

MASS MEDIA AND THE SEARCH FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The concept “transitional justice” describes a policy that corrects past wrongs of a country by identifying and punishing perpetrators of the wrongs. Transitional justice systems have enabled many countries of the world to effectively deal with national challenging issues similar to those of Nigeria such as corruption, injustice, bad governance, human rights abuse, internal conflicts (ethnic, religious, communal, sectional in nature, etc), intolerance, and dysfunctional multiculturalism. There is the urgent need for a system of transitional justice in Nigeria to assist address the above challenges and more that stand in the way of the country’s development. The mass media, as a social institution expected to contribute to the smooth running of the society, have a crucial role to play in the establishment and sustenance of a system of transitional justice in Nigeria. This article articulates a realistic role for the mass media in this regard. This role is in the form of advocacy journalism, agenda setting, community broadcasting and the effective use of new media. The articulation takes into cognizance the hostile operational environment and challenges confronting mass media practice in Nigeria, and suggests that for the mass media institution to effectively discharge this role, it has to distance itself from unprofessionalism and unethical practices, train and retrain journalists for this task, and imbibe the culture of investigative journalism and democratic approaches to mass media operation.

Keywords: Mass media, national challenges, national development, sustainable peace and stability, transitional justice.

INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has predicted that Nigeria is likely to break up by 2015. This prediction is informed by the serious challenges to peace and security in the country. These challenges began before the country got political independence in 1960. Ethnic distrust and intolerance among the three major ethnic groups (Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) began to manifest at about the 1940s (Kirk-Greene, 1971; Anyanwu, 1999; Kur, 2012) and have continued with little or no hope of any meaningful and genuine reconciliation. Across the length and breadth of the country, there are serious threats to peace and unity. The Niger Delta disturbances, which

seriously affect the economic fortunes of the country adversely, for now, have assumed the status of an uneasy calm because the president of the country, Goodluck Ebere Jonathan, is from that region. As soon as President Jonathan leaves office, it is likely that the disturbances will resurface. This is because, not minding the amnesty programme in place in the area, most of the problems which gave rise to the disturbances are yet to be addressed. These problems, among others, identified by Wilson (2009), include: bad governance, social injustice, environmental damage, militarization, lack of social and economic development in the area, lack of self-worth, and lack of participation in the oil industry by the people of the area.

Apart from the Niger Delta disturbances, religious, ethnic, political and other aspects of communal conflicts, some very violent in nature, have become endemic in the country. Of recent is the Boko Haram insurgence which is causing serious rampage and defiling all possible solutions, as observed by Agbo (2011, p.48): "Boko Haram is on rampage in the North and gaining notoriety every day because of lack of competent security structure, infrastructure and operatives, coupled with the underlying political connection." In addition, threats to the democratic process are a serious challenge to sustainable peace and stability. The threats are in the form of electoral irregularities, insensitive and desperate conduct of politicians, personalization of state power, massive corruption in public and private sectors, absence of accountability, executive fiat, tyrannical attitude, bad governance, structural weakness of public institutions, disregard for rule of law, increased deprivations, debilitating poverty, rising public frustration, and violation of human rights among others (Kukah, 2007; Akinwale, 2010; Adedayo, 2011; Bayo, 2011; Egbuta, 2011). These threats to peace and stability have seriously undermined development efforts in the country.

A common sense view holds that unless and until mistakes of the past are corrected, they will be repeated. It is in this regard that, globally, there is a serious concern to address economic, political and social challenges of the past so as to prepare well for a better future (Berns, 2007; Misty, 2009; International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2009). This means that the development of a country, which has had national challenges, is dependent on the country's adoption of a policy of transitional justice. This policy contributes significantly in facilitating the process of societal reconciliation; identifying and punishing perpetrators of political, economic and social crimes; and putting in place a system of reparation that would give victims of political, economic and social crimes a sense of belonging. Kukah (2009) believes that most of Nigeria's problems stem from the inability of the country to adopt a genuine policy of transitional justice. The absence of this policy has made it extremely difficult to effectively manage challenging issues for the attainment of sustainable peace and stability which are necessary for sustainable development. There is a serious need for transitional justice in Nigeria, yet little or no effort is being made to advocate for it.

The main thrust of this paper is to make a case for the advocacy of transitional justice in Nigeria, and prescribe a critical role for the mass media in this regard. Among the institutions of social change, the mass media occupy a topmost position. This is because, according to McQuail (1987), the mass media have a general carrier function for knowledge of all kinds; they operate

in the public sphere, accessible in principle for all members of a society on an open, voluntary, unspecific and low-cost basis; in principle, the relation between sender and receiver is balanced and equal; and they reach more people than other institutions. This is the case depending on the form of media system a society adopts. Since the mass media are influential in individual and common perception of reality, and are very effective in pushing across the people's agenda, they would be effective in a campaign for the desirable transitional justice in Nigeria. Even though there are numerous problems militating against mass media practice in Nigeria, they could be well managed to enable the mass media show the light for the people to find the way. The pre-occupation of this paper is to prescribe a role for the mass media in the onerous task of establishing an effective system of transitional justice in Nigeria and to identify and suggest solutions to the challenges, which stand in the way of the mass media in effectively discharging this role.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: MEANING, OBJECTIVES, AND PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

Transitional justice generally is seen as a set of judicial and non-judicial measures put in place to address cases of massive human rights abuse. The International Centre for Transitional Justice (2009) explains it as a response to systematic or widespread violations of human rights, which seeks recognition for victims and promotes possibilities of peace, reconciliation and development. Transitional justice is not a special form of justice, but the normal kind of justice adopted on societies transforming themselves after civil conflicts, massive human rights abuse and state repression. The idea, according to International Centre for Transitional Justice (2012), is to achieve accountability and redress victims so as to provide recognition of the rights of victims, promote civic trust and strengthen the democratic rule of law. Unaddressed cases of massive human rights abuse, massive corruption and state repression are likely to socially divide, generate mistrust between groups, weaken institutional frameworks, and slow down security initiatives and the development process. Unless a system of justice, which shows clear commitment to the rule of law, is enshrined in a society, sustainable peace will always elude such a society. Transitional justice is intended to enshrine a justice system that restores confidence in the rule of law.

The primary objective of transitional justice is to strengthen peace and democracy. Specifically, it aims to facilitate the process of societal reconciliation, holding perpetrators of past crimes accountable for their actions and seeking the truth so as to put records straight. Another objective of transitional justice is the need to restore public trust in the apparatuses of the state. The most important apparatuses in this regard are security services and justice system (Misty, 2012; International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2009, 2012). To attain the objectives of transitional justice, it is suggested that certain basic approaches should be adopted. These approaches, seen as elements of transitional justice, include: criminal prosecutions, reparations, truth-seeking through truth commissions, institutional reforms, gender justice, "memorialization" efforts (establishing museums and memorials that preserve public memory of

victims and raise moral consciousness about past abuses in order to discourage their recurrence) (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2009, 2012). These approaches take judicial and non-judicial forms, and some require very careful international involvement. International involvement is required where national institutions for ensuring transitional justice face serious challenges to the extent that they are rendered ineffective. Some of these challenges include: a weak judicial system that is incapable of dispensing fair and impartial justice; the overwhelming influence of the “old order” which may infiltrate all organs of government including the judiciary and the law enforcement agencies; and lack of resources, infrastructure and capacity to respond to situations of injustices. The international community has put in place a number of mechanisms for transitional justice. One of the mechanisms is the International Criminal Court (ICC). This court has jurisdiction over crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The ICC is invited to try those crimes when national courts are either unwilling or genuinely unable to dispense justice. The jurisdiction of ICC is however limited to the extent that it can only exercise powers over and within nation states that are signatory to the Rome Statute of ICC, and Nigeria is signatory to that statute. Similarly, ICC has jurisdiction only when cases are referred to it by the United Nations Security Council, as was done in the case of Darfur, Western Sudan in 2005, and in Libya in 2011. Another mechanism of international justice system is the existence of internationalized tribunals, established by agreement between the United Nations Secretary General and the country concerned. The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) is an example of internationalized tribunals. Whether at the national or international level, lustration is an important concept in the literature of transitional justice. It is a strategy of institutional reform that allows the “vetting and removal of those in positions of government and the civil service who had been members of the old regime, or who were responsible for crimes committed during the period in question” (Misty, 2012, p.6).

The strategies and mechanisms of a transitional justice policy cannot be effectively implemented without taking into cognizance two key principles: consultation and attention to the needs of a particular society. The principle of consultation demands that transitional justice should be a product of wide consultation, which should assist in determining a number of issues which include, among others: the temporal period that the transitional justice mechanism will examine, which kinds of crimes the transitional justice mechanism will scrutinize, and the extent of involvement of international intervention. Similarly, a checklist approach to transitional justice may not be effective in all societies. Every society has peculiar problems and needs, and a transitional justice system that is intended to be effective should be built within the backdrop of the problems and needs of a society.

The concept of transitional justice came about immediately after the Second World War (1939 – 45) with the Nuremberg trials. These trials were part of the de-nazification policy of the post-war Germany. This project, by the victorious allies of the Second World War, was aimed at restoring peace to Germany after the war. Hence, Germany and Japanese officers and other key perpetrators of the Second World War crimes were tried to send out positive signals that would facilitate reconciliation (Kukah, 2009). The Nuremberg trials contributed significantly to the

establishment of the culture of respect for human rights. The term transitional justice however was coined around the late 1980s and early 1990s, mainly in response to the demands for justice and political changes in Latin America and Eastern Europe (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2012). During this period, human rights activists, in an effort to address systematic abuses of former regimes without disrupting transitions to democratic rule that were under way, advocated for a system of investigation and prosecution of cases of human rights violations and reparation programmes to help make amends of material and moral damage caused by past human rights violations. Since this approach to realizing justice was popularly called “transitions to democracy,” the term “transitional justice” was coined (International Centre for Transitional Justice, 2012). The approach found expression largely in the idea of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which became accepted in post-conflict politics as a way of addressing the challenges posed by authoritarian rules of the past (Kukah, 2009). The TRC was meant to cope with the problems of transition to democratic rule, and had eight broad objectives as follows: (1) Halting ongoing human rights abuses; (2) investigating past crimes; (3) identifying those responsible for human rights violations; (4) imposing sanctions on those responsible (where it can); (5) providing reparations to victims; (6) preventing future abuses; (7) preserving and enhancing peace; and (8) fostering individual and national reconciliation. The idea of TRC has been put to use in many countries with some level of success, because, as noted by Kukah (2009), it has assisted to take nations away from past terrible situations, not minding that it has not delivered the expected justice. Nations that have benefitted from transitional justice in this regard include: South Africa, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Cote D’Ivoire, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, East Timor, El Salvador, Chile, Argentina and Guatemala among others.

The ongoing transitional justice approaches in some Middle East and North African countries, after the revolutionary wave that swept across the regions in 2011, have some big lessons to teach in the implementation and management of a transitional justice policy. The experience of transitional justice in the Arab Spring (Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen) has shown that for a transitional justice system to be effective, it must take into cognizance factors such as timing (when transitional justice mechanisms should be adopted), sequencing (a more holistic approach), and the extent of the role of the international community (international community intervention is only to assist the local situation, and not for other motives). Other factors include credibility (how credible are those managing the transitional justice system), the question of legitimacy (is the management of the transitional justice a product and an instrument of international politics?), and the placement of heavy emphasis on economic crimes. Nigeria can draw huge ideas from those factors to design and implement an effective transitional justice policy that would contribute to sustainable peace and stability for sustainable development.

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA: EXIGENCIES AND PAST EFFORTS

To achieve sustainable peace and stability in Nigeria for sustainable development, transitional justice is not only desirable but a necessity. There are difficulties in addressing the socio-economic and political challenges in Nigeria largely because past criminals have not been brought to justice and past mistakes have not been corrected. Nigeria experienced a civil war (1967 – 70), and almost all the factors that gave rise to the war have not been addressed and are already resurfacing to a high magnitude. This means that the country has not learnt from the experience of the war, largely because there has not been any serious approach to transitional justice after the war. The people of the South-east Nigeria, predominantly of the Igbo ethnic group, are still complaining of political marginalization just as they found it a convenient reason to attempt a secession over 40 years ago (Uwechue, 1971).

The problem of unhealthy ethnic and sectional rivalry has always been a threat to sustainable peace and security and started long ago, immediately after the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914. The three major ethnic groups – Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba – at different times viewed the amalgamation as a forced one that is incapable of achieving the desired unity (Kirk-Greene, 1971; Anyanwu, 1999; Kur, 2003; Kur, 2012). The rivalry is not only among the three major ethnic groups. Many other ethnic groups in Nigeria are in a cut-throat unhealthy rivalry. For example, within the Middle Belt Zone of Nigeria, a total of 25 violent ethnic conflicts were witnessed between 1975 and 1999 (Yoroms, 2002). Between 2000 and 2005, within the same period, 12 violent ethnic conflicts were recorded (Best, 2006). Around the entire country, Adebani (2003) has compiled a total of 39 conflicts, which occurred between 1999 and 2003. Fundamental questions at the root cause of these conflicts are yet to be answered. These questions border on citizenship contestation, land matters, struggle for political control, chieftaincy matters, and deepening economic crises (Orite & Albert, 1999; Alubo, 2006). It is only an effective system of transitional justice that can effectively address these causative factors for effective management of the conflicts.

Religious intolerance is another threat to peace in Nigeria. Religious differences have a high tendency of disuniting people (Kukah, 1993). Throughout Nigerian history, religious differences, largely between Christians and Muslims, have been the basis of tension, animosity, hostility, conflict and war. Bolarinwa (2010) recounts that religious antagonism in Nigeria dates back to pre-independence period, when the British colonialists introduced a policy of protecting the Muslim North from the “destructive influence” of the Christian South. The climax of religious antagonism in Nigeria was the 1977/78 Sharia controversy at the Constituent Assembly (CA). Since then, religious crises have been endemic, occurring at the slightest provocation in a very fierce manner. Between 2000 and 2004, according to a compilation by Bolarinwa (2010), 21 religious crises between Christians and Muslims occurred in Nigeria. A prominent feature of the crises is that they have political undertones. Usman (1987) observes in this regard that members of the elite political class use religion to advance their selfish economic and political interests. Even though the government has had to set up commissions of inquiry into the crises,

the findings of most of the commissions were never made public, not to talk of implementing their recommendations. Herein is another exigency for sustainable transitional justice to assist in the effective management of religious conflicts for sustainable peace and stability.

The massive human rights abuses and injustices perpetrated by the various military governments in Nigeria have to be addressed for any meaningful national reconciliation. Even though not everything about military dictatorship in Nigeria was an act of injustice, many aspects of the dictatorship produced injustices that have to be addressed. Corruption is one type of injustice that was perpetrated by many military regimes in Nigeria (Ikejiani-Clark, 2001). Civilian regimes too have been vulnerable to corruption and should not escape the hammer of transitional justice. The rate and magnitude of corruption in Nigeria is so alarming and systematic that it has assumed the dimension of an epidemic. Corruption is present on a large scale in almost every public and private institution in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Finance in 2003 commissioned a group of researchers to investigate the extent of government corruption in Nigeria. Findings revealed that the Police Force was ahead on a list of 30 most corrupt government institutions. Next in that order were: the political parties; the executive arm of the federal, state and local governments; members of the national and state legislature; and the judiciary. Others were: the Central Bank, the Custom, the armed forces/military, the mass media, Board of Internal Revenue, and the state budget authority among others (Adekeye, 2003).

Past and present governments in Nigeria, military and civil, have made efforts to fight corruption but without any attempt to visit past corruption cases, especially those in high places. Some of these efforts were not genuine. A clear example is the anti-corruption campaign of the President Olusegun Obasango government. Many observers saw the campaign as selected and targeted at the perceived enemies of President Obasanjo. One such observer is the Speaker of House of Representatives under that government, Ghali Na' Abba, who lamented:

There is a perverted justice in the campaign against corruption by the Obasanjo administration. A pattern has been established where these anti-corruption agencies are not being allowed to work independently. It appears the proclivity to send people to face these institutions is when somebody is against this administration (Adeyemo, 2006, pp.20 – 21).

Another observer in this regard, the Executive Director of Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarization (CENCOD), Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, asks the following rhetoric questions to buttress the point that President Obasanjo's government was insincere in its anti-corruption campaign: "If the war is not selective, why have we not done something on Tony Anenih, the ex-works minister? Why have we not done something on the Abuja National Stadium on which the IMF said the money would have given us two of the edifice?" (Adeyemo, 2006, p.21). For any realistic anti-corruption war for the attainment of sustainable peace and development, past allegations of corruption must be holistically investigated and culprits adequately punished.

One of the major challenges of Nigeria's electoral process is electoral fraud. This challenge has rendered the electoral process very weak and incapable of producing the right

calibre of leaders, a major factor responsible for bad governance. Weak and irresponsible leadership is the case at all levels of governance in Nigeria. From the federal through states to the local government levels, the story is abysmal failure of leadership. Many of the leaders are corrupt, ignorant, unwilling to accept democratic change, and lack vision (Makpu, 2007). As rightly observed by Eyo (2001), past and present leaders in Nigeria, civilian or military, are deeply engrossed in the undesirable practices of negative ethnicity, religious bigotry, intolerance, and personal greed for political power and wealth. This tripod, according to Eyo, is the bane of Nigerian leaders, and is largely responsible for many other leadership challenges such as corruption, lack of vision, ignorance, inexperience, etc. It is sad that most perpetrators of electoral fraud and fraudulent leaders in Nigeria go unpunished. The institutional framework put in place to deal with these challenges is very weak and often manipulated by the same fraudsters for selfish reasons. There is every need for a system of transitional justice to assist address the fraudulent challenges associated with the electoral process and leadership.

The debilitating poverty in midst of plenty and the rising level of public frustration as a result of abject poverty and misery in the land are caused by inimical actions and inactions of certain individuals and groups. The increased deprivations, structural weakness of public institutions, and the many other cases of injustice are the handiwork of certain individuals and groups. The activities of these individuals and groups constitute a serious economic, political and social sabotage to the extent that Nigeria as at 2007 was classified among the 50 fragile states in the world (Orji, 2011). Similarly, the country is on its way to becoming a failed state if it is not yet one. Certain individuals and groups are responsible for the above malaise, just as certain other individuals and groups are victims of the malaise. The perpetrators of the malaise have to be brought to book and victims granted adequate reparation, without which every effort at peace building will end up in futility. This underscores the need for transitional justice.

There was an attempt at transitional justice in Nigeria, but it failed woefully. In 1999, President Obasanjo established a Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission, headed by Justice Chukwudifu Oputa, to investigate human rights abuses committed from 1996 to 1999. The Oputa Panel, as it was called, worked for three years and at the end submitted a report to President Obasanjo. The report, which was not officially released to the public (though it leaked and the public got knowledge of its content), recommended compensation to victims of human rights abuse, and the prohibition of past dictators from holding public offices among others (Hayner, 2006). The recommendations were not implemented. In fact, former military dictator, Ibrahim Babangida, successfully challenged the Oputa Panel in court, stopping the Panel from compelling him to testify before it as well as dismissing any ban on him from holding public office. Rev. Fr. Matthew Hassan Kukah (now the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto Diocese), who was Secretary to the Panel, which was only a truth-seeking Commission, expresses his observation on the failure of the Panel and the attendant consequences:

The fact that Nigeria did not have the space to debate these key issues in its own TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission), the fact that no perpetrators of human rights

violations were ever brought to trial, that no one took responsibility for the institutionalization of impunity, that non were named and shamed for crimes against the state, violation of the constitution, assault on the citizens, all have meant that yesterday's villains have now recycled themselves or their proxies as today's public officers. Today, flawed elections, corruption in the national assembly, corruption in politics in general, neglect of rule of law, lack of transparency and accountability are all symptoms of the untreated disease of military dictatorship and not a new disease (Kukah, 2009, p.6).

Nigeria needs a system of transitional justice that is radically different from the Oputa Panel that was wrongly constituted, had limited powers to function effectively, did very little to address past wrongs, and even the little done not implemented.

MASS MEDIA IN NIGERIA: CHARACTER AND CHALLENGES

The socio-economic and political structure of a society determines the manner of operation of the mass media in that society. The socio-economic and political structure of the Nigerian society is one which is capitalist, underdeveloped, dependent, complex, transitional, and multicultural or plural in terms of cultural diversities (Aina, 1999). The character and operations of the mass media are a reflection of these realities of the Nigerian society. Thus, the media operate along ideological lines. According to Kur (2003), they represent the interests of the dominant class and seek to achieve the objectives of the class they represent. Along the same reasoning, Nwankwo (1987) describes the Nigerian mass media as bourgeois in character, representing the bourgeois Nigerian society. A bourgeois media cannot be for the best interest of the people. Such media operate to reinforce the status quo. The media may enjoy freedom of expression, but that freedom conforms only to the real economic and political realities of the capitalist system (Udoakah, 1990).

In what appears contrary to the foregoing, but is really not, is that the mass media in Nigeria, especially the privately-owned ones, are highly critical of government of the day. Even under repressive military dictatorships like those of Buhari, Babangida and Abacha, the media mustered the courage to criticize and challenge the dictators. Arguably, they did this not because their aim was to defend the masses. Their action is understood along the ideological reasoning of power interplay among members of the ruling class who were both military and civilians. From the backdrop of the foregoing character of the Nigerian mass media, their operations have been characterized by certain challenges, which are structural, internal and external to the media (Pate, 2012). Hence, political pressures and interferences, lack of professionalism, ethical violations, undue ethnic and sectional interests, poor remuneration of media workers, poorly maintained and inadequate facilities, poor training of media workers, over-commercialisation of the media, and

poor regulatory framework are the major problems militating against the effective performance of the mass media (Sowunmi, et al, 2010; Skjerdal, 2010; Iwokwagh & Batta, 2011).

MASS MEDIA AND THE SEARCH FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN NIGERIA

A crucial role of the mass media in facilitating transitional justice in Nigeria lies in advocacy journalism, which is the use of journalism techniques to promote a specific political or social cause. Jernigan and Wright (1996) see advocacy journalism, also called media advocacy, as the strategic use of the mass media as a resource to advance a social or public policy initiative. These definitions and many others suggest that advocacy journalism implies four assumptions: (1) it applies journalism techniques, (2) it is evidence-based reporting, (3) it has a stand point, and (4) it promotes a specific cause. Along the premises of these four assumptions, advocacy journalism could be employed to make a strong case for transitional justice in Nigeria. First, it would confer on media the crucial responsibility of articulating a justification for transitional justice, and not only disseminating this articulation, but also mobilizing the public to support and clamour for the institutionalisation of transitional justice. Secondly, by the principles of advocacy journalism, journalists and media workers in conjunction with other stakeholders constitute themselves into a civil society, which has the primary responsibility of highlighting and advocating against issues of injustice and inequalities (Iwokwagh, 2012). By advocacy journalism, media workers would also have a greater opportunity to partner more effectively with government institutions such as the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary in pursuing the cause of transitional justice. There are several examples that buttress the power of advocacy journalism in Nigeria: Advocacy journalism was a major tool used to fight for Nigeria's independence (Omu, 1978); it contributed significantly to the entrenchment of democratic rule in Nigeria (Nwosu, 2003); and it played a major role in mobilizing against the unpopular third term agenda of former President Olusegun Obasanjo (Agoh, 2007). Media advocacy is more effective when used in a multimedia approach. The multimedia approach, as explained by Kur and Gapsiso (2012), involves the use of different forms of media available in the urban, rural, and semi-urban areas separately and simultaneously. The different media forms include the traditional media (radio, television, newspapers and magazines), new media (internet and social media), indigenous media, and community media.

Another critical role of the mass media in the search for transitional justice lies in the agenda setting function. This function presupposes the impact of the media on cognitive changes in the audience, with the main idea being that the media indicate to the public what the main issues of the day are, and the public perceives these issues as important to actively respond to (McQuail, 2005). Through agenda setting, the media would not only raise awareness of the need for transitional justice, but would also instill in the public ideas to work with towards the realization of transitional justice. This is what is referred to as framing, an aspect of agenda setting theory, which is today treated as a separate theory because of its importance in explaining the process of mass media effect. Framing is the process of centrally organizing ideas for news

content that supplies a context and suggest what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration (Griffin, 2000). Explaining framing further, McQuail (2005, p.378) maintains that “frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies.” The mass media could therefore frame the need for transitional justice in such a way as to attract overwhelming support and instigate action.

The community broadcasting project, as a form of mass media practice, is an excellent tool in facilitating the establishment and sustenance of an effective system of transitional justice. Community broadcasting stands for democratic, participatory and horizontal communication, as against the existing public and commercial broadcasting forms, which are largely vertical or one-way kind of communication that excludes many people (mostly the rural dwellers and urban peasants) from active communication. Community broadcasting thus becomes a good vehicle that can drive messages of mobilization and agitation for transitional justice. Nigeria is the only country in the West African sub-region that is yet to commence the community broadcasting project. The delay in the commencement of the issuance of licenses for community broadcasting is an indication that the government is reluctant in implementing this project, which can facilitate all round development, as it is “the oil which helps the community development machine to keep running without breaking down” (Alumuku, 2006, p.24). There is every need for all stakeholders not only in the mass media industry, but in the Nigerian project, to continue to agitate and mount pressure on the government to approve the immediate take off of community broadcasting.

In the present era of information society, with many people in Nigeria having access to different forms of digital communication, the use of new media are very influential in a campaign for social justice in Nigeria. New media are understood as the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in their associated contexts, to include the juxtaposition of three elements: technological artifacts and devices; activities, practices and uses; and social arrangements and organizations that form around the devices and practices (Lievrouw & Livinstone, cited in McQuail, 2005). Accessibility to individual users as senders and/or receivers, interactivity, multiplicity of use and open-ended character, ubiquity and delocatedness, and convergence are some important characteristics of the new media that give them an edge over the traditional mass media. Thus, the new media are hugely advantageous in a campaign for social justice in the sense that they have the potential to enable: (1) many-to-many conversation; (2) simultaneous reception, alteration and redistribution of cultural objects; (3) the dislocation of communicative action from the posts of the nation, from the territorialized spatial relations of modernity; (4) the provision of instantaneous global contact; (5) the insertion of the modern subject into a machine apparatus that is not networked (Poster, cited in McQuail, 2005).

The effectiveness of new media in a campaign of this nature is seen in the example of the Arab Spring. The new media, particularly the social media, have been acknowledged as one of the strongest factors that contributed to the success of the revolutionary wave that swept across some countries in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, leading to leadership change in those countries. As the sit-tight former leaders of Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen exercised firm governmental control over the traditional media in these

countries, the people resorted to the use of the social media as an alternative voice that agitated loudly and clearly for leadership change. This voice was actively heard and received widely, attracting national and international support, which contributed to the leadership change in these countries. The social media could do same in championing the cause of transitional justice in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION: A WAY FORWARD

The argument thus far in this article has been that the mass media have a critical role in the realization of a credible and sustainable policy of transitional justice in Nigeria for sustainable peace and stability, which are necessary for sustainable development. This role can be effectively discharged only when certain obstacles that pose a serious challenge to mass media performance in Nigeria are removed. Thus, within the media industry, serious efforts must be made to address the challenges of ethical and moral decay, unprofessionalism, and unhealthy ethnic, sectional and religious differences. It is also imperative to strengthen regulatory frameworks, train and re-train media workers for best practices that encourage serious investigative and advocacy journalism, and ensure a horizontal and democratic approach to communication (largely with the institutionalization of community broadcasting). Outside the media industry, it is incumbent upon all stakeholders in the Nigerian development project to ensure a radical reconstruction of the Nigerian society to encourage a true democratic culture that is not only desirable but necessary as it allows for the development of a free, independent and pluralistic media environment.

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