African Research Review

An International *Multidisciplinary Journal, Ethiopia*
Vol. 8 (2), Serial No. 33, April, 2014:96-117
ISSN 1994-9057 (Print) ISSN 2070--0083 (Online)
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/afrrev.v8i2.7

Redefining Political Terrorism: Nigerian Media and the Crisis of Democratization

Nwozor, Agaptus
Department of Political Science and International Relations, Landmark University, Omu Aran, Kwara State
E-mail: agapman1@yahoo.co.uk
Phone: +2348037005435

Abstract

In Nigeria, there is little dispute about the power and role of the media as agenda-setting agency. What is subject of disput is whose interest the agenda ultimately serves - the elite or the masses? Despite the avalanche of evidence that Nigeria's electoral processes had not met the least benchmark of credibility since the country returned to civil rule in 1999, political analyses and advertising in the media tended to gloss over previous electoral flaws in their quest to ascribe invincibility to political elites. The effect of this is that the political elite are emboldened in their brazen manipulation of the electoral processes, which is a terrorism of sorts. While there is claim of balance between the media's commercialistic interests and public good, evidence suggests that Nigeria's political elite have used the instrumentality of the media to rewrite and embellish their political fortunes. This paper examines the mechanisms of political terrorism within the context of elite-media convergence and argues that the

Copyright© IAARR 2014: www.afrrevjo.net

Indexed African Journals Online: www.ajol.info

consolidation of democratic governance in Nigeria entails the dismantling of all the operational pitfalls that fuel and sustain political terrorism in all its ramifications.

Introduction

The role of the media in Nigeria's socio-economic, cultural and political development is not in doubt: the Nigerian media have, at every point in the country's chequered political history, stood to be counted. But in being counted, it has not lived above the contradictions of the Nigerian state. Undoubtedly, the Nigerian media have demonstrated robustness in its self-imposed role of setting and pursuing agenda both in military and democratic regimes. But, the domineering narrow interest of the elite has tended to eclipse its general utilitarian value.

The Nigerian media created an aura of invincibility around personalities that anecdotal evidence upbraided for less noble roles in Nigeria's socio-economic and political development, thus undermining its social responsibility to the society. The cardinal social responsibility of the media, which ought to be owed the society in general was transferred to the elite on account of such factors as media ownership structure, commercialistic interest, dominant interest of the elite and overriding power of the state. The resultant effect is the enthronement of the culture of impunity and total disregard of the rule of law in government and governance. The necessary fallout of the media - elite complicity is the effective marginalisation of the masses. The media-elite linkage has created a terrorism of sorts as the society is detrimentally manipulated through political advertising.

Terrorism does not merely connote the use of physical violence to wreak havoc on targets. Also, it does not simply entail as classically held by extant theorisation, the use or threat of the use of violence to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, including international organisations, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause (Hoffman 2009). Terrorism has assumed wider connotations. It is not just "disgruntled"

groups that use the instrument of terror. The state also uses terror in myriad ways outside the precinct of actual physical violence. We have used the concept of micro-terrorism to depict the genre of terrorism that the state visits on its citizenry. The media had collaborated with the elite in unleashing terror on the masses through psychological, political and administrative manipulation of political advertising.

This paper examines how the Nigerian political elite have marginalised the masses through the instrumentality of political advertising with the media as a willing accomplice. It contends that the political terrorism of the masses through the leverage of the elite in the conduct of politics in Nigeria has had the effect of eroding democratic consolidation and therefore urgently requires redress.

The Nigerian media: a marriage of social action and elite interest

The history of the media in Nigeria denotes that it was conceived as a tool for social action. The colonial era press was a hybrid tool of social crusade, radical nationalism, commercial enterprise and the voice of the masses. The major strategies which the press adopted in the pursuit of its set objectives were editorial and column writing. Both of these strategies were used to anchor its agenda-setting role. As Obafemi (2008) observes, "one of the most significant functions of the press lies in the power of its editorial comments in influencing socio-political development since the colonial days". Contemporaneously, the media introduced feature writing and "special project adverts" to deepen its agenda-setting role.

Several factors which were rooted in the core interests of the Nigerian elite tended to determine the trajectory of the editorial slant of the various press establishments. Whether in the colonial or post colonial era, the media are owned by the elite and deployed principally to advance their interest within the society. Apart from the profit motive which motorises investments into the ownership of media houses, a major critical motive for media ownership is its use as a negotiating chip in inter-elite power game. The masses, whether in democratic or autocratic regimes, are critically important as they form the pool of

the human machinery necessary for the maintenance or overthrow of the status-quo. This is exemplified by the lack of unanimity in the editorial policies of the media organisations as their disposition oscillated between radicalism and conservatism. But the seeming ideological leaning of the various media organisations is underpinned by their overall socio-economic and political interest.

The constant mutation of the elite class within the Nigerian federation and their increasing acquisition of stakes in media organisations as well as the contraction in opportunities during military regimes created the condition for the clamour for civil rule. During the military era, the appurtenances of power and influence were in the firm control of the military oligarchs and their select allies in other spheres of the elite class. The non-military elite occupied the fringes of the power circle. And even at that, the military tended to neglect established elite and, for its purpose, created a new set of nouveaux riches whose interest were made to coincide with theirs The frequent change of government meant that each regime raised its own set of elite who were to become the vanguard of its interest both in and out of government. The alienation of the mainstream elite and their subsequent estrangement from government patronage system motorised the agitation for democratic rule. Often, such agitation for political reordering found collaborators and allies in business, traditional, bureaucratic and retired military elite groups who felt marginalised in the scheme of dispensing state patronage.

Because governance in Nigeria as elsewhere in Africa, is perceived, not in terms of service to the people, but as a divinely- ordained opportunity to partake in the sharing of the national cake, there is a perennial centrifugal struggle for power in the polity (Ake 1981:126). The elite in government and those outside of it are locked in a war of survival and ascendancy, with the media as a veritable platform for its prosecution. This was best exemplified during the regimes of retired General Ibrahim Babangida and the late General Sani Abacha. During the Babangida era, his transition programme was appropriately described as unending as he constantly shifted the date for the

termination of military rule. For Abacha, he was set to transmute to a democratic head of state before death stopped him. Interestingly, he was supported by a cross-section of the elite.

Political transitions in Nigeria were a product of elite agitation. They merely recruited the masses and the media for political effect and to provide the necessary bite to the struggle. The media used the twin tool of editorial and column writing to set the agenda of "political revolutions". Obafemi (2008) avers that the established editorial culture which was consolidated by the Daily Times of Nigeria (founded in 1926) through the innovative formation of editorial boards, bestowed on the press two interrelated leverages: to comment incisively on issues and take position and to enlighten the masses on the nitty-gritty of issues at stake. The overall aim was to influence decision-making at the highest levels as well as conscientize and mould public opinion at the lowest levels of followership. This unparalleled power wielded by the media was at the root of the anti-media policies that manifested in the sealing of media houses as well as the assassination of journalists both in military and democratic regimes.

The Nigerian elite, media and political transitions

Nigeria's political experience is undoubtedly chequered. Before the 1999 re-emergence of civil rule in Nigeria's political horizon, the media was under siege. The jackboot of military autocracy made sure it was in strict control of the media through a combination of stick and carrot. It was easy for the military to terrorise and control the media because of several factors namely; i) power of arbitrary and retroactive legislation; ii) government monopoly of the media; iii) restrictions arising from official and unofficial regulatory bodies; iv) state-sponsored violence against media practitioners; v) economic strangulation of media houses through arbitrary closure; and vi) systematic denial and withdrawal of patronage through advert and sundry placements owing to government dominance of economic activities.

Prior to 1999, Nigeria had witnessed eleven regimes, out of which the military accounted for eight and instituted one contraption called the interim national government (ING) that was eventually sacked through a military coup d'état and cumulatively ruled for twenty nine years. Although the various military regimes used the instrumentality of draconian decrees to beat the media into line, they brought about changes that introduced robustness in the operations of the media especially in its agenda-setting role. Even though Obafemi (2008) described the relationship between the government and the media during the period of military autocratic regimes as "uneasy bed-fellows", it was during the military that a certain kind of liberalisation was introduced in the electronic department of the media. This liberalisation ushered in privately-owned electronic media houses. But the press, since the colonial era, never lost its verve as a crusader for common good. But the common good championed by the press did not have cross-class definition or distinguishing parameters. In actuality, "common good" coincided with the dominant interest of the elite. The composition of the elite in Nigeria is quite fluid and complex, as it is not mutually exclusive but cross-cuts through political, bureaucratic, religious, military and traditional spheres (Olujide et al 2010:52).

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, there have been four identifiable political transitions: Three were supervised by the military (1979, 1992/1993 and 1999) and one by a democratic regime (2007). None of these transitions consciously factored the masses in its conceptualisation and execution. The elite on both sides of the divide claimed to be the mouthpiece of the people. In other words, the preferences of the dominant elite, who wanted power for its sake, were equated with those of the masses. This debatable equation of elite interest with that of the masses, in terms of preferable political system, is an offshoot of the thinking that political system determined economic outcomes. Or put more succinctly, that democratic regimes were superior to military regimes especially in terms of equitable distribution of socio-economic or political dividends. Even the

military oligarchs tended to subscribe to this logic as they promptly promised, on assumption of office, of fashioning a new political order. Babawale (2007:83) has described this as a response to the crisis of legitimacy that confronts military regimes. As he puts it, "all previous military administrations tried to wriggle out of the crisis of legitimacy by making promises of a rapid return to civil rule". Each of the transition programmes had its peculiar challenges. And these challenges which emanated from, and engendered by, the mainstream and fringe political elite consisted mainly in the deployment of anti-democratic strategies. A checklist includes: banning certain categories of persons from contesting, clamouring for the incumbent to transmute themselves into democratic leaders and the organisations of solidarity rallies through pressure groups for the advancement of their narrow interests and perennial shifting of handover date.

There is no doubt that the various political transition programmes embarked upon by the military were done in deference to the pressures mounted by the elites through the media. In this respect, the media have creditably set tasks. But in championing and orchestrating political revolutions, the masses have held the short end of the stick. The various transition programmes operationally sidelined and relegated the masses to the fringes as their inputs were quite infinitesimal. For example, the Constitution Drafting Committee of 1975 and the Constituent Assembly that produced the moribund 1979 constitution, the 1988 Constitution Review Committee (CRC) that masterminded the still-birth 1989 constitution and the 1994/95 National Constitutional Conference (NCC) whose deliberations were encased in the 1999 constitution were all conferences of the elite, as the majority of their membership were hand-picked and chosen by the military elite. The implication of this as Babawale (2007:77) observes was that people at the grassroots developed aversion for politics as they saw it as a vocation of the elite. Therefore, their involvement in politics was purely for the immediate benefits or inducement to be obtained for that effort.

The transition programmes, as desirable as they were to the overall interest of the country pitched the elite in squabbles that underscored their parochial interests. For instance, these squabbles enabled the Babangida Transition Programme to be subjected to countless adjustments from October 1, 1990 to 1992 and to August 27, 1993 until it was fruitlessly terminated on June 23, 1993 (Babawale 2007:58, 91). The same forces that egged IBB towards the abandonment of the democratic goals it set for its regime hijacked the late Gen. Abacha and put him on the path of self succession. While different sections of the elite were either pacified or cowed, the intrinsic lot of the masses was total neglect in the scheme of unfolding political drama as they were threatened with mass extermination. Dada (2006: B5) avers that the "late Gen. Sani Abacha proclaimed with his mouth that he would continue to rule even if the population of Nigeria was reduced to six [and] that he would deal decisively with anyone who tried to hinder his ambition of perpetuating himself in power". The Abacha-for-President campaign under the aegis of Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA), the National Mobilization and Persuasion Committee for Abacha 1998 and other motley pro-Abacha-for-President organisations clearly portrayed the convergence of elite-media conspiracy. Elite conspiracy consisted in the seeming unanimous adoption of the Abacha candidacy by the then five political parties and the deployment of the propaganda of the indispensability of Abacha in the crafting of a new Nigeria. A handful of anti-Abacha elite who could no longer take the heat of Abacha's counter-attack fled into self-exile. The media, in consideration of its survival and commercial interest, in the face of the rising culture of impunity against press freedom, not only tempered its critical reportage but capitulated in its hard-line stance. The conformists were rewarded with patronage through advert-placements and sponsorship of special features from the government and pro-government organisations. There is no doubt that the Nigerian media antagonised anti-democratic policies of various regimes as well as championed the restoration of democracy. But they did so within the ambit of the sphere of interest specified by their management.

Political Advertising as a Weapon of Political Terrorism

Nigeria's experience in political engineering points to a diversified experience. From parliamentarianism to presidentialism with military autocracy in-between, political advertising has been deployed in numerous ways through various media and for myriad purposes. The claim by Olajide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010:53) that "the extensive use of television and radio has supplanted direct appearances on the campaign trail" might be true for the developed economies but obviously false for underdeveloped countries especially in Africa. Several factors account for the seeming indispensability of rallies in Africa as a major vote-gathering strategy. These include: low level of information and communication technology (ICT), widespread poverty, lack of necessary infrastructure to power television stations; low ratio of person-to-TV access, corruption and absence of people-oriented development models often associated with leadership and governance failure. The electorate in underdeveloped countries generally perceive election period as their "once-in-a-blue-moon" opportunity to take their piece of the national cake from their leaders.

Pinto-Duschinsky (2004:17-18), succinctly states that television does not yet rule the world. Indeed, in many parts of Africa and Asia, television sets and even radios can be quite hard to find outside the cities. In almost all African countries rallies are still the best way for candidates to reach the voters. In Nigeria, political rallies and direct appearances in specially arranged town meeting venues have remained an integral part of its electioneering campaign process. But, because of the increasing relevance of the media, (and in recent times the ICT outlets like the GSM and Internet), such direct appearances have come to serve the purpose of consolidating the orchestrated media bombardment through political adverts. Political advertising connotes more than mere "use of the media by political candidates to increase their exposure to the public" as adduced by Olujide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010:53). Such a definition is simplistically narrow and does not portray its complexities.

As useful as extant categorisation of political advertising might be, it falls short of methodological exactitude in connection with Nigeria. While spotting the flaw in Johnston and Kaid's classification of political advertising into image and issue adverts, Olajide, Adeyemi and Gbadeyan (2010:53) propounded three major categories of political advertising as: political, contrast and negative or attack adverts. Interestingly, they were caught in the same methodological net they set out to untangle. The manner in which political advertising has been deployed over the years in Nigeria provides the radar towards its categorisation. We contend that there are five distinct categories of political advertising in Nigeria's political space namely;

(a) Activist adverts – concerned with advocacy for groups or neglected interest outside the domain of the dominant elite interest.

(b) Status quo adverts – aimed at maintaining the status quo in terms of regimes, office holders and their policies.

(c) Continuity/Change adverts – directed at mobilising and winning support for either continuity for the officeholder or political party or for change of the status quo.

(d) Federal Character adverts – involves the demand for inclusiveness in governance and concession for certain political positions to engender feelings of belonging, equity and justice in the polity.

(e) Smear Campaign adverts: Where certain categories of people are negatively labelled, preparatory to their political destruction.

Political advertising has been a permanent feature in Nigeria's political firmament irrespective of the form of government in operation. Both military and democratic governments variously utilised political advertising to achieve their ends. In all these, their target had been the masses. In other words, political advertising has been deployed as a handy tool by both types of government to

manipulate the masses in the furtherance of their interest. Often, it is the conflict of interest amongst the elite that motorises political advertising.

While political advertising targets a segment or the entirety of relevant population of eligible voters, its aim is to successfully mobilise them for the purpose of marketing the object of its campaign. In other words, while presenting the subject of its campaign, political adverts ultimately expect a feedback, whether positive or negative, from the masses. To this end, political advertising does not function in isolation but within the dictates of the political environment. Thus, whether in one-party, two-party or multiparty; autocratic or democratic states; political advertising is indispensable both for mobilising support for regimes' consolidation as well as legitimacy and for the opposition parties' drive for change. Put succinctly, political advertising involves the evolvement of effective strategies aimed at building and packaging candidates and political platforms within the framework of credibility on the one hand or the creation of doubts towards the opponents on the other hand, for the sole purpose of winning the support of the masses in democratic or non-democratic states. The tasks of political advertising are not exhausted in the checklist propounded by Lund (cited in Awonusi 1996: 107) namely, attracting attention, arousing interest, stimulating desire, creating conviction and getting action in the form of support. The tasks of political advertising also include countering the strong points of the opponents; shoring up the weaknesses of the subject of political adverts and inundating the target audience's socio-psychological space with messages of the superiority of the subject over other contenders.

The environmental and socio-economic peculiarities of states determine the dominant political advertising strategies in operation. Apart from the strategy of direct self-marketing in rallies and campaign trails and the use of pamphlets, circulars, fliers, billboards and stickers, the mass media have been the most influential political advertising strategy in Nigeria.

Undoubtedly the dominant interest of the elite determines the trajectory and competitive nature of political advertising. Political advertising in Nigeria often incorporates such primordial elements as ethnicity, religion and gender as its rallying strength. The Nigerian elite use them as mobilising totem to herd the masses towards their preferred political inclination. The state of development in Nigeria vis-à-vis the nature of political advertising shows a disjunction between political claim and reality. The media have used the concept of balancing to surreptitiously fan the embers of its interest and fixate it within the front burners of public consciousness. The failed tenure elongation project of Obasanjo provides a veritable example. A groundswell of political advertising towards the realisation of the Third Term project was orchestrated and sustained by a trans-ethnic and inter-elite coalition led by Mr. Festus Odimegwu, the erstwhile Managing Director of Nigerian Breweries Plc. Obasanjo was reified as a messiah and his regime ascribed with doubtful credentials of economic prosperity (Olayinka 2006:B5). Although there was a preponderance of opinions against the project, there was nevertheless certain ambivalence in the media.

Whose media? Whose interest? Nigerian elite and media ownership

The motive for media ownership in Nigeria has remained unchanged. Media ownership is dictated by ideological and political considerations. From the colonial era to the present, elite interest dictated and powered the media. The dominant newspapers of the colonial era, the West African Pilot, the Nigerian Daily Telegraph and Lagos Daily News were founded by the late Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo for the twin purposes of dislodging colonialism and entrenching themselves as the inheritors of state power in postcolonial Nigeria (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine 2003:183). The explosion in the number of newspapers, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coincided with major prospects of change in power configuration in Nigeria. For instance, in the course of the Second Republic politics (1979-1893), Chief Moshood Abiola was ostensibly

motivated to establish the Concord Media group chiefly to further his political interest which consisted in challenging and displacing the monopolistic hold of Chief Obafemi Awolowo and his Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) on the South-West in the interest of his party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN). Other waves of newspaper establishment coincided with other epochs in Nigeria's political and economic development.

The liberalisation of the electronic media through Decree 38 of 1992 as amended by Act No 55 of 1999 introduced a new robustness in the importance of the media in the Nigerian polity. The Federal Government through the instrumentality of this decree set up the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) with the core responsibilities to regulate and deregulate broadcasting in Nigeria in terms of licensing stations, regulating broadcast content and setting standards for quality broadcasting. According to the NBC, the liberalisation of the broadcast industry led to the landmark expansion in private investment in the sector. So far, 55 companies have been licensed to offer radio broadcasting service, 25 companies licensed to offer television services, 34 for wireless cable (MMDS) and 5 for direct-to-home (DTH) satellite TV platforms. What this meant was that the monopoly status of government through the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) and Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) was effectively dismantled. This shift in policy was what gave birth to the establishment of the pioneering Africa Independent Television (AIT), Minaj Broadcast International (MBI) and a host of other electronic media houses. Jibo (2003:582) has argued that a constant fixture in the firmament of media practice in Nigeria, as in other parts of the world, is the ever-present personal interest of the proprietor or the senior journalists in their overall operations.

Two factors made the media an attractive means of articulating, aggregating and pursuing socio-economic and political agenda of the elite. The first is the ever-expanding interchanges within the elite class manifesting in complex trans-migration from one cadre to another and

the attendant rivalry for ascendancy. The constant interchanges and cross-cadre movement amongst political, bureaucratic, religious, military, business or corporate and traditional cadres created contraction in available opportunities. The media, thus, provide leverage for ascendancy. The second factor is the nature of party formation in Nigeria and the ambush strategy often employed by rival elite groups to take control of party leadership. The media have been elevated into alternate party machinery to mobilise support. Party formation models in Nigeria take the form of top-bottom rather than bottom-top direction. What this implies is that the trajectory of party formation has always been dictated by either the government or the elite and never the masses. For instance, the parties in the aborted Babangida Transition, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC), were the creation of the military government. The political parties formed in the present democratic dispensation were the transmutation of erstwhile factions of the elite. For instance, while the PDP was a coalition of a group known as G-34 and 25 other associations, the former National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) metamorphosed into Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP, then APP) was a coalition of the remaining non-conformist elites especially those that received considerable patronage from the Abacha regime (http://www.peoplesdemocraticparty.net/index-php?option-com_content&view=article& id=47&Itemid=28&limistart-1; Igwilo 2011; Synge 2003:781). Other existing parties are chips off the blocks of these three pioneering parties in the present dispensation.

Because of the medley of elite cadres that united to form political parties and their contending interests, party politics in Nigeria is essentially characterised by constant alignment and realignment of forces that tended to be centrifugal. The media, thus, serve as their joker to constantly manoeuvre their way into positions of influence and affluence. In all of these calculations, the masses were reduced to mere pawns in the chessboard of elite interests. Even the elite journalists have often converted their positions as a means to access

juicy appointments. Despite the elaborate code of ethics for the Nigerian media especially the supremacy of public interest, elite interest, often garbed as public interest, is still supreme and dictates the trend of media operations. Where a media organisation is not directly linked to the elite, it is converted to acting as their foot soldiers. Under such scenario, personal aggrandisement and patronage become codes of ethical operation. As Fakoya (2010) puts it,

> Nigerian journalists are merely a reflection of the Nigerian sickness… They will write anything as long as money can exchange hands. The public have been fed with half truths and distorted concoctions….

The dimensions and politics of terrorism: the media-elite linkage

Despite the lack of agreement amongst scholars as to the defining characteristics of terrorism, in general terms, it denotes the deployment of violent and non-violent means towards a target in order to achieve a desired end or to precipitate the achievement or non-achievement of a desired end. A representative national conceptualisation of terrorism yields certain uniformity. Hoffman (2009) affirms that the legal system and code of law of the United Kingdom influenced those of the United States, Canada, and Israel as to the boundaries and connotations of terrorism. Thus, the United Kingdom's Terrorist Act 2000; United States Code, Title 18, Section 2331 (18 USC 2331); Canada's Anti-terrorism Act (Bill C-36) and the Israeli Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance No. 33 all perceive terrorism as the use or threat of the use of violence to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, including international organisations, for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause. Paul Wilkinson has also described terrorism as a "special weapon or method which has been used throughout history by both states and sub-states, [and] organizations for a whole variety of political causes or purposes" (cited in Abonyi 2006:26). These definitions are problematic considering their narrow and restrictive parameters. The goals of

terrorism are not always the achievement of political, religious or ideological goals. They transcend those goals. Terrorism is motorised by the quest for the ascendancy of personal or group interests in a milieu of interests. It is erroneous to contend as Gould (1999) did, that terrorism is typically a unidirectional and bottom-top phenomenon and a war waged by persons and groups who considered themselves as unprivileged victims of socio-economic, political, and technological advancement in the modern world and who desired visibility for the purpose of a redress. Within the global and national arena, the tool of terrorism has been wielded by individuals, groups, organisations, states and other non-state actors in the pursuit of their interest. Understandably, the different strategies adopted by terrorist groups target both tangible and intangible landmarks. Although every actor within the global arena is a potential terrorist, it is the non-state actor, on account of its supra-sovereign status, that poses the greatest danger to global stability and system survival. But, within national boundaries, the state has, in a number of ways, dispensed terror on the citizenry, notwithstanding the form of government.

The capabilities of various actors to unleash terror and the magnitude of damage achievable through terrorist attacks have led to the differentiation of terrorism into macro and micro. The difference between the two lies in the sophistication of organisation, resources at their disposal, target of attacks, expected outcome of attacks, magnitude of attack, and nature of weapons used in carrying out attacks. While macro-terrorism necessarily entails broad-based violence using sophisticated weaponry, micro-terrorism covers small targets and uses ordinary weapons and/or psychological tools. Micro-terrorism has been conceptualised contemporaneously in terms of contraction in the magnitude of the effect of terror attacks. This conceptualisation flowed from the shift in the strategy and target of terrorist attacks by groups especially the al Qaeda. Their orientation has shifted towards the “strategy of thousand acts”, that is, systematic piecemeal attacks on their enemies instead of a big bang. Zakaria (2010) describes micro-terrorism as small-scale terrorism, driven from

the local level, whose practitioners choose not the largest or most spectacular operations but those that are likely to succeed. As useful as this definition is, it narrowly conceptualises micro-terrorism within the ambit of non-state actors. State actors are also agents of micro-terrorism and their targets are not just anarchists or anti-government groups but in certain cases, the generality of the masses. In this study, we shall expand the derivative of micro-terrorism a notch to incorporate government policies targeted at hoodwinking the people. The avenue through which the national elite orchestrate their terror on the people is the mass media through the psychological weapons of political advertising.

Since Nigeria's independence and despite the visionless contraction of the Nigerian economy to monoculturalism, Nigeria has earned more than enough to catapult it out of the dinginess of Third World categorisation. According to Ikpeze (2004:6), between 1973 and 1981, Nigeria earned the fabulous sum of over US$60 billion from oil exports alone. From being under-borrowed in 1973, Nigerian became a debtor-nation from 1978 onwards as a result of two jumbo loans borrowed by the country. As a result, Nigeria deployed substantial percentage of its annual earnings to service these loans, which were ostensibly committed to the satiation of elite greed. Before the much celebrated debt reprieve by the duo of Word Bank and the IMF in 2005, Nigeria had, as at 2003, spent a cumulative whopping sum of US $35 billion as debt service payments (Adetunji 2004:1). Notwithstanding that the two jumbo loans which culminated in Nigeria's debt peonage originated in General Obasanjo's tenure as military head of state, the debt relief was eulogised to high heavens and formed the fulcrum around which his unconstitutional tenure elongation campaign revolved. The media shirked its responsibility to the people, and was awash with all sorts of encomiums and pro-tenure elongation political adverts that were calculated to ambush the people's political choices.

The anti-corruption crusade of the Obasanjo era which ought to have served the nation was converted into a personal political tool for

vendetta. The result of this was that as at the end of Obasanjo's presidency in 2007, only 10 high profile cases had been charged to court (Adisa 2011). Although Obasanjo set up the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and stepped up propaganda against corruption, the fight against corruption was selective and was used as a tool to cow "unruly" elites. Despite the revelation by the EFCC that since 1999, political office holders had looted Nigeria's treasury to the tune of US$100bn (Daily Independent 18/09/2006), no mainstream political office holder was in jail, except for the isolated cases of the former Inspector General of the Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun and former Chairman of Nigerian Ports Authority (NPA), Chief Olabode George. Despite the publication of a list of political office holders under investigation by the EFCC for a myriad of corruption charges in the media, these politicians were not stopped and, with their stolen wealth, entrenched themselves further into government. The result is that corrupt people are recycled in power and corruption endemically entrenched in the polity. The media have functioned as image-laundering organ of the elite and successfully too. Kargbo (2006:132) in outlining the media-elite conspiracy observes:

> 99 percent of the people do not have the opportunity of crosschecking or conducting reality checks on public actors. It is the press [and the electronic media] that present and define (sic) these characters and more often than not, it is the pictures of these people as presented by the media that the people would hold.

The Nigerian political elite have evolved mechanisms through which they terrorise the people. The media often distorted the truth about indicted politicians describing them as "innocent" victims and attributing their travails to politics, ethnicism or such primordial sentiments. Two factors power the elite-media collaboration: the patronage from state apparati of power and cash (Kargbo 2006:B2).

The seeming balance of the commercialistic interest of the media and their social responsibilities has led to such contraptions as a special projects or features. Under this guise, certain illegalities such as first lady syndrome and the celebration of hollow rituals such as hundred (100) days in office where all manner of uncensored political adverts chronicling dubious progress are fed to the people. Notwithstanding the disclaimers by the media organisations, this propaganda serves only the ruling elite. To compound issues, the foreign media are often employed for greater effects, especially to deepen the legitimacy of the propaganda. The CNN has often been chosen to fill this gap. Since Nigeria's return to democratic rule, it has aired several political adverts of state governments, often with trumped-up developmental projects. And the rationalisation for the waste of resources which these pockets of propaganda represent has been anchored on the need to showcase the developmental strides within the states as a strategy to attract foreign direct investment. The tenure elongation agenda of the Obasanjo regime offers a good example. Its proponents used the CNN to advance its cause for two reasons: one, to consolidate the domestic misinformation of the people and, two to orchestrate international misinformation.

There is general agreement that since 1999, elections in Nigeria have not measured up to the international benchmark of free and fair. And yet, the media have in their analyses, attributed political invincibility to certain people from Oyo to Anambra and from Rivers to Zamfara states. From 1999 till 2007, there was progressive alienation of the people from exercising their franchise and determining who should govern them as the electoral process was compromised by the electoral umpire and manipulated by the political elite. This scenario threw up the godfather syndrome in Nigeria politics. As obnoxious and destabilizing as the godfather syndrome was in Nigerian politics the dramatis personae were made heroes of in the media and were neither prosecuted nor made to pay restitution for the political terrorism they unleashed on the masses.

Conclusion

The starring point to redress the micro-terrorism that the political elite and the Nigerian state had unleashed on the masses is the review of the Nigerian constitution through the involvement of the people. As it is, it is a document of the elite. Through uncensored political advertising, the media had become an accomplice in the marginalisation of the masses. While business principles dictate that the survival of business enterprises hinges on profitability, the media must recognise that the overriding impetus for its existence is the promotion of social justice. It is when social justice has been served that profit would come under the purview of consideration. The unwitting effect of the current political advertising regimen in practice in Nigeria is the emboldening of the culture of impunity and the glorification of a warped mindset that everything is answerable to monetary inducement; two effects that are anti-development.

References

Abonyi, N. N. (2006). "Terrorism and global security in post cold war international relations: The case of the USA and Great Britain". *Journal of International politics and Development Studies*, 2 (1). Pp. 25-36.

Adetunji, A. (2004). "FG spends US$35billion on debt servicing". *Business Day* (Nigeria). 28 May.

Adisa, T. (2011). "A peep at EFCC in a season of elections". *Nigerian Tribune*. Retrieved from: http://www.tribune.com.ng/index.php/politics/20066-a-peep-at-efcc-in-a-season-of-elections. Accessed 6 June 2011

Ake, C. (1981). *A political economy of Africa*. Harlow, Essex: Longman Group Ltd.

Awonusi, V. O. (1996). "Politics and politicians for sale: An examination of advertising English in Nigeria's political transition programme". *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia*. XXX.

Retrieved from: http://ifa.amu.edu.pl/sap/files/30/07awonusi.pdf. Accessed 28 May 2011. Accessed 6 June 2011

Babawale, T. (2007). *Nigeria in the crises of governance and development: Retrospective and prospective analyses of selected issues and events. Vol.1*. Lagos: Concept Publications.

Dada, S. C. (2006). "Power of the tongue". *Daily Independent* (Nigeria). 9 March.

Gould, H. A (1999). "The Roots and fruits of terrorism". A paper presented at an international seminar on counter terrorism strategies for the 21st century: Asian and Pacific Basin perspectives at Potomac Institute for policy Studies, Virginia, USA. Retrieved from: http://www.terrorismcentral.com/Library/Causes /Gould.html. Accessed 5June 2011

Hoffman, B. (2009). "Terrorism". *Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD]*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.

Igwilo, D. (2011). Ekwueme – patriot or villain". Retrieved from: http://nigeriaworld.com/articles/2011 /feb/121.html. Accessed 6 June 2011.

Ikpeze, N. I. (2004). The Nigerian economy: performance in the current republic". Paper Presented at the *National Conference on Nigerian Government and Politics: An Appraisal of Performance 1999-2004 at the Department of Political Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka*, April 20-22, 2004.

Jibo, M. & Okoosi-Simbine, A. T. (2003). "The Nigerian media: An assessment of its role in achieving transparent and accountable government in the fourth republic". *Nordic Journal of African Studies*. 12(2). Pp. 180-195.

Kargbo, S. (2006). "Winning the race as Obasanjo's successor". *Daily Independent* (Nigeria). 9 March.

Obafemi, O. (2008). "The media and national patriotism". Being a revised version of a lead paper presented at the National Institute of Cultural Orientation in 2007. *Sunday Sun* (Nigeria). Serialised on 13, 20 and 27 July. Retrieved from: http://www.elsnetworld.com/webpages/features/literati/2008/jul /13/literari-13-07-2008-002.htm. Accessed 28 May 2011.

Olayinka, L. (2006). "Why OBJ must continue to play God". *Daily Independent* (Nigeria). 8 March.

Olujide, J. O., Adeyemi, S. L. & Gbadeyan, R. A. (2010). "Nigerian electorates' perception of political advertising and election campaign". *Research Journal of Social Sciences*. 1(5). Pp. 52-60.

Peterside, I. (2006). "Third term and CNN credibility". *Daily Independent* (Nigeria). 8 March.

Pinto-Duschinsky (2004). "Financing politics: A global view". In Ndubisi Obiora (ed). *Political finance and democracy in Nigeria: Prospects and strategies for reform*. Lagos: Centre for law and Social Action.

Synge, R. (2003). "Nigeria: Recent history". In K. Murison (ed). *Africa South of the Sahara 2003, 32nd Edition*. London: Europa Publications Ltd.

Zakaria, F. (2010). "The year of micro-terrorism". Retrieved from: http://www.time.com/time/specials /packages/article/0,28804,2036683_2037181_2037470,00.html. Accessed on 8 June 2011.