



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DAILY TIMES NEWSPAPER AND ITS EDITORIAL POLICY TOWARDS THE CONSTRUCTION OF POLITICAL HISTORY IN NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The Daily Times newspaper was one of the earliest newspapers in the pre-colonial Nigeria. At that period all privately owned newspapers interestingly directed attention to the social evils of the day, seeking desirable changes to enable the colonies forge ahead. Consequently, partisan political leaning agitations and considerations dominated the newspaper press of the pre and subsequent post-independent Nigeria. However, Daily Times had continued to defend its neutrality, insisting that it did not get involved in putting across political views during the pre and post-independence periods in Nigeria because “since the original company was absorbed by overseas interests, it has maintained a neutral role in party politics, while at the same time attempting to promote economic and social interests of Nigeria as a whole. From the above background it is therefore germane to investigate the Nigerian press, particularly the Daily Times between 1947 and 1975; the period when the fortunes of the newspaper had little to do with the fortunes of Nigerian newspapers industry. Then Daily Times was not involved as the other nationalist newspapers were, with the fortunes of political parties or particular personalities but rather maintained its secure financial and editorial connection with business and government while also pursuing editorial policy that was non-partisan. To achieve the goal of the paper it adopts the Social Responsibility Theory as its theoretical framework. The research method adopted in this study is secondary method and historical in nature. The population of the study encompasses various stakeholders: journalists, editors, politicians, readers, and historical figures involved with the newspaper. The findings of the study reveal the key role in undermining the editorial independence of the Daily Times during the military regime, and had contributed to the dwindled fortunes of the newspaper. The study also identified harsh economic policies of the government, distribution costs, lack of utility and depreciating income of the readership as other economic factors that affected the fortunes of the newspaper which may have contributed to its demise. Based on the findings it recommends that the media should also be immune from extraneous forces capable of jeopardizing their survival.

Keywords- Daily Times Newspaper, Editorial Policy, Political History



1. INTRODUCTION

The *Daily Times* newspaper was one of the earliest newspapers in the pre-colonial Nigeria. At that period all privately owned newspapers interestingly directed attention to the social evils of the day, seeking desirable changes to enable the colonies forge ahead¹. Consequently, partisan political leaning agitations and considerations dominated the newspaper press of the pre and subsequent post-independent Nigeria. It was also noted that the press became an instrument for waging political battles and battleground for economic advantages, and people were recruited into political battles along fractious lines, terms and perspectives dictated by contending interests².

Following the competition of various political interests, the period witnessed an intense upsurge in political activities occasioned by the growing disenchantment on the part of the nationalists who had already become restive about the evils of colonization and the need for freedom³. Most newspapers that emerged during this period were partisan both in context and outlook, and what they were publishing were more of viewpoints of the editors who incidentally also were the proprietors of most of these pioneering newspapers⁴.

Whereas religious and political considerations were significant in the establishment of the early newspapers, such considerations were neither uppermost nor important in the establishment of the *Nigerian Daily Times*⁵. The emergence of the newspaper at a time the Lagos administration and the local expatriate community were clearly under severe pressure from what a colonial administrator referred to as “this misleading journalism” as well as the time the race hatred and contempt for the government was so high, offered what seemed to many Nigerians at the time a new kind of journalism. A newspaper that was partisan, not in relation to the crucial issue of interest to the rather politically minded Nigerian middle-class, but a rather nebulous concept of “Nigerian prosperity and stability”⁶.

However, *Daily Times* had continued to defend its neutrality, insisting that it did not get involved in putting across political views during the pre and post-independence periods in Nigeria because “since the original company was absorbed by overseas interests...it has maintained a neutral role in party politics, while at the same time attempting to promote economic and social interests of Nigeria as a whole”⁷. Earlier in the First Republic, given the political situation at the time, the *Daily Times* drew up a new editorial policy in order to survive and prevent what many other media organization, particularly, *Daily Express* was going through. *Daily Times* newspaper, during this period, found itself walking a tight rope and in order not to suffer the same consequences that the *Daily Express* was obviously going through, it proceeded to secure an editorial position that was more forthright in commentaries on foreign affairs and circumspect in comments on local affairs, though it often assumed the role of the voice of reason in its occasional endorsement of federal actions or call for a cooling of nerves⁸.



In 1963, in the midst of the census controversy, the newspaper's management felt constrained to issue guidelines to all members of its editorial department. The guidelines expressed that:

The *Daily Times* is a national newspaper and it must fairly reflect the interest of all the people in the Regions and the Federation. The *Daily Times* is deeply concerned with the prosperity, health and education of all the people of Nigeria and with the development of the country. We must not allow the *Daily Times* to be used to further narrow sectional interest which are inconsistent with its independent and national character. Politically, the *Daily Times* is independent. This means it does not, as a matter of course, support or oppose any political party. If the policy or action of a political party or group ... merits the paper's support, however, we shall give it ... The *Daily Times* has won wide respect for its political moderation, fairness and accuracy. It is our duty to ensure that this reputation is enhanced⁹.

The revised editorial policy proved to be one of *Daily Times*' survival strategies and this was coupled with a degree of free media that was enjoyed across Africa at that point. However, there were instances when the paper would toe positions contradictory to the government's positions. It had in some other instances teamed up with other newspaper organisations in event of disagreement or face-off with the government¹⁰. This point of gradual departure or disagreement between the *Daily Times* and the supposedly benefactor, the government, was just the beginning of change of editorial tenor that metamorphosed into ideological incongruence that characterised the later relationship that were to exist between the newspaper and the government. This strained relationship climaxed with the intervention of the military in the political history of Nigeria.

From the above background it is therefore germane to investigate the Nigerian press, particularly the *Daily Times* between 1947 and 1975; the period when the fortunes of the newspaper had little to do with the fortunes of Nigerian newspapers industry. Then the *Daily Times* was not involved as the other nationalist newspapers were, with the fortunes of political parties or particular personalities but rather maintained its secure financial and editorial connection with business and government while also pursuing editorial policy that was non-partisan. Based on the following the objective of the paper is review the establishment of *Daily Times* and its editorial policy towards the construction of political history of Nigeria.

2. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 The Liberal Perspective and the Nigeria Media

The question to ask is how applicable is the argument of this perspective to the Nigerian media? In answering this question, we need to understand that the Nigerian media system was part of the colonial heritage the country inherited from Britain. Right from the colonial period, media operators have used the main tenets of the liberalist perspective to agitate against repressive government policies. Such media owners and journalists appropriated the writing of the John Miltons and others in their protestations against attempts by the colonial authorities to muzzle the



press¹⁰. The early newspapers saw themselves as instruments of public enlightenment and mobilisation for independence. They championed the cause of the colonised and passed judgement on the colonial government as the watchdog of the society. They provided the platform for debate and discussion.

In the post-colonial period, the media have carried out these function¹¹. These libertarian principles continue to inform public discourse on the role of the press, press freedom and official media policy. In public discourse, there is general acceptance of private media ownership. With an equally general acceptance of the media as the fourth estate of the realm, Nigerians are wont to argue that the government has no business in media ownership¹². It is argued that government owned media are not free. A mass communication scholar, who has commended the press for holding to the tenet of the social responsibility of the press, however observed that: ... whatever successes recorded in the performance of the watchdog function by the Nigerian press cannot be shared by the government-owned newspapers, radio and television houses which were more or less government lap-dogs and megaphones¹³.

It is this type of view and perception plus the reigning neo-liberal orthodoxy which informed the liberalisation and commercialisation of broadcasting in the country and the predominance of privately owned newspapers. Though, until recently broadcasting is still predominantly owned by the government, the liberal ethos informs the discourse about their roles in the democratic process¹⁴. The constitution provides an over-arching anchor for this liberal discourse. During the debates which took place during the drafting of the 1979 constitution, there was a widespread acceptance of the need for a constitutional provision for freedom of the press in line with the American First Amendment. It was more or less settled then that Nigeria should abandon the British Westminster parliamentary model for the American President System with all its legal and institutional trappings. Though the framers of that constitution and others that followed refused to provide for such a specific provision guarantying the freedom of the Press as in the American constitution, they nonetheless acknowledged the role of the mass media¹⁵.

In a section which has now become a constant feature of subsequent constitutions (now in Section 22 of the 1999 Constitution), it is expressly stated that: 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. The debate for the need or otherwise of a constitutional guarantee for freedom of the press has been on for many years and it reached its peak during the debate for the 1979 constitution. The advocates having failed to get a specific constitutional provision to that effect went for a Freedom of Information Law. A coalition of civil society organisations, the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), Newspapers Proprietors Association and others, presented a bill for that purpose to the National Assembly. The Bill after a very tortuous journey within the Chambers of the two arms of the Assembly, the House of Representatives and the Senate was



passed into law almost ten years after it was first sent to the Assembly. The main argument of its proponents is that without such a law, the mass media cannot effectively discharge their constitutional obligation of upholding the fundamental objectives spelt in Chapter II of the Constitution and monitoring governance and holding the government accountable.

Certain characteristics of the mass media system in Nigeria also give the impression of a high pluralistic media system. First is the fact that the country has the most extensive media industry on the African continent with 82 television stations, 121 radio stations about 30 newspapers and weekly news magazines, notwithstanding numerous licenses being granted. The liberalisation of the broadcasting sector has added to this diversity of ownership. Second, is the high political profile of the press. Right from inception, during the colonial period, the Nigerian press has carved out a niche for itself as a highly “political press” and a protest press. Even the military failed to muzzle the press. This has led many commentators to the belief that Nigeria has the freest press in Africa¹⁶. Nigeria has a highly volatile press.

In addition to this is the fact that the Nigerian mass media industry has effectively become integrated with capital. Up till the 1970s with the exception of the *Daily Times*, most of the newspaper organisations were single entities run more for their political importance than as industrial concerns. But now most of the newspapers and private broadcasting stations are not only owned by wealthy businessmen-cum-politicians but are part of corporate organisations often having roots in all sectors of the economy¹⁷. This makes these newspapers to see themselves first as commercial organisations like others in the corporate networks before anything else.

The second source of problem with the liberal-pluralist argument is the fact that the mass media of today have changed so much from what obtained when the argument were first formulated.

The politicians as become reconciled to the logic of the news making process, they increasingly adopt these PR strategies to influence the process of political communication to their own individual and/or group advantage. And because of economic constraints which limit the budget for news gathering, the mass media becomes more dependent on the packaged offerings by the politicians⁶⁵. Thus rhetoric, oratory, image suited for the television camera, form rather than substance become the main staple of the media.

2.2 Media Ownership, Influence and Developmental Media Agenda

It has been noted that ownership of a media certainly plays a major role in influencing news making and editorial decision making process. Studies have also shown that some of media groups have strong political viewpoints and even agendas. The motivation of large media groups, being essentially financial, has equally important consequences for the type of information which is being relayed. The aim to achieve the highest ratings or readership or to reach prime target



audiences, like the concern not to irritate certain financial interests, often results in silence and self-censorship, when it does not result in the promotion of certain causes or governments¹⁸.

The problems arising from increasing use of sponsorship to produce programmes or media events have also led to the risk of subordinating the requirements of independent information to the interests of a handful of large corporations or institutions. The diversity of the 'non-media' interests of these groups also places them in an ambiguous position in relation to the political authorities which hold the power to grant favours and contracts to them¹⁹. How, for example, can a television channel equitably cover events in an authoritarian country which is negotiating with one of the group's industrial subsidiaries? One example is News Corp., which chose to eliminate BBC World Television from its Asian satellite programming stream and to terminate the publishing contract between the former governor of Hong Kong, Chris Patten, and the HarperCollins publishing firm, in order not to upset the Chinese authorities²⁰.

Euromedia Research Group reported the founder of CNN who said;

'It is a frightening thing. You have two of the four major networks owned by people that have huge investments in nuclear power and nuclear weapons; both GE and Westinghouse. What sort of balanced story are they going to give you on the news about the nuclear issues?'²¹

The pressure to maximize profits and reduce costs is equally important in the definition of editorial priorities. Pleasing core targets or the largest possible audience affects the audacity and independence of editorial staff as well as the choice of topics and how they are covered. The current crisis in investigative journalism is an indicator of the will not to upset received wisdom and to reduce costs to a minimum²².

Let us examine briefly some of these control mechanisms; Laws, Regulations, Legislation and Decrees. The broader the legislation, the more authority a government has over the press. Nigeria has had about 25 of such restrictive legislations - sedition laws, Official Secrets Act, the Criminal Codes, Decrees 2,4 and 11, laws of obscenity, defamation, libel and a host of other extra-legal and non-legal restrictive laws including emergency regulations to control the press, harassment and imprisonment of journalists. Journalists have been murdered, arrested and jailed the world over. Beatings and other forms of man-handling have been the journalists' lot in many African countries. Legislators, government officials, the police and soldiers have conducted a constantly running battle with journalists. Also, verbal and written threats, damage to printing and recording equipment, unannounced police searches, proscription of newspapers, suspension, banning and other forms of harassment have been experienced²³.

In Nigeria, cases of media practitioners' harassment and incarceration that are still fresh in memory include: Horatio Jackson of the *Weekly Record*, jailed for sedition for his article 'There is no Justice in Nigeria'; the *Times of Nigeria*, the controversial columnist, who were members of a Delegation to London protesting against the Land Acquisition Ordinance and other objectionable legislation; Tai Solarin for his article 'The Beginning of the End'; the proscription



of the *Newswatch* magazine by the military regime; chief correspondent of *The Nigerian Observer*, who was stripped, beaten up and his head shaved because of a story on the teachers' strike published on a military Governor's 31st birthday in Rivers State during the military regime; the imprisonment of *The Guardian* for one year under decree 4 during the Buhari military regime; the little-known case of Segun Sowemimo, a journalist whose tragic death inspired the title of Wole Soyinka's prison notes, *The Man Died*: the mysterious and sudden death of Dele Giwa through a letter bomb during the military regime; and a host of other cases that cannot be mentioned here for lack of space and time²⁴.

The sacking of the editor of the Plateau State government owned *Nigerian Standard* over the editorials published on the retirement of two Bank chief executives because of their different views from that of Babangida government on financial and economic matters, and the detention of the Managing Director of the Federal Government owned *New Nigerian Newspapers Limited* for authorising the publication in the *New Nigerian* of an advertisement by the Council of Ulama over the unjust, unfair and unconstitutional treatments being meted against Muslims under military administration, all deserve mentioning. In the published advertisement, the Council of Ulama had enjoined Muslims to take steps to protect themselves saying that the government and the security agents, including the armed forces, had failed to protect them as citizens of Nigeria²⁵.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The framework adopted in this study is Social Responsibility Theory. The mass media, particularly the press, is generally referred to as the Fourth Estate of the Realms. This appellation crystallizes the crucial importance of the media to the society. Not only do the media provide information needed by the citizens to take informed decision and to make contributions to the overall societal growth, the media is expected to play a watchdog role, monitoring the activities of other arms of the government and communicating them to the people¹²¹. Communication is an integral part of society upon which all activities within a society are based. In other words, the society and communication are intertwined. Thus, no society can exist without the role communication plays²⁶.

Generally, the philosophy of social responsibility of the media is an extension of libertarian philosophy in that the media recognise their responsibility to resolve conflicts through discussion and to promote public opinion, private rights, and important social interests. Social responsibility is majorly premised on the ground that freedom carries concomitant obligations. While a responsible journalistic practice is a bulwark to societal progress, the press still carries the burden to ensure that their activities are guided by ethical requirements at all times. But the snag lies with the subjective interpretation and the obsession by the government as to what constitutes social responsibility of the press. To the government, the press is socially responsible when it



nurtures their comfort zones; when it reports on issues that make them feel at ease rather than a form of reportage that rattles and keeps them on toes²⁷.

However, the society expects journalism to serve the interest of the people. To this end, it is expected that the media not only informs, but also educates. Some scholars illustrates the principles of Social Responsibility Theory to include that: The media have obligations to society, and media ownership is the public trust; that news media should be truthful, accurate, fair, objective and relevant; that the media should provide a forum for ideas; that the media should be free but self-regulated; that media should follow agreed codes of ethics and professional standards; and that under some circumstances, society may need to intervene in the public interest²⁸.

The society expects the media to play the role of watchdog, leadership to the community, empowerment and many other emerging redeeming functions²⁹. These are basic cannons of journalistic functioning that emerged from the famous report by the Commission on Freedom of the press headed in 1947. But the fundamental questions to ask are: to whom should the press be responsible? Is the media responsibility to the owners or to the government or to the public? Without prevarication however, clearly states that the media is obligated to the society that gives them freedom to operate. He emphasized that the media function as trustee of the public and must promote public interest always³⁰. But to what extent has this line of obligation and expectation of the media received practical fulfilment? This is what this paper seeks to examine and unravel.

Over the past decade, communication and media have played a critical role in the political history of Nigeria. In the process of consolidating the nationhood, Nigeria had faced series of politically motivated crisis prior to the attainment of the independence in 1960 with its attendant power tussles, the census controversy, the various military coups and obstruction of democratic processes by the coupists, general elections, religious/ethnic crises, amongst others. All these historical events demonstrated the power of media in Nigeria³¹.

In all these events, the public was able to witness and participate as the media played the roles of informing, mediating, documenting, analyzing and mobilizing. With the emergence of media as a force in our national life is the realization of the need to emphasize the social responsibility of the communication media. This means that the media must be able to promote and protect the common good³². In principle, the media should be responsible to all constituencies in terms of how it reports news, interprets events, and mediates social reality, but often the media's interests, and the interests of individual journalists clash with other interests in the environment³³. As a scholar observes: "What is one person's responsible journalism may well be another's irresponsible journalism"³⁴.



In other words, what is considered a responsible or patriotic media may well be another's cynical media. Perceptions are usually not the same. What can be insisted upon is that the media, in fulfilling its function as the watchdog of the society, must remain true to its own ethics. Its very nature and scope has often invited the determination to restrict it, depower it, rob it of its responsibility but ultimately, the value of the media is to be considered in relation to its impact on people and society, and the extent to which it champions their cause³⁵.

The patriotic or responsible media, therefore would seem to be that media which is committed to this objective, and even when it is considered cynical by its opposition, it is a kind of cynicism that is progressive, and hence people-centred. The obverse would be that kind of media which serves the interest of the authority which seeks to delimit and de-centre the press, and sees nothing wrong in that effort. Such media is unpatriotic for that reason. This ought to be self-evident explains a scholar:

The crucial challenge facing journalism, however is how it can be a handmaid and catalyst of social development. To achieve this, it has to work harder for greater public acceptance. It has to be closely associated with the popular struggle against poverty and disease, against deprivation and want and against inequality and injustice. It has to show a greater sensitivity to the issues that concern the destiny of the nation. When journalism becomes the hope of the ordinary man and woman, press freedom will enjoy enduring protection and will be complete³⁶.

Whether the media is patriotic or cynical is a question of responsibility³⁷. It presupposes the idea that the media, in any society at all, ought to exercise responsibility one way or the other. Responsibility in itself is about power. It further presupposes that the media has the capacity, the breadth, and the mind to impact on society. The foundation of power involves the capacity to influence, change, or to maintain or to leave as it is. The classical definition of the purposes of the media points to this use and/or abuse of power. What then, are the responsibilities of the media? In a pluralistic society, the existence of multiple points of view and partisan interests redefines the media's responsibility as a strictly relative concern³⁸.

This study pursue four main arguments. The first argument is that the media in Nigeria have been partisan right from the onset, to the extent that they openly and unapologetically championed ethnic, religious or party interests while interpreting perspectives of the nation's political history. The second argument is that because of the partisanship of the various media particularly the state and political party owned media during the pre and post independent Nigeria, it was difficult for any of them to construct or deconstruct the historical narratives of the nation patriotically or even responsibly. The third argument is the obviousness that the control of the media has become part of the struggle for the control of the political space, and the mind of society, hence the resolve by the various governments both at the regions/states and the centre to own and control their media organs.



The fourth argument is that this dynamics enables a characterisation of the Nigerian media in terms of whether it has been patriotic and responsible or otherwise. The study notes that with the exception of *Daily Times*, virtually every other newspaper in Nigeria, during the pre and post independence had abandoned the social responsibility duties of promoting the interests of the nation rather choosing to serve the interest of their founders. While most media had on several occasions not only encouraged dissemination of misconceptions and misinformation, and were needlessly partisan, *Daily Times* stood out as the newspaper that pursued a patriotic and responsible journalism from inception up till its acquisition by the government³⁹.

The obligation imposed on the journalist by the Social responsibility theory is to provide fair, balanced, objective information on different sides of an issue, which empowers audiences to formulate their own judgments and increases levels of truthfulness in reporting. Corroborating the view above, it was argued that Social responsibility of the media from the perspective of a developing country like Nigeria entails that; the mass media are expected to inform the citizenry of what goes on in the government, which in a way, keeps rules in check⁴⁰. Also, the media should be reporting on and prompting discussion of ideas, opinions and truths towards the end of social refinement; acting as a nation's bulletin board for information and mirroring the society and its people just the way they care, thus exposing the heroes and the villains.

From the notion of Social responsibility, an author posits that the press is accountable in four ways: To the audiences, to whom they own correct news reportage, analysis and editorializing; to the government to which they owe constructive criticism, a relay of popular opinion and adequate feedback from the populace; to the owner, to whom they owe the survival of the media organization as a business venture as well as a veritable source of education, enlightenment and entertainment; and to themselves, to whom they owe fulfilment in their calling, satisfaction and an entire success story. When any of these obligations of journalistic responsibilities is shunted, accountability is seriously dented which automatically gives rise to distorted responsibility as was the case in Nigeria's post independent history⁴¹

The origin of social responsibility of the media can be traced back to a key landmark of the report produced by the Commission on the Freedom of the Press usually known as the Hutchins Commission. An author says the project was requested in 1942 by the founder of Time Magazine, at a time when it was believed First Amendment freedoms were being increasingly threatened by the rise of totalitarian regimes throughout the world. Some avers that the regimes felt that considerable check-mating measures must be placed on the activities of the media against their perceived excessive freedom the Libertarian press theory ostensibly accorded the media. The libertarian theory is premised on the notion that man's wisdom will always ensure the victory of truth in the open battle with falsehood and so it was pointless to bridge the press in whatever guise⁴². This make a scholar points out provoked anomalies and inconceivable excesses in media activities, manifesting in unwholesome lies, arrant misinformation character



assassination, defamation and slanderous publication. Against this background, totalitarian regimes were up in arms to bridle and gag the press. Alarmed by the indeterminacies of the extent the media could be clamped down with its attendant dire consequences on the society, felt something must be done to define the role and extent of the press freedom⁴³.

The social responsibility theory gained prominence in the late forties against the backdrop of World War II. Henry Luce and Encyclopedia Britannica funded a Commission comprised a group of eminent scholars. The Commission published its first report titled: A Free and Responsible Press. Thus, the Hutchin's Commission was the first to enunciate in a coherent and systematic manner the social responsibility of the press. This report ever since has provided a blueprint for many subsequent studies on press responsibility and ethics⁴⁴. The Commission which deliberated for four years came up with an encompassing prescription for the extent to which the press can exercise their freedom.

The commission frowns at the basic premise of the libertarian theory that man's wisdom will ensure victory of the truth in the open battle with falsehood. Rather, it said that, not only is man a frail and often irrational being but the world which he must seek to understand is increasingly complex. Thus, the Commission resolved that a truthful, comprehensive account of the news was a yardstick for societal orderliness⁴⁵. To this end, some authors identifies five guidelines for a socially responsible press the Commission came up with in its report titled; A Free and Responsible Press: A truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which give them meaning; A forum for the exchange of comments and criticisms; The projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society; The presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society; Full access to the day's intelligence⁴⁶.

From the five guidelines enunciated above, emerged the theory of Social Responsibility of the Press. Some authors say the formal theory of Social responsibility of the press came as the third of the four theories of the press namely, Authoritarian, Libertarian, Social Responsibility and Soviet. One pivotal characteristic of the theorists –Sietbert and Schramm –is an emphasis on the media's responsibility to use its powerful position to ensure appropriate delivery of information to audiences. The power and near monopoly of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to decide and make inform decision for the general wellbeing and progress of the society⁴⁷.

A careful perusal of both the Hutchins' report and the resultant theory put forth by Siebert and Schramm shows that the concept of public interest lies, albeit implicitly, at the heart of Social responsibility. This, consequently, highlights the crucial role of communications through the mass media in shaping societal processes. The media reports are crucial to the formation of public opinion and civic society movements, social and political development pattern, including



more tangible processes such as unfurling of elections campaigns and their outcome as well as proper interpretation of political history of any nation⁴⁷.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research method adopted in this study is historical method. The population of the study encompasses various stakeholders: journalists, editors, politicians, readers, and historical figures involved with the newspaper. Through a historical research design utilizing secondary sources, the study delves into the newspaper's impact on shaping political discourse, public opinion, and policy formation throughout Nigeria's turbulent history. By examining archives, articles, and commentary, researchers gain insight into how Daily Times influenced societal perceptions, governmental actions, and democratic processes. Understanding this dynamic interaction between media and politics elucidates the newspaper's significance in Nigeria's socio-political landscape, offering valuable lessons for media studies and historical analyses.

The method of data collection involved accessing secondary sources; archives, digitized newspapers, scholarly articles, historical records, and relevant literature. Through comprehensive analysis of editorials, articles, letters, and commentaries, they discerned patterns, trends, and key moments in the intersection of media and politics. This method facilitated a thorough examination of Daily Times' pivotal role in shaping Nigeria's political landscape. Utilizing secondary sources ensured the study's robustness and allowed for a nuanced understanding of the newspaper's influence over time.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As against the behavioural pattern of most newspapers in Nigeria where partisan and biased reporting of events are normal and most often acceptable, *Daily Times* newspaper on inception adopted an editorial policy distinct from most other newspapers at the time by adopting editorial policy that was neutral, independent and unbiased. This study is therefore an attempt to establish the impact *Daily Times* newspaper's editorial policy played in shaping Nigeria's political history, particularly during the pre and post-independence Nigeria. In doing this, the study took a look at the early history of the *Daily Times*, its editorial policies and the stabilizing role it played through its editorial contents during the early political history of Nigeria before the military intervention in 1975; its later roles as a government owned newspaper; as well as how these roles impacted on the reconstruction of Nigeria's political history.

Because the vision of *Daily Times* was to produce an independent newspaper that would be fair and balanced in its coverage, this research put this agenda to test by highlighting the editorial position of the newspaper, different from most other newspapers in several events in the political history of Nigeria. Such historic events include: the controversies over the date for the attainment



of self-rule between 1953 and 1957; the 1962/63 census controversy; the politics of 1979 general election and the campaign; the 1992 Zangon-Kataf communal crisis and trial of General ZamaniLekwot; as well as the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election. Through the test, the study established that *Daily Times* newspaper played a huge role in deemphasising partisanship in the construction of political history of Nigeria before and shortly after Nigeria's independence. These roles were emphatic during the controversies over the date for the attainment of self-rule between 1953 and 1957. The newspapers served as mouthpieces of powerful groups and had devoted energy in presenting historical narratives from the lens of these patrons thereby publishing divergent interpretation and opposing narratives as historical realities.

Analysis of the newspapers coverage of the controversy over the date for the attainment of self-rule, and the struggle towards independence, shows that *Daily Times* had the highest percent of neutral coverage of events and this was largely because the newspaper had no indigenous interest to protect and that reflected on its neutral editorial disposition. Also the study of the newspapers character in the reporting of the 1962/63 Census controversy achieved virtually similar result like that of the date for the attainment of self-rule, and the struggle towards independence. The study notes that the structure of media ownership was one dominantly controlled by political parties, partisan federal and regional governments. It also notes that with the exception of the *Daily Times*, the other newspapers sampled were either owned partly or wholly controlled by or closely associated with and/or enjoyed financial subsidies from the dominant political parties and their governments. The study notes that this ownership structure has been the key factor determining the behaviour of the press in Nigerian political history.

Sample of the newspapers examined include Northern Nigeria Government owned *Nigerian Citizen*, the Eastern Nigeria Government owned *Nigeria Outlook*, and the Western Nigeria Government owned *Daily Express*. The others are the independently owned *West African Pilot*, and the Federal Government owned *Nigerian Morning Post*. *Daily Times* was owned by a foreign business interest. And as expected, all the newspapers with the exception of the *Daily Times* were clearly biased in their reportage of national issues and had served the interest of the political parties and regional governments that either established or funded them. *Daily Times* as an impartial arbiter represented all sides to the controversies.

Similarly, the study also established that when ethics of the profession are not been strictly observed by the practitioners, then sycophancy and self-censorship set in, noting that sycophancy and self-censorship took a major grip on the *Daily Times* during the first military era when the newspaper was acquired as government owned and subsequently.

The study also identified harsh economic policies of the government, distribution costs, lack of utility and depreciating income of the readership as other economic factors that affected the fortunes of the newspaper which may have contributed to its demise.



4. CONCLUSION

The study clearly notes that some critical factors that contributed to the survival or otherwise of *Daily Times* include ownership influence; the nature of funding, sales with editorial contents and policies as drivers, self-censorship/sycophancy, and prevailing economy. Some newspapers in Nigeria have also lost their value because of their poor reporting traditions, their unwillingness to change and their failure to reflect the realities of journalism in the 21st century. They have lost their esteem because they lack professionalism, and because they no longer serve as a platform that enables minorities, less privileged people and the voiceless in the society to express their views freely.

Similarly, no newspaper survives without strong financial foundation. Finding the balance between generating profits in a new business environment—while holding on to well-established journalistic standards and maintaining editorial independence—has emerged as one of the most pressing and urgent issues for journalism. A media house in order to survive must have the financial strength to sustain its existing publication. This must also go hand in hand with providing attractive incentives for reporters who have to go in search to get in-depth information that will motivate the consumers to continue buying their products.

Particularly, in this era of economic recession, few newspapers are going through challenges and there is need for bail out from the government. More so, since the media have always been seen as the fourth estate of the realm and by implication, there is the need for governmental intervention for the newspapers to survive. These interventions could come in the form of import duty waiver, copy subscription and advertisement. This government interventionist approach should be such that it will not incur any form of interference or unethical control from the government.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

a. The research recommends that the sustainability of the media can be guaranteed when it is devolved of any sentimental attachment to ownership. It should not be about the piper dictating the tone. Certainly, there are other public interest political goals which the media can be used to serve. Such goals include the following: informing the public, public enlightenment, social criticism and exposing governmental arbitrariness, national integration and political education. But the more the media are used to serve the narrow self-serving group of interests, the less able they are to serve the other group of public interests.

b. The media should also be immune from extraneous forces capable of jeopardizing their survival.



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