under military administration
A Platform for National Issues

Stories on government officials/commentators focussing on national issues

Newspapers	Issues and Dates of Publication
Vanguard	-"Jaji students flay Kano govt...over its 'unhealthy' employment policy" (**lead, 5/6/87**). -"Akinyemi's charge to new envoys", (**2/6/87, p.1**). -"Police blamed for prison congestion", (**15/6/85; p.1**).
New Nigerian	-"Economic survival: Fifth plan is the nation's last chance" (**3/6/85, p.1**). -"105,752 died in road accidents in 15 years-Alhaji Abubakar". (**lead, 3/6/87, p.1**). "EPI children immunised in 17 states, *New Nigerian*, (**7/6/85, p.1**). "Enhance Nigeria's image abroad-Tony Momoh [Nigeria's Information Minister] appeals", *New Nigerian*, (**4/6/87, p.1**).
The Guardian	-"Govt. stops fund for first degree studies abroad" (**14/6/85. p.1**). -"Industrialists advice leaders on national issues", (**4/6/85, p.1).** -"Govt, civil servants to meet over purge order" (**14/6/87, p.1**). -"21 draft laws before AFRC [Armed Forces Ruling Council] for approval" (**6/6/87, p.1**).
The Nigerian Observer	-"SAP: big boost to economy" (**4/6/87, p.1**).. -"Evolve result oriented programme-Inienger tells Chief Executives", (**4/6/87, p.1**). -"Soleye warns: FMG not father Xmas" (**lead, 4/6/85, p.1**) -"N25,000 tools for coal industry" (**7/6/85, p.1**). -"Western press flayed" (**14/6/85, p.1**). -"Why military appears on the stage" (**28/6/85, p.1**).
Daily Champion	-"CGS calls for nation's security" (**5/6/87; p.1).**-"Model rural communities for each LG" (**2/6/87 p.1**).
National Concord	-"Gov wants civil service bodies amended" (**15/6/85, p.1**). -"Nigerians favour 2-party system" (**28/6/87, p.1**). -"66 executed in Nigeria-Amnesty" (**6/6/85, back page**).
Nigerian Statesman	-"Gov calls for ban on sale of alcohol to youths under 16yrs" (**lead, 1/6/85, p.1**). -"Call for review of Civil Service", (**2/6/85, back page**). -"Gov calls for economically active labour force" (**lead, 3/6/85, p.1**). -"Governor commends immigration men-says no compromise on national security" (**lead, 6/6/85, p.1**). -"Help govt build strong, stable future for Nigeria-Gov charges NIPSS alumni" (**1/6/87, p.1**) -"FMG determined to reduce import bills" (**1/6/85, p.1**). -"Fed Govt to establish food information centre", (**5/6/85, p.1**). -"Experts agree on privatisation", (**3/6/85, p.1**) -"Local beer expected in Nigerian markets within five years" (**4/6/85, p.1**). -"CGS urges Nigerians to work towards national security" (**5/6/87, p.1**).. -"Chairman urges press to spread activities of directorate" (**2/6/87, page 9**).
Daily Times	-"Can't we brew indigenous beer?", (**3/6/85, p.1**). -"Kalu [Nigeria's Minister of National Planning] wants indigenisation law reviewed",, (**4/6/87, p.1**). -"Review pension tax-Directors urge govt" (**1/6/85, p.1**) -"Kalu [Nigeria's Minister of National Planning] wants indigenisation

law reviewed", **(4/6/87, p.1)**.. .

Daily Sketch

-"We're on the path...Towards achieving our goal-Buhari" **(lead 29/6/85, p.1)**

-"Why N127m Port deal doubled" **(1/6/85, p.1)**.

- "Omeruah speaks on detained politicians" **(15/6/85, p.1)**.

-"Call on Govt to scrap SFEM - Shonekan replies Aluko...says SFEM is good for economic revival" **(lead, 28/6/87, p.1)**.

(XV)

1993: Elections Conducted by a Military Administration
State Government-owned and Federal Government-owned Newspapers
Military Centralisation engenders non-partisan/national editorial policy

Vanguard
-"Yar' Adua pledges support for MKO", (**lead, 2/6/93, p.1**).
-"Tofa promises to abolish oil dichotomy" (**2/6/93, p.1**)
-"Parties get N80m lifeline from NEC" (**lead, 4/6/93, p.1**).
-"Abiola, Tofa in historic debate" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).

New Nigerian
-"NRC, SDP get N80m for campaigns" (**4/6/93, p.1**).
-"Abiola promises drug barons big fight" (**5/6/93, p.1**).
-"Tofa outlines programme for women" (**7/6/93, p.1**).
-"Mismanagement, nation's bane - Abiola, Tofa" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).
-"Let's learn from past mistakes-IBB" (**8/6/93, p.1**).

The Guardian
-"NRC, SDP get N80m more for activities" (**lead, 4/6/93, p.1**);
-"Abiola, Tofa bank on minorities for victory" (**6/6/93, p.1**).
-"Tofa, Abiola present economic blueprint" and ---"Candidates differ on national conference" (**lead/headline 7/6/93, p.1**).
-"Tofa pledges respect for women's right" (**7/6/93, p.1**).

Daily Champion
-"June 12 elections: MKO, Tofa may still be disqualified" (**3/6/93, p.1**).

National Concord
-"Great TV debate: Abiola, Tofa 'clash' over oil subsidy' (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).
"I owe my country my all, says MKO" and "Why I attacked Christianity – Tofa" (**7/6/93, p.1**).

Daily Times
"Flag bearers risk 10-year ban for election fraud" (**3/6/93, p.1**).
-"N80m lifeline for NRC, SDP" (**4/6/93, p.1**).
-"The Great Debate: Abiola Vs Tofa - keen, revealing" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).
-"We must learn from history-IBB" (**8/6/93, p.1**).

Daily Sketch
-"Don'ts of June 12 polls: Decree out; Guilty candidates to be banned for 10 years; Police, Governors, NEC officials, media, affected" (**lead, 3/6/93, p.1**).
-"MKO to end fuel shortage" and "I'll share nation's wealth equally – Tofa" (**3/6/93, p.1**).
-"The Great Debate: MKO, Tofa face Nigerians" and "Tofa preaches unity" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).
"MKO promises home-made drugs" (**10/6/93, p.1**).
-"[Tofa]...promises to increase fuel prices to save NNPC" (**11/6/93, p.1**).

(XVI)

1993 Presidential Elections
State Government-owned Nigerian Statesman
A Voice for the Ibo Nationality Group
Examples of stories based on nationality interests

-"Political power sharing in Nigeria: Tofa says you can't scheme out the East (Ibos)" (**1/6/93, p.1**).
-"Mammoth crowd at NRC rally...Tofa says attempt to marginalise the East (Ibos) must be resisted":(**2/6/93, p.1**).
-"Tofa scores high marks - at NTA debate with Abiola", (**8/6/93, p.1**).
-"Saturday's Presidential elections: Tofa tipped to win".(**10/6/93, p.1**).
-"If Abiola can influence the marginalisation of the East (Ibos) within the SDP... what will he do to us when he gets to Aso Rock?" (**2/6/93, p.1**).
-"Vote a consistent Tofa you can trust - **Tofa Solidarity Nigeria"** (**8/6/93, p.1**)
-"Who is going to represent us (Ibos) in the Abiola combination? Nobody. Our only hope for a better tomorrow is Bashir Tofa and Sylvester Ugoh - **Tofa Solidarity Nigeria"** (**9/6/93, p.1**).
-"Abiola for you...'Nigeria is Nationally and Internally a Muslim State'...think about this as you cast your vote on Saturday (**10/6/93**)..

(XVII)

Privately-owned Newspaper under Military Administration
A tool for scrutinising government/officials
Examples of stories based on investigative journalism

Newspaper	**Issues and Dates of Publication**
National Concord	-"For alleged link with cocaine suspect-Senior Police Officer on Suspension", (**lead, 4/6/85, p.1**).
The Guardian	-"Trade pacts with 30 nations-Nigeria may lose N1b on goods shipping" (**lead, 7/6/85, p.1**). -"Questions over payment to foreign creditors" (**lead14/6/87, p.1**).

(XVIII)

1993 Presidential Election
Privately-owned Newspapers
Instrument of mobilisation against oppressive and undemocratic Government
Examples of stories against military's threat to the Peoples democratic will

Vanguard	"Nigerians uphold June 12 election" (**lead, 28/6/93, p.1**).
The Guardian	"Politicians, others flaw poll's cancellation, fresh agenda" (**lead, 28/6/93, p.1**).
National Concord	'NIGERIANS REJECT FRESH ELECTIONS' (**lead, 27/6/93**) "IBB Lists New Rules, Unchain Banned Politicians", and "Another transition to what?". (**27/6/93, p.1**). "Front Page Comment-The People's Will Must Prevail" (**27/6/93, p.1**).
Daily Champion	"'Declare June 12 Presidential poll result now'-NLC (Nigerian Labour Congress) issues ultimatum – Nation-wide strike looms" (**lead, 29/6/93**).

(XIX)

Nigerian Newspapers under Military Administration
Coverage of Events involving the State
Uniting to Make Nigeria out of Nigerians

Newspapers	**Issues and Dates Published**
Vanguard	
New Nigerian	
The Guardian	-"Nigeria set to conquer the world" (**11/8/85, back page**). -"A Day of Glory: Nigeria goes to the East and conquers the World" (**lead, 12/8/85, p.1**). -"Beautiful Babies, welcome" (**lead, 14/8/85, p.1**) -"Bounteous rewards for soccer heroes" (**lead, 15/08/85, p.1**). -"A magical moment" (**Editorial Comment, 14/8/85, p.8**)
Nigerian Statesman	-"D-day for Baby Eagles" (**lead, 11/8/85,p.1**). -"Nigerians await Baby Eagles today" (**lead, 14/8/85, p.1**). -"Millions cheer in Baby Eagles...Lagos in carnival mood as heroes ride in triumph through major roads" (**lead 15/08/85,p.1**).
The Nigerian Observer	-"World cup Finale: Give it to Eaglets" (**11/8/85, p.15**). -"NIGERIA MAKES SOCCER HISTORY...wins world cup" (**lead, 12/8/85, p.1**). -"HEROES WELCOME" (**lead,, 15/08/85, p.1**).
National Concord	-"World Cup Final Day: Nigeria makes soccer history...Baby Eagles versus W. Germany in Peking", (**11/8/85, p.15**). -"SOCCER WORLD BOWS TO NIGERIA: Baby Eagles beat Germany 2-0" (**lead, 12/8/85, p.1**). -"ALL HAIL BABY EAGLES" (**lead, 14/8/85, p.1**). -"HEROIC WELCOME FOR CHAMPIONS...Renamed 'World Golden Eaglets'" (**lead, 15/08/85, p.1**).
Daily Sketch	
Daily Champion	

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Privately-owned Newspaper

Activities of politically/non-politically motivated Newspaper

	Vanguard	The Guardian	National Concord	Daily Champion
A tool of politically-motivated owners			-High tyre prices: Concord investigation: Economy not to blame"; **(lead, 1/6/83, p.1)** -Outstanding money on building materials: FG owns up'; **(lead, 4/6/83, p.1)**; -Bad leadership ruins NPN govt", **(6/6/83, p.1)** -Nigerian Consulate stinks: 1m-dollar fraud alleged". **(lead, 15/6/83, p.1)**..	
Report based on non-partisanship/Investigative journalism		-"Barau out of jail, back in politics" **(lead, 12/6/83, p.1)**.. -"Polls: Students on forced holiday" **(lead, 26/6/83, p.1)** -"Bendel House waylays governor", **(26/6/83, p.1)**.	"Plan on votes' counting scares V-P (Vice-President, Dr. Alex Ekwueme)", **(lead, 2/6/83, p.1)**; -"Council of State decided on peaceful elections (President Shehu Shagari)" **(2/6/83, p.1)** -"Priority for Lagos-says (President) Shagari at campaign", **(only story on front page 3/6/83)**. -"Goni's wife named UPN governorship candidate" **(4/6/83, p.1)**. - "Outstanding money on building materials-FG owns up" **(lead,**	

		4/6/83, p.1) -"Governor's job scares me-Adebayo", (**lead, 6/6/83, p.1**) -"As '83 elections draw nearer-Police at full alert...To stop thugs and save lives", **(lead, 7/6/83, p.1**). -"Headache over the recovery of loans...from legislators" **(lead, 29/6/83, p.1**).
Focus on national/non-political issues	-US airline exposes Nigeria Airways **(lead, 5/6/83, p.1)** -"Wanted NTA director yet to be arrested" **(5/6/83, p.1)** -"A tiny cocaine world in Lagos" **(5/6/83, p.1)** -"The Guardian covers Junior World Cup' **(5/6/83, p.1).** -"Cash problems keep phone lines dead" **(12/6/83, p. 1)**; -2 names tipped to lead Supreme Court" **(lead, 19/6/83)**. -"Late youth service for Polytechnic students" **(19/6/83, p.1)**. -"N400,000 fraud claim rocks Mobil" **(19/6/83, p.1)**. -"Drums' giant closes down" **(26/6/83, p.1)** -"Gas firm dumps wastes in the drain" **(26/6/83, p.1)**..	

(XXI)

1993: Elections Conducted by a Military Administration
State Government-owned and Federal Government-owned Newspapers
Military Centralisation engenders non-partisan/national editorial policy

Vanguard	-"Yar' Adua pledges support for MKO", (**lead, 2/6/93, p.1**). -"Tofa promises to abolish oil dichotomy" (**2/6/93, p.1**) -"Parties get N80m lifeline from NEC" (**lead, 4/6/93, p.1**). -"Abiola, Tofa in historic debate" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**).
New Nigerian	-"NRC, SDP get N80m for campaigns" (**4/6/93, p.1**). -"Abiola promises drug barons big fight" (**5/6/93, p.1**). -"Tofa outlines programme for women" (**7/6/93, p.1**). -"Mismanagement, nation's bane - Abiola, Tofa" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**). -"Let's learn from past mistakes-IBB" (**8/6/93, p.1**).
The Guardian	-"NRC, SDP get N80m more for activities" (**lead, 4/6/93, p.1**); -"Abiola, Tofa bank on minorities for victory" (**6/6/93, p.1**). -"Tofa, Abiola present economic blueprint" and -- -"Candidates differ on national conference" (**lead/headline 7/6/93, p.1**). -"Tofa pledges respect for women's right" (**7/6/93, p.1**).
Daily Champion	-"June 12 elections: MKO, Tofa may still be disqualified" (**3/6/93, p.1**).
National Concord	-"Great TV debate: Abiola, Tofa 'clash' over oil subsidy' (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**). "I owe my country my all, says MKO" and "Why I attacked Christianity –Tofa" (**7/6/93, p.1**).
Daily Times	"Flag bearers risk 10-year ban for election fraud" (**3/6/93, p.1**). -"N80m lifeline for NRC, SDP" (**4/6/93, p.1**). -"The Great Debate: Abiola Vs Tofa - keen, revealing" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**). -"We must learn from history-IBB" (**8/6/93, p.1**).
Daily Sketch	-"Don'ts of June 12 polls: Decree out; Guilty candidates to be banned for 10 years; Police, Governors, NEC officials, media, affected" (**lead, 3/6/93, p.1**). -"MKO to end fuel shortage" and "I'll share nation's wealth equally – Tofa" (**3/6/93, p.1**). -"The Great Debate: MKO, Tofa face Nigerians" and "Tofa preaches unity" (**lead, 7/6/93, p.1**). "MKO promises home-made drugs" (**10/6/93, p.1**). -"[Tofa]...promises to increase fuel prices to save NNPC" (**11/6/93, p.1**).

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