Sensitive Information Gathering and Dissemination: An Assessment of Doctrinal Roles of The Military and The Media In Nigeria.

Oshega Abang
University of Calabar
Calabar-Nigeria
abangoshega@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Sections 22, 39 and 217 (2c) of the 1999 constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides specific roles for the military and media in Nigeria. These constitutional provisions give the military the powers to execute their duties of suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore law and order. Similarly, sections 22 and 39 respectively, allow the press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media to uphold the national interest of the nation. Every man has an inherent right to form his own opinions, ideas and thoughts and to express them freely. Yet the freedom of expression granted to all men is not absolute. This paper on sensitive information gathering and dissemination focuses on the role of the military and that of the media in the gathering and dissemination of information often termed sensitive, contentious and inciting. It is based on past and present media reports that the military and the public now consider alarming and inciting any information insensitively published. Since the issues highlighted in this paper falls within the public domain, the paper leans on the Gratification theoretical model espoused by Denis McQuail (1970). The theory is a reaction to the critical theory of the assumption that the audiences are easily brainwashed by media reports. The research reveals that based on the supposedly biased media reportage on sensitive issues that there exists in pert, palpable anxiety and insecurity in the country. The paper recommends that the military and the media should synergize to ensure a harmonious working relationship especially in the reportage of security issues.

Keywords: *Sensitive, Information, Constitutional role, Military and Media*.

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INTRODUCTION

The end of the cold war in the 1990s did among other things turn attention to two related issues, namely, intra state conflict and national insecurity – especially, developing nations with increased lack of peaceful coexistence. (Bassey, 2005. 16). Undoubtedly, the term peace has become a very important concept to all peoples in all parts of the world and everyone seems to give it their own definition and meaning (depending on which side of the political divide they belong or identify with). One thing is obvious. What is obvious is that the world needs to be secure and such security may be enhanced among other things through the role which the media plays in ensuring global an national peace. In consequence, there exists a much wider range of argument about what kind of issues and questions one should include in the meaning of peace or in the corollary reality of security (Oshega. 2002:36)

No matter what these issues and questions are, the individual and their security situations within the state and the role which the state and media plays in any security situation remain critical. (Jibo & Simbine, 2001 : 180). The enhanced awareness of the important role which the media plays in society has been demonstrated by the steep rise in the use of information technology in varied social processes world-wide. This development is consistent in emphasizing and establishing the position that the media helps to inform and to cause attitude change. By so doing, it ensures socio-economic transformation (Agbaje, 1992:10).

In this traditional sense, security is not only limited to safety. Throughout the cold war era (1845-1989), national security was perceived in terms of state security. It was a kind of pact that was maintained through amassment of the awesome weapons and large size kind of military personnel employed in the process. But the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the humiliation of the USA in 2001 by unarmed Arab youths (the September eleven episode) changed the militaristic perception of national security. Thus, the concept expanded vertically to include the security of the political, environment, social and military security as espoused by Buzan (1990. : 7).

Clarifications of Relevant Terms

Sensitive information: Sensitive information refers to any information that can upset or jeopardize a plan. It is also known as privileged information which when compromised can cause serious harm. It is the sort of information that must be protected from falling into use by unauthorized persons. Sensitive information here applies to military operations and reports that can ignite violence, insecurity and anxiety.

Constitutional role: Constitutional role or Doctrinal role of the military and the media is one which is provided in different sections of Nigeria's 1999 constitution (as amended). It is to be found in Sections 22, 39 and sections 217 (2c) of the constitution. These sections render explicit the expected role of the military and media.

Military: The military consist of the members of the Armed forces and the police. They have the onerous task of maintaining law and order, They keep, and hardly volunteer information. They consider information as being sensitive and privileged

Media: The media here refers to tools used for information dissemination. They consist of the print and electronic systems including the new media, online as well as the social media. Basically and for the purpose of this paper the media refers to the print and electronic media.

Contemporary Engagements and Obligation to the Public
The contributions of the military and the media in promoting peace and harmony cannot be over emphasized. The military and the media both have common grounds in the discharge of their constitutional roles relating to security which must be explored fully for greater mutual understanding, harmony and effective co-ordination. Among them this ought to be the case because evidence now show that the information flow between the military and the media has not been fluent (Yusuf, 2010, p. 10). One soon realizes on analysis of the recent security challenges in the country, such as the recent past Niger-Delta Insurgency and the current Boko Haram Insurgence in the country's

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North-East region, the relationship between the media and the military has experienced some turbulence. Reporting is all about relationships. That is why the military and the media should never consider each other as enemies. Instead, they but should regard themselves as watchdogs of national security concerns. This paper seeks to examine whether an acceptable process can be established between the military and the media for the gathering and dissemination of information to the public without compromising national security. It will also examine whether there truly exists a synergy, mutual respect and singularity of purpose in the military and media roles of promoting harmony among citizens without playing-down on their rights to be informed. And if this is absent, the paper also seeks to suggest how this may be possible. Specifically, the paper seeks' to demystify the idea that the military and the media are philosophically at variance in their constitutional roles of promoting national objectives, peace, security and mutual co-existence.

Methodology:

The method adopted is a content analysis of three national newspapers reports on security challenges. The newspapers the Guardian, the Tribune and the Punch were collated and analyzed based on the uses and gratification theory espoused by Denis McQuail (1970), the uses and Gratification theory is a reaction to the critical theory's view of the audience as easily brainwashed, being people who believe what they are told, read or hear what they are taught without questioning.

In doing this, the paper has, with the aid of a questionnaire, elicited data to determine how and to what extent the audience makes use of the media. It intends to determine whether the media have the power to shape, modify or alter people's attitudes. In other words, does the media teach the people ways of thinking or that it creates consensus among the people and stir in them alarm, thereby, making them more anxious and more security-minded? That is to say, to what extent have the Nigerian people responded to media advocacy and sensitization workshops on national security?

Review of related literature

Basic philosophical foundations relating to the Media in any society include those of the following: inform, educate, entertain and in recent times, set agenda for the people and monitor governance while making the government accountable for the peace and security of the citizens (Akinfeleye, 2011. : 12). These roles, as it would be expected, make the media a powerful means of social change. Perhaps, it is for these roles that the British and American societies hitherto, refer to their Media systems as "The fourth Estate of the Realm", or the "Fourth Branch of government ". This perception of the media is succinctly captured by Wilbur Schramm (1963: 24):

> …the structure of communication reflects the structure and development of any society, the size of the communication, the direction of the communication, the development of the commination. The role of communication to the society and the stretching out and multiplicity misuse of communication network at any given time reflects the value pattern of the society it serves".

The media can contribute to the people's awareness of political danger, dissatisfaction and desire to change (positively or negatively) against the backdrop of a heightened sense of insecurity and a pending state of instability or disruption of peace and order in the society (Uche, 1989; Agbaje, 1992; Best, 1996).

Although, there are no well-articulated constitutional guarantee for freedom of the press in Nigeria, chapter two, section 22 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) provides us with a clue where it states thus:

> … "the press, radio and television, and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in that chapter".

By this provision, it is expected that the media will monitor and report information on the state of affairs in the nation. Similarly, section 217 of the 1999 constitution of Nigeria (as amended) specifically tasked the military (security Agencies) to:

"Defend the Nation from external aggression, monitor and suppress insurrection and to maintain law and order".

In pedagogical terms, the manifest linkages between the media and the military cannot be contested, because they both differ, not in their basic assumptions about how the world works, but in what they consider as security threats (Bassey, 2005:9). The military deals with the broader matrix of the core of context-specific values of the nation. (sovereignty, law, order and territorial integrity of the nation). It is in such a context that the national security policy provides the integrated framework within which the calculation of instrumental responses of the military or the media to the multiple threats in question proceeds.

Today, the most persistent and (in many ways) paradoxical features of the international community is the "security dilemma" that Herbert Butterfield sees and coins into words as an "absolute predicament". This paradox of the international community or of Butterfield lies in the very geometry of the international community. It is paradoxical in the sense that the very measure it is invariably adopted by state governments as an irreducible minimum of their survival in the face of numerous dilemma. This dilemma is absolute and often exacerbated by the inflexible images that generate in the minds of decision makers in any nation (Herbert Butterfield, 1952; Robert Jarvis, 1976; Bassey, 2005).

With the growing incidence of communal, intra and inter-state conflicts: and with the media giving early warning signals, and the military perceiving same as unnecessary alarm, only political decisions can resolve observable differences in their social obligations to ensure freedom of the press to the public. Though the military is trained and its members know the security implication of unchecked public information and news; it is to be added that not all media practitioners are so trained to make this happen. Even when they ask penetrating questions, ensuring professionalism in media reporting is quite another story. Observably, the military is weary of the media and they believe that the media sometimes compromises security issues. And because they are trained to protect as well as maintain law and order, the military tend to reason that sharing privileged information with the media can jeopardize military operation and expose such essentials as: equipment, hardware's and personnel to danger. The military guards jealously privileged and sensitive security information with all their strength.

The media on the other hand owes the public a responsibility to inform the people in their quest to know what is happening around them. Thus, the role of the media can be grouped into two traditional and modern roles as follows:-

Traditionally, the media is expected to educate and enlightened the people. It is expected to inform and professionally publicize impending security threats, if only this is done to avert danger. The media also entertains the people among other things.

In modern times, the media functions as an instrument for setting of Agenda. It has served as a moral crusader and played the watchdog role as guardian of public interest.
These roles emanate from the philosophies of thinkers such as Harold Lasswell. He espoused three key functions of the media to include the following: surveillance of the environment through gathering and dissemination of information; the correlation of parts of the society through explanation and interpretation of events, and thirdly, the transmission of social heritage from generation to generation (Jibo and Simbine, 2001, pp. 180-195).

Contending issues in Information Gathering and Dissemination
Apart from the worrisome behavior of some politicians and public functionaries as reflected in, cases of allegation and counter allegation of corruption and bad governance, decaying infrastructure, unemployment and increasing poverty, there is in the main, numerous security challenges, due to aggravating issues of insurgency, which seem to challenge the very foundations of national security and social order in Nigeria (Yusuf, 2010: 26).
In consequence, there have been periods such as these which have been bedeviled by communal clashes as it has been observed in most part of the North-East of the country. These periods have been characterized in the North East region by Boko Harem insurgency and cattle-rustling between Fulani herdsmen and crop farmers in the region. There is from the Boko Haram insurgency a lingering issue of the Chibok girls who were abducted into the Sambesy forest over 1000 days ago. In the Niger-Delta region there is an on-going destruction of oil pipelines by activities of some militia groups within the Niger Delta region.
Explosive information relating to all of these may be classified as 'sensitive' or 'previleged' information whose gathering and

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dissemination by the media and the military requires absolute professionalism. Unfortunately, some of these issues get uncontrollably into the public domain and are being debated even though the public is still being fed with improperly gathered opinions on these challenges. This divide remains deep to the extent that public opinion defers to them. (Olukotun, 2000: 136). For example, the punch newspaper of March 14, 2014, p1-2 has a title- "Gunmen kill 69 in katsina". The story went further to state that:

> "Killings were in simultaneous daylight attacks in four villages in Katsina state; in the body of the report, the paper also informed the readers of security measured aimed at ending the killings and destruction of properties by cattle rustlers in Benue State".

Similarly, the Saturday Punch, March 15, 2014, p1 & 6 has captions such as:

> 350 killed in Boko Haram, Army Clash" No fewer than 350 people lost their lives as the orgy of bloodletting continued with the clash of the Boko Haram insurgents and Special Forces in Mailmalari, Maiduguri, Borno State. The paper reported the failure of a special force tank in Shika to respond as the insurgents advanced closer to the biggest detention facility on the premises of the HQ of the Brigade where their members who had earlier attacked the military formation were being held. (Simbine, 2014, p. 6).

Stories such as these, evoke anxiety and increased forms of insecurity, even though they lack accuracy tending to give the fearful idea of the political strength of those involved in the creation and propagation of violence and instability in the country.

Thus, following the Bakassi killing of Nigerians by the Cameroon gendarmes in the 1980's and 90s at the Bakassi Peninsular, Nigerian media is erroneously reported to have deployed troops to the Bakassi Peninsular on February 15, 1994 to protect Nigerians in the area. Unfortunately, (but in its desire to inform the citizens that the government was sensitive to the plight of Bakassi residents), a Nigerian Newspaper is held to have unprofessionally carried the news in the front page of the Nigerian Tribune on February 16, 1994 holding thus:

> "About 1000 Nigerian soldiers have been deployed to the Nigerian-Cameroon border to tighten security and stop the harassment of Nigerians" (Nigerian Tribune, February 16, 1994).

The news story provided details concerning when the plane carrying the troops departed from Lagos airport; the type of plane used, the time it took off from Lagos and when it was expected to arrive in Calabar for movement by road to Bakassi. The danger in the report, apart from creating panic, enabled France and Cameroon to quickly assemble joint military exercises around the disputed area. The news report also provided the Cameroonians an insight as to the strength, time of movement and the capacity of the Nigerian military thereby exposing the troops to surprised attacks.

> Quite often, problems arise when public officers' try to hide under security to ````commit misdeeds. For instance, early in June 2014, thousands of copies of several newspapers, mostly the Daily trust, the Nation and leadership Newspapers, were confiscated. This was followed by the sealing of their distribution points in several major towns across the country by soldiers. The issue attracked several public reactions, which prompted the then Director of Defence Information, Major-General Chris Olukulade, on June 6, 2014 to implausibly deny the seizure of the newspapers. The troops he said, "Merely embarked on thorough search of vehicles conveying newspapers and newsprints across board". According to him, "The search followed intelligence reports indicating movement of materials with grave security implications across the country using the channel of newsprint related consignments".

This inaccurate explanation by the media and the army led to speculations that the real target of the army's action was the "Daily Trust" for its publication of the story in front page of its edition of June 4. The story was faulty to have held that the army had shared out part of a land meant for barracks development to several top Generals in the Army. The report even added the incrimination fact that the sharing of

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this loot was done by army Generals to their spouses, their relations and their companies for private use. The story is yet to be reputed as accurate (Mohammed Haruna, 2014).

The truth is that the media as society's mirror and a channel of publicity and communication, can sometimes get sensational and biased to the extent of 'fabricating' facts as it has often been observed in the News Media. Here, news and opinions are often not checked for their accuracy before publication in the media.

Research in Military and Media relations reveals' that failure by security agencies to provide sensible information to the media at the right time sometimes has often had negative security implications for the country. This refusal by the Nigerian military to release sensitive information to the secular media, often leads to a total media black-out in conflict situations resulting in speculation. And because the media is always anxious to give early signals to and to envisaged security challenges as well as provoke reactions using speculative genres. That is why the process of gathering sensitive information should be reviewed if not totally abrogated in Nigeria to reduce the level of speculation. Situations such as these tend to beg for a useful synergy between the military (security) and media (information). It is said to be useful since it will facilitate a new era of free and unimpeded fundamental rights to information, insecurity and security related issues.

Professional doctrines and ethics

The military and security agencies by their nature have specific constitutional strategic purposes or objectives. Most times this involves intervening in crisis situations by conducting internal security actions and communications. With growing information technology, particularly, in the environments of liberal governance coupled with previous experience with the media and the military as an institution, seems to hold strong and negative views about the media. The argumentation arising from this position has spanned ages particularly of liberal democratic governance. This notwithstanding the fact remains that the military like the media can rightly draws their mandates' from constitutional provisions. The Nigerian military (armed Forces) derives its roles from section 217(2c) of the 1999 constitution (as amended). On the other hand, the Media are known to obtain sources of information from unreliable authority are often

ascribed to the sources of a story to some nebulous or nonexistent source "persons who would want to remain anonymous". (Olukulade, 2014, p6-11).

The tendency towards negative reportage has become commonplace among our media outfits. Although, the media exists to serve the function of public or national interests, the growing inability to give balanced information which would separate national interest from self or commercial interest, is a reality which is gradually becoming a cause of concern. Specifically, the media now seems to be threatened by the unprofessional activities of social or online media platforms. Here, cyber confusion holds sway; and falsehood is packaged and published while alternative opinion is drowned in favour of monotony, cacophony, and falsehood (Nwolise, 2010. P. 96). Today, stories move quickly and effortlessly from social media into traditional media. But in social media there are no filters to control readers and their reactions. In this regard, both the military and the media is expected to strive to be guided by the ethics and code of conducts of their profession while discharging their constitutional duties and responsibilities to the public. This is expected especially in respect of checking the accuracy and authenticity of opinions relating political and economic instability.

Summary and Conclusion

Bodies concerned with information gathering and dissemination are expected to be conscious of the likelihood of negative effects of the information which they give. This should be done in favour of national security, peace, and unity of the country. Over the years, the military, as the paper discovers, has been non-active rather than pro-active in their media reports. The research reveals that military reliance on strategic information seems to make the media more speculative rather than factual due partly to the denial of the regular media full access to information which in some cases is considered in law as sensitive or privileged information. In some of the media headlines examined, majority of the headlines have been misleading while others are out rightly confusing in terms of whether the media is working for the country's collective security interest is being becoming insensitive to the consequences of the outcome of their publications.
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The media, the paper believes, strives to create awareness on the ongoing crisis of unprofessional reporting or their intended outcome with a view to galvanizing support for government and its citizens. Since

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the primary duty of the military is to maintain law and order and to ensure the safety of the citizens, information relating to national on security issues should professionally be made available to the regular media which has the capacity to influence public opinion. The situation is that not many people can access and evaluate military information. Investigative journalism is a hazardous and time-consuming, particularly when sensitive secrets are being shielded from exposure. Yet, professionalism demands that the media should imbibe the tenets of investigating them thoroughly before publishing.

Nigeria today is at cross-roads with all the problems of insecurity, corruption, bad governance, poor technology, hunger, unemployment and kidnapping. Specifically, the military and the media have an enormous task of providing surveillance for sensitive information, especially, in its Niger-Delta and the North-East region. Their collective capacities and strong will to gather and disseminate information from these areas leaves much to be desired.

Conclusion
The Paper concludes that the military and the media hold the primary duty of providing professional information through surveillance, gather and dissemination of information especially as it relates to security issues, the causes of friction, ideological orientation and lack of good judgment on what is sensitive or otherwise in the media. That negative and insensitive reportage of security issues sometimes kills the morale of the military during periods of operations as well as kills the citizens confidence in the operations of the media. In oder to sustain our fledgling democracy, the doctrine of freedom of speech needs to be juxtaposed with the national interest the sembiotic relationship exist between the military and the media and the Nigerian state.

1.1 Recommendations
As a result of recent security challenges, the military and the media have experienced some turbulence. To overcome such situations the paper recommends that:

i. A better understanding of security implications of the media reportage should be encouraged to enhance synergy between the military and the media.

ii. That mutual respect and singularity of purpose in promoting harmony among citizens without reducing their rights to be informed should be instituted.

iii. Finally, conferences and seminars should be organized often to educate each organ on their roles and obligations to the public especially as it concerns gathering and disseminating sensitive information at critical periods.

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