

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN PROMOTING FOREIGN POLICY IN NIGERIA, 1999-2015

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Abstract

The mass media are often referred to as the fourth branch of government because of their oversight function. The media's role in democratic governance has been recognized since the late 17th century, and remains a fundamental principle of modern-day democratic theory and practice. Democracy requires that citizens' opinions play some role in shaping policy outcomes, including in foreign policy. The Nigerian media have been a vital source of government policy, news for opinion leaders and decision makers within a political structure as well as for foreign policy formulation and implementation. Every sovereign country requires a foreign policy perspective, which has as its attributes, the aspirations and desires of that country as well as the strategies for implementing them. Ever since Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999, the country has been bedeviled by numerous developmental challenges. The objective of this paper is to examine the role of the mass media in promoting foreign policy in Nigeria. The paper asserts that Nigeria needs a robust foreign policy framework in order to fully capture the emerging challenges and also to inject new dynamism into the country's foreign policy.

Keywords: Mass media, Foreign Policy, Media-government Relations

Introduction

Almost every government today attaches specific importance to the role of the mass media in the conduct of its foreign policy. The complexities of international politics characterized, in recent decades, by the multiplication of actors in the international system have automatically led to an increasing role of information in international relations. It has been established that there is a very strong relationship between media performance and the conduct and vibrancy of politics and political activities. The return of civil rule in 1999 in Nigeria following decades of military dictatorship naturally generated a great deal of expectation regarding the prospects of a more democratic media system that would foster popular participation in development.

The media has been variously defined by some scholars as a collective

means of communication by which general the public or populace is kept informed about the day to day activities in the society. The media is also said to be an aggregation of all communication channels that use techniques of making a lot of direct personal communication between the communicator and the public. Mass media is conceptualized as "...the totality of organizations and agencies that provide information for the members of the public. The role of the mass media lies in making information a common knowledge or facilitating effective communication of ideas (Iruonagbe et al, 1999. p. 33). The media have traditionally been understood to refer to the printed press as well as radio and television. In recent, the definition has become broader, encompassing new media including online journalism, and social media. Citizen journalism is widely gaining traction, including countries where traditional media is either controlled or strictly regulated.

In the contemporary world, mass media and foreign policy are complementary because media serves as a device to show a country's face to the outer world. Therefore, in the modern democratic societies, mass media has emerged as an important contributing factor of foreign policy. Walter Lippmann defines media as 'an organ of democracy' because in democratic societies media has the potential to translate the dictum of 'government of the people, by the people and for the people.' Media is an important source of information to effect upon and to be effected by foreign policy (Lippmann, 1992, p.32).

The framers of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in recognition of the sacred role of the media not only in democratic consolidation but also in the overall development of the country enshrined in Section 22, of the 1999 Constitution which stipulates that: "The press, radio, television and other agencies of the media shall at all times be free to uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people". Accordingly, Oyovbaire (2001, p. 17) argues "the press remains the fourth estate of the realm, the watchdog and the conscience of the nation. In this connection, the obligation of the media as indicated in section 22 of the 1999 constitution, equally endows it with the duty not only to discharge its normal watchdog role in all aspects of governance and in guarding and advancing the frontiers of the people's liberties and freedoms but also the obligation to regard itself as the policing institution over the fundamental objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy as well as the citizen's Fundamental Rights"

Theoretically, the role of the mass media in the implementation of foreign policy of any country is mainly connected with the whole question of public opinion and the right of people to know what their government is doing in its foreign relations. This is primarily derived from the fact that the foreign

policy of a country is normally formulated and conducted within the limits set by the actual, presumed, or potential demands of the public (Kamuhanda,1989) In other words, public opinion constitutes one of the factors which a government takes into account when making its foreign policy decisions. It follows, therefore, that government has the obligation to inform its people about its various commitments and activities in the international system with a view to gaining popular support for the realization of its foreign policy objectives. The people, on the other hand, have the right to monitor the behaviour of their government to ensure that it is in line with national aspirations.

The mass media, being the principal channels for the articulation of public opinion, serve as an important link between the government and the public. Additionally, the mass media have an added task of projecting the country's foreign policy objectives and image to the outside world. Hence the role of a country's mass media is as important in the successful implementation of foreign policy as it is in the realization of domestic policy. It is specifically for this reason that diplomats frequently analyse the contents of the local media, especially the press, to gain additional information about official attitudes and the policies of a host country. The Media has the potential to expedite the processes of international relations and can constrain future policies (Naveh, 2002).

The media today are indeed part of the policy process but the government has also become part of the media process (O'Heffeman, 1991). The observation of Patrick O'Heffernan encapsulates the wider interconnection and interdependence between the media, the government and the political process. The media have admittedly turned into a central component in politics in democratic states impinging on both the areas of domestic and foreign affairs. This paper approaches the media within the context of their relationship with the government and seeks to highlight their influence and significance in foreign policy making processes by exhibiting the weight that governments themselves accord to the media when planning policies. This paper is therefore to assess the role of the mass media to the making of Nigeria's foreign policy. It seeks to identify the relationship between the mass media and foreign policy; as well as the role of the mass media in foreign policy making.

Theoretical Discourse on Foreign policy and the Media

Foreign policy is the face that a country shows to the outer world. There is a great debate about the relationship between the news media and the foreign policy decision-making process, and the impact the former may have

on the latter. Foreign policy has been defined by different scholars. According to Frankel (1995, p. 34) “foreign policy consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent relations between one state and others.” Gibson (1993, p. 4), defines foreign policy as a well-rounded comprehensive plan based on knowledge and experience for conducting business of government with rest of the world.” Goldstein and Pevehouse (2001, p. 4), defined ‘foreign policy as the strategies that government use to guide their actions in the international arena...they spell out the objectives which state leaders have decided to pursue in a given relationship or situation. Foreign policy deals with the relations between sovereign actors in the international system. Thus, foreign policy objectives can be understood as a range of intended actions as well as a set of strategies adopted by sovereign actors with express purpose of influencing the behaviour of other sovereign actors within the international system (Ogwu, 2005). The concept of foreign policy is not new rather it is as old as the countries are. It is designed to achieve national interests and objectives while dealing with other nations. National interests are outlined and prioritized through foreign policy, and executed through tools under some strategies. Foreign policy is based on the goals to protect and advance national interests that policy makers seek to obtain abroad. It dictates political, social, economic and military behavior of a country with other countries”. The main argument of foreign policy suggests how a state conducts external relations with the other states. Foreign policy is the set of government approaches related to international relations, national security and defense (Eijaz, 2012).

Past studies of foreign policy decision-making neglected to deal with this complex role of the media. The media as one of the channels of informing leaders of international events, as input for the decision-making process. The media, such as the television, press, radio and new multimedia technologies – are not only channels, they also play a far more important role in the process. The media is a crucial part of the foreign policy decision-making environment, an environment which should not be regarded only as the input stage of the process, but much more as a general context, and as an output environment in which leaders make policies (Naveh, 2002). The literature that lays the foundations for the theoretical aspect of this paper comes from two disciplines: Theories of foreign policy decision-making, on the one hand, and theories of mass communication effects, on the other. These two disciplines give more insights to the complexities of media involvement in the foreign policy decision-making process.

The main research gap that the paper aims at covering lies in the actual media role and impact on the foreign policy process. Despite the attention

given to the media's potential to affect foreign policy decisions, their involvement is still confined to a largely instrumental role and more importantly, one that influences the process of decision making, rather than the decision outcomes. The study of the media in the conduct of diplomacy (Gilboa, 2002), in conflict situations (Wolfsfeld, 2004) and humanitarian interventions (Livingston, 1997) demonstrates fully the media's participation in the making of foreign policy but leaves an obvious deficit of evidence with regard to their ability to influence political outcomes.

Theories and concepts of media that can be applied on foreign policy matters are; agenda-setting, framing, gatekeeping, Chomsky's propaganda filter, CNN effect, embedded journalism, spiral of silence etc. Agenda-setting function of the media explains how media agenda and policy agenda are related with each other. According to Hallin 'media content conforms with and reflects official agenda setting. The media does not create policy, but rather that news media is mobilized (manipulated even) into supporting government policy" (Hallin 1986.6)

This paper has argued that the media is involved in all stages of foreign policy formulation processes and that political leaders take the media into consideration in its national and international aspects. Moreover, the paper argues that this double-edged media environment is considered mainly in the publication, or media management stage. The involvement of the media in this decision-making process is complex. When an external, international event occurs, political leaders learn about it from the media. This information is processed through various image components and the policy or decision formulating process is set in motion. Media advisors and public relations professionals participate in the process, officials consult with them and consider their advice. Finally, they take the media into account when they define their policy and match to it the appropriate media tools.

There are several analytical approaches elucidated by foreign relations scholars to expatiate on the role of the media in foreign policy formulation and implementation. However, this paper adopted the game theory approach in this discourse. Game theory is "the study of mathematical models of conflict and cooperation between intelligent rational decision-makers". Game theory is mainly used in Economics, Political Science, and Psychology, as well as Logic, Computer Science and Biology. Originally, it addressed zero-sum games, in which one person's gains result in losses for the other participants. Today, game theory applies to a wide range of behavioral relations, and is now an umbrella term for the science of logical decision making in humans, animals, and computers (Myerson, 1991).

Game theory in particular, has been selected for providing an analytical tool for the investigation of interactions among players and is therefore expected to offer a thorough explanation of the interaction between the media and the government. The employment of the theory is aimed at overcoming the existing gap with regard to the media's power to affect decisions and political outcomes. It does so by exploring their behaviour as a domestic constituent that interacts with other 'players' and behaves according to own motivations and interests, and particularly by placing the media in the decision-making process and in a strategic interaction with the government in which both actors are after the maximisation of their own profit.

Game theory is here presented as a model for the study of decision-making process between rational actors. This theoretical approach reflects an attempt to integrate the media in political decision making process. Game theory has been selected to help in exploring the political process itself through a more systematic and consistent framework. It serves to give insight into the forces that drive political decisions and in creating entries for the media frames to be systematically incorporated in that process. Game theory associated with public diplomacy contributes toward the goal, through the media, of influencing the people who have to make decisions (Tourl, 2006 , Marinho, 2014)

In summary, the foreign policy decision-making process takes place within an environment partly created by the media. Media performance in this environment is dictated by the state's political communication regime, government communication policy, the political-economy structure and by the specific communication channels which perform the relevant media functions. This media-created atmosphere reflects foreign-policy events through the agenda setting perspective, influencing decision-makers and compels them to respond through the media, with their specific characteristics. It is necessary to mention that the concept of media environment includes the feedback processes, which in this context means media-oriented foreign-policy decisions on the press (like censorship, etc).

The process of media involvement is complex, but it is mainly twofold: first, the media as an input source for decision making, second, the media as an environment which leaders must consider and relate to when they make decisions and consider promulgating them. Leaders and foreign policy decision-makers are influenced by the media. They learn about many international events from the press, and many of the messages that come from the international arena penetrate via public communication channels through the processes described in this paper. At this stage the media serve as a source, part of the input environment of the decision-making process,

supplying leaders with information and data (Naveh, 2002, Eijaz, 2012).

Contemporary Discourse on Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is essentially the instrumentality by which states influence or seek to influence the external world and to attain objectives that are in conformity with their perceived national interest. In theory, foreign policies are anchored by visionary and strategic thinking with a view to projecting, protecting and enhancing a country's core national interests. The main focus of all architects of foreign policy is to articulate in vivid terms their country's national interest which serves as a guide in their relations with other nations. The efficient administration of foreign policy objectives is based on credible and widely accepted principles that help shape a country's image in the international system

As a country that is well-endowed in terms of population, natural resources and geographic size, Nigeria's post-independence foreign policy has been marked by a near-constant striving for influence within its region and beyond. This especially resonates in the articulations of Nigeria's foreign policy, which places Africa at the centre of its foreign engagements, its commitment to global peacekeeping operations and its efforts at mediation and development co-operation in West Africa, in particular. However, since its return to an electoral democracy in 1999, Nigeria has struggled to duplicate its assertive and activist foreign policies of the 1970s and 1980s, and its status as 'regional hegemon' or 'pivotal state' has been called into question. Critics list numerous factors that have led to this gridlock – from a chaotic post-1999 political economy due to fluctuating oil prices and economic difficulties to the failure to deal with the Boko Haram insurgency (Amuwo, 2016)

The main objective of Nigeria's foreign policy on which others are anchored is the promotion of the national interest of the federation and of its citizens in its interaction with the outside world. This in essence means that Nigeria's foreign policy like that of any other country ought to be fundamentally guided by its national interest. National interest covers three outstanding components of national security; protection and preservation of the welfare of the state, and national prestige. Nigeria's foreign policy operates within four concentric circles. According to Nigerian diplomats and scholars, the theory of Nigeria's foreign policy has often been explained in terms of these four "concentric circles" of national interest. The first circle consists of Nigeria's policy towards its neighbors in West Africa, the second one is her policy towards the rest of Africa and the third circle is policy toward the larger international system. Indeed, in practical terms and for security and political reasons, the Federal Government authorities consider

the entire West Africa as Nigeria's security and political sphere, hence its policy towards and relations with its neighbors as of utmost priority. The fourth circle involves Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions and states outside Africa. This concept still guides Nigeria's foreign policy priorities.

The interface of domestic and foreign policy makes it imperative that an effective foreign policy will facilitate the attainment of the country's developmental objectives. The foreign policy of every country has an underlining orientation or ideology. For Nigeria, this is liberalism. Liberalism as used here represents freedom of choice; freedom of association; freedom of expression; freedom of worship; respect for fundamental human rights and rule of law; and market-driven economy (Ashiru, 2013).

The end of the Cold War has resulted in a fundamental change in the dynamics of contemporary international politics. Developing countries, like Nigeria, with oil wealth, a large army and a large pool of well-educated citizens are now able to play a leadership role in Africa, due to the reduced strategic significance of the continent for major external powers. However, while policymakers and executors of Nigeria's foreign policy appear to be committed to responding to demands, pressures and influences from the external environment to contribute to regional peacekeeping, they also need to respond appropriately to domestic pressures and influences, especially those derived from popular public opinion. A civilian regime, unlike military governments, also faces pressure from the parliament and the press (Nuamah, 2003)

While Nigeria's immense potential is clearly based on its demographic size of over a 100 million people, its multiethnic population, its vast oil reserves and its reservoir of highly skilled and educated people, a majority of its people remain poor with a per capita income of less than \$500. Likewise, while Nigeria has played a vital role in international peace keeping both under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), as well as ECOMOG (the Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group), Nigeria itself has been immersed in conflict, either at the level of intra-elite struggles for power or conflicts within the context of its troubled federal experiment. Thus, while Nigeria possesses the necessary potential as well as institutional structures needed to formulate a vibrant foreign policy, its constraints lie in domestic factors, namely, the nature of the foreign policy elite as well as its economic dependence and vulnerability.

Regionally, Nigeria has seen itself and been perceived by others, as a global player on the world stage, from its role in the African liberation struggle and its leadership of the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS) during the Cold War era to more recent peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Nigeria's approach to both Africa and its immediate neighbours is based on a policy of decolonization, non-interference, respect for inherited borders, economic integration and commitment to practical policies that promote African unity.

Externally, since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has sought to play a full and active role in the international community. Its leaders have attached even greater importance to this role because Nigeria has felt a special responsibility, as Africa's most populous nation, to act as an unofficial spokesperson for Africa and for all black people in the international fora. Some have defined this as a *Pax Nigeriana*, an effort to achieve hegemonic leadership in Africa by a country that accounts for over half of West Africa's population and economic strength with a 94,000- strong army that dwarfs the combined strength of those of its fourteen ECOWAS neighbours. Examining the ways in which Nigeria has pursued its foreign policy objectives through an extensive network of multilateral relations and the impact of external factors in its foreign policy formulation is a critical dimension in the study of Nigeria's foreign policy after the Cold War (Nuamah, 2003).

Conceptually, the role of the mass media in the implementation of Nigeria's foreign policy could only be understood in the context of the country's Fundamental Foreign Policy Principles. Since independence in 1960, certain specific imperatives have governed the conceptualization and the conduct of the Nigerian foreign policy. The method of approach and its implementation may differ depending on circumstances of the time and the style of leadership, but the real substance of our foreign policy objectives have intended to resolve around the principles which the country holds tenaciously in the conduct of our foreign relations. Specifically, Chapter 2 of the 1999 Constitution, which is the Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy as provided in Section 19 (a-e) encapsulates Nigeria's foreign policy objectives to include: (a) promotion and protection of the national interest; (b) promotion of African integration and support for African unity; (c) promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations, and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations; (d) respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and (e) promotion of a just world order.

Successive Nigerian Governments, from that of Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, to the present Government of President Muhammadu Buhari have demonstrated commitment to these

guiding principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy. It is important to stress the fact that irrespective of the changes in government, the principles and objectives of Nigeria's foreign policy as laid down by the late Prime Minister, Balewa has remained basically the same. However, what was noticeable in all the continuities and discontinuities was in the area of emphasis (Akinboye, 2013). Nigeria as a sovereign state has experienced a meteoric rise and fall in its diplomatic soldiering. However, scholars noticeably Osuntokun, (1998), Amuwo (2016), Saliu (2013) and Alli (2013), have questioned the existing structure, processes and machinery of foreign policy formulation and implementation which have served Nigeria relatively well up to the early 1980's. For example, Jega (2010) has observed that the contradictions, constraints and inherent weaknesses are glaringly manifest; hence the urgent need to strengthen and re-valuate policy in line with requirements of a fast-changing and rapidly globalizing world.

While Africa has been the centre-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy from the outset, successive governments have been able to adapt its principles, objectives and priorities to the prevailing circumstances. Owing to the Afro-centric posture of our foreign policy, it was to be expected that the founding fathers of Nigeria would anchor the country's foreign policy thrust on the decolonisation of the African continent and the promotion of African unity. An important component of this stance was Nigeria's commitment to the eradication of apartheid in Southern Africa and the deployment of substantial resources in the various theatres of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola and South Africa. Since the dawn of a new democratic era in 1999, a major trend is clearly discernible in Nigeria's foreign policy. This is the desire to establish and maintain friendships with countries that have historically shaped global diplomacy while forging new alliances with emerging powers in the global economic arena. This trend reflects the country's overall objectives as envisioned in its Vision 20-2020 document.

The foreign policy of any country at any given time is intricately related to its domestic politics. In fact, one cannot really separate foreign and domestic politics. Many factors have accounted for the lack of attainment of the appropriate position of power and influence which Nigeria's potentials has recommended for it in global political and economic relations (Udeala, 2009). Some of these are associated with the influence of domestic processes on foreign policy, but intertwined with these are historical, structural as well as external factors and influences. A country's image is an important factor in international relations, and can contribute a great deal to the realization of certain foreign policy goals. Image-building is an essential element in the

strategy of communications, the task of foreign policy is to create and reinforce favourable image of the country to the outside world. This is important because foreign policy makers usually carry in their memories collections of images of the world in its various aspects which inform their policies towards other nations and international events (Udeala, 2008).

Media—Government Relations

In the modern democracies, the mass media has emerged as an important contributing factor of foreign policy. Democracy requires that citizens' opinions play some role in shaping policy outcomes, included in foreign policy. The involvement of the media in this decision-making process is complex. When an international event occurs, political leaders learn about it from the media. This information is processed through various image components and policy formulating process is set in motion.

Over the last decades, the role of the mass media in the political process has changed fundamentally from a rather passive conveyor of messages to a political actor in its own right. As a large body of literature suggests, the media are now taking an active part in the public representation of politics by shaping the agenda of the political discourse and by contributing their own preferences in political controversies. The growing dominance of the media has led to the emergence of a new type of democracy called 'media democracy' – where the media's logic of operation is increasingly 'colonising' the political process to the effect that political institutions are, at least to some extent, losing control over the course of politics (Robinson, 2001).

The Nigerian press reporting and interpretation of the country's foreign policy news improved markedly in 1980's. Many factors account for these improvements. The first relates to the growth of publications, second undoubtedly was due to higher standard of education of journalists, and a third reflects the greater degree of specializations now evident among Nigerian journalists. The fourth is what has been called "academics in print journalism" As a result of all these factors interacting, editors and heads of news desk are now more discerning in their use of foreign news agencies. Thus, the assertion that the Nigerian press reliance on international news agencies is impeding effective reporting, analysis and interpretation of foreign policy news is baseless or certainly much exaggerated (Okere, 1999).

The media is a source of information and ideas at several stages in the foreign policy process, to the diplomats abroad, to ministers and officials in Nigeria and the wider public, policy makers and interest groups. The media links the public to policy makers by acting as a forum for debate on foreign policy and by reflecting this debate in public opinion to policy makers. The

media and foreign policy relationship is associated with the idea of agenda setting and influence. The role of the media and image building form an essential element in the strategy for foreign policy formulation and implementation in the country. When well focused, foreign policy initiatives help create and reinforce favourable image of a country to the external world (Alimi, 2005)

This is important because decision makers and policy formulators often carry in the memories image of a world as portrayed by the media, and this invariably contributes to the formulation of both internal and external policies. In Nigeria, as many other developing countries, the low level of our political culture, awareness and literacy as well as our intractable domestic problems have meant that the press remains the most important arbiter, mediator and moderator of public opinion. This leaves the press as an active player in the foreign policy field. It aggregates the disparate interests and opinion of a large section of the society, in relation to foreign policy issues and presents such as the aggregate opinion of the people (Iroh, 2005) .

There is always a distinction between the media's relationship with the government as regards domestic affairs and their relationship concerning external matters. This distinction is important because, in reality, the government behaves differently towards the mass media on domestic issues as compared to foreign policy matters. For example, while on matters of a domestic nature, the government has been able to fully utilize the services of the local media for the mobilization of the people for various purposes, this is not always the case when it comes to foreign policy issues. In the latter case, the government's behaviour is somehow characterized by a certain measure of secrecy. No one disputes the right of any government to operate in secret, especially in view of the complexities of international politics. Indeed both the media and government in Nigeria share the common belief that some news must be withheld for public good. However, unnecessary or excessive secrecy can easily lead to the alienation of the government from the people and, worse, create an ill-informed public.

The secrecy now characterizing the government's behaviour with regard to foreign policy matters is mainly reinforced by the negative attitude with which some government and parastatal officials view the mass media in the country. These officials view media people with suspicion—a suspicion that seems to be asking the Ruskian question: whose side are you on? The media people are sometimes erroneously seen as being unpatriotic and, therefore, people who cannot be trusted. The result is that it is not uncommon for the media people to be confronted with this assertion (Kamuhanda, 1989) . And this is despite the fact that both the media and the government which is

the principal owner of the media in Nigeria have the same goal of serving the people.

While it could be acknowledged that some local journalists in Nigeria are comparatively incompetent, it is erroneous to consider all media people as such. On the contrary, the country has some of the best journalists in terms of both professional excellence and ideological clarity. The unfortunate thing is that some of them are currently underutilized. Equally important is the fact that even the incompetence of some journalists has something to do with the attitude of some public officials towards the media. The old saying that a reporter is no better than his sources is as valid today as it was two hundred years ago. Kamuhanda further, argues that a reporter can only write a good, balanced story if his source cooperates in providing the necessary information. If those who are occupying positions of authority in government and, are therefore, are knowledgeable about certain issues including those on foreign policy objectives refuse to cooperate, the reporter will obviously either write a poor story out of the skeleton information at his disposal, or write no story at all. In both cases, the casualty is the public who will have been denied that information.

This, however, does not mean that the media are all-perfect. On the contrary, they have some imperfections. For instance, some Nigerian journalists lack adequate professional training. As a result, the majority of them are jacks of all trades and masters of none. This, of course, negatively affects their professional performance. But these imperfections should not be the excuse for denying the public information on matters that directly or indirectly affect their well-being. Instead, efforts should be made to overcome those imperfections.

Furthermore, withholding information has the other effect of inhibiting the media from effectively projecting the country's image abroad for, as a people and government organs, the media is supposed to be the major instruments for projecting the country's national interests abroad. To be able to perform such a task, the media must have the necessary information to write with authority as well on matters concerning foreign relations. Otherwise the media would be demagogic and parochial in their approach and less effective in projecting the country's foreign policy objectives to the outside world.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the role of the media to the making of Nigeria's foreign policy. It sought to identify the relationship between the media and foreign policy; as well as the role of the media in foreign policy making. It tried to determine whether the media set agenda for issues of debate

and acts as a forum for discussion, as well as the extent to which this process results in a change of policy. The formulation of a country's foreign policy is a complex process, mediated by the participation of various stakeholders which the media are active participants. The main conclusion of this paper is that the mass media and foreign policy making process influence one another, sometimes directly, other times indirectly. The degrees of their mutual influence are proportional to other circumstances, such as newsworthiness from the media point of view, and policy uncertainty, from the foreign policy making perspective.

Nigeria's developmental challenges are multi-dimensional, therefore overcoming them requires a multi-dimensional strategy. There is no doubt however, that whatever strategy is adopted would be dependent on good governance, because the majority of these challenges are the consequences of lack of transparency and accountability in governance; poorly observed rule of law; violations of fundamental human rights; high incidence of corruption; and general indiscipline. It therefore follows that a country's intractable challenges have direct implication for its foreign policy.

Recommendations

(1) Key policy recommendations in this area include: first, the need for Nigeria's foreign policy to be built around core national interests based on the promotion of peace and security, as well as development and democratization at home and abroad. Second, Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs needs reshaping and strengthening, with foreign policy objectives translated into more specific national interests and a program of action designed to respond in a timely manner to changes in the external environment. Finally, Nigeria, having led efforts to create ECOWAS in 1975, should be at the forefront of efforts to build viable and effective economic communities in Africa. Along with South Africa, Nigeria should champion the building of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU).

(2) Nigeria's fundamental foreign policy principles and objectives have remained unchanged since independence. However, every succeeding administration in the country has invented new circumstantial mechanisms tailored towards the achievement of foreign policy goal. Present-day foreign policy decisions and actions need to focus on addressing the challenges of national survival, human security, progress and development in line with current reality in the country. Indeed, the defined foreign policy objectives as encapsulated in the 1999 Constitution require re-examination, if not re-definition, to accommodate a focus on new issues and challenges confronting

us as a nation in this globalized world. While the old issues of protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security are still relevant, new emerging issues, for example, pertaining to national competitiveness in the globalized economy, promotion and defense of universal rights, protection of the environment and sustainable development, as well as the promotion of peaceful co-existence and democratization have assumed primacy and therefore need to be addressed in line with global realities.

(3) For Nigeria to have an effective and successful foreign policy, we need a stable domestic policy. No foreign policy can be effective if the domestic arena from which it takes its inspiration and operational essence is dysfunctional. Consequently, fundamental measures need to be taken to address social, economic and political challenges that engender internal instability and negative publicity or perception in the international arena.

(4) In order to ensure that the media play a more effective and positive role in the implementation of the country's foreign policy, there is the need to ensure that the media are enabled to freely analyse and initiate debates on international issues which will affect, directly or indirectly the consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria. Communication between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the mass media should be strengthened to ensure regular contact. This could be done by the introduction of monthly press briefings by the Ministry to acquaint members of the media with both conceptual and practical trends in the country's foreign policy and position in topical international issues.

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