

CHAPTER EIGHT

Political Conflicts and the Imperative of Peace Journalism in Nigeria

Ekeanyanwu, Nnamdi T. Ph.D. & Ajakaiye, Olanrewaju

Introduction

This chapter examines the issue of political conflicts and the predisposing factors in a multicultural setting like Nigeria. It is an evaluation of the reportage of Nigerian media of political conflicts within the unique multicultural environment the media operate. These affect how the media discharge their roles in every known society. This chapter also evaluates the interface between the human rights community in Nigeria and the media reportage of political conflicts in the interaction of both. The highpoint of this chapter is, therefore, the determination (from empirical and literature analyses) of the specific styles and patterns the Nigerian media have adopted in reporting political conflicts with a view to making a case for Peace Journalism in pedagogy and professional practices.

Overview of Conflict Reporting in Nigeria

Reporting (political) conflict is an inevitable role of the media because there is no known society that lacks its fair share. Conflict is a state of disagreement, dispute, or incompatibility of views over specific issues or concerns. Folarin (2004) argues that conflict is the outcome of opposing or opposed interests, concerns, needs and positions of individuals, groups, organisations/institutions and societies. Vechio (1991, p. 34) also views conflict as: "the process that results when a person or group of people perceive that another person or group is frustrating or about to frustrate an important concern". McShane & von Glinow (2005, p. 388) also see conflict as "a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party". These perspectives seem to suggest that existence of opposing views and interests are at the heart of conflict.

The roots of conflicts are complex. Ekeanyanwu (2013, p. 147) argues, "They emerge from different traditions of upbringing, ethnicity, language, religion, cultural exposure, and political ideology". Taken within the context of politics, conflicts assume dangerous and delicate dimensions. Political conflicts and crises, by their nature, raise tempers and build barriers to communal understanding which is needed for any type or level of

development. No nation or society has been known to grow beyond its state in the time of crises or conflicts.

Political conflicts, especially within the African context, may arise from the perennial struggle for power, which is sometimes a symptom of economic decline and as such, rival factions struggle over the control of state and the division of its declining wealth (Chime, 2008). In essence, the ultimate aim of the struggle for political power is to have economic power and to preside over the allocation of the national wealth. This is one of the fundamental reasons inducing conflicts in politics. Reporting political conflicts in a multicultural setting like Nigeria comes with a lot of baggage that tends to frustrate the reporter who is often a part of the society and therefore not immune from the various conflicts in the society, as typified by biased and unethical reportage of issues. Accordingly, this chapter attempts to analyse the frosty relationships between the media and Human Rights Organisations (HROs) in Nigeria.

Ekeanyanwu (2015b, p. 174) argues that the Nigerian media have not only “shown partisanship along political lines; it has also shown partisanship along ethnic, racial, and other biased lines”. Egbon, (1994); Galadima and Enighe, (2001); Ekeanyanwu, (2007) have established media coverage of politics along ethnic lines in Nigeria. Since one who pays the piper calls the tune, it follows that these biased lines of coverage have negatively tainted Nigerian media coverage of conflicts.

The presence of heavy government regulation in most aspects of the industry is another feature of the Nigerian media industry, which often leads to media compromises and blackout of government secrets whereas the people have a right to know. Although government ownership of the media industry is different from government regulation of the industry, the stranglehold of government on the media industry through anti-media legislations, is assuming a dangerous trend (Ekeanyanwu, 2015b).

Historical perspectives

Political conflict in Nigeria may have its roots in the infamous amalgamation of 1914. The constituent parts that make up Nigeria can be perceived as strange bedfellows since the basis of nationhood tends to be missing as epitomised in divisive ethno-religious conflicts, which are regular features of the post-amalgamation era. Arguably, Nigeria is not the only nation with differences in terms of culture, people, language, ethnic aspirations, and other primordial sentiments. However, the uniqueness of the Nigerian situation is the obvious lack of commitment on the part of all stakeholders to sink perceived differences in the interest of national co-existence and development; although sometimes a by-product of international conspiracy. For instance, Great Britain as a colonial master in Nigeria encouraged the

policy of 'divide and rule' thus sowing the seed of discord that have bedevilled the growth and development of the Nigeria as a true State/nation. This is why Ekeanyanwu (2013) argued that Nigeria as a nation-state is a deception. There seems to be no Nigeria, which may explain why the ruling political class is afraid to convoke a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to discuss the basis for Nigeria's unity or chart a path for her future.

Dare (2009) in a lecture to mark the 75th birthday anniversary of Professor Wole Soyinka says:

Nigeria began as an idea in the head and mind of the British imperial agent Frederick Lugard. He actualized the idea in 1914. Since then, Nigeria has been a picture we carry in our heads. Nigeria is a place on a map located it is often said with more than a hint of derision, in the armpit of Africa. It is inhabited by a patchwork of ethnic nationalities corralled into place by British imperial fiat. Nobody knows its actual geographical boundaries. The World Court at The Hague, I gather, awarded Bakassi to Cameroun largely on the evidence of official Nigerian maps, which located the disputed territory unambiguously in Cameroun.

Ekeanyanwu (2013) traces the genesis of bitter and ethnic rivalry over political representation in Nigeria to 1941 when Sir Kofo Abayomi, a chieftain of the then popular Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM), resigned his membership of the Legislative Council to take up another appointment as a member of the Central Executive Council. Sir Kofo Abayomi was representing Lagos in the Legislative Council. The tone for the rivalry was set in the contest to replace Sir Abayomi. Two prominent members of NYM, Ernest Ikoli (an Ijaw) and Samuel Akinsanya (Yoruba of Ijebu extraction) vied for the vacant seat. Although the NYM was predominantly Yoruba in origin, Akinsanya did not originally get the support of the majority of the Yoruba members of the party. According to Coleman, as cited in Olaniyi (2004), "perhaps many Yoruba were prejudiced against the Ijebu Yoruba because they controlled the main trade routes into the interior and because they supplied most of the middlemen in the slave traffic". All these factors explained why Ikoli (an Ijaw man) defeated a Yoruba man in his constituency (Lagos).

However, shortly after the election, the Yoruba members in the party led by the iconic and highly revered Chief Obafemi Awolowo, modified their position by attempting to change the electoral outcome. This development degenerated into inter-tribal wrangling between the Eastern and Western members of the party. Consequently, majority of the Eastern members of the party (NYM) led by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, withdrew their membership of the party and founded the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (later known as National Council of Nigerian Citizens). The Yoruba, led by Chief Awolowo also formed "Egbe Omo Oduduwa" a Pan-Yoruba Socio-Cultural

Association that metamorphosed into the Action group (A.G.) in 1951. Consequently, the NYM died a natural death, which explains why Coleman wrote that: "the Akinsanya crisis was the first major manifestation of tribal tension that affected all subsequent efforts to achieve unity in the body polity called Nigeria" (Olaniyi, 2004).

It was perhaps this experience of the colonial days and that of the First Republic that made General Aguiyi Ironsi to introduce a unitary military system of government, and later General Yakubu Gowon (Rtd), to ensure equitable distribution of political power, appointed Federal Commissioners and Military Governors from each of the then twelve states of the federation. Furthermore, in order to allay the fears of the different sections of the country, section 14(3), which deals with the Federal Character principle was enshrined in the 1979 Constitution. Since then, the principle has become very crucial to the political survival of the country (Olaniyi, 2004).

The emergence of the Fourth Republic also saw calls for rotational presidency, which the ruling political party then, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) adopted. Since then, the so-called Federal Character Principle has continued to influence the allocation of political office in the Nigerian political landscape. The interpretation and implementation of the Federal Character Principle in political and civil service office allocation, as well as the need to promote merit in government and political affairs of Nigeria has often bred conflicts and ethnic rivalry in the body polity. It is therefore safe to say that the combination of both the historical and current socialisation and political acculturation processes in Nigeria have influenced the conflict situations prevalent in most part of the nation. A typical Nigerian sees himself first as a member of a smaller primordial grouping before seeing himself as a Nigerian. This makes the centre weak in terms of emphasizing the things that divide rather than unite us as a people and nation.

Causes of political conflicts in Nigeria

Scholars (Omu, 1978; Mytton, 1983; Egbon, 1994; Galadima and Enighe, 2001; Olaniyi, 2004; Folarin, 2004; Ekeanyanwu, 2007) have given an exhaustive list of issues that breed conflict and especially, political conflict in Nigeria. However, we will only highlight the recurrent issues here.

First are issues of nepotism and ethnicity, which lead to sectarian politics. These cankerworms have eaten deep into Nigeria's attempt to nationhood. Nigerians rarely have a national goal to pursue. Everyone is either looking out for himself or his people (ethnic grouping). Therefore, allocation of power, positions, resources, opportunities are perceived to be inequitable. Nepotism and ethnicity promote a culture of impunity and mediocrity in government, business, and industry. They also negatively affect every effort at national development and unity because people do not often see any reason to think

Nigeria. It is Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ijaw etc before Nigeria. As a result, it is always difficult to form a consensus on controversial national issues.

The second issue is political leadership. Nigeria has never had true national leaders. It is arguable that Nigeria's notable historical figures being paraded in history as 'nationalists' like Chief Obafemi Awolowo, Sir Herbert Macaulay, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sir Abubakar Tafewa Balewa, Alhaji Ahmadu Bello, Mallam Aminu Kano etc, during their time, mostly propagated and defended sectionalism and ethnic interests, at the expense of Pan-Nigerian interests. Hence, it will be difficult for anyone to explain why Chief Obafemi Awolowo never became Nigeria's President with all his 'flawless' credentials except to attribute it to his failure to sell himself as a nationalist. The Igbo people were afraid of him after his purported role in the Nigerian Civil War and the Hausas thought he was too intelligent to handle. Therefore, it was difficult for him to secure the mandatory two-third majority in any nationwide election. He was simply not considered nationalist enough. Every other tribe saw him first as a Yoruba man before seeing him as a Nigerian. The same goes for all others earlier mentioned above. Unity, therefore, continued to elude Nigerians as a people.

Our argument here is that any attempt at electing or selecting political leadership in Nigeria always results in unbridled political conflicts among the ethnic groupings that make up Nigeria because the so-called leaders are merely after their parochial individual/ethnic group interests as against the larger Nigerian (national) interests. In our conclusion here, while politics is the single influencing factor in allocation of power and power structures in civilised societies, in Nigeria, ethnicity is the single factor. We readily use the crisis in the eighth National Assembly of Nigeria (formed after the 2015 General Elections) as a recent case in point. The election of Principal Officers for both chambers of the National Assembly divided the legislative chambers apart into sectional/ethnic interest groups. The issue of leadership in the National Assembly had nothing anymore to do with competence and merit but the ethnic group where one comes from. The system of politics will continue to promote mediocrity in politics.

The third major factor is the issue of constitutionalism. Every segment of the society wants to use the Nigerian Constitution to promote its primordial and ethnic sentiments that further weaken the centre. What sort of policy will stipulate that a Nigerian child from the South who scores 80% in a University Matriculation Examination (UME) be denied admission and his/her spot given to another Nigerian child from the North who scores 50%? This happens in the same examination because the latter is from a region that is tagged educationally disadvantaged while the former is from educationally advantaged region. How can this type of policy, which also manifests in

employment, appointments, promotions, and opportunities at the Federal level, bring unity? How can a united nation emerge from such corporate injustice and policy misdirection? How can a nation interested in national cohesion/unity institutionalise such ill-advised programmes and policies like Federal Character Principle, Educationally Less Advantaged Areas, Catchment Areas, etc? It cannot! It is only a recipe for conflicts. However, protagonists claim that it is on the basis of equality of the multi-ethnic groups that national unity can be established. For instance, most often cited cause of the failure of the General Aguiyi Ironsi military leadership was that his appointments into key national leadership positions, even if based on merit, were skewed in favour of a section of the Nigerian society. Even the execution of the January 15, 1966 Coup d'état led by Major Kaduna Nzeogwu was considered ethnic based. In short, mutual suspicion is the norm, and this limits the prospects for achieving true unity in Nigeria.

The fourth major issue is the culture of 'kakistocracy' – a government by the worst citizens. In the civilised world, technocrats or the best the political class could offer run the government. In Nigeria, our leaders come from the prison to office and return to prison after a full tenure in office! This culture also manifests in every aspect of our national life.

Other secondary recurring issues that breed political conflicts are summarized by IPCR (2003, pp. 141-146) to include: feelings of alienation and the struggle for recognition; Fear of domination of one ethnic group over another; State formation, delineation and contestation of borders; and access to political power. Others include: lack of internal party democracy; manipulation of the political process and political thuggery; disrespect for the rule of law; second and third term syndrome and agenda; and non-implementation of previous findings of panels of inquiry. There are also issues about government insensitivity and non-consultation with the needs and grievances of the public; ineffective and biased judicial system; and failure to implement any development agenda in Nigeria

Media reporting of political conflicts in multicultural Nigeria

Ekeanyanwu (2007) observes that journalists have allowed their employers, families, friends, as well as the nature of society to influence the way they carry on with their professional duties. This in turn affects the handling of crises to the detriment of efforts to resolve them. Ekeanyanwu (2007) carried out a study on "The Nigerian press coverage of political conflicts in a Pluralistic Society" and found out that over 50% of the entire reports were mainly news stories, which were devoid of sound journalistic analysis and media interpretation. Conflict reports should be interpreted by the experienced journalist and given a context so that the public could make sense of the issues behind the news.

Galadima and Enighe (2001, p. 66) have earlier analyzed Nigerian press coverage of political issues and came up with the following conclusions:

The Nigerian press are always used by their owners - private party or government – for the propagation of the interests of such owners, especially in the struggle to gain power or monopolize same. There is recklessness and partisanship on the part of the press during elections and transition to the civil rule programmes instead of restraint and responsible reporting of events. The principle of objectivity is always abandoned by the championing of the causes of their masters' political struggles. Manipulations of the press to report false election results, which caused violence, mostly in the western region, have been a common trend since independence. Proscriptions, banning and closures of media houses with the aim of reducing (or avoiding) courses, as a result of the points mentioned earlier is another recurrent trend since the first republic.

A further look at the performance of the press after the annulment of the June 12 Presidential Election revealed a complete relapse to the style of coverage, which saw them tackle issues from tribal, ethnic, biased, opinionated, and personal perspectives. This trend has continued to define the pattern of news coverage even today (Ekeanyanwu, 2007, p. 74).

Similarly, the Guild of Editors also berated the press for taking rigid stand, for or against the June 12 crises. The body claims this made it very difficult for both the military and political class to resolve the crises of that annulment of 1992. The Nigerian Union of Journalists through its past president Mr. Zanni Zoro, has also openly acknowledged the "dichotomy and recklessness" among its members in the day to day carrying out of their job of news gathering, analysis and reporting (Galadima and Ehighe, 2001).

To support the result of ethnic biases in press performance with regards to quality, Adio (1999) cited in Galadima and Enighe (2001) stated that the Nigerian press which was totally responsible for the resignation of Alhaji Salisu Buhari (the first Speaker of Nigerian House of Representative of the Fourth Republic) in 1999 due to the exposé of Buhari's certificate forgery (now regarded in media circles as Buharigate) and also forced the Nigerian Senate to impeach Chief Evan Enwerem as Senate President, but failed to do same to Governor Ahmed Bola Tinubu of Lagos State. The issue here is that Buhari is from Northern Nigeria, which has very little presence in the ownership of the Nigerian media industry. Evan Enwerem is from the Eastern part of the country, which also has very little presence in the ownership patterns in the Nigerian media industry. However, Bola Ahmed Tinubu is from the South-west part of the country, which practically controls the Nigerian media industry because the majority of the publishers and professionals are from this particular region.

The crux of the matter is that these personalities mentioned above were all principal actors in the Nigerian Fourth Republic accused of the same offence of certificate forgery and falsification of age to gain public office. Buhari was Speaker of the House of Representatives (lower legislative chamber), Enwerem was President of the Nigerian Senate (upper legislative chamber) and Tinubu was Governor of Lagos State (Nigeria's commercial capital). The press handling of the above scandals gave the impression that the Nigerian press was biased along ethnic lines. The former Nigerian Head of State, late Gen. Sani Abacha summarised this view when he noted, "The Nigerian press was polarised along regional, sectional or ethnic lines with every side protecting and supporting their kith and kin (Abacha, 1996).

However, a thorough analysis of the so-called "South-West" domination of media ownership in Nigeria contradicts the above claim. Although the South-West is host to dominant media organisations in Nigeria, ownerships of most of such media houses may in fact reside outside the region. The African Independent Television (AIT)/Raypower FM; Silverbird TV; Channels TV; Vanguard Newspapers; Champion Newspapers, and so on, although based in Lagos, have their proprietors drawn mostly from the South-South and South-East geo-political zones of the country. It is therefore debatable to attribute the failure to prosecute Bola Ahmed Tinubu to a section of the Nigeria media sympathetic to Tinubu's ethnic background.

The argument of ethnic based coverage leads to what Ekeanyanwu (2015b) calls Ethnocentric Journalism, a brand of Journalism that does not see any wrong in what a particular ethnic group does because the so-called media professional is from that particular ethnic group. It is a brand of journalism that protects ethnic nationalities from prosecution from wrongdoing because of media blackout of their activities and offences. It not only protects a particular ethnic group, the evil in this type of journalism is that the same wrongdoing is exposed elsewhere by the same media. This is a form of double standard that has marred media performance in reporting political conflicts.

Another related issue that is adduced from the assessment of Nigerian media coverage of political conflicts is that most times during crises, the media and the media professionals usually focus more on the personalities rather than the issues. Personality based reporting always result in character assassination and counter accusations that breed further conflicts. The Ekeanyanwu (2007) study further reveals that the newspapers were virtually intolerant of opposing viewpoints and therefore offered little opportunity for such viewpoints to be analyzed. This reporting style has the potential to escalate any crisis.

The Nigerian media have tended also to engage in advocacy journalism in times of crisis. This is acceptable in crusade and watchdog journalism but not

anywhere else. Advocacy journalism has some negative connotations towards conflict resolution and management because advocacy suggests the taking of sides or a particular stand on conflicting/controversial issues. However, the rule of professional engagement in media practice is against the media taking sides in conflict or controversies.

On the positive side, some of the conflicts reported in the Nigerian media were given adequate and prominent attention. The few in-depth reports on some of the conflicts got adequate treatment in terms of context, interpretation, and analysis. This approach should be encouraged in the Nigerian media industry because of people's reliance on the media for guidance, direction, and information during periods of crises. It is our position, therefore, that any crisis shrouded in secrecy never or hardly get resolved but experience has shown that the crisis much talked about receive quicker attention in its management and subsequent resolution.

Need for peace journalism in Nigeria

Peace Journalism is seen either as conflict free journalism or as conflict solution journalism (Galtung, n.d.). It is also regarded as conflict sensitive journalism and constructive conflict coverage (Galtung, n.d.). Whichever way one chooses to go, the underlying argument of Peace Journalism is the emphasis on media coverage of issues that tend to promote the resolve for peace rather than coverage that may escalate a conflict situation. This is the major reason why this chapter considers Peace Journalism from the perspective of Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) that define the term as a situation "when editors and reporters make choices of what to report, and how to report it - that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict".

The idea of Peace Journalism was originally conceived by the eminent peace scholar, Johan Galtung, who views the Peace Journalism model as a

Source of practical options for journalists; a lead in to media monitoring for peace activists and offers a firm basis for drawing distinctions in content analysis by academic researchers. Peace journalism shows backgrounds and contexts of conflicts; hears from all sides; explores hidden agendas; highlights peace ideas and initiatives from anywhere at any time" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005).

Peace Journalism grew from research that indicates that oftentimes, news about conflict has value orientation towards violence and conflict. This is based on the notion that media thrive in conflicts/violence and so will do anything to ensure the drama associated with conflicts is sustained. In other words, Peace Journalism suggests that there is something fundamentally wrong with typical conflict reporting. With this perspective, the promoters of

peace journalism model have built within the model, journalistic for practice (both the mainstream and alternative media) that pushes for non-violence and solution sensitiveness in media coverage of conflict.

Nigeria's strength is in her diversity. In any case, there is no going back on the nation's multicultural status and it seems Nigeria has come stay. Conflict is part of a developing society like Nigeria with unstable political structures. However, no known society has moved from undeveloped to a developed status in an absence of peace and respect for human rights. This means that in spite of the nations's diversity, Nigerian politicians must find a way to ensure a stable political climate, avoid unnecessary political conflicts, and promote a government that respects human rights. To achieve this, the media must be central in promoting peace and peaceful moves in the body polity. This is the primary reason this chapter argues that Peace Journalism is the missing link in the media coverage of political conflicts in multicultural Nigeria.

Nigerian media professionals must be trained in Peace Journalism strategies. Nigeria as a developing nation needs no media industry that focuses on mere reportorial standards without paying attention to the overreaching consequences of its coverage on the nation's march to peaceful coexistence. Therefore, only reporting models that promote peace and emphasis peaceful moves in a political conflict standoff, should be adopted as the ideal media model for Nigeria and most other developing African states.

This brings us to some of the attitudes and behaviours of media organizations and professional communicators towards war and conflict reporting. MacBride et al (1981) identified five categories of these attitudes and behaviours of communicators towards war and conflict reporting thus:

Those who see it as a duty to inform or report the news untainted, and are not concerned or do not consider it necessary to weigh the consequences which their method of reporting could have on the prospects of peace or war. Those who consider it their professional duty to maintain complete neutrality, no matter the nature or seriousness of the issues at stake. Those who assume that the mission of the mass media of communication is to promote social harmony and that they are therefore, in the service of peace and against any form of war or conflict. Those tied to their respective governments' apron strings and see it as their professional duty to support the government in all situations and circumstances. Those who consider it incumbent and a moral obligation to prepare the public minds and views for any eventuality including war.

These attitudes and behaviours remain relevant today and should guide media practitioners in making choices of models of reporting conflict especially political conflict in a multicultural society. Different attitudes will work differently in different societies. However, in reporting political

conflicts in a multicultural society like Nigeria, media professionals should assume that the mission of the mass media of communication is to promote social harmony and that they are therefore, in the service of peace and against any form of war or violent conflict.

This may have influenced Ekeanyanwu's (2015a, p. 132) conclusion in a related argument thus:

Nevertheless, no matter the attitude adopted, the role of the media as an instrument of social change, especially change concerned with peaceful co-existence cannot be disputed. Furthermore, the media should strive to initiate the growth of a global consciousness about the adversities associated with war, conflicts and political instabilities. They should also promote the emergence of a public seriously concerned about peace, convinced of the need to tackle controversial issues to nip in the bud, problems that could degenerate to serious conflicts or war and ready to assist government seek genuine solutions to conflicts when they do arise.

Recommendations

Because the Nigerian media were actively involved in pre-independence and nationalistic struggles, they became part of the politics and struggles of that time. Since then, the media and their professionals have found it difficult to alienate themselves from partisan politics and the conflicts that do usually arise from it. What is noticed is the use of the media to achieve political ends at the detriment of public good as noticed in the history and reasons behind the establishment of some so-called national newspapers. The way out of this situation is greater media professionalism in political conflict coverage (Ekeanyanwu, 2007).

Editorial independence most of time is subjected negatively to ownership influence. Most of the thriving media organizations in Nigeria are owned individually. However, community ownership of media encourages corporate ownership as against individual ownership. This way more persons are in control of the media industry. The present situation in Nigeria where only individuals own and control the media industry has given rise to many unprofessional conducts and abuses on the part on media professionals and the publishers. The conclusion here is that apart from private ownership, the public should also get involved through joint ownerships, corporate ownership, and group ownership to avoid the excesses of the private media moguls who may be hell bent on pursuing partisan political interests through their media houses. It is also our argument in this chapter that more media houses owned and run by corporate individuals will ensure more access, more analysis of issues, better coverage, more reportage, and more presentation of all sides of a controversy, conflict or crises.

Peace journalism advocated in this chapter makes journalists and their organisations peace ambassadors representing the generality of the public. Peace Journalism produces a media industry eager to pursue the cause of peace, highlighting only peaceful moves in times of crises. For this brand of journalism, the elements of journalism change as peace takes overriding precedence over any element that may promote the escalation of the conflict. We are aware that Peace Journalism will not be easy to promote in a multicultural society like Nigeria. This is because the call for this brand of journalism starts with value reorientation on the part of practitioners and publishers. It also calls for sacrifice, a term most persons are not interested in pursuing. However, we are convinced that Peace Journalism is the missing link in the Nigeria's media coverage of political conflicts.

There should also be massive re-orientation of the human rights community in Nigeria to create positive awareness and possibly create people patronage and diversified funding support for its activities. Egbon (1994) compiled a comprehensive guideline to help media organisations in their reportage of crises and conflicts thus:

- Collective national interest must supersede parochial ethnic and individual interests.
- Press freedom should be limited where national survival is threatened or where it conflicts with constitutional provisions and rights.
- Sensationalism that could possibly blow up crises should be seriously avoided.
- Suppression of the truth should be avoided as it will obviously escalate the crises and create a false sense of security.
- Professionalism and ethical considerations must be held in high esteem or sacrosanct in the management and coverage of crises.
- Maintain a healthy scepticism and provide socially responsible criticism, avoiding relentless hostility.

In conclusion, the Nigerian media must rise above petty reporting and face the challenges of constructive and balanced reporting especially during crises/conflict periods. The media, however, should not support evil or help to perpetuate it and should therefore always take a stand against it. This must be done professionally, ethically, objectively, and cautiously. The public interest (the interest of the generality of people ascertained through democratic principles and structures) must be the guiding and overriding interest in such situations. Media organizations must ensure that only experienced and highly competent media professionals or journalists are assigned to political beats. This is very crucial especially in developing societies like Nigeria. Conflict and diversity reporting should be taught in

institutions of higher learning in Nigeria across the broad spectrum of different areas of specialisation in media and communication studies. This will help the journalist and media workers to become more professional in his handling of conflict-based reports.

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