The Electronic Media: A Formidable Instrument For Promoting And Sustaining Responsible Democracy In Nigeria

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Abstract
This paper focuses on the indispensability and effectiveness of the Electronic Media in imbibing and translating the principles of democracy and sustaining responsible democracy in Nigeria. The paper introduces to the scholar/reader the History of the great country Nigeria; starting from 1901 during which time she was part of the British Empire (the foremost world power at the time). Furthermore her Independence and First Republic were discussed. The meaning, definition of Mass Media as well as the meaning and definition of Electronic Media were explained. The Electronic media challenges in a democracy were highlighted and the Principles of democracy of the United States of America were X-rayed and upheld. The audience of this paper will be exposed to the ethics; the true nature of democracy and the well-meaning individuals will be rightly influenced to play by the rules of principles of responsible democracy. Finally, it urges Nigerians who stand on the fence when their contributions to Nation building and development are mostly needed to re-strategize and inculcate transparency in Nigeria’s elections and democratic governance.

Keywords: electronic media, instrument, promoting, sustaining, responsible, democracy.

INTRODUCTION
There is need for a new comer to the Nigerian Democracy to have a little insight into a short history of the sovereign state called Nigeria. Citing Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki History of Nigeria recapitulated the birth of Nigeria as an event following the claims of the British to a West African sphere of influence after the Napolianic wars by 1885. As a result of international recognition accorded it, the Royal Niger Company was chartered under the leadership of Sir Geord Taubman Goldie. This accorded Nigeria a British protectorate in 1901, thereby making her part of the British Empire-the foremost world power at the time.

Independence
In response to Nigerian nationalism the British Government moved Nigeria towards self-government on a representative basis. In 1960 Nigeria was granted full independence under parliamentary government and a good measure of self-government for the country’s three regions-North, East and West. The Federal Government was given power to legislate in a bicameral parliament with executive power vested in a Prime Minister and cabinet and judicial authority in a Federal Supreme Court. Unfortunately, three political parties developed along three main ethnic groups-Nigeria peoples party (NPC) in the Northern Region which represented the Hausas dominated by Muslims; the National Convention of Nigerian citizens (NCNC) which represent the Igbos dominated by Christians who ruled the Eastern Region; and the Action Groups (AG) in the west inhabited largely by Yorubas. In October 1963 Nigeria proclaimed itself a Federal Republic with Nnamdi Azikiwe (NCNC) as the first President and Sir Abubaker Tafewa Balewa (NPC) as the first prime minister. The AG became the opposition under Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

First Republic
In the three years of the Federal Republic Nigeria’s ethnic and regional interests manifested themselves in economic and educational disparities between the North and the South. This provided an excuse for the military to takeover the government in 1966 and this led to a civil war from 1967 to 1970. The Military ruled Nigeria for a period of 16 years and it was not until the military handed over to the civilians in 1999 that Nigeria tasted democratic government for the first time.

Democracy In Nigeria
Any from of government in which the people hold power under a free electoral system may be regarded as a democracy. Although there are several types of democracy, two principles may guide any definition of democracy: the first is where all members of the society have equal access to power and the second is where all members enjoy universally recognized liberties and freedoms. However some democracies provide better representation and more freedom for their citizens than others. The 1999 constitution guaranteed separation of powers between the executive, the legislature and the Judiciary and recognized majority rule as a characteristic feature of democracy. However, this depended on whether power was acquired in a way harmless to democracy. “The majority rule” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy-page (2 of 18). It also depended on
whether the elections were competitive, free and fair, freedom of political expression and speech, freedom of the press so that the citizens were well informed and able to vote in their personal interests.

Citing Ayres Clearance, Adeniyi Olusegun http://www.prinigeria.net/opinionsegun2.htm. “The essence of democracy” is the continuous process of education and enlightenment. “You need the media to have an informed citizenry, without which democracy is a mere farce”. The media has increasingly intertwined with the practice of democracy in various countries and Nigeria cannot be an exception. While most Nigerians have a great deal of exposure to the media in the realms of entertainment and culture, many do not understand how the media politics and public policy interact with each other and thereby affect their lives. However, investigative reporting has exposed some important crimes against the country both at national and international levels, thereby highlighting the role of the media in buttressing and deepening democracy.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY TO THE READERS
It is expected that all those in governance and leadership positions, the governed as well as the readers of this paper will understand the full implications of democracy and will play by the rules and practice of responsible democracy.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The problem is that a good percentage of both those in governance and the governed do not understand fully the true meaning of democracy and its implications thereby they find it difficult to put into practice the democratic principles.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY
The limitation of this study is lack of adequate funds.

Electronic Media: The Challenges
Carona, Shelia, http://www.prinigeria.net/opinionsegun2.htm Role of the Media in a Democracy by Olusegun Ademiyi, p (4 of 6) was quoted as stating ‘serious reporting is often difficult to sustain in competitive media markets that put a premium on the shallow and sensational. Moreover, the media are sometimes used as proxies in the battle between rival political groups, in the process sowing divisiveness, rather than consensus, hate speech instead for sober debates, and suspicion rather than social trust. In these cases, the media contribute to public “cynicism and democratic decay”. On the same note, an American media authority (Bogart, Leo 5 of 6) poses and answers the question on whether “media inherently serve democracy”? He posited that media are instruments, which serve different ends. “They are indispensable to a democratic society because they make information available to all social levels and in all geographic corners”. So far in this paper the history of the advent of democracy in modern Nigeria has been renewed and it is now poised to attempt the role of electronic media in promoting and sustaining responsible democracy.

Electronic Media Roles in a Democracy
The electronic media-film, television, Internet are psychologically superior to the radio because of their “visual thinking” effects. In furtherance of the argument for inclusion of film in the national/state budgets, it is pertinent to note that “film is a language of the now” Above views by worth, Tobia. The uses of film in Education and communication, 1996 (15 of 15) affirms that the problem of intelligence is half solved with seeing/viewing/watching the film and the television. The perception of the viewer is original and native to him. Responsible use of the electronic media shapes the society positively. Free media are a sine qua non for democratic development hence; the electronic media are a formidable instrument for creating, inculcating in the minds, deepening and sustaining democracy, more especially in the less developed areas of the country. However, one will not lose sight of the fact that the rapid expansion of various news forms of electronic interchange and including the newest form-the Internet more than ever before provide “opportunities for communication across national and international boundaries thereby promoting fertilization of ideas according to Ott, Dana. “Power to the people” the role of electronic media in promoting Democracy in Africa, 2007 p(1 of 21). The Internet with its modernity, acceptability and instantaneous characteristics is highly selective. The percentage of the people who can access the Internet is low because of reasons ranging from computer illiteracy, poverty and inability to purchase a computer set or not having the where with all to visit the cyber café.

Democracy in Action
This paper will not be concluded without reference to recent events in United State of America elections, which gave Barack Obama ticket to the US Presidency. With the introduction of the fairness doctrine in 1949 series of litigations interrupted in US. The fairness Doctrine was a policy of the US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that required the holders of broadcast licenses to present controversial issues of public importance in a manner that was honest, equitable and balanced. This is different from the Equal Time Rule, which deals only with political candidates while the Fairness Doctrine deals with matters of public importance. The US Supreme Court upheld the Commission’s general right to enforce the Fairness Doctrine where channels were limited but the courts have generally not ruled that the FCC was obliged to do so in commission’s policy or congression legislation. The controversy continued from 1984 to 1986 and in 1987 and in 1987
the Fairness Doctrine was abolished by FCC by a 4-0 vote decision, due to the intrusion of the government which restricted the journalistic freedom of broadcasters in the presentation of controversial issues of public importance. http://wikipedia.org/wiki/fairness doctrine (p 1 of 7). That is why Barack Obama (democrat) supported media-ownership caps, network neutrality, public broadcasting as well as increasing minority ownership of Broadcasting... The author feels Nigeria should as much as possible go along the lines, in order to achieve democracy goals:

Mass Media: Definition and Meaning
Mass media refer to the types of media in which messages can be presented simultaneously to multiple audiences in different locations. According to Abone, Clementina, "Mass Media: Effective instrument for promoting Health Programmes in Africa. "Emugu Rhyce Kerek, 2008 (174). To buttress the points above, Clementina Abone in Nwosu, Ikechukwu et al stated that mass media mediate most public communication, interaction and transaction and spring up the infrastructure for critical social and institutional functions such as elections, economic depression, global financial down turn, health programmes, civil wars, earth quakes and Religion.

Electronic Media: Definition and Meaning
Citing from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia http://en.wikipedia.org/electronic media, they are media that utilize electronics or electromechanical energy for the end user (audience) to access the content. This is in contrast to static media (mainly print media), which are most often created electronically, but don’t require electronics to be accessed by the end user in the printed form. But for the purposes of this paper, electronic media can be defined as “any equipment used in the electronic communication process (e.g. television, radio, desktop, computer, Internet, hand held device. The web page is an electronic medium-
http://onwikipedia.org/wiki/electronic media

Internet Campaign: The US Example
Any country desiring to promote and sustain a responsible democracy should borrow the example of the United States of America Tuesday November 4, 2008 presidential elections and the recourse to electronic media especially the Internet. Candidates reached out to internet users through their own sites. Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama, Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki United States (p 10 of 31) was able to create a broad grassroots movement, innovating campaign strategies, by courting and mobilizing activists, donations and voters through the internet. Besides he set fundraising records more than one month through support from a large number of individual small donors. “On December 16, 2007 Ron Paul collected $6 million more money on a single day through internet donations than any presidential candidate in US history”. Noteworthy was the emergence of some organizations that specialized in reproducing and distributing viral materials like “Brave New Films” resulting in having a growing influence on American politics. With the use of the electronic media it was easy for the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to maintain a track record of general campaign expenses by a total of 148 candidates for all parties which rose to a staggering figure of $1,644, 712,232. The amounts raised and spent by the major candidates according to the same source were also recorded Presidential Election 2008 – Wikipedia, free encyclo… http://wikipedia/ united_states presidential election_2008 p. 1 of 31. see below:

U.S General Expenses Summary
- Barack Obama (D)/$532,946,511/$513,557,218/69,447,084 = #7.39 per vote
- John McCain (R)/$379,006,485/@$346,666,422/59,925,610=$ 5.78
- Ralph Nader (1) $4,496,180/$4187,628/736,434 = $5.69
- Bob Barr (L) $1,383,681/$345,202/524,334 = $2.57
- Chuck Baldwin (C)/$261,673/$234,309/196,505 = $1.19
- Cynthia McKinney (G)$240,130/$238,968/161,146.$1.48

Excludes spending by independent expenditure concerns.
Source: FEC[83]

Principles of American Democracy
(1) Free elections are used to select representatives of the people
(2) The powers of government are based on the consent of the governed.
(3) Public questions are decided by the will of the majority.
(4) Rule of law guarantees right and freedoms.
- Freedom to live or travel anywhere in the US
- Freedom to work at any job for which one qualifies
- Freedom to marry and raise a family
- Freedom to receive free education in public schools
- Freedom to join a political party, union or other legal groups
(5) People retain the right to alter or abolish a government that becomes destructive and form a new government.
(6) Equality under the law is promised for all citizens
Majority rule will prevail with the rights of minorities protected.

The organization of government is based on the separation of powers, which include the concept or checks and balances.

Student's should take notes for each of the above items. Source above.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The last Nigerian general elections were held in 2007. The Government and State Assembly elections were held on April 14, while the Presidential and National Assembly elections were held on April 21, 2007 (p1 of 8). The elections are not comparable with November 2008 US elections. Two years after Nigerian elections litigations on who won the elections have not ended. Indeed this calls for sober reflection. It is however important to remember that the global antecedent was made possible by recourse to the Internet and other electronic media.

Another factor that helped to set the model was sincerity and integrity of the Americans. For instance the example set by George Bush was worthy and commendable. Not only did he make his speech a week before the handover, he was candid to admit what he failed to do well and what he did well but also recommended what needs to be done well. What was most interesting was the viewing from the electronic media how president Bush and his wife as well as President Obama and his wife stood in most friendly terms before the capitol building and the white house where they drank together. Similarly McCain, Obama’s opponent did not waste time in extending the hand of friendship to his victor in the presence of a huge world audience. This is responsible democracy, which should be sustained and emulated by Nigeria. The United States of America’s Presidential Election is very much around, the corner – November 2012. The author urges Nigerians to watch with keen interest and wrap attention the United States of America 2012 Presidential Great Debate/Election between President Barack Obama and MITT ROMNEY. In order imbibe the culture of Free, Fair and Credible elections for the sustenance of responsible democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- National action plan for the security of media personnel should be developed and sustained.
- Only seasoned and tested media artists and technicians should be employed.
- Our universities/ The Nigerian Universities should be seen as frontiers of knowledge and as such only those duly certified university materials should be given admission as was in the sixties, seventies and eighties.
- Adequate Budgetary allocation should be granted to the Federal media institutions in the country.
- To those who stand on the fence when their contributions to nation building and development are mostly needed the author urges to re-strategize and inculcate transparency in Nigeria’s elections.

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