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IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES:

SOME FUNDAMENTAL TOPICS

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CHAPTER 2

MASS MEDIA AND CONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: A CALL FOR PEACE ORIENTED JOURNALISM

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2.1. Introduction

Conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end. Our survival on this planet hinges on how we manage the various features of conflict that is fuelled not only by seemingly incompatible interests and values, but also by hostilities (Jeong, 2008).

The Nigerian success story of amalgamation of diverse groups in 1914 has radically shifted from a platform of peaceful coexistence to an arena of hostility, conflict and gradual disintegration. The popular explanations for this unexpected situation include colonialism, corruption, political instability and protracted ethnic and religious conflicts. The spate of these insecurity, conflicts and threats to lives and properties in Nigeria has reached alarming proportions, despite the growing democratic system.

With these plethora of conflicts (political, religious, ethnic and communal) that dotted the landscape of Nigeria before and since the restoration of civilian rule in May 1999, and with the heap of complaints from some observers that journalists are biased, sensational, pre-occupied with commercial gains, unpatriotic

among other allegations when reporting conflicts, one cannot but ask these questions: How should the media cover conflicts? What is and what determines news? Does the press monitor itself? What should be the roles of media stakeholders in a situation of conflict? These allegations are not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Across the globe, mass media have been used as tools to inflame grievances and accelerate escalations towards violent conflicts. In Rwanda the radio was used to lay the groundwork for genocide while the television was manipulated to whip up the ethnic tensions prior to the civil war in Serbia. In the former Soviet Republic of Georgia similarly, territorial disputes were aggravated by the news media (Forges, 1999). Many critics of the United States (US) war in Iraq opined that if elite media had not backed President George Bush, it would have been difficult for the US to leave for Iraq. In Thailand, media was identified as the main energizer for the Red shirt demonstrators in a three months conflict that ended violently last year. Although, it is generally believed to be a sign of impending good governance, social media were recognized as the motivator of the ravaging Middle East conflict and protest for change of leadership.

The media are also supposed to play a change agent role. Unfortunately, as numerous mass communication studies have shown, the media all too often end up protecting the *status quo*. Nonetheless, the literature shows that the media act to constrain other groups, such as social protesters who attempt to effect social change, especially when the protest groups become more violent militant. Gitlin (1977) argues that the nature of media coverage of social protest "fragments" social consciousness and stunts social change.

2. 2. Conceptual Clarification

2.2.1. Conflict

Conflict is actual or perceived opposition of needs, values and interests. According to Brahm (2003), conflict can be intrapersonal (internal or within oneself), interpersonal (between two or more people) or prevalent conflict (affecting many people). Conflict is the result of many aspects of social life such as social disagreement, conflicts of interests, and fights between individuals, groups, or organizations. In a broad sense, the concept of conflict has been stretched and molded to describe any discord resulting from almost every aspect of social situations. Conflict can therefore occur between two individuals and groups of friend, within a family and between families, within an ethnic group and between some ethnic groups, within an organization and between organizations, within a state and between states.

Zartman (1991) sees conflict as the "violent exhibition or expression of incompatibility". However, Ho-Won (2008) claims that conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end.

2.2.2. Stages of Conflict

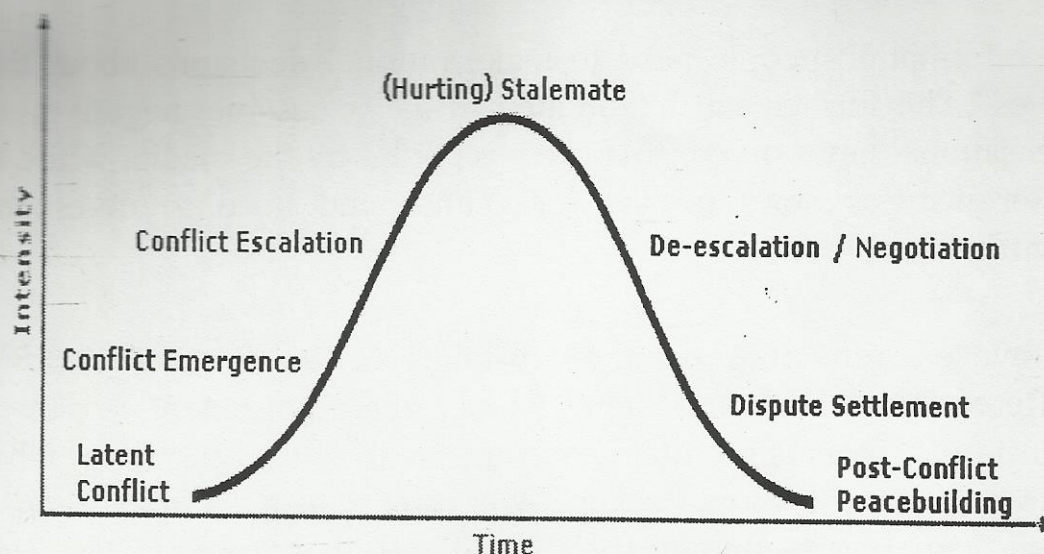
Conflicts don't just erupt. They pass through stages. Therefore, it behoves media organizations to identify these stages and report about them timely, accurately and objectively. The potential for conflict exists whenever people have different needs, values, or interests; this is the latent conflict stage. The conflict may not become apparent until a "triggering event" leads to the emergence (or beginning) of the obvious conflict.

Emergence may be followed quickly by settlement or resolution, or it may be followed by escalation, which can become very destructive. Although causes of escalation are complex, a common root cause of internal conflict comes from feelings of extreme frustration. These frustrations are due to perceptions that certain basic needs are not being met. According to UNESCO (2004) there are also other more indirect causes of escalation in which the media have a critical role. "The '*security dilemma*' is one of such processes where the media can intentionally (as was the case of a propaganda machine both in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, or unintentionally, act as a vehicle to escalation". Escalations, however, cannot continue indefinitely. By intervention or a situation in which neither side can take any further worthwhile action, the conflict enters a stalemate.

De-escalation can be temporary or can be part of a broader trend toward settlement or resolution. Conversely, escalation may lead to a stalemate, a situation in which neither side can win. If the pain of continuing the conflict exceeds that of maintaining the confrontation, the parties are in a "hurting stalemate," which often presents an ideal opportunity for negotiation and a potential settlement.

Finally, if and when an agreement is reached, peace building efforts work to repair damaged relationships with the long-term goal of reconciling former opponents. From these, therefore, it can be concluded that conflict is inevitable in all human societies. Our survival hinges on how we manage the various stages and features of conflict that is fuelled not only by seemingly incompatible interests and values but also by the roles often played by the media.

Fig. 2. 1: A Graphical Representation of Stages of Conflict (Brahm 2003)



2.2.3. News

A single definition for news is problematic because so many different factors influence its selection and production. There are also many different approaches to analyzing news selection whereby each views the news from a different theoretical perspective. Therefore news is what the newspapers print in their news columns and what radio and television broadcast on their news programmes. Limiting the definition to this is not very helpful to do justice to the above allegations.

According to Charles Dana in Mencher (1981), "news is anything that interests a large part of the community and has never been brought to their attention before". One of Dana's editors, however, defined news through his classical comments that; "if a dog bites a man, it is not news, but if a man bites a dog, it is news". This suggests that news is a report of the unusual, even though news is not always about unusual events.

While summing up the definition of news, Mencher (1981) gave two general guidelines: "News is information about a break from the normal flow of events, an interruption in the expected"; "News

is information people need to make rational decisions about their lives” The former can be situated in the excessive, negative, and sensational news on conflict often reported by the media, while the later justifies news on the root cause and need to de-escalate conflict.

However, reflecting on the attributes of news, Okoye (2006) offered this definition of news which, to a great extent, serves our purpose: “News is the timely account of an interesting event which the public must know because it is important as it helps them to live their lives meaningfully”. The importance given to one piece of news over another or the process of deciding what is news depends on a variety of factors, such as proximity, prominence, magnitude, impact, timeliness and oddity. Although widely used and accepted, radical scholars have condemned these news determinants for their emerging irrelevance in modern time. Still, news media employ these criteria. There are, however, some important differences in the amount of emphasis each news organ places on them. Rationalizations for this criticism are analyzed in the theoretical framework.

2.2.4. News as a Source of Conflict

Conflict is the bread and butter of journalism. This is expected, because conflict sells. Take any newspaper, listen to any news broadcast, watch documentaries on television and one is confronted by stories with potentials to spark conflict.

The situation is not different in Nigeria. Examples abound on how indigenous media have contributed to start and escalate conflicts. The yet to be abated Jos conflict is linked to the Plateau Radio-Television service. According to the Daily Trust newspaper of June 15, 2010, the broadcasting house was accused and charged to court on the fact that it triggered attacks in the state.

The moment conflict erupts, mass media begin to seek for exclusive and bizarre scenes to report even if those scenes do not serve any developmental purpose for the society. Also during conflict, media exaggerate casualty figures without credible and reliable sources, such as the police. Even when they report from the same conflict spot or police press release, they still give conflicting figures of casualty. These days, very few newspapers quote police sources. Most times they quote unreliable sources and thereafter hid behind background and deep background forms of attribution.

As if orgy scenes are not enough, media use chilling and gory photographs that, on their own, can instigate more violence. We all, or some of us, still remembered what happened during Shagamu conflict when newspapers and television showed the pictures of dead bodies, believed to be Hausas, loaded in trucks being taken to the mortuary. Within hours of dissemination, spontaneous reprisal killings of Yoruba started in the north.

Though, there are times when journalists have to show disturbing photographs in order to make the government and readers realize what is happening and hopefully get something done about it, but they should realize as well that this is not applicable in all situations, in all countries. That is why Moeller (2009) observed that images tell a more compelling story than words, providing good reasons for governments' traditional attempts to control images either by not showing them to the public or by imposing tight restrictions on their use.

These unethical practices go on till today unabated. The formation of different associations of journalists such as NAWOJ, Association of Christians Journalists, Muslim Media Group etc and segregation into Southern and Northern press axis are not helping matters. These unnecessary classifications, most times, affect and

determine the direction of news of many newspaper and magazines on national issues.

Akinfeleye (2003) reacting to the Nigerian media practices warned that:

If the Nigerian press will continue to play a significant role in our political, social and economic transformation, if the Nigerian press is to be given the well deserved respect by the publics, if the Nigerian press is to be truly the Fourth Estate of the Realm and not the Fourth Estate of the Wreck, this is the time to respect and work out a new agenda for adherence to the social responsibility of the press.

The tension and violence experienced during the Sharia launch was not due to the complaint of non Muslim who live in Zamfara but due to the editorial contents of some newspapers and magazines that betrayed the ethic of the profession. According to Aliagan (2009) "one newspaper columnist in the *Guardian* went as far as calling for war against all northerners in Lagos, from beggars to gatemen, cleaners, and gardeners because they were the apostles and soldiers of the new jihad".

No doubt, this was a clear hate media with ethnic colouration, the type that apparently instigated Rwanda ethnic war in 1994 that claimed over 500,000 lives. The same brand of journalism that Akinfeleye (2003) tagged "socially irresponsible" journalism and about which he offered this piece of advice, "Let the press focus their activities and news coverage and presentation in the new millennium more on the promotion, protection and preservation of our national interest and sustainable democracy".

2.2.5. How Media Portray Conflict Stories?

Due to the history-on-the-run nature of the news media, conflict discourse is often not exhaustive. Eti (2009) claimed that this is

because reporting does not capture the entire life circle of a particular conflict situation. The process of approaching conflict from holistic perspective is what Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) call "conflict mapping", Eti added. They however cited Wehr (1979) who described conflict mapping as an "understanding of the origins, nature, dynamics and possibilities for resolution of the conflict." This is the ideal which most journalists often ignore but rather resort to the following:

- Media mostly just follow events. They don't explain what led to those events.
- They concentrate on bad news of conflict and maintain silence on peace processes.
- They are often sensational and emotional in tone.
- Who are the news makers? They tend to focus on powerful people, political leaders, the rich and the famous who live in town and cities.
- They often reinforce stereotypes.
- When telling every story, they not only choose who and what to include inside the frame but who and what to leave out.

2.2.6. Conflict Sensitive Journalism

This is a kind of journalism that focuses on restoration of peace rather than promotion of violence. It is a brand of journalism that gives recognition to people who condemn violence. Conflict sensitive journalism was developed from the 1970 Johan Galtung's Peace Journalism initiatives propounded to condemn the traditional journalism penchant for promotion and sensationalism of conflict and war. Howard (2003) described it thus:

A conflict sensitive journalist applies conflict analysis and searches for new voices and new ideas about the conflict. He or she reports on who is trying to resolve the conflict, looks closely at all sides, and reports on how other conflicts were resolved. A conflict sensitive journalist takes no sides, but is engaged in the search

for solutions. Conflict sensitive journalists choose their words carefully.

Conflict sensitive journalism also abhors only reporting what divides the sides in conflict as well as words like terrorist, extremist or fanatic. These languages portray journalists as taking sides and making the other side seem impossible to negotiate with, which directly or indirectly prolong the conflict. In that wise, a journalist that is conflict sensitive will identify and label people what they call themselves either before the emergence of the conflict or during the conflict.

2.2.7. Peace Oriented Journalism

Over a long period of time, conventional coverage of conflicts in Nigeria and across the world is constantly and consistently stained with sensational stories that escalate conflicts and promote war. In the 1970s, an apparent call for a shift from this tradition made a Norwegian scholar, Johan Galtung, developed a set of standard for judging conflict reporting. Galtung's concepts which advocate for change of attitudes and behaviour in the coverage and framing of conflicts/war and peace are adapted in this article to serve as reference point for Nigerian journalists and other stakeholders.

Table 2. 1: Galtung's Indicators of Conflict/War Journalism and Peace Journalism.

Conflict/War Journalism Approach	Peace Journalism Approach
Visible effects of war (Stories that focus only on visible effects of violence such as killed, wounded and material damage)	Invisible effects of war (Stories on long-term economic costs, trauma, culture etc)
Elite/official – oriented sources (Elite mouthpiece)	People– oriented (Stories that give voice to all parties)
Differences – Oriented	Agreement – oriented
Focus on here and now event	Focus on causes or consequences of war
Report on direct violence	Structural or cultural violence
Dichotomise the good and the bad	Avoid good /bad dichotomy
Two-party oriented stories framing	Multi-parties oriented stories
Zero-sum oriented (Stories that describe conflict as two-sided, as any gain for one side is a loss for other)	Win-win or loss-loss orientation. (Stories that is solution- oriented)
<i>Discuss military options (that peace will only come from victory and ceasefire)</i>	Discuss peaceful option (Highlight peaceful initiatives)
Support “our” roles (supporting the position of the country in which news is produced)	Critical of “our” roles

Source: Hackett and Schroeder (2008)

3.1. Chronicles of Recent Conflicts in Nigeria

Since 2010, there were dozens of active conflicts across Nigeria. Many of them are brutal. Many have been on for years threatening the lives of millions of men, women, and children. In December 2010 up to 70 were killed in the northern city of Bauchi in a clash between Islamic religious sect the Yan Kala Kato and the police after the group broke the ban on open-air preaching. In January 2011, Muslim-Christian tensions again erupted in bloody clashes

in Jos city, Plateau State, before military restored order. By the time the dust settled down police announced that at least 320 were killed, but aid workers and local leaders placed death toll at over 550, with 18,000 displaced, and some 300 arrested. Also, in the same month, there was a sharp deterioration in Niger Delta, as militant group Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) announced end of 3-month ceasefire and promised "all out onslaught" on oil industry (Bloomberg, 2010).

In March, about 500 mostly Christian women and children were killed in attacks on 3 villages by Fulani gangs and 20 more killed in neighbourhoods/villages. Christian majority in the region condemned military response as partisan (*Daily Independent*, 2010). Christian and Muslim youths clashed in Wukari, Taraba State, in July where 4 were killed in a dispute over location of mosque; Shiite and Sunni clashed in Sokoto on 20th July. In the same month in Niger Delta, gunmen blew up country home of impeached deputy governor of Bayelsa State, a backdrop of political tensions between the Governor and the Deputy Governor. In view of these, Senate President David Mark called for state of emergency in South Eastern States to stem increasing cases of kidnapping, including of 4 journalists and driver seized in Abia State.

In October 2010, dozens of houses were burned and 13 killed over a land dispute between Boje and Nsadop communities in Cross River State. Same month, security services intercepted large weapons shipment in Lagos Port reportedly loaded in Iran (*Economist*, 7 Oct. 2010). Violence flared in January in North East States. Human Rights Watch reported that more than 200 were killed in reprisal attacks following the 24th December bomb blasts in Plateau State capital, Jos. In retaliation, bus carrying Muslim wedding guests was attacked by suspected Christians, sparking deadly riots between rival groups in South West of Jos.

Islamist sect Boko Haram claimed responsibility for series of deadly bomb blasts in three towns shortly after President

...the Governor reconfirmed that he never called me and never texted me any message on Dogo Na Hauwa, Rasat, Natum and other villages and he said that in the presence of the Police Commissioner... Director of State Security... I don't know why journalists keep either lying or misrepresenting or misquoting individuals.... Sometimes, I wonder if you guys are Nigerians. If only you know the level of damage you are doing to your country in an apparent attempt to discredit your armed forces. You do not see American journalists criticizing their military. Perhaps they criticize government policy but not its military.

Bad media coverage may help 'ignite' sectarian conflict in Nigeria'- Archbishop warns EWTN NEWS-Mar 18, 2010:

After a fresh round of violence on March 16 between Fulani herdsmen and Jos-area villagers, the Archbishop of Jos, Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, reiterated that the attacks do not constitute a clash between Christians and Muslims. He also voiced his concern that the international press has misrepresented the situation and is "trying to throw fuel on the fire" by igniting sectarian hatred.

The archbishop urged the media not only to be interested in crises but also to cover peace initiatives undertaken before or after conflicts. "Whilst some newspapers, including *The Independent*, allude to poverty and corruption as decisive factors, others, particularly *The Times* and *The Telegraph*, put the continued conflicts down to 'sectarianism'. *The Guardian* makes no reference to the conflict, an interesting lack of coverage. The *BBC* in its handling of events has cited various figures of the Christian and Muslim dead, according to the prominence of sources used on the ground", he lamented.

Jonathan's 29 May inauguration in 2011. By 12 June, Boko Haram gave conditions for dialogue with government, which include Sharia law in the North and release of all detained members. Also, the group claimed responsibility for 16 June suicide bomb blast at Nigeria Police headquarters, Abuja where several people were killed including police officers. The blast marked the group's first operation in Abuja and first use of suicide bombing in Nigeria. In August 2011, about 23 people were killed and dozens injured in a massive car bomb targeting United Nation building in Abuja. Same month, around 50 people were killed in a renewed violence in Barkin-Ladi area and Jos, Plateau State by youths wearing military uniforms (New York Times, 2011)

3. 2. Insight on News Media Coverage of Conflict: Jos Example

There are some beliefs and opinions held by some people regarding newspaper coverage of conflicts in Nigeria. It is obvious that certain sections of the media have always taken sides in reporting of events in the recurring crises on the Plateau, and this has the capacity to cause more harm than good". For instance, The Vanguard Newspaper of Saturday, 27 March 2010 with the caption 'Jos Crisis: GOC Explodes!'. And reporting on the General Officer Commanding.

Rolling out his complaints on media coverage of Jos conflict, Major General Saleh Maina, General Officer Commanding (GOC) 3 Division said, "I was very disappointed that some part of the print media misconstrued, misunderstood, misrepresented and misinformed the public and was apportioning blame on the military.

Reacting to the controversial text messages reported in the media to have been sent by the Plateau State Governor to him, Maj. Gen. Maina said:

The archbishop concluded that positive and objective reportage devoid of sentimental outbursts will help create a healthier and more peaceful society.

Muslim media group asks for fair coverage in Jos - 15

March 2010:

"As an umpire, the media has a duty to be fair, just and balanced in its reportage of events, not only in respect of the Jos crisis, but also other issues in line with the ethics of the journalism profession," said MMGN.

Meanwhile a source who wished to be anonymous lamented in *Media Watch* February 9, 2010.

When I was growing up journalism was a daring profession, the domain of honest men and women of proven integrity for whom trustworthiness and reliability through verification and cross-referencing of information with all relevant parties to an issue was crucial before for anything could qualify as a broadcastable (sic) news item. These were non-negotiable components of genuine journalistic professionalism. Through their reports we developed a strong liking and longing for news hours and the pages of the newspapers. Their reportage was educative, informative, and inspiring. We didn't need to probe any further. We were served nothing but the truth. However, this kind of journalism and journalist seems to have fizzled into oblivion and they are remembered only with a groan of the good turned bad, sometimes even worse.

And capping the grouse, the source said:

Unless the journalistic profession is rescued from the current bunch of practitioners, I am afraid, we might soon be conducting a funeral service for the once beloved profession, I say this sincerely as a realist who sees things the way they are and says it the way it is. For the few lone voices of irreproachable, responsible, and just journalism, please keep on, as there might be some young person out there who will live to celebrate you as I do the journalists and journalism of my childhood.

4.1. Things to Consider When Covering Conflicts

- **Understand the stage of conflict first:** This is necessary to avoid misleading information, raising tension etc. But mostly media overlook this especially where the conflict stage is latent. E.g. while the JOS conflict was going on series of media reports on imminent attack in some parts of Oyo state from Fulani cattle rarer awash the National newspapers. Just recently it was in the news that Boko Haram sect were set for another attack but the police denied.
- **Understand what is going on:** Deep-rooted and intractable conflicts as we are experiencing in Jos tend to be very complex. Good journalism requires a conflict assessment to understand who all the parties are and what role they are playing in the situation.
- **What are the underlying causes of the conflict?** Disputants often frame the conflict in relatively simple (and often self-serving) terms. Very often the sides see the underlying causes as very different. In Jos some said is religion, ethnic, political. Sometimes they don't even know what they are, as the conflict has gone on so long and become so embedded in the culture, that raw emotions: fear, humiliation, and anger overlie earlier substantive concerns. Good journalists will explore both the superficial, but also the underlying causes of the conflict from all points of view.

- **What are the full effects of the conflict on different constituency groups?** Conflict participants, particularly those most directly involved in the struggle, often don't really understand the full cost of the conflict and the potential benefits of settlement or resolution. Doing an assessment of the human, as well as monetary costs, of the conflict on the primary parties, the by-standers (people caught in the middle) and on allies and neighbors of the disputants often reveals an overlooked picture of the conflict situation.
- **Reflect conflict's plurality:** Rather than portray a conflict as involving only two groups or parties you should mention all parties and individuals involved and affected. The recent bombing in Warri was due to a report credited to the Delta State Governor and sensationalized by the media that some groups among the militants are not matter in the conflict.
- **Where are you getting your "facts?"** Factual disputes are rampant in complex, intractable conflicts. Sometimes this occurs because facts are hard to obtain or understand; sometimes it occurs because each side claims different "facts" are true and the opposing sides' facts are false. Journalists should take care to do balanced and careful fact-finding before believing any facts about what is or has been going on. For example on the number of deaths in Jos conflict, government said over 400, the police said 150 but the media went for magnitude for commercial interest. Also, report that food stuffs from the North have been poisoned in connection to Jos conflict which was later discovered to be fake, as well as the controversial text messages allegedly sent by the governor to the Military commander all turned to factual dispute. etc.
- **Avoid the use of extreme language:** Uncontrolled languages from the media contribute to conflicts. So words such as "vicious", "fundamentalists", "Islamists", "extremists", "fanatics", "barbaric", "militants", "rogues", "terrorists" etc should be avoided, if unnecessary, more so that it is likely a party or group in the conflict must have been using it to describe others. Name calling sometimes suggests partisanship and promotion of hate speech.

- **Are stories contributing to conflict escalation?** Media coverage often contributes to escalating a conflict. When this is discovered, frequency of attention and coverage should be minimized.
- **What can be done to de-escalate a conflict?** Though media coverage often serves to escalate conflicts, there are ways that journalism can be used to de-escalate conflicts and make them more constructive. By organizing moderated separate interviews with warring parties who would not have had direct factual information from the opponent can de-escalate and make reconciliation inevitable. E.g. this help for Egypt and Israel.
- **Contributing to the stoppage of the conflict:** It is also argued, though not applicable in all conflicts, that emotionally-charged footage of people suffering, such as mass starvation, burning houses, and refugee camps arouse the public to demand immediate action, e.g. "CNN effect" a recent media phenomenon which occurs when powerful news media (i.e. BBC, CNN, Al-Jazeera) seem to be creating the news by reporting it. It has been argued that CNN, with its vast international reach, sets the agenda by deciding which items are newsworthy and require the attention of government leaders.

Concluding Remark

Looking back at the roles played by the media in conflict situations, the power of journalists is clearly apparent. As much as they can start conflict, they can also play an important role in defusing tension, reducing and containing conflicts. It can do so by being deeply aware of the fragility of Nigeria's social fabric, of the efforts being expended at unifying a country polarized and ethnicised, and more importantly by objectively reporting conflict incidences as they unfold.

Media does not set out deliberately to end conflict (as this may not be within its power), but through accurate and impartial news reporting, media contributes greatly to reducing conflicts (Howard, 2003). Through the media reports, the parties in the conflict are provided an avenue for communication, which can be a beginning point for meaningful dialogue among parties.

As we approach another general election, in 2015, which often sparks conflicts, the immediate battle that both print and electronic media should be concerned with is not only battle with politicians and corrupt officers but also battle with themselves.

Nigerian Journalists also need to put to use the Freedom of Information Law, a legal instrument that empowers and enables them to have access to official information during crisis situations and in the coverage of conflicts.

The government, through its relevant agencies, should regularly brief the public whenever the nation is involved in a conflict situation.

Media owners should provide adequate resources and equipment as well as insurance cover for journalists covering potentially hazardous assignments.

Journalists should not allow their personal views and emotions as well as ethnic, religious, political and ideological sentiments to influence their reports on conflicts as such may call to question the credibility of the reports and put their lives at risk. In all cases, the principle of fairness and accuracy should apply.

Journalists should have adequate knowledge of the history, politics, geography, etc of the state, local government area or tribe, religion etc. of where they are covering conflicts.

Journalists should always avail themselves of a wide range of expert sources to strengthen and validate the process of crisis reporting so that all stories can be put in proper context. Doing this will bring journalism closer to all sections of the society.

Newspapers and magazines should avoid undue sensationalism in casting headlines of conflict news.

Journalists should be sensitive and cautious in reporting events that are capable of inflaming passions.

Government and media owners should support NUJ in the retraining of journalists without background in journalism. Also, it should be made mandatory for practicing journalists to attend refresher courses, especially in conflict reporting.

As the practice in other countries, Nigerian journalists should be allowed to embed with security forces in conflict areas. This will allow for first hand, factual, and reliable information that can stimulate policy makers in taking action to end the conflict.

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