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**ETHNIC CONSIDERATION IN POLITICAL COVERAGE BY NIGERIAN MEDIA****DR. IFEDAYO DARAMOLA****LECTURER****DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION****ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY****NIGERIA****ABSTRACT**

Two cardinal rules in journalism ethics are that, (1) journalists should be objective in their reportage, that is news reporting should devoid of the journalist's biases, opinions and views; (2) journalists should not originate materials which encourage discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation or use the media for axe-grinding or settling scores. It is often discovered that many journalist find it difficult abiding by these rules. Besides this, journalists are pressured by ownership factor, which appear in form of house style; editorial policy and primordial attachment to set aside ethical injunction by putting sentiment into consideration in their reportage. This is why this paper throws its search light on examining ethnic consideration in political reporting by Nigerian media. In a country of 250 ethnic groups, the paper found that journalists are at times propelled by ethnic affiliation and ownership factor in reporting politics. The paper also traced the historical background of incursion of ethnicity into Nigerian politics to the founding fathers of Nigerian independence, Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello. The paper says ethnicity found its way into Nigerian politics in 1934 when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and his Igbo supporters angrily left Nigerian Youth Movement and that ethnicity took root in the 1950s when each of the aforementioned nationalists and politicians formed political parties of ethnic (tribal) colouration. From then till 1983, political parties and elections were largely, ethnically based. Worse still, many of the politicians were also newspaper proprietors who turned their newspapers to megaphone of the political parties.

**KEYWORDS**

Ethnic, Media, Nigeria, Political reporting, Objectivity, Political parties.

**OPERATIONALIZATION OF TERMS**

We shall begin this paper by operationalizing the three key words in the title of the paper. The words are: ethnic, coverage and media.

**Ethnic:** This means connected with or relating to different racial or cultural groups of people. Ethnic group refers to a group of people who share the same culture and race including language, religion, history or custom (Akinbade, 2004). For example, Nigeria has more than 250 ethnic groups such as Yoruba, Ijaw, Ibo, Hausa, Urhobo, Fulani, Kanuri, Efik and Tiv. Many African countries are characterized by societies of considerable ethnic diversity. In other words, within the boundaries of the nation state and within the broader structure of 'national' identity, many people regard themselves as members of more specific groups which could be referred to as 'ethnic groups'. This form of affiliation is called 'ethnicity'. These groups are sometimes referred to as 'primordial groups' in the sense that loyalties to them often outweigh those to the nation state and its values and priorities. In the context of this paper, we shall adopt Geertz's view (1963) cited in Akinyele (2003) that ethnic consideration is a way in which people think of themselves and others, and make a sense of the world around them.

**Coverage:** coverage of something in the news media is reporting of it or paying attention to a given event.

**Media** is the plural of medium which means vehicles of transmitting messages to a large, heterogeneous and diversified audience through the use of newspaper, magazine, television, radio, book and lately the Internet.

**INTRODUCTION**

Ethnic consideration in political coverage will therefore mean reporting political events from the perspective of ethnic affiliation. In other words, a Yoruba journalist will report issue from the perspective of a Yoruba person. Same goes for Hausa, Ibo, Tiv, Efik, Ibibio journalist. This is in line with Sanda view of ethnicity as "the active sense of identification with some ethnic unit whether or not this group has an institutional structure of its own, or whether it has any real existence in the pre-colonial epoch (cited in Akinyele, 2003). But Mare (cited in Akinyele (2003:125) believes that ethnicity can be accepted and that it should neither be privileged nor denied, that is that it is possible for an individual to identify with his ethnic group while remaining objective in the dealings with members of other ethnic groups. In a simple term ethnic consideration in political coverage by the media can simply be translated to ethnic consideration in political reporting by the media. Going by the code of conduct of Nigerian journalists, putting ethnicity into consideration in political reporting is definitely unethical. But before making this submission, I will like to go into history to tell you the genesis of ethnicity in Nigeria.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Social responsibility theory was used as the theoretical framework of this research. The social responsibility theory was one of the theories of press discussed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in their famous "Four Theories of the Press" in 1956. The central point of the theory is that absence of control of the press and its practitioners would make them irresponsible. The libertarian theory, which was one of the theories propounded by the scholars, was believed to have allowed unfettered freedom for media men. The social responsibility theory came on board to advocate that media practitioners themselves and proprietors should control the media to prevent irresponsible act, and thus help to bring them socially responsible. It, however, warns that government should not control the press

In most of the developing countries in particular, when a punitive law is enacted, to curtail the press, it is always argued that it is to ensure social responsibility. One important code of conduct of journalism says, journalists should not originate materials which encourage discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation or use the media for axe-grinding or settling scores. When a journalist writes or reports to promote tribal or ethnic sentiment, such a journalist has violated the ethics of his/her profession and should therefore be sanctioned. But the absence of sanction in ethics has made its violation the order of the day. This paper is of the view that ethnic consideration in political reporting is unethical.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ETHNICITY IN NIGERIA**

It is a common knowledge that many Nigerians blame Nigeria political, economic and social development on ethnicity, religion and corruption. As far back as 1997, Eyo (cited in Akinyele: 124) has observed that Nigeria "rests precariously on the tripod of ethnicity, religious intolerance and greed for political power". This is perhaps why Nnoli describes ethnicity as "a socio-political phenomenon associated with interactions among members of a society, consisting of diverse ethnic groups, characterized by cultural and linguistic similarities, values and consciousness".

Ethnicity has its roots in the party formation of the early 1930s. One of such political parties was Nigerian Youth Movement which was established in 1934 and had branches in the West, East and Northern part of Nigeria. In 1941, the proprietors of *Daily Service*, Ernest Sesse Ikoli indicated interest to contest as the president of the party. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe did not support Ikoli, an Ijaw man who has contributed immensely to the growth of the party just because Ikoli's newspaper has been trying to overshadow *West African Pilot* of Zik. Rather than support Ikoli, Zik pitched his tent with Samuel Akinsaya, an Ijebu man. However, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and H. O. Davies supported Ikoli who eventually won the election. Zik attributed the defeat of Akinsaya to the fact that he

(zik) was not a Yoruba man. He therefore resigned his membership of the party along with his other Igbo followers (Akinyele: p. 126). The action of Zik and his followers, noted Dlakwa (cited in Akinyele), rather than concrete proof of victimization on ethnic grounds, has become the driving force of ethnic relations in the country.

Omu affirmed the situation when he said, "the feud between the *Pilot* and the *Daily Service* edited by Ernest Ikoli (1938 – 1944) and Akintola, S.L. contributed to the regionalisation of nationalism and crystallisation of inter-group tension and animosity which characterized political developments for a long time" (Omu 1978: 247).

Similarly, in 1948 in his acceptance speech as president of the Igbo state union, Zik was quoted as saying he believed that one day the Igbo will lead other ethnic groups in Africa. The speech, according to Coleman and others (cited in Akinyele, p. 127) broke the cordial relationship that hitherto existed between the cultural groups and forced many of them, like the Edo, Ijaw and others to form their own ethnic unions for self protection. Yoruba also formed Egbe Omo Oduduwa in the same year which later transmuted into Action Group, a political party led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The rivalry between Chief Awolowo and Zik ignited the suspicion that influenced the outcome of the 1952 election. Chief Obafemi Awolowo has been accused of formation ethnicity. This was attributed to the role played by Chief Obafemi Awolowo after 1952 election in which Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and his NCNC won in the South West. Reading the negative effect of this on the South West, in the night of the election, Yoruba members in NCNC were asked to cross carpet to Action Group. But a critical look at Chief Obafemi Awolowo's action clearly reveals his fear of domination and drum of ethnicity already being beaten by Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe since 1934. Ethnic swaggar was also used in the East that year against Dr. Eyo Ita who was removed from office. The major political parties, Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), Action Group (AG) and National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) were ethnically based. The NPC for instance, was an offshoot of the Hausa/Fulani *Jamiyya Mutaren Arewa*, AG was *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* reincarnated while the NCNC which originally a national political party shrank into a committee for the management of the affairs of the Igbo people (ibid). Dlakwa again expresses his fear about the situation in the 1950s thus:

*By and large, the politics of Nigeria was regionally centred with the NPC in control of North, the AG in control of the West, and NCNC appeared to be the most nationalist in spread since it had a trickle influence in the west, while N.E.P.U was the most nationalistic in ideological inclination followed by the A.G. Ethnicity was, however, deeply rooted in both the A.G and the N.C.N.C. This had to do with the role played by Awolowo and Azikiwe in the two parties (Akinyele: 127).*

Again Fred Omu (p. 247 – 248) said of the newspapers of the period, "with the advent of responsible government in 1951 and the emergence of modern political parties as well as party controlled administrations, old antagonisms were intensified and the atmosphere of politics and the press seethed with bitter rivalry and enmity". He went further to say, "with few exceptions, the newspapers were owned or supported by the rival political parties (NCNC) and the Action Group (AG) and it is one of the ironies of Nigerian history that in a crucial decade in the nation's development, a period of which witnessed the taking of political and constitutional steps which led inexorably to independence, the newspapers were completely immersed in the vortex of partisan politics and were in no position to prepare the people for the challenges of independence and national unity".

This inclination according to Akinyele (p 128) was reflected in the voting of the Igbo and Yoruba during the various elections of 1956 and 1959. The Northern Peoples Congress was deeply rooted in ethnicity to the extent that North did not allow any of the political parties in the South to make in-road in the North. As a matter of fact, the AG's leader visit to Kano to campaign was marred by crisis which was later referred to Kano crisis. Whereas the NPC sought and got support in the premier of Western Region, Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola while preparing for 1964 parliament election, Chief Akintola aligned with NPC after forming NNNDP.

The same pattern of voting was noticed in the 1979 and 1983 elections. The realization of enormity of ethnicity prompted General Aguiyi Ironsi who took over as head of state after January 15, 1966 military coup d'état to "proscribe the ethnic associations and impose a unitary government on the country". In fact, the promotion that was done in the army which favoured Igbo officers was believed to be ethnically motivated.

*The Drum* one of the publications of *Daily Times* in its February edition 1960, attributed Nigeria problem to ethnicity or tribalism in a headline captioned "Tribalism is Nigeria's deadliest enemy". According to the paper;

The Nigerian federation is today in very grave danger. For the sake of administrative convenience the country was divided into the three major regions-Northern, Eastern and Western. But the immediate danger far outweighs any administrative advantages. That danger is tribalism (Ethnicity). And what that danger can do – to the unity of the federation, to the spirit of oneness of its peoples, to their economic growth, to their sense of civic responsibility and to their tolerance of one another – was amply demonstrated by many unhappy incidents during the last general election.

Tribalism, as a political weapon, was thought up and employed by our own politicians. The Action Group, for instance, in spite of its attempts in recent years to become national rather than tribalistic, was founded as a tribal party. Its membership, during the first two or three years of its existence, was entirely made up of Yorubas. Its political scheme did not include the Ibos or the Hausas. In short, it ignored the non-Yorubas. The Action Group has today become national in outlook, but those who saw it as originally tribalistic have not been convinced that it has lost its capacity to harm non-Yorubas with its original tribal poison. The Ibos of Eastern Nigeria are about the most united of all Nigerians. And it was as a result of their sense of unity that they have come to see the NCNC as an Ibo affair rather than something national. That millions of the Ibos vote NCNC is not so much because they cherish its policies more than they do those of the Action Group. It is because they regard it – by reason of Dr. Azikiwe's leadership – as "our party".

And what of the Northern People's Congress? The NPC, which came into being as a political party on October 1, 1951, has, at no time, wanted anybody to believe that it has any interest outside the region of its origin. It is still determined to prove to the world that northerners can unite, irrespective of creed, tribe or rank, for any common cause, yet still maintain their traditional culture and sense of discipline. The party sees no reason to amend its battle cry of "One North, one people".

Tribalism leads to violence. In the last general election many campaigners had their heads bashed, not because they were campaigning on a political platform unacceptable to those who clouted them, but because they did not belong to the same tribe as their attackers. Nor is it only politics that tribalism shows up so glaringly. It is equally bad in our offices, in our factories and in other places where Nigerians work together in groups (Dyson, 1998: 191).

## ETHNIC AND OWNERSHIP CONSIDERATION IN POLITICAL COVERAGE

In Nigeria, newspaper ownership is closely tied to ethnicity and by extension in ethnic consideration in political reporting. Newspapers that were published before and after the formation of NUJ toed the line of their proprietors and remained partisan. One recalls here the role played by *The Record* (1891-1930) of Thomas Horatio Jackson, *Lagos Daily News* of Herbert Macaulay (both men founded the first Nigeria political party, Nigeria National Democratic Party (NNNDP) and *Eko Akete* in 1923 during the campaign for the first election in Nigeria. The newspapers were partisan. The available newspapers took positions as pro-NNNDP, anti-NNNDP and a few were neutral. During political campaigns and even when the election had been conducted, the newspapers took side and beat the drum of division. Each newspaper stood on the side of its owner and served as the mouthpiece of owner's political party (Omu, 1978).

The *West African Pilot*, a newspaper established by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe which had remained non-partisan in the crusade against colonial domination, soon became partisan during the regional election in the 1950s, the newspaper originally had a national scope. The *West African Pilot* was founded in 1937, leading to a chain of newspapers by Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and helped to cover a wide segment of the country. The *West African Pilot* was the first mass circulated newspaper devoted to promoting serious broad-based anti-colonial mobilization in Nigeria. The paper later served as the mouthpiece of National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), a political party led by Zik for two decades. The paper and its allies served the country for many years. The Nigerian press enjoyed a marriage of convenience with politics but this marriage of convenience broke down in 1951 when Nigeria was divided into three regions by Governor Macpherson. With the division of the country into regions and the consequent outmaneuvering of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe and his party, NCNC in the Western Region, the "seed was sown for the sectional (in contrast to the national) use of the press in Nigeria" (Africa Leadership Forum, Dialogue 15, 1991). Thus with Zik as premier of Eastern region under an NCNC government in the 1950s, the *West African Pilot* shed its national toga and fully embraced the promotion of "Eastern" Nigeria interests. The divisive cry of "To Thy Tents, Oh, Israel", sounded in the division of Nigeria into three regions- North, East and West – in 1951, has continued to remain with the Nigerian press today. Ownership became and has continued to be a crucial factor in determining the nationalist orientation of newspapers (Africa Leadership Forum, Dialogue 15, 1991).



Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1963)), cited in Onoja (2005:82), the mass media are part of the machinery through which rival pressure and policy proposals are expressed, made known, brought to arbitration in a multiple contest that makes for shifting equilibrium of influence. Onoja (ibid) goes further when he cites Westergard (1977:38) who states that a critical look at the pluralistic views run counter to interpretation, which assigns a single set of interest in contemporary societies, despite ostensibly indefinite pull and push of societies. He states that the locus of power at any given time can only be established by referring to visible results of contest for influence in decision-making.

According to Maduka (1997:28), cited in Onoja (ibid), during election time, or run-up to election, this power of accumulation takes a fiercer form and new dimensions. A broadcaster was once hauled before a top Nigerian government functionary for allowing the opposition a hearing on the government-owned station even in normal times. He explained his actions based on the enabling laws setting up the station. But the officer asked the broadcaster: do you know that those laws are neocolonialists and therefore no longer tenable? In a similar circumstance, a government spokesman would not allow a station to apply established rules to a case, because, according to the senior official, it was an election year, and therefore, a war situation existed (Maduka, 1987:29). In the 1983 elections, *New Nigerian*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Sketch* threw caution to the wind with each of them trying to serve its master. In Nigeria, the role played by the mass media in the coverage of presidential elections in the second republic (1979-1983) has not been different. The mass media adopted a hegemonic political perspective, and confined itself to serving the interest of its owners and ethnic balancing.

Without consideration for the geographical spread of the five major political parties in the 1979 general elections (NPN, UPN, GNPP, NPP and PRP), newspapers owned by politicians believed that their masters must win the election. When the result of the presidential election was announced, *Nigerian Tribune* was the first to shout 'court' or 'electoral college' so as to resolve the issue of 2/3 of 19 states as was then made. Hear the paper:

Today, many news organisations end up endorsing a candidate or party in an election, with some maintaining a surreptitious bias in their selective reporting. Despite pre-election electoral endorsements, most of the news media rarely admit that they do so. Most of the media (particularly during political campaigns) pursue all these partisan activities (Rubin, 1983:48).

This linkage has assisted most media organs to enjoy patronage during campaigns, particularly if the endorsed candidate wins. Smith (1991:45), as cited by Onoja (ibid), points out that it is vain talk of a free press when the favour of power is essentially to the support of editors. It is the most solemn truth and it should be impressed on every mind that if liberty shall ever expire in our country, it will die of poisonous draught of poisonous patronage. The media thus have potentials to act as facilitating agents, to diffuse and magnify issues and events. Each message is designed for a particular purpose and audience. As Smith (1991) puts it, it must indeed be recognised that a journalist ceases to be a reporter for whom all is grist to the mill and becomes in good faith a judge of what is expedient. Information is not and cannot be entirely neutral.

Sobowale (1986:45) admits this when he says virtually all information published by the media is suspect. To him, "Choosing what events to cover on the lead, involves a lot of subjective decisions". He further pointed out that even those news sources that provide information to reporters do not do so out of genuine desire to make information available to the public. Sobowale (1986:48; 1994) concurs with this position when he said that owners' interest greatly affect reportage. He affirms: "when interests such as pecuniary benefits, group and religious interests are involved, ownership plays a leading role particularly its directionality". He further points out that government-owned press tends to give more favorable coverage than the privately-owned, if the image of the owner is affected; a case of who pays the piper dictates the tune. For instance, reportage of the presidential elections in the Third Republic was sharply divided along political party lines and the structure of ownership where personal interest was involved, the state of the stories easily betrays the prejudices of the affected media. On the protracted June 12 Presidential election that was annulled by the military government, the Northern part of the country was clearly in support of it, while their South West counterpart took the opposite axis. A few others whose interests were considered more paramount than political or regional allegiance charted a more middle of the road course. Ownership of the media thus confers control over the nature of the information disseminated. It is a common knowledge that when there is an issue that should be addressed nationally, a section of the country will tag the press, Lagos-Ibadan axis press just to give a dog a bad name.

There is common agreement by political scientists and historians that political parties in Nigeria are formed along ethnic lines. These parties championed parochial and ethnic interests at the expense of national unity and a stable government. From the NCNC, AG and NPC of the pre-colonial days and the first republic (1951-1966), through the NAP, NPN, UPN, NPP, GNPP, PRP, (1979-1983) of the second and third republics to the NRC and SDP (1991-1993) of the botched third republic, political party formation has been an ethnic affair.

According to Uzegeunam (1997:39) "the first republic had the NCNC which began as a national party and ended as an Igbo party. Action group and the NPC were all regional, ethnic confraternities in political party garments". Regrettably, none of these parties could be said to qualify in real sense of a national political organization. Party formation in 1999 except for Alliance for Democracy (AD) appeared national in outlook.

Unfortunately the mass media have become inextricably entangled in this web of anomaly. Marcia Grant, in Edogbo (1994:33) did a comprehensive study of the relationship between the press and the political system in Nigeria during the first republic and found out, among other things, that the character of political reporting and commentary in the print media was entirely dependent on media ownership structure and the owner's relationship with the political system. As a result Grant concluded that most newspapers often spoke for one political party or one region against another, which meant that the press acted not as an impartial estate, but as mouthpiece of the political division in Nigeria.

In the same vein, Koromah et al (1999:97) as cited by Agba (2006) observe that "between 1979 and 1983, press partisanship was clearly manifested in political reporting in Nigeria. During the period the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) was in control of national government, the federal government owned media such as *New Nigerian*, *Daily Times*, NTA (television) and Radio Nigeria pulled along behind the NPN, acting as the organ of government propaganda." For instance, the Abiola media conglomerate- *National Concord*, *African Concord* and *Community Concord*- waged an all out media war with the Kaduna-based press on the June 12, 1993 annulment. Also Zik's *Pilot* was an unwavering supporter of pro-Igbo agitations, in the First Republic. The stand of these newspapers on the issue of representation in the central legislative council between 1949 and 1950 are reflective of the above. *The Pilot* opposed the demand of the north that the latter be allowed 50% representation in the central legislature. Though the *Daily Times* did not support partisanship, it however faulted when it praised the East for supporting the north' demand. Another issue, which showed press partisanship, was 1962 and 1963 censuses in Nigeria. The issue was controversial due to the relationship between census figure and the federal legislative seats that could be allocated to a region. Each region at a time accused the other of inflating census figures. Census figures from the north showed that the north had more people than the rest of the regions put together, a result that jolted the south. A pamphlet released by the federal ministry of information put Nigeria's population at 40 million, with 22 million people from the north and 10 million and 8 million from the East and West respectively.

When the result was declared the *West African Pilot* accused the North of mischief, saying that the North wanted to rule forever. The ensuing controversy caused a rift in the NPC/NCNC coalition, a weak point which was so much exploited by the *Daily Express*, the political weapon of the west, which had been laboring tirelessly to discredit the coalition. The *Daily Times* sat on the fence, even though it betrayed its support for the government. The paper once rejected a suggestion by Honorable Ibrahim Waziri, then Minister of Economic Development, that the 1963 census be repeated. The paper also commended the prime minister, Alhaji Tafa Balewa when the latter chided Waziri. Mordi (1994:341) notes that the "*Daily Times* defense of the figures was not based on conviction". "The paper", he says, "was afraid not to step on the toes of the federal government and the Northern Regional Government which favored the acceptance of the figures." Mordi further added that the *West African Pilot*, which supported the NCNC, had noted that census was the key to future political power and therefore wasted no time in rejecting the figures.

On the 1965 Western Regional parliamentary elections, reports had it that the rejection of Chief Akintola by the majority of the westerners did not deter the latter, but made him rig the elections with the support of the NPC, a party with which Akintola's NNDP formed the Nigeria National Alliance (NNA) in the 1964 election. Mordi (1994:416) observed that, "as in the AG crisis and the census controversy" the press took sides with the squabbling politicians instead of acting as national symbols and playing the role of the watchdog in the critical moments of Nigeria history, 1964 to 1966. The press mirrored and heightened issues of obstruction of political campaigns and harassment of political opponents and the disagreement between the president and the prime minister.

This situation makes the press to allow politicians to say what they like during campaigns. In fact, electoral dirtiness and insincerity are most pronounced in electioneering campaigns. Campaign periods are time when politicians, “fully with the sense of deceit, poise to use rhetoric, verbose speech and stylized blandishments to blindfold unspeakably gullible Nigerians”.

Electioneering campaigns seem to portray a consortium of insincere political figures, whose failure to keep promises dampens the spirits of the electorate and the masses in future elections. Worse still, campaigners exploit the resultant political apathy of Nigerians. “These have been the basis for most of the cases of irregularities, election malpractices, misappropriation, mismanagement and insensitivity to the yearning of the masses...” (Uzuegbunam, 1997:49).

Media ownership and indeed newspaper ownership was for a long time concentrated in the south west of Nigeria. Lagos as the political capital and economic nerve centre of Nigeria played host to major newspaper, television and radio outlets. Even when the political capital was moved out of Lagos in the early part of 1990s, Lagos still remains home to major daily newspapers and magazines in Nigeria. Gambo (2006:159) attests to this when he said the region (south west) enjoys near monopoly of a vibrant press which is largely in the Lagos-Ibadan axis. According to him, these and many other factors, combine to make the region politically more vocal than the others.

Most state government today, owns one newspaper or the other. The Federal Government after its foray into *Morning Post* (1961-1966) *Daily Times and New Nigerian* (both now out of print) does not own a newspaper now. While not overlooking the dynamism in the Nigeria’s press ownership particularly the privately owned newspaper, Egbon (Supra) notes that the privately owned newspapers constitute a kind of regular opposition to the ruling administration, and to a large degree help keep the government on its toes all the time. He says “these non-government newspapers are among the best in terms of professionalism and credibility in the country’s democratic process”. Yet, many still believe that the press (newspaper) dance to internal and external pressure particularly that of its owners which manifest itself in form of house style, censorship or direct intervention by the proprietor.

After all, politicians keep on establishing newspapers, radio and television stations even in the Fourth Republic (1999 till date). Among those newspapers are *The Nation* of Alhaji Ahmed Bola Tinubu, former governor of Lagos State and leader of Action Congress (a political party), *The Sun* was established by Chief Orji Uzor Kalu, former governor of Abia State and *Independent* which is being financed and controlled by Chief James Onanve Ibori, former governor of Delta State. Like their old counterparts such as *Nigerian Tribune*, *West African Pilot*, *Lagos Daily News*, *The Record*, *Morning Post*, *Sketch*, these new set of papers will in addition to profit making, act as the ‘viewpapers’ of their politician owners.

## CONCLUSION

Ethnic consideration in political report may not be easy to remove in Nigeria, because ethnicity has been seriously entrenched in our psyche and it dictates our views of politics and reporters. But it is against the principles of journalism. It is against this backdrop that this paper is supporting the view expressed by Farm House Dialogue on the media in democracy (Dialogue 45, March 15 – 17, 1991:6) that though economic gains might have motivated individuals who set out to publish newspapers or magazines, the pervasive impact of the mass media and their ability to influence the minds of others’ special interest in their performance. Ownership of the media, the forum said, must be seen and accepted as a PUBLIC TRUST and must not be compared with the ownership of a car or of a house.

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