

Mobilizing against failing media and resisting a failed political system: Mass self-communication for the redemption of the Nigerian state

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Abstract

There is a notion that Nigeria as a nation has failed in many aspects of its national life. However, the failure of the nation's political system is perhaps of greatest consequence because everything is tied to the way the political architecture is managed and the survival of any nation depends on its political fabric. The pogrom in parts of the nation, cultural catastrophe, social malady, religious confusion, economic debacle, infrastructure crisis, weakness of institutions of government, ethnic hatred and communal clashes and the palpable insecurity in Nigeria are all evidence of absence of governance and indication of the inability of political leaders to provide leadership in real sense of the word. While acknowledging the media as a critical partner in governance and the capacity of media people to mobilize the populace and leaders towards the proper management of the nation, this paper notes that rather than do this, the media in Nigeria have quickened the process that has brought about Nigeria's political failure. The paper proposes that the people should take up the responsibility of mobilizing themselves through mass self-communication using the social media platforms. Since these platforms have given back to them, the power of journalism, citizens can reject the narrative that sees nothing wrong in the status quo and through this process initiate a trend that will get the media to be responsible and effective in carrying out their watchdog function. It will also compel a political re-orientation and ultimately change the way politicians run the nation.

Key Words: Mobilization, watchdog, governance, media, political system, failure.

Introduction

There is a general feeling that the Nigerian nation is facing a lot of challenges that have hampered its growth. Nearly six decades since independence and in spite of its enormous resources especially in crude oil and solid minerals along with fertile land, adequate rainfall and sunshine, the nation can hardly feed its people let alone provide healthcare services to them. Road transport facilities, water and basic sanitation remain almost impossible. More than these are rising insecurity in all parts of the nation. In North-east region of the country, Boko Haram terrorist group has killed people in thousands and maimed several others, while communities have been annihilated and sacked by herdsmen in the Middle-Belt. In South-south and Eastern parts, kidnapping

and cultism have virtually taken over while religious and ethnic crises as well as politically motivated killings are reported all over the country.

As these challenges continue to plague the Nigerian state, leaders remain both insensitive and evidently clueless as to how to handle them, thus leaving innocent citizens to their fates. The few in the political class who have succeeded in making themselves excessively but criminally rich, some even richer than some states of the federation, build empires and castles for themselves and their families and make adequate provision for their education, protection, healthcare and other needs mostly in choice locations around the world while other citizens die of common diseases like malaria and are unable to overcome starvation and illiteracy (Ihejirka and Usua, 2016; Otohile and Obakhedo, 2009). The Nigeria politician prefers to surreptitiously stash away stolen money or invest clandestinely in foreign nations where the money stimulate the economies of such nations and the investments generate employments for the people there rather than put it back to boost the Nigerian economy.

Unfortunately, while the political class continues to plunder the nation, having succeeded in emasculating and rendering state institutions ineffective, including the police, anti-graft agencies and even the judiciary, the fourth estate of the realm, expected to be the last man standing has equally been enfeebled by the combined forces of political machination and irresponsible media practice. This is to such an extent that the watchdog function that the media are expected to carry out is thrown overboard, therefore further compounding the frustrations of the people (Anthony and Thomas, 2012). The conventional media in Nigeria have failed to accomplish their function of guiding the leaders to deliver on their mandates to the Nigerian people. According to Sado (2010), the media in Nigeria have been used by the political class to realize their selfish objectives. Other observers also argue that the mass media in Nigeria have become more of the mouthpieces of political players than the voice of the masses. The concern of this paper therefore is to look at the performance of the Nigerian media at a time that the political leaders are believed to have driven the nation to the unenviable status of a failed state (Nwabueze, 2018), as well as map a course for the people to initiate an action that can get both the media and the political system back on course for stability and growth.

The problem

The survival and growth of any nation and indeed the happiness of its inhabitants is dependent on the way that the nation's political system is managed because on it also depends the functionality of state institutions. The evident failure of the Nigerian political system and the attendant collapse of the machinery of state is a very serious tragedy facing this nation of over 180 million people. The hijack of the state by minute few and their level of insensitivity towards the doom that lurks around the corner call for urgent and serious concern. Since the political class has developed a reprobate attitude towards the nation and the people, taking with it, those institutions and agencies of government that should provide basic services — healthcare, education security,

municipal services and general infrastructure among others — the mass media with their basic mandate of serving the society as the watchdog against political malfeasance, are expected to rise up for the people.

Unfortunately, the conventional media in the case of Nigeria have not been able to accomplish this. Instead, media operators work for and with politicians as they perpetuate and seek to justify the illegal and anti-people activities of the politicians. By whatever manipulation, the mass media in Nigeria have become more of the mouthpieces of political players than the means through which the voice of the masses is heard. This has continued to happen at the expense of the Nigerian state and its people and has come to the point that even the survival of the nation is threatened.

Literature Review

Politics and the political space in Nigeria

Politics generally refers to activities and behaviours that revolve around the pursuit of interests of individuals, groups, tribes or nations. But such interests are not expected to infringe on the rights and well-being of others. According to Parenti (1998), politics is:

concerned with the struggle that shape social relations within societies and affairs between nations. The taxes and prices we pay and the jobs available to us, the chances that we will live in peace or perish in war, the cost of education and the availability of scholarships, the safety of the airliner or highway we travel on, the quality of the food we eat and the air we breathe, the availability of affordable housing and medical care, the legal protections against racial and sexual discrimination—all things that directly affect the quality of our lives are influenced in some measure by politics (pp7-8).

Therefore, politics has to do with the formation and running of systems or social institutions through which people seek, acquire and exercise power with which they contribute their efforts which they think will be useful to the society. There is however not denying the fact that while contributing to the growth and development of the larger society having acquired political power, one may cater in one way or the other, for his personal, family or business interests. It is the ability to keep one's interest at the lowest level that separates a good political leader from the bad one.

Political players in most of Africa unfortunately seem to have a totally different view about what politics should be and how it should serve the society. In Nigeria for instance, it is believed that the wrong people occupy the political space and politics itself become perceived by some as a dirty game (Pate, 2003; Nwokeocha, 2009). Even though the reference to politics in Nigeria as a dirty game is debatable, what is not is the fact that it is a reflection of the level of discontent, frustration and disappointment that politicians and political activities have brought on the Nigerian public (Pate 2013).

The pursuit of personal, family or business interests or the interests of friends and associates of holders of political power in the country has remained irreconcilably higher than the pursuit of the interest of the larger group.

From independence, a few actors hijacked the Nigerian political space, formed alliances, remain politically visible from one era to the other so that decades after, some names remain as key players in the polity but with little or no record of service delivery to the people. Nnaemeka (2008) notes that political parties are controlled by a few members of the society who “besiege the available posts and positions in the upper hierarchy of the parties. These few influential and powerful individuals, who are in the minority, make all the decisions” (p.111).

The political office in Nigeria is attractive because of the spoil of the office and the stupendous wealth that political players get within a short time in office. Besides mouth-watering salaries and allowances, political offices are used for the control of government contracts. Looting is commonplace, and public money is syphoned without questions. As a result of this, the Nigerian political space is characterized by electoral frauds, greed, unhealthy rivalry, thuggery and assassination (Ihejirika and Usua, 2016). Massive negative use of money, massive rigging, cut-throat ethnic rivalry, non-acceptance of defeat and large scale violence prevail while blood and the destruction of property both publicly and privately owned, remain the tokens of the intolerance and vindictiveness that have come to be the hallmarks of Nigerian politics (Orhewere, 2013; Eshiotse, 2013).

Since the nation’s political environment is hostile even to common issues of development and the struggle for power is so absorbing to the extent that nothing else matters (Ake 1996), expecting the nation to function like a civilized human community can only be a false hope. This is because the crop of political leaders who are preoccupied with planning how to get oppositions out of the way and whose energy is geared towards planning how to win the next election even from the first day of their tenure, will have little time to think out strategies for solving societal problems. One may not be far from the truth to observe that the non-performance of political leaders, besides that many of them lack the basic requirements and credentials for the offices they occupy, is because they think almost all through their stay in the offices, of how to commit and conceal atrocities, consolidate and perpetuate themselves in political offices while the acts of governance suffer. These then over the years have dragged the Nigerian nation down the path of ignominious retardation and unto the point of a failed state where Nigeria is said to be.

That Nigeria has degenerated into a failed state is not debatable. Otoghile and Obakhelo (2009) have outlined several negative epithets with which Nigeria has been described to demonstrate its failed state status — failed and collapsed state, prebendal, decadent, crippled giant, weak, underdeveloped, kleptocratic, among others—and the authors go ahead to observe that this is in part as a result of the way politics plays out itself and the way the political class goes about it. A failed state is a political body that

has reached a point where basic conditions of life and responsibilities of sovereign government have failed. Based on Google indicators of a failed state, Nwabueze (2018) posits that Nigeria has failed as a state. Demographic pressures, massive refugees and internally displaced persons, civic disorders as well as ethnic, racial and religious conflicts and human flights all constituting social indicators of a failed state are records that are not in favour of the nation. Also, economic decline, endemic corruption, deterioration in public services, and the failure or inability of the state to protect its citizens are other indicators of a failed state which Nigeria has been experiencing. The Fund for Peace, a United State think-tank and independent research organization recently considered Nigeria as a failed state based on its records of weak and ineffective central government, wide spread corruption, high rate of crime and criminality, involuntary movements of people as well as the inability of government to provide public services. These in the face of sharp economic decline fittingly qualify the country as a failed state. This is more so when the situation is evaluated vis-a-vis section 14 (2)b of the Nigerian constitution of 1999 which states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government; a responsibility that the Nigerian governments have failed to carry out (Nwabueze, 2018). An average Nigerian citizen, as a result of economic, social and political states of the nation will be quick to accept that his/her country has failed. Oso (2012, p.274), quoting an American politician, notes that as things stand, the “sense of being a Nigerian has ebbed and flowed. It was ...on an upward course in the 1970s and early 1980s, but it has declined since”

The blame for the failure of the state, arising of course, from the inability of political leaders and agencies to satisfactorily carry out their various responsibilities which in turn has resulted in lack of electricity for citizens, failure of the transport system, absence of basic healthcare, poor education and lack of food and clean water supply for citizens among others, goes back to the politicians who promised during electioneering campaigns, to fix these same problems. If political machinery or system of any nation is the engine that runs that nation; if the survival and growth of the nation depends on how political leaders manage the wealth of the nation more than on natural endowments; and if the annihilation of a state is less dependent on natural disasters and external aggression than on how political players handle the affairs of the state, then the question of how Nigeria came to the point in its history that qualifies it to be described as a failed state is there for politicians to answer.,

The mass media in Nigerian politics

Even though the business of governance belongs to the political leaders and hence we can blame that class for the failure of the state, it remains that the media in every society plays a critical role in the day to day running of the country. In the first instance, communication is the tool for the execution of all political activities. As Nwosu (2013) has observed, communication and politics are so intertwined historically and contemporarily, that it is difficult to think that the media of communication have no influence or role in politics. Since independence in Nigeria, the mass media have

remained prominent and active in the political processes. They actually played the key role in the activities that led to the nation's independence from colonial rule. After independence Nigerian media remained visible, strong and influential in whatever direction they chose, in the various regimes.

Being that through them individuals and groups express their views and opinions, the media have become inevitable instrument as well as play vital roles in personal, social, business and even political interactions. The role of the media in enlisting the loyalty of the people and in influencing their political thinking has been acknowledged by various stakeholders including scholars (Enahoro, 2010; Orhewere & Onosu, 2012; Oso, 2012; Umuerrri and Galadima, 2012; Usua, etc. 2018). The mass media are trusted to have the capacity and believed to be in position to get the leaders in any nation to pander to the wishes of citizens. They can guarantee good governance by ensuring that the political class and in particular office holders go about the business of leadership justly, fairly and in the most civilised and selfless manner. Based on this, the society is expectant that the media will monitor the activities of leaders and get them to be accountable and transparent. In that case the media are acknowledged to be the watchdog that can engender public spirited service which ultimately translates to service to the masses by political leaders.

While by nature, the media are malleable instruments that can be shaped into what their operators want them to be and to serve who they want the media to serve, politicians can get hold of them, and having taken the people captive, make the media to authenticate and rationalize their actions either by what is published in the media or simply have the media look the other way and pretend not to know what they are doing. This is why Sado (2010) has observed that in Nigeria, "democratic and non-democratic regimes have depended on the media to a large extent, in realizing elite objectives" (p178). Of course it is not for nothing that politicians go to the extent of establishing media outfits with the mandate of singing their praises and in that process see how they can endear media proprietors to the people. The tradition is that close to elections, more newspapers and other media stations spring up in parts of the country obviously to advance the causes of political parties and mobilize electorate in favour of politicians that establish and fund such establishments. Those that cannot establish media outfits to work in their interests simply conscript existing radio, television, newspaper and magazine outfit workers into what is popularly called political structures with the same mandate of helping them get into/remain in power (Galadima, 2008).

The obvious outcome of this situation is that the media end up promoting partisanship, ethnic and regional chauvinism and engage in distortion of facts and reality. As the media allow themselves to be used for the blackmail of opposition parties and candidates, they fail to stand together in defence of the people against insensitive and visionless political class. Rather than constitute a united and purpose driven entity to be able to check the excesses of the political class, the media are divided along power blocs, political camps, religious and regional lines; they help in deepening political,

religious and regional hatred and succeed in taking away public attention from corruption, looting of public wealth, incompetence and the general malfeasance of Nigerian politicians. It thus becomes difficult for the media to set common agenda on national issues (Nwokeocha, 2009; Enahoro, 2010; Usua, 2010, Oso, 2012; Aliede, 2013). In what may be described as a picture of frustration, Nwokeocha (2009) states:

The fourth estate of the realm—the media—that should function as agenda-setter and watchdogs of the society have not lived up to expectation. The media have not been effective in ensuring the emergence of a credible electoral system and have not held the elected (or selected) candidates accountable to the people (p.341).

In support of the idea expressed above, Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (in Anthony and Thomas 2012), posit that by abandoning their basic responsibility of watching the society and by throwing away their autonomy to represent the interests of the populace and challenge those of dominant groups, the mass media fail to remain the fourth estate of the realm and watchdog of government ethics, policies and excesses. In that sense “they function more along the lines of the guard dog metaphor” (p.100). And in supporting the atrocities of political players or electing to be silent about their anti-people activities and non-performance in office, the Nigerian media on one hand manifest the failure of the political system itself and on the other, the media present themselves as equally failing in their responsibilities because as Ochonogor and Omega (2009) have noted, the media have as basic responsibility, the task of presenting to the public, the activities of political leaders, interpreting such actions and weighing them against the expectation of the generality of the people. Not only should the media come up with the profile and antecedents as well as strengths and weaknesses of office holders/seekers, they are expected to adequately educate the populace to be able to make informed decisions as far as those office holders/seekers are concerned. It is in this sense that investigative aspect of journalism is of essence because through it the media dig up the atrocities of self-serving politicians working against the interest of the masses. In the light of the foregoing, many observers and writers see a Nigerian media system that is fast failing (Ihejirika and Usua 2016; Nwodu, 2013 etc.), just as “many communicators have argued that the Nigerian press has been unable to rise above the various cleavages existing in the country’s polity” (Oso 2012, p. 272).

Theoretical framework

The Public Sphere Theory (PST) theorized by the German scholar, Jurgen Habermas in 1962 and Revolutionary Media Theory popularized by William Hachten (1992) provide the support for the study.

PST acknowledges the fact that the conventional media—radio, television, newspaper, magazine and other media— provide the space for public discussion. It emphasizes the need for what Oso, (2012) describes as a space between the economy and the state to serve as the platform for the mass of the people to take part in the socio-political discourse which affects the general population. The theory does not however

conclude that only the conventional media should serve in that capacity. In other words, while the mass media provide the platform for public discourse, other avenues also constitute means of accessing that sphere.

As regarding the new media platforms, Abubakar (2012, pp 103-104) notes that with them, the public sphere “changed from a location to a communication network, which serves as an arena where citizens come together, exchange opinions regarding public affairs such as issues related to politics, discuss and deliberate sometimes in a critical and analytical manner”

Before now, journalists and editors enjoyed the privilege of determining what was news and entertainment and hence dictated to the public, what was to be served the audience as news and entertainment. With media facilities in their hands, they would make public space as large as they were willing it to be. But with the shift in trend, the people can demand for the extension and expansion of that space. Thus in a failed or failing state, and with a compromised or compromising media system, the people can find a way of creating enough space to accommodate their issues and in the direction they deem fit. Through that effort, any unwilling media organisation; such that would not be mobilized to be people focused may make itself the casualty of the people’s reaction even if they are only going to be shunned or rejected and the people’s patronage withdrawn (Abubakar, 2012; Usua, 2013).

A look at world history manifests the reality of hegemony where the elite continually seek ways of gaining advantage over the general and often, weak mass of the people. In situations of hegemony conscious effort is made by elite to conscript, patronize or compel the media to work whether manifestly or otherwise, in the interest of the ruling class and business elite. As is evident in many African societies, including Nigeria, we cannot assert with certainty that the conventional mass media have continued to serve public interest as much as they do political and economic interests of what Ihejirika and Usua (2016) refer to as modern-day African big man. Where, as a result of this, the political system and indeed governance has failed; where the media abandon the pursuit of public good to follow political agenda; and where profit concern is the preoccupation of the media against service for humanity’s sake; or even when the media are unwillingly taken hostage by a selfish political class, what is available as an alternative for the people is the rejection of the flopped political players and malfunctioned media system both of which can only operate in negation to common good of the people. That is the idea behind the revolutionary media system. Since this media system is revolutionary, meaning it is born out of frustration and disappointment resulting from systemic failure, it follows that conventions and media laws are ignored, the media need not be licenced and may be faceless; without fixed address, etc. What is important to operators is to try to oust the unwanted (Hatchen, 1992).

People under oppression whether physical or psychological, will at a point find one reason to seek redress which may take revolutionary approach. As Asadu and Usua

(2012) have noted, man, in the quest for his freedom has made revolutionary approach one of the ways of exercising his rights and that:

people in many countries resorted to the use of the press to fight for their freedom... Nigerian and most English speaking West African nationalists used this method to express dissatisfaction with colonialism. They therefore... mobilized the people against colonial governments and finally advocated for independence (p 51).

But this is as long as the conventional media continue to serve people's interest. Where they do not, the people, in search of their freedom can deploy the alternative which in contemporary times, can be found in the social media, what we may call the 'people's media' (Anthony and Thomas, 2012).

The need for mass self-communication

Public expectation from the media is often high not just because people want to shift responsibilities to the media, even though we must accept that in climes like ours the people themselves may be guilty of docility over the profligacies, arrogance and treachery of politicians. However the masses may be excused because they have in the first instance given the right to watch and scrutinize political leaders and their activities to media operators hoping that they, with media tools at their disposal and with possible requisite training, will carry out that duty on their behalf. This public trust and sacred responsibility given to the media by the society in the hope that the former will execute on behalf of the latter to ensure social, economic, political and cultural benefits for all (Lawal, 2002), is the reason the society looks up to the media to checkmate political ineptness and rascality. It is the same reason that public opprobrium has been loud in Nigeria regarding the failure of the media to perform up to expectation (Tichenor and Olien in Anthony and Thomas, 2012; Ihejirika, 2014). The right to publish, guaranteed in the constitution, is actually the right of the people to know. It is from there that media workers derive the right to practise journalism. The freedom of expression that the mass media enjoy is the freedom of citizens to express opinions, which they have willingly handed over to the media to execute on their behalf.

With the failure of conventional media sector to live up to its billing, especially at a time the nation is believed to have failed, the need for the discussion of an alternative strategy in political communication throws up itself. The alternative must be such that involves the people in such a manner that they are encouraged to recover their right of seeking, processing and sharing information rather than total dependence on a media system that has been incapacitated by political manipulation and ephemeral rewards that media operators get from the political class. The needed alternative political communication approach in this circumstance is such that involves committed participation of the mass of the people through the social media platforms.

The active involvement of the people is important for two reasons: On one hand, the ultimate objective of the involvement of the people is to take back what originally belongs to them, being the right to seek and share information and their nation which

has been bastardized by the political class. On the second hand, it is given only to citizens working as a united front and using the revolutionary approach to recover a dying nation from political juggernauts. Luckily, we live in a time that technology has made many things not just possible but easy. One of such is that sharing of information for the purpose of becoming aware of how much the political class in collusion with the conventional media has taken the people for a ride, has become simplified. According to Nwachukwu and Usua (2009), advances in media technology have considerably offered the masses great opportunity to socialize, participate and interact.

The social media as great outcome of the development of media technology in the 21st century have in very great measures, made man to become more aware of himself, his fellow human and the entire society than ever before and have removed many of the constraints to information sharing that necessitated dependence on professional journalists. In place of those constraints, they guarantee and promote participation, openness, consciousness, connectedness, independence, freedom as well as conversation (Odoemelam, 2007; Mayfield 2008; Nwachukwu and Usua, 2009).

The social media platforms and the Internet may have been invented for reasons other than mobilization of the oppressed people of developing world especially in Africa, but their possible and actual use for that purpose as demonstrated around 2011 in parts of Middle East and North Africa, in what has come to be known as MENA experience, speak to the hope that there is, even in a failed system like Nigeria, if the people decide to have a change. According to Wahba (2011), in Egypt, the people were able to effect a change in the political situation because the Internet served as a means through which undiluted and unfettered information and opinion could get to the people, having noted the many red lines that radio and television channels as well as newspaper houses would not be permitted to cross. Even though we cannot claim that the Internet was the sole means of mobilization, it tremendously stirred discussion among the people. Similarly, Tunisians came to that point in their history when change was inevitable and the Internet yielded itself and became the rallying point and avenue for the people to talk to themselves as per what needed to be done and how. In both instances, Nwachukwu and Usua (2009) observe that “not only were social networks useful for information, they helped give the populace a sense of collective identity” (p.109).

The efficacy of the Internet or the social media platforms in getting the grassroots people to discuss their issues is the basis for their recommendation for mass-self communication, a process which involves the mass of the people sharing information among themselves about activities of their leaders. Bearing in mind the fact that the conventional media have failed to effectively engage the ruling class in such a manner that they remain accountable to the public (Nwachukwu and Usua 2009; Oso 2012), the people should no longer stay aloof while politicians continue to plunder their nation and further impoverish the greater majority, create enmity and tension between

citizens while their loots and families are safely kept away in foreign countries with the media refusing to call the attention of the people to these aberrations.

With the available communication tools, it is now the responsibility of Nigerian people to talk to themselves about themselves and for themselves. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others do not require professionalism or training in journalism before one can capture a picture of dilapidated classrooms in public school standing next to massive, gigantic and state of the art residence of a councillor, local government chairman, an honourable member or senator, possibly complete with exotic swimming pool. Citizens can easily upload pictures of washed bridges, flooded settlements, or abandoned roads. Such pictures shared with the intention of calling public attention to the hypocrisy of our political leaders can make as much meaning to the already crestfallen and disenchanted populace if not a greater impact than newspaper article or broadcast news report. People can use social media platforms to tell one another what they know about those who aspire to lead them.

Prior to elections such interactions and deliberations by the people, using the social media, will be critical because what will result from such exercise will be an election based on the choice of the people, of political leaders and representatives. With social media, Nigerians will both share news and information about what is happening in their neighbourhoods and fact-check stories published/broadcast in the conventional media. All that is required is for a resident of an area, using the social media, to react to any story claiming project accomplishment in their neighbourhood by politicians or another weighing a politician's promise on the balance of his antecedents.

This proposal is strongly supported by the two theories that form the foundation of the discourse—the public sphere theory and the revolutionary theory. On one hand, the idea of mass-self communication leads to the widening of public space by accommodating the voices of ordinary citizens and encourage them to express their desires. On the other hand, when the people no longer need to wait for the so-called mainstream and conventional media to fight for them, meaning they take the revolutionary approach and fight for their right, they are operating in line with the tenets of revolutionary media theory.

There is no denying the fact that there are certain shortcomings associated with mass-self communication as a possible communication approach to political mobilization. Cases of fake news dissemination cannot be ruled out while selfish political actors may also want to exploit the same media tools and platforms as the citizens to perpetuate their machinations. However, social media as tools for mass-self communication give the people the opportunity to cross-check and fact-check stories that are said to emanate from their communities especially if they are claims of service delivery by politicians. Again, it may be true that the strength of this communication approach can also be reduced by the fact that for now many people especially in the rural communities are both illiterate and poor and Internet penetration is still low in rural communities. There are however indications that the Internet is making gradual

inroad into Nigeria's rural areas and even if early adopters may be few on accounts of illiteracy and poverty, they will impact on the rural community people more than the conventional mass media operators who are removed from the grassroots people and who are more likely to pander towards the political class than the poor mass of the people. In not too distant future, it is expected that the Internet and indeed the social media will become common means of interaction in parts on Nigeria. While not proposing outright rejection of the conventional media because no medium can totally replace the other as every channel has one attribute or the other which makes it more suitable than the other for certain communication situations (Wilson, 1990; Chukwu, 2006), the need for the people to talk to themselves and about their concerns regarding what is offered them by the political class vis-a-vis the commitment of the conventional media in watching that political class cannot be wished away. The advantage that the social media have in enhancing that mass self-communication can equally not be denied.

Conclusion

There is no doubt going by available indices, that Nigeria as a nation has failed its people. The absence of effective public services, food shortages and the attendant starvation of the people, intolerable level of illiteracy and the kind of poverty that has given the nation the status of world capital of poverty are all features of a failed state. These along with the disturbing and unacceptable levels of insecurity in all parts of the country especially Boko Haram rampage and herdsmen killing in Northern Nigeria, should by now have given Nigerian leaders reasons to begin to think about the future of the nation and the lives of nearly 190 million people and those of generations to come. Rather than think of the people and the future of the nation, politicians continue to play politics of savagery and damn the impending doom because political offices give them the wherewithal to accumulate wealth for themselves and prepare places for their families outside the country.

Having crippled and incapacitated agencies of the state and manipulating others, Nigerian political actors have succeeded in perpetuating themselves in offices and they continue their loot of the wealth of the Nigerian people. They have also managed to get the watchdog of the society—the mass media—to be silent, divided or to subtly defend actions and inactions of the self-seeking and self-serving political leaders. With the media unable or unwilling to challenge politicians as they lead Nigeria into doom, the watchdog has unfortunately become the guard dog (Anthony and Thomas, 2012). Since the other part of the calling of media people—awakening the consciousness of the people in the face of bad governance—has become neglected, and the people would not be told how on daily basis, politicians continue to mortgage their lives and their future, the need arises for the mass of the people to communicate among themselves, by themselves and for themselves in a manner that each one tells one what they know, what they see, what they think and how they feel regarding their needs and challenges and as regards what politicians are doing with their resources. Through this mass-self

communication using the social platforms which are gradually but steadily penetrating Nigerian communities, the people will become connected and more aware of themselves and the society as a whole as well as their rights so as to be able to check the excesses of the wicked, incompetent and insensitive political class.

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