

# **Reporting Violence or Mediating Peace? The Nigerian Press and the Dilemma of Peace Building in a Democracy**

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Dissertation submitted for DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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June 2016

## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the press and investigates their potential for escalating or minimising such conflicts. Undertaken in the context of the protracted sectarian conflicts plaguing the Nigerian nation since return to democratic governance in 1999, the study focuses particular attention on the Nigerian press and seeks to locate the press within these conflicts. It addresses the wider debates around the reporting of war and conflict, particularly the contentious issues of the relationship between media and conflict and explores the implications of this relationship on the course of violent intra-state sectarian conflicts. Research on news culture confirms that media representations generally tend to glamorise war, violence and propaganda with negative implications for the resolution of such situations. This has raised critical issues about mainstream journalistic practices in the coverage of violence and scholarly arguments as to whether journalism is a participant or a detached observer in the conflict cycle. This study engages these difficult and much contested issues within the context of emerging alternative strategies for conflict reportage, focusing particular attention on the concept of peace journalism and its applicability to routine journalistic practice.

The research utilises a repertoire of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, including content analysis, framing and critical discourse analyses and semi-structured interviews. The data collected is interrogated using a theoretical framework that incorporates ideas from ethnicity, media and ethnic conflicts, critical political economy as well as debates about alternative approaches to conflict coverage and reportage. The objective is to understand the intricate relationship between conflict dynamics, conflict analysis and the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

The research reveals significant flaws in the quality of coverage and with the framing and representational patterns of the conflicts. These flaws are located within the historical development of the Nigerian press, the commercialisation of its operations as well as weak institutional structures. It further engages the context of news production with specific focus on the issues of professionalism, training and media regulation and how these affect content. It argues for the adoption of journalistic practice patterns and styles that will make the press less predisposed to aiding conflict escalation. This has implications for both teaching and research in the field as well as for news practices by the press.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should acknowledge, as of first importance, my Heavenly Father, the author and finisher of my faith, and the One who has enabled me to successfully undertake doctoral studies, with all the excitements and challenges this endeavour represents. Truly, “my times are in your hands” (Psalm 31: 15), the most secure place anything ever could be.

In undertaking this research, I have been blessed with numerous persons and institutions that have supported me and for which I am immensely grateful. Of persons, I must mention my dad and mum who believe so much in me, and who have been my chief supporters in life. Thank you, Ndagi and Maimuna, for being there for me. I also wish to thank my siblings, relatives, friends and colleagues, to whom I must devote a whole chapter should I attempt the impossible task of enumerating them here. However, let me thank Mr. and Mrs. Sam Sheshi (Ya Sam), Mrs Lois Ndagi (Abu) and Ben Tsado, among numerous others, for their special role in my life. I must also mention Arch Bishop Emmanuel Egbunu (Emmy), my friend and pastor; Bishop Foreman Nedison, Rev Maaji Mutah Madu and Pastor Tony Wastall, as well as Dr. Paul Temile and Rev Tim Olonade for their abiding friendship and support. I similarly thank the Prison Fellowship Nigeria family, particularly my friend, Barrister Ben Iwuagwu, the Executive Director.

Of institutions, I must clearly acknowledge the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, (NIPSS), Kuru, Jos, Nigeria, which has nurtured me and supported me to undertake this course. I am grateful to the management, staff, and colleagues at NIPSS for their encouragement. I should thank particularly Prof Danfulani Ahmed, who as Director General approved my initial study leave. I am also greatly indebted to the immediate past Director-General, Prof Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, OFR, and the Ag. Director General, Mr. Jonathan M. Juma, mni, for their consistent support and abiding faith in my ability. I am grateful to other colleagues and personalities at NIPSS, particularly Prof Habu Galadima, current Director of Research, Dr. Musa Emmanuel Umar, Brigadier-General AD Chinoko, mni, Osime Samuel, Aishatu Wetle, Florence Adigun, Pastor (Mrs.) Asabe Ebeye, Ngozi Okoye, Atiku Shidawa, Ishaya Turah, Prof Funmi Para-Mallam, mni, Prof Mike Maduagwu, and others for their kind support and friendship.

Let me also thank the Birmingham City University for providing a great learning environment for me, and particularly for giving me such great people as Dr. Ayo Oyeleye and Dr. Oliver Carter as my supervisors. I owe a lot to Ayo who patiently nurtured my research from beginning to end. Oliver Carter who joined my supervisory team later added inestimable value to my studies and piloted it to successful completion. I admire these two gentlemen for their passion, skill and commitment and it has been a rare privilege working with them. I thank other professors and colleagues at the Birmingham School of Media, particularly Prof Tim Wall, Dr. John Mercer and Dr. Yemisi Akinbobola for their proactive guidance and support.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to appreciate Marie Ayitsa, my wife, partner and friend, for her love, affection and support. Thanks *Nyami* for being there for me always. My life has never been the same since I set eyes on Marie. I also thank our precious children, Yetu, Mana, Yebo, Esha and Cinny who have meant so much to me. Indeed, this journey would never have been possible, or even worthwhile, without the support of my wife and kids, to whom I joyfully dedicate this work.

**Jacob**  
June 2016

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## INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to explore the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the press and investigates their potential for escalating or minimising such conflicts. Undertaken in the context of the protracted sectarian conflicts plaguing the Nigerian nation since return to democratic governance in 1999, the study focuses particular attention on the Nigerian press and seeks to locate the press within these conflicts, as to whether they are a part of the problem or a part of the solution. It addresses the wider debates around the reporting of war and conflict, particularly the contentious issues of the relationship between media and conflict and explores the implications of this relationship on the course of violent intra-state sectarian conflicts. Empirical data was sourced through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods involving the analysis of text as well as the context of news production. The study finds significant flaws with the quality of coverage and the framing and patterns of representation of the conflicts by the press. Age-old issues of partisanship, ethnicity, sensationalism, exaggeration, over-simplification and a critical lack of depth and analysis are evident and pronounced in the media coverage under analysis in this study. Regional and primordial tendencies appear to shape coverage while the reportorial style and general news culture tend to obfuscate rather than clarify issues. The dissertation therefore argues for the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, patterned on peace journalism principles, as a measure to re-orientate the press towards professional and ethical practices that would not aid escalation of conflicts. Central to this effort is the role of training and education in enshrining professional principles and re-orientation of journalists towards new paradigms of practice in conflict reporting. It also canvasses the strengthening of the institutional platforms of journalism practice and press regulation to secure better professional output in media content.

The idea for this study emerged from my own personal experiences and involvement with the Nigerian print media. As a young graduate of mass communication from the University of Lagos, Nigeria's leading centre for journalism training, I was employed by a faith-based news magazine, *Today's Challenge*, whose focus was to report current affairs from a Christian perspective. The period of my service with this publication, the mid-1980s to early 1990s, were also very turbulent years in Nigeria in terms of Christian-Muslim relations, largely on account of ill-informed political strategies by the then military government. In particular, the controversy surrounding Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) sharply polarized opinions along religious lines and heightened sectarian tensions. This, coupled with the debates surrounding the introduction of *Sharia*

Islamic law into the country's jurisprudence, heated up the polity and resulted in series of religious riots between Muslims and Christians - the two dominant religious groups in Nigeria. As a reporter, and later editor, of this news magazine, I was actively involved in the coverage of major incidents of religious crises during that era, such as the Kafanchan-Kaduna-Zaria riots of 1987 and the Reinhard Bonke Crusade riots of Kano in 1989.

Some of the experiences I had covering those riots remain indelible: panic and fear from sudden eruptions in a conflict area we were covering; gory scenes and pathetic narrations of victims; tales of atrocities, injustice and cruelty; humanitarian disasters and personal brushes with security agencies in the course of journalistic assignments. One particular incident which set me thinking about investigating the media was when a reporter from a popular northern-based national newspaper approached our magazine to allege, with evidence, unfair editing and doctoring of his report of an incident which significantly altered the meaning of the story with serious religious connotations. That particular incident provoked in me a curiosity to explore media practices in conflict coverage beyond routine journalistic work.

Years later when Jos, the scenic and hitherto serene city on the Plateau where I have lived most of my adult life, was conflagrated in sectarian and ethnic conflicts, the latent interest to research media coverage of such conflicts was re-awakened and became compelling for me. Although I took particular interest in how the press was reporting the Jos conflicts, my concern however transcended Jos, as Nigeria's return to civilian governance in 1999 after protracted military rule seemed ironically to open up a floodgate of unremitting contestations and violence. And, like Ogoh Alubo (2011) has observed, the print media has fed readership screaming headlines on exploding bouts of civil disturbances as a result of these conflicts. Simultaneously, there was also an outcry by members of the public that the press was exacerbating the conflicts by the style of reportage (Galadima, 2010; *Daily Trust*, 5 August 2010). All of these set the context for the subject that I set to explore in my doctorate research.

The issue of the relationship between the press and conflict is a broad and often times controversial subject of debate and enquiry (Frere, 2007; Geelen, 2002). Established knowledge in media research on news culture however confirms that media representations generally tend to glamorize war, violence and propaganda with negative consequences for the resolution of such conflicts (Galtung, 1998; Starkey, 2007; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). This has raised critical concerns about mainstream journalistic practices in the coverage of

conflicts. Indeed, a main criticism of mainstream journalism is its apparent preoccupation with war and violence and a relative lack of interest in processes of non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation (Cottle, 2006:100). Hyde-Clarke (2011:14) has noted the growing belief that “the media have sometimes fanned the flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths.” And for Galtung (1993: xi), the media “amplify the sounds of guns rather than muting them.”

In response to this criticism, there has emerged a journalistic genre which positions itself against established, traditional forms of journalism, challenging foundational news values, dominant agendas, privileged elite access and existing professional journalistic practices (Cottle, 2006; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Lynch, Hackett and Shaw, 2011; Moge kwu, 2011; Hackett, 2011). Imbued with a normative agenda, these new genres seek to redress the perceived deficiencies of mainline news representations and better align journalism to projects of social responsibility, economic development, political participation and cultural democracy (Cottle, 2006). These “corrective journalisms,” in Cottle’s perception, share a common concern to move beyond traditional news values, routinised journalistic practices, elite source dependencies and institutionalized ideals of professionalism. Among these new forms of journalism are peace journalism, development journalism, alternative journalism on-line, public journalism, among others (Cottle, 2006: 102).

This research focuses particular attention on peace journalism which “offers a form of critical analysis of existing ‘war reporting’ and a set of practical plans and options for journalists” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 248). Developed by Galtung (1991) and operationalized by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), among others, the model proposes an alternative strategy for covering conflicts (Ottosen & Mudhai, 2009) and contrasts conventional or “war journalism” with “peace journalism.” The assertions of peace journalism have been the subject of sharp debate particularly in western journalistic circles. Scholars such as Hanitzsch (2007) and practitioners like Loyn (2007) argue that peace journalism exaggerates the influence of journalists and the media on political decision making and that, as defined, it is naïve and impracticable. It is also capable of eroding cherished traditions of journalism, such as objectivity and neutrality.

While the debate about journalists’ relationship to conflict is healthy, it is not going to be resolved easily. Within the context of Nigeria’s experience, however, I share Howard’s (2009) position that “the news media in many societies can be a powerful force to reduce the

causes of conflict and to enable a conflict-stressed society to better pursue conflict resolution” (Howard, 2009: 5). My research aims to make a tangible contribution to this debate by providing empirical data on Nigerian press coverage of ethno-religious conflicts as well as examining the perspectives of media practitioners and media academics on the contending issues.

I have organised the research around exploring the overarching question:

*How has the Nigerian press reported ethno-religious conflicts in the country and what are the implications of this for journalism practice within a democratic setting?*

To answer this question, I adopted a methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, a strategy that enabled me to explore data extensively and rigorously. After an initial quantitative content analysis, I utilised more interpretive methods, including critical discourse analysis and framing analysis to discover latent meanings and perspectives of text. I also undertook semi-structured interviews to explore the context of news production. In order to interrogate the issues and questions thrown up by this enquiry, I utilised a theoretical framework incorporating ideas from ethnicity, media and ethnic conflicts, critical political economy as well as debates about alternative approaches to conflict coverage and reportage. Through these I am able to analyse professional practices of Nigerian journalism and their relationship with conflict and to canvass the argument for a re-orientation in style and comportment leading to the adoption of a news culture which does not aid conflict escalation.

In chapter one, I explore the theoretical foundations of the research in the form of a literature review structured under three thematic frameworks. The first framework provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the socio-economic and cultural terrain within which the Nigerian press operates. In this respect, it engages with discourses about ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Africa, and their particular manifestation in Nigeria. This is with specific reference to Jos, a contested territory at the fault line of Nigeria’s Muslim-Christian, north-south geopolitical trajectory. The second framework focuses on media and ethnic conflicts and examines in particular the practices of the Nigerian press in this regards. The last framework is a discourse of alternative theories and approaches to conflict coverage and conflict reportage, exploring specifically the emerging concept of peace journalism and examines the critiques of the model as well as considering its relevance for the professional enhancement of media practice in conflict reportage in Nigeria.

Chapter two sets out the methodology for this study and outlines the framework within which data are gathered and evaluated. My approach employs a repertoire of quantitative and qualitative research methods in generating and analysing data. In constructing a suitable methodology, I was persuaded by Bertrand and Hughes' (2005: 13) argument for flexibility in the choice of methodology as between quantitative and qualitative methods. They argue that in media research, the critical theorist may utilise any appropriate method "provided the results of the research can be directed towards improving the social world." The plurality of methods enabled me to source data from divergent sources to ensure fair and adequate representation of conflicting views and opinions. The data were then converged to argue for professional and ethical re-orientation of the Nigerian press as a way of ensuring conflict responsive journalism.

In chapter three, I employ quantitative content analysis to scope the patterns of coverage and the practices of the Nigerian press in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. This enabled me to grasp in broad outlines the approach of the Nigerian press and to identify areas of weakness with such news culture. This broad picture is then deepened through qualitative and interpretive endeavours in chapter four, specifically to determine the framing and representation of the issues in conflict. I observe, through this, that the pattern of representation coincides with existing social and political cleavages and thus tends to confuse, rather than clarify issues.

Chapter five explores alternative perspectives to conflict reportage and conflict coverage. Here I examine current debates about the relationship between media and conflict, and the role of journalists in conflict. The chapter particularly dwells on the concept of peace journalism and the contentions as to its applicability in mainstream journalism. I find that the Nigerian press tends towards "war journalism" framing of conflict, a tendency which is capable of exacerbating such conflicts. I therefore argue for the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, a modified application of the peace journalism model.

Chapter six discusses the context of journalism practice in Nigeria, through interviews with media practitioners and media academics. The chapter focuses particularly on issues of professionalism, training and education of journalists and media regulation, all of which impinge critically on content. I find that Nigerian media practitioners and media educators, while positively disposed to the principles about news making that do not aid escalation of



conflicts, also recognise structural issues which currently militate against such practices, chiefly issues related to training, work environment and commercial pressures.

The dissertation concludes by calling for the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, involving practice patterns and styles that will make the press less predisposed to aiding escalation of conflict. This, I argue, has implications for both teaching and research in the field as well as news practices and news culture.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

In order to establish an integrated conceptual framework for the research, this chapter attempts to produce a critical reading of theoretical positions relevant to the subject of enquiry. This literature search is structured under three thematic constructs, namely: ethnic conflicts, ethnicity and nation building in Africa; media and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria; and alternative approaches to conflict coverage and conflict reportage.

The first part provides a conceptual foundation for understanding the socio-economic and cultural terrain within which the Nigerian press operates. This is accomplished largely through engagement with discourses about ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Africa, and their particular manifestation in Nigeria. With reference to Nigeria, the discussion probes the dimensions and complications religion brings to this theme, particularly within the democratic setting.

The second part focuses on media and ethnic conflicts and how this connects with citizenship rights and nationalism within the framework of democratic governance. The review explores the discourses around the history of the Nigerian press and how this has shaped its world view and the resulting news culture. It dwells on the issues of ethics and professionalism.

The last part of the review explores the discourses on alternative theories and approaches to conflict analysis and conflict reportage. It dwells particularly on the theory of peace journalism and considers its philosophical and conceptual frameworks. It also examines critiques of the model and explores its relevance for the professional enhancement of media practice in conflict reportage in Nigeria.

The overarching objective of this review is to locate the Nigerian press within the wider struggles, concerns and contradictions of Nigeria's nation-building trajectory. The aim transcends a mere chronology as the narrative not only probes for gaps in understanding, but creates vital links with emerging trends in conflict reportage which challenge mainstream styles in "the attempt to impose ethical discipline" (Sharp, 2013: 35) on the process of news making that does not aid escalation of conflict.

## 1.2 Conceptual Clarifications

Before proceeding to discuss the frameworks outlined above, it is important, for holistic understanding, to clarify central concepts and terms employed in this study. These include the concepts of nation/nationalism, ethnicity, ethno-religious conflicts and media.

### 1.2.1 Nation/Nationalism

Connor (1994: 91) observes that debates over definitions of terms such as “nation” and “nationalism” are shrouded in ambiguity due to their imprecise, inconsistent and often erroneous usage. The range of meanings associated with the concept of nation is very broad and encompasses notions derived from citizenship and other legal and democratic institutions, and the traditional culturally and ethnically connotated understanding of nation (De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999: 169). Within these plethora of ideas however, Benedict Anderson’s concept of the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1983, 2006) stands out and is widely considered as a key contribution on the subject, or in Zimelis’ (2016) words, “the Bible of nationalism” and provides a major analytical framework for discourses on nations and nationalism.

In his seminal work, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Anderson (1983: 5) defines the nation as “an imagined political community...and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”. He traces the cultural roots of nationalism to the “unselfconscious coherence” of medieval religious communities and the permeable political boundaries of preceding dynastic realms. He demonstrates that print capitalism, book publishing and the development of vernacular languages provided the tools people needed to imagine they were part of a much larger community of similar people. Those who belong to the nation conceive of it as a deep, horizontal comradeship, a fraternity that can inspire millions to give their lives for its cause. And even though the vast majority of members of this fraternity have never and will never meet each other, they all share the same feeling of overriding loyalty to it.

In Anderson’s conception, the nation has three major characteristics. The first is that it is limited, in the sense that each nation has finite boundaries beyond which lie other nations. “No nation imagines itself coterminous with humanity,” he explains. This means that it excludes all those who do not belong to it. Secondly, it is sovereign because its people dream of being free from control by any other entity. Indeed, the very concept of nation-ness,

according to Anderson, was born in an age in which Enlightenment and the Revolution destroyed the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained hierarchical dynastic realm. What this means is that the national community supplants the earlier forms of community founded on royal, dynastic rights, religion or kinship. At its base, nationalism is thus similar to religion than to the rationalist institutions of democracy and bureaucracy which legitimise it. Thirdly, the nation is conceived or imagined as a community “because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately, it is this fraternity that makes it possible...for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings” (Anderson, 2006: 6).

A clear argument of Anderson’s work is that nations are social constructs, existing only in the minds of those in the community. They are imagined as “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or hear of them. Yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006: 17). Anderson’s theory therefore locates individuals within specific ordered communities as members of bonded communities whose members have common traits and concerns. All the individuals within this community have a horizontal relationship with one another, thus creating an identity. Such identity provides safety and security to members of the imagined community, offering a sense of belonging to a group of people who are on the same wavelength and have similar interests and motivations (UK Essays, 2013). As De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999: 153) emphasise, nations are to be understood as mental constructs, represented in the minds and memories of the nationalized subjects as sovereign and limited political units and can become very influential guiding ideas with sometimes tremendously serious and destructive consequences.

This “imagination” within the community is made possible particularly by modern media which spreads or propagates knowledge of the same multivalent symbols throughout the nation, thus creating the basis for an emotional community. This point is of particular interest to this dissertation since the media is the key to creating these “imagined communities” through their mass reach and appeal. Higson (1998: 355) points out that national media and educational systems have a critical role in ensuring a nation imagines itself as a “coherent, meaningful and homogenous community.” And for De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999: 153), the idea of a specific national community becomes reality in the realm of convictions and beliefs through reifying, figurative discourses continually launched by politicians,

intellectuals and media people and disseminated through the systems of education, mass communication, militarization and sports. Anderson's main focus however is with the press (newspapers) which he recognises as a critical aspect of print-capitalism and the key commodity in the generation of new ideas and concepts (Anderson, 2006: 37). For him, newspapers allow shared experiences and therefore contribute greatly to the imagined communities that exist within nations both now and in the future. Anderson would therefore argue favourably for the role of the media in the public sphere as a positive vehicle for promoting public debate on issues. Furthermore, as scholars such as Baines (2001: 3) argue, nation-building occurs not only through political and economic processes, but also through cultural and symbolic contexts. In this regard, arenas such as sport, and representations of sport and nation in the media are crucial sites for imagining and re-imagining the nation.

This is not to suggest, however, that all nations or imagined communities are united or consensual on issues; quite the contrary. As Higson (1998: 356) argues, nations can be presented and represented as being in disarray. More fundamentally, Anderson's postulations have been challenged as being limited in terms of their global relevance, particularly with respect to the realities of the African experience. For example, Ndi (2015), arguing from a critical perspective, insists that Anderson's theoretical insights about nations as imagined communities are culturally reductionist. In his opinion, Anderson's perspective is restricted to western experiences of religion, capitalism and the press and thus fails to throw sufficient light on the very complex situation of nationalistic identities and how they came out as processes in Africa. In Ndi's (2015: 8) words, "while these theoretical insights about nationalism are impressive, they do not illuminate the transcending nature of 'nationalism' in Africa as a shared identitarian history." This historical nature, he posits, has to do with, among other things, ambiguities in African nationalism, dichotomy between identity and nationhood, the connotative functions of the concept of 'nation' in different contexts and the determination of sociological conditions. For him, one vital question Anderson fails to address is "whose 'imagined community' is being referred to?" This question is critical when one considers that African nationalist elites fought against colonial rule with a dichotomous mind-set, that is, that their struggle was emancipatory in objective and the imperial powers that controlled them were oppressors. Ndi (2015: 9) therefore argues that the process of nation formation in Africa could not be collectively qualified as a nationalism "imagined" endogenously and constructed "from within" the dynamics of their indigenous histories.

The argument above denotes wider debates among scholars as to the origins and character of nations, nationalism and nationalists (Bainier, 2001; De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak, 1999). Alan Bainier (2001: 3) offers a distinction between “ethnic” and “civic” nationalisms, both of which can provide the basis for the formation and maintenance of a nation-state. According to him, ethnic nationalist discourse is close to assumptions about the primordial and natural origins of the nation. It is also bound up with language and possibly race in some instances. Ethnic nationalism is regarded as unenlightened and exclusive in its political aspirations as either one belongs or does not belong. For Bainier, this “ethnic closure” is the chief basis of many of the current national conflicts that afflict the world. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, is reasoned to have emerged with the largely artificial creation of nations and nation-states primarily during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It celebrates citizenship within particular political entities as opposed to membership in supposedly natural human associations. As a consequence, civic nationalism is viewed as inclusive since anyone can belong once certain conditions are met.

Bainier (2001), however, points out that it would be an error to draw water tight compartments in this argument as there is substantial overlap between these different nationalisms. For him, how the politics of particular nations is packaged is contingent more on specific circumstances than on some deep-rooted commitment to one or the other version of the ideology. Some exhibit a “separatist type” nationalism whose objective is the establishment of a new entity completely free from an existing state. Such aspirations are premised on a sense of ethnic or social national identity that can only find true political accommodation when freed from what is considered as an unacceptable set of political arrangements. In other instances, the nationality process seeks to create a nation-state by bringing together disparate regions, ethnic groups, and other premodern social or political arrangements. This frequently demands a civic approach to nationalism whereby the people become citizens of a new nation-state while often retaining a sense of identity located elsewhere.

This position agrees with the assertion by De Cillia, Reisigl and Wodak (1999: 154) that there is no such thing as the one and only one national identity in an essentialising sense, but rather that different identities are discursively constructed according to context. For them, national identities are not completely consistent, stable or immutable but are to be understood as dynamic, fragile, vulnerable and often incoherent. Within the context of the debates outlined above, my dissertation defines nation as an independent political entity consisting of people

of diverse backgrounds and ethnicities existing in a single geographic territory and governed by one government. This definition is in line with the concept of “civic nationalism” espoused by Baines (2001) and emphasises the constructed nature of the phenomenon as propounded by Anderson.

### ***1.2.2 Ethnicity***

The concept of the nation and nationalism discussed above also flows into the debates about ethnicity and ethnic conflicts which are equally contested. Scholars have proposed a variety of approaches to ethnicity, but two of these stand out, namely the “interpretivist” and “quantoid” approaches proposed by Fearon and Laitin (2000: 4). According to Green (2006), an interpretivist approach refers to the strategy of using a variety of situational definitions suitable to each study, an approach existent in much post-modern and post-Marxist work. Authors such as Stuart Hall, Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein view ethnicity as a “plastic and malleable social construction, deriving its meaning from the particular situations of those who invoke it” (Green, 2006). In comparison, a quantoid approach attempts to impose precise definitions which are applicable to all situations. This is situated between two extremes of essentialism/primordialism and instrumentalism/constructivism. The former, prevalent in journalism and non-academic discourse, views ethnic groups as ancient and immemorial kinship groups. Constructivism, on the other hand, considers ethnic groups as artificial and constructed rather than as natural and eternal. Fearon and Laitin (2004: 6), basing their concept of ethnicity on what they term “ordinary language definition of terms” define it as “groups larger than a family for which membership is reckoned primarily by descent, is conceptually autonomous and has a conventionally recognised ‘natural history’ as a group.” For Green (2006), this ordinary language or “minimal” definition is more suitable for use in political economy than the interpretivist or quantoid approaches as it makes it easier to discuss with policy makers and non-academics not versed in ivory tower discourses of the concept. It also allows for conceptual clarity by eliminating the polysemy of interpretivist approach while avoiding the obscure and complicated terminology of the quantoid approach.

Adopting this “ordinary language” approach, my research considers ethnicity as the self-consciousness of a group of people who are related closely by shared customs and experiences including language, religion, history and common heritage. As explained above, ethnic groups are artificial and constructed rather than natural, and as Green (2006) explains,

just as they can be created, they can also be fragmented or deconstructed. By this definition, a nation could be composed of multiple ethnic nationalities historically constituted into a sovereign community with varying degrees of cohesiveness amongst these nationalities.

A dimension of ethnicity is its propensity to generate conflicts between different ethnic groups. According to Osaghe (1991) ethnicity is the conscious behaviour of a group in competition to capture political power or scarce government resources. This definition emphasizes the conflict-generating nature of the phenomenon of ethnicity because, as Egwu (2004: 45) explains, it is essentially a tool of competition for individuals and groups for scarce public goods. This conflictual nature of ethnicity as presented here agrees with Stavenhagen's (1990:15) definition of ethnic conflict as a confrontation, at any level, in which the contending parties or actors identify themselves or each other (or are so identified by outsiders) in ethnic terms, that is, using ethnic criteria such as language, religion, race and culture. Particularly in the context of the third world, ethnic conflicts are protracted and usually combine ethnicity with a demand for economic redistribution or involve a struggle against a dominant or hegemonic group (Irobi, 2005).

### ***1.2.3 Ethno-Religious Conflicts***

This brings me to the issue of ethno-religious conflicts. As used in this dissertation, ethno-religious conflict is a variant of ethnic-based conflicts which have religious undertones (Ikpe, 2009; Alemika, 2002; Ibrahim, 2002). These are disputes that are largely based on group identity as defined by religion and ethnic origin (Ochoche, 2002). As argued by Jinadu (2007), ethno-religious conflicts are best understood within the broader context of identity-based conflicts since ethnicity is but one of a variety of markers which may occur singly or in concert with others such as religion or class in a given conflict situation. Such conflicts, Jinadu contends, entail the manipulation and mobilization of primordial identities like ethnicity and religion around shared political, economic, social and ideological goals. Fawole and Bello (2011) view ethno-religious conflicts as a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious group and another of such group in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation.

With respect to Nigeria, the focus of this research, Kuna (2005) locates the problem of ethnicity in the colonial structure of power that thrived on the reproduction of difference, the most dominant of which are ethnicity, religion and indigeneity, a structure which he argues



has become indispensable to the post-colonial state. For him, the conflicts in parts of northern Nigeria are “significantly related to the way in which othering is deployed in the reproduction of existing power arrangements.” Globally, he argues that ethnicity, religion and indigeneity have now replaced race as the major organizing principles of community. Struggles based on ethnicity, moreover, have intensified in Nigeria, as in many other developing countries, as a result of declining state capacity, evident not only in the provision of social services, but also in the inability to provide the most basic services states are traditionally known to monopolise – personal and public security. Kuna argues that in many cases, declining state capacities have reinforced othering processes by creating conditions that allowed sub-national and other primordial groups to take precedence over a broader, national and inclusive identity.

Religion plays a central role in the ethnic contestations in Nigeria partly because the population is almost equally divided by the two dominant world religions – Christianity and Islam (Kuna, 2005). The dimension of religion both complicates and builds into ethnic conflicts a capacity to ignite wider crises in other parts of the country through retaliatory attacks by ethnic or religious compatriots especially as ethnic and religious affiliations overlap such that some ethnic groups predominantly share the same religion. Ethno-religious conflicts are particularly prevalent in Nigeria’s Middle Belt, the geo-political region which is the focus of this study, because ethnic and religious boundaries tend to coincide between the Hausa/Fulani and northern minorities (Imobighe, 2003). In Imobighe’s words, “the conflicts between these two groups often take on the posture of ethno-religious conflicts” (Imobighe, 2003: 15). This emphasizes the conflict-generating propensity of the phenomenon in inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships, issues discussed more fully in the next section.

#### **1.2.4 Media**

Allen and Seaton (1999: 4) observe that media are not homogenous as is sometimes suggested by the use of the term. ‘Media’ is a plural form of ‘medium’ and refers to the mechanisms by which information is transmitted. Thus the media cannot in themselves make decisions and, while they are persistently manipulated, there is no big, underlying meta-conspiracy. The media therefore have to be de-mythologised if we are to understand them. According to Long and Wall (2009: 3), media is a conventional term used to describe modern means of electronic communication. This encompasses the range of newspapers, the broadcast media (radio and television) and the internet in all its variety giving rise to the concept of new media. It also includes those practices that operate at the intersection of these

various media, such as advertising and public relations. Long and Wall further explain that the use of the term mass media reflects a concern with the manner in which various media forms send messages, from a single form to an anonymous mass of people who constitute the audience, consumer, listenership, readership, community, etc.

Wimmer and Dominick (2013: x) however observe that categorising what a mass medium is has become complicated in view of recent technological developments. They therefore provide a traditional definition of the mass media and a revised definition. For them, the traditional definition of the mass media is any communication channel used to simultaneously reach a large number of people, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, films, recording, books and the internet. In view of new high tech communication channels, they have added a new category called smart mass media, which include smart phones, smart TVs and tablets, three media that are essentially computers. As standalone devices, each of these media can function as individual mass medium. For example, using these smart devices, one person or one organisation can now communicate simultaneously with hundreds of thousands or even millions of people via tweets, text messages, social media posts and email. However, smart media can access the internet and additionally serve the function of all other mass media. For example, a person can watch television, listen to radio or read newspapers, magazines or books all using a smart media device. In other words, smart media represents another form of mass communication. Therefore, Wimmer and Dominick now define mass media as any communication channel used to simultaneously reach a large number of people, including radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, film, recordings, books, the internet and smart media.

My dissertation focuses on journalism, which Hackett (2007: 1) describes as the most important story-telling genre of the media. Within journalism, it is particularly concerned with the press or newspaper journalism. According to Long and Wall (2009: 141) the newspaper is the oldest of the non-electronic mass media, with industry and form affected, if not usurped, by once 'new' media such as radio, television and lately the internet. As explained in Chapter 1, the newspaper industry in Nigeria dates back to the nation's precolonial history and is a key player in the political and social terrain.

The complications associated with modern media have wide ranging ramifications, not only for professionals and owners, but also for audiences and consumers. In an age of multiple screens, and within the context of postmodern theorising about the fluidity of our identities, it

is even difficult to pinpoint when people become audiences (Press and Livingstone, 2006: 176). The rapid changes also emphasise the need for a highly literate and discerning audience able to make meaning both of new technologies and myriad information.

### **1.3 Ethnic Conflicts, Ethnicity and Nation Building in Africa: A Background Discourse**

Having clarified basic concepts as used in this dissertation, this section proceeds to examine and interrogate in greater detail the concept of ethnicity and explores its limitations as an analytical tool in explaining Africa's conflicts. Allen (1999) observes that modern conflict brings with it complexities quite different from the classical warfare of the past. He notes, for example, that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ninety percent of all war casualties were military, whereas today, ninety percent are civilian. Also, unlike in the past, most current wars are not being fought between states but are intra-state. Wallenstein (2007) similarly notes that 21<sup>st</sup> century armed conflicts have made significant shifts in nature, location and focus relative to previous warfare. Whereas previous conflicts were usually fought between recognised state entities and waged according to international conventions, post-World War Two conflicts are mostly intra-state, and tend to be more frequent and numerous. Within this reality, Seaton (1999) observes a phenomenon, which has been the eruption of peculiarly brutal, sub-national ethnic warfare as many modern conflicts are characterized by what he describes as unimaginable atrocities, including endless streams of wretched refugees fleeing violence, mayhem and starvation.

The usual explanation for the ferocity of modern wars is ethnicity or inter-ethnic strife. Leading war analysts such as Keegan (1998), Moynihan (1993) and Kaplan (1993) are among authors who hold the view that numerous contemporary wars are the result of certain ethnic groups expressing their true qualities following the lifting of external controls, or as revealing atavistic drives existing in all of us, which are manifested the moment the rule of law is undermined (Allen, 1999: 27). Allen (1999) however challenges this popular notion, maintaining that ethnicity itself is not an explanation, but rather a product of social processes. He notes the creeping tendency to conflate ethnicity with the old meaning of race as social differentiation with a biological basis. This tendency suggests that natural divisions motivate action, and that some social groups are inherently predisposed to violence. Such "biologizing" of ethnicity, he argues, informs the imagery of a new "barbarism" which some authors have used to characterize the supposed irrationality of wars in parts of Africa. And for Seaton (1999), the problem is that reducing the social and economic realities, and the

complex historical causes, that underlie and prolong these conflicts to “ethnicity” depoliticizes them. Such explanations, he points out, collude with protagonists’ nationalistic, mythologized interpretations of history. Such characterizations not only obscure the role in such wars of national political struggles, but their relationships with post-Cold War global capitalist system.

Atkinson (1999: 259) corroborates this assertion by explaining that the images presented of African conflicts as primitive and backward reinforce existing prejudices and limit further examination of their causes and impact. Using the Liberian civil war as an example, Atkinson contends that the lack of understanding of how national political struggles have been played out, with their local, regional and international dimensions, was a primary factor in the lack of effective early action in the crisis by the international community. According to her, the media presented the war as “ethnic conflict” with the horrific violence “understood as expression of primitive instincts and loyalties. The hidden implications, that Liberians are at some backward phase of their political development, forms part of the more general analysis of the African situation.” Her conclusion is obvious: “If conflicts are seen as caused by factors unique to...African history and culture, then it becomes difficult to see how the West could intervene effectively” (p.264). Such analytical deficiency, she argues, obscures the activities in the international sphere which have a direct bearing on the development of the war. In this respect, Atkinson points out the failure of the media to recognise early the role of Liberian illegal export economy as a driving force in the conflict, which involved leading members of the international economy contributing to the power of existing warlords and increasing the incentives of competing to aspiring fighters, warlords and politicians. Thus “media and other sources have almost always failed to analyse the economic aspects of African wars, which arguably form the crux of many conflicts, providing as they do both the motivation and the means for expressing or resolving competition through violent conflict.” Significantly, Atkinson also points out that the Liberian situation was effectively resolved only following serious attention by the international community to the issue of the illegal economy and its role in perpetuating the war.

McNulty (1999: 275) also points out the flawed characterisation and misinterpretation by the media of the Rwandan crisis due to “oversimplification and the related racist tendency to label all conflicts in Africa as ‘tribalism,’ by means of which a unique set of political circumstances is ethnicised and thus explained away.” Quoting Pieterse (1997:71), McNulty observes this pattern of “distortion” in the coverage of Africa, insisting that “ethnicity,

although generally considered a cause of conflict, is not an explanation but rather that which is to be explained. The terminology of ethnicity is part of the conflict and cannot serve as a language of analysis.” He insists that swallowing the ethnic interpretation of conflict promoted by interested parties locally, reinforces and perpetuates a vicious circle which strengthens politically motivated propaganda and misinformation.

The analysis above agrees with Allen and Seaton’s (1999: 4) argument that modern conflicts are political and have real histories and that it is therefore necessary to unravel them to counter ethnic mythologizing by protagonists and journalists and strip them of “fantastic emanations.” This, they contend, requires “unfashionable, accurate, balanced, old-fashioned, evidenced-based narratives” which explain in logical sequence how one event led to another as an anchor for investigating what is really going on. Arguing further, Allen and Seaton insist that ethnicity has no biological basis, but refers to socially constructed relationships between groups, often expressed in conflicted social boundaries. All definitions of war include the idea of organised violence against an enemy group. It follows that "there is no special category of ethnic war, but all war has an ethnic aspect." They however explain that ethnicity influences behaviour because once conflict commences, ethnic identities become social facts and people are labelled. The power of ethnicity lies in the acceptance by people generally that particular social divisions are natural and inevitable.

The end of the Cold War witnessed an upsurge of identity politics which has transformed several African states such as Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Nigeria into massive theatres of violent conflict. These conflicts revolve around the manipulation of primordial identities, notably ethnicity and religion (Para-Mallam, 2012). It must however be noted that identity based conflicts associated with ethnicity and religion are not exclusive to Africa as the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Northern Ireland, etc. have shown. Bowen (1994: 34) also argues against the tendency by some scholars to baptise every conflict, particularly in Africa, with the toga of ethnicity. According to him, “ethnic conflicts misguide us. It has become a short hand way to speak about any and all confrontations between groups of people living in the same country.” And for Dragadze (2003), ethnic conflict could actually be a cover for human rights violations since the ethnicisation of conflicts distracts attention from the true causes of conflict between groups. It is therefore necessary, according to her, to look beyond the claims of interested parties in order to understand the true nature of conflicts.

Melone, et.al (2002: 6) notes that inter-ethnic conflict has become a central characteristic of the post-Cold War era as many groups and leaders around the world have turned to ethnicity as the answer to their dilemmas of identity. They identify three main causes of ethnic conflicts as structural factors, facilitating factors and triggering factors. Structural factors encompass economic, social and political issues relating to wealth distribution and inter-ethnic relations; facilitating factors include “the degree of politicisation and ethnic consciousness” and triggering factors relate to issues such as a sharp economic shock, sudden escalation of inter-group tension or the collapse of central authority. This position refutes the characterization of the problem of ethnicity in Africa as a “tribal” phenomenon. Indeed, scholars have challenged the usage of the word “tribalism” as a derogatory colonial coinage, insisting that Africans are not primitives and tribalists who delight in killing one another on the basis of ethnic differentiation (Osaghe, 1990; Okwudiba, 1980; Vail, 1989; Mare, 1982). In the words of Chabal and Dalo (1999: 45), “Africans do not behave any less or any more, rationally than anyone else.”

The above explanation notwithstanding, it is also noticeable that among numerous identity markers, ethnicity and religion constitute “the dominant axis” around which violent conflicts have revolved in Africa (Hagg and Kagwanja, 2007: 12). Irobi (2005) insists that irrespective of the validity of the arguments to the contrary, many of African conflicts have ethnic connotations, citing the case of Rwanda where killings were carried out along ethnic lines reproducing past animosities. Irobi further cites a study by Christian Sherrer (1999: 53), which reveals that two-thirds of all conflicts from 1985-1996, had a dominant or influential ethnic character. What is clear, according to Irobi, is that ethnicity does not exist in isolation, but often combines other cleavages such as religion, race, class and regionalism with each reinforcing the other. For Egwu (2004: 86) the tension and conflicts in inter-group relations are a consequence, not of natural divisions between ethnic and cultural groups, but the outcome of competition for power and resources in which elites of various ethnic groups engage in deliberate mobilisation and politicization of ethnic identities.

Imobighe (2003) has however attempted to disentangle the word “ethnic” from the negative connotation popular in literature arising from definitions based on the dysfunctional ways ethnicity has been employed by some people. Tracing the root word “ethnic” to its classical meaning, Imobighe defined it as “the feeling of belonging to a distinctive cultural or linguistic group.” According to him, such a feeling of belonging to a distinctive socio-cultural group or a manifestation of ethnic consciousness cannot by itself be a bad thing just as the

manifestation of national consciousness is not regarded as a bad thing within the comity of nations. “The cultivation of that feeling to serve negative ends cannot be regarded as the essence of the word,” he emphasised.

The political economy of ethnicity is therefore what gives rise to much of the “negative ends” referred to by Imobighe above and which fuels protracted and often gruesome conflicts described by Harris and Reilly (1998) as “deep-rooted conflicts.” According to them, deep-rooted conflicts have two powerful elements. The first of these elements is identity, defined as “the mobilisation of people in communal identity groups based on race, religion, culture, language.” The second element is distribution, that is, “the means of sharing economic, social and political resources within a society.” Where perceived imbalance in distribution coincides with identity differences, this easily results in conflict. This combination of identity with wider perceptions of economic and social injustice is thus a critical factor that often fuels deep-rooted conflicts.

Yusuf (2007) also identifies other characteristics of deep-rooted conflicts to include their persistence and scope. According to her, these conflicts have a tendency to recur because identity issues cover a wide range of elements that are at the core of a people’s sense of being, such as race, religion, culture, heritage, history and language. They are more complex, persistent and prolonged. And since the core issues appear difficult to negotiate or compromise, such conflicts are also much more difficult to resolve. In this regard, Yusuf further observes that deep-rooted conflicts have a scope that can be alarming because wherever people who share the same identity in race, language, religion, and culture exist, the conflict could spread to such areas. This is particularly difficult where such identity-related issues also combine with a sense of injustice and perceived marginalisation in the distribution of resources such as land, economic and political power, employment prospects, etc. Then the conflicts become prevalent, pervasive, durable and insoluble. The issues in the dispute are not only identity-driven, but people become emotionally charged over what gives them their sense of themselves, defining a person’s bond with their community and defining the level of satisfaction of their need for identity.

Most of the modern conflicts with ethnic colouration occur in the poorer parts of the world, least equipped to recover quickly (Allen and Seaton, 1999). As early as 1994, UNDP’s Human Development Report had called for a profound transition from nuclear security to human security. It noted that of the 79 countries affected by political violence in 1993, 65 of

them, or 82 percent, were in the developing world. Africa, in particular, has presented an almost unmitigated picture of war, violence and political turmoil. Irobi (2005: 10) paints a grim picture of ethnic conflicts and their effects on Africa, noting that from the Horn of Africa to the Cape of Good Hope, there are flames of conflict, which produce poverty, hunger, refugees and agony. Ted Gurr (1991) notes that in the 1980s alone, conflict and ethnic violence claimed over three million lives in Africa while 160 million Africans lived in war-stricken areas. The United States Committee on Refugees estimates that within the same period, Africans accounted for 43 per cent of the global refugee population, most of them fleeing from the cataclysmic effect of ethnic conflicts (1990: 3032). More recent figures by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation shows that the number of hungry people in sub-Saharan Africa stood at 239 million as at 2010, being the most recent estimates (FAO, 2010). Sub-Saharan Africa also has the largest proportion of its population undernourished, an estimated 30 percent in 2010 compared to 16 percent in Asia and the Pacific. This implies that in 2010, one in three persons in sub-Saharan Africa was hungry. According to the World Hunger Education Service and Hunger Notes (2015), conflict is a principal source of human misery including hunger and poverty. People living in countries affected by violence are twice as likely to be undernourished and 50 percent more likely to be impoverished. By 2011, Africa had an estimated 13.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons or 38 percent of the global refugee population, most of this resulting from violence and conflict. For Kofi Annan (2005), former UN Secretary General, the level of conflicts and their enduring nature made Africa a major challenge to the efforts to achieve global peace, prosperity and human rights (cited in Irobi, 2005). Given the foregoing accounts of wars and conflicts that continue to plague the African continent, it is clear that a more concerted effort to grapple with the problem of wars and conflicts, regardless of their origins, demands urgent intellectual and socio-political attention.

Para-Mallam (2012), in reference to Hag and Kagwanja (2007), adduces three plausible reasons for the preponderance of identity-based conflicts in Africa. First among these is the colonial legacy which laid the defective social and political foundation that apparently makes these conflicts almost inevitable. The system of colonial administration, anchored on divide-and-rule tactics, elevated one or a few ethnic groups and relegated and marginalized others. Such policies bred "political tribalism" in emerging states characterized by patrimonial client networks. This "ethnicisation" of politics owing to the construction of ethnicity as a legal



entity by various colonial administrations polarized many African societies along settler/migrant and native/indigene fault lines.

Another reason for the preponderance of conflicts in Africa is the character of the African state which remains "weak, dysfunctional and predatory and formal institutions and processes of governance continue to rely on neo-patrimonial logic for resource allocation and upward mobility" (Para-Mallam, 2012: 8). Echoing scholars such as Egwu (2004), Alubo (2011), Ikpe (2007), Para-Mallam (2012: 8-9) notes that clientelism, a major feature of the patrimonial state, "entails that ethnicity or religion or a combination of both, constitutes a key eligibility criterion for access to socio-economic resources instead of the liberal democratic approach that relies mainly on citizenship." In this respect, the state itself becomes a partisan, rather than a neutral, player in the allocation of resources and by this perpetuates identity-based conflicts.

Para-Mallam's third explanation for Africa's conflicts is "globalisation and regional conflict complexes." She cites Appadurai (1998) and Hag and Kagwanja (2007) in their assertions that "ethnic violence is deeply rooted in the uncertainties, anxieties, disillusionments and chaotic environments created by economic globalisation." This results in regional power conflicts and economic wars in the context of poverty and underdevelopment. According to Para-Mallam, it is within this construct that (scholars) locate the instrumentalist conception of ethnicity "evident in the political manipulation of ethnic and religious identity by...elites struggling for power in order to gain access to globalized capital."

This, however, is not to conclude that ethnic identity and diversity are inevitable recipes for violent conflict. On the contrary, cultural identity could indeed be an important asset in peace making, nation-building and social re-engineering (Hag and Kagwanja, 2007; Para-Mallam, 2012). What makes the critical difference, according to Para-Mallam, is Lonsdale's (2010) typology which differentiates between "moral ethnicity" and "political tribalism" where cultural differentiation serves as a basis for tolerance and mutual respect in the former and unhealthy rivalry in the latter. This, she explains, agrees with the cultural theory of democracy proposed by Jinadu (2007) which is anchored on traditional African values, methods and styles within the contemporary realities of modern democracy. According to Para-Mallam (2012) such a home-grown African system would aim at the pragmatic management rather than the resolution and removal of identity-related conflicts. It would also emphasise mutuality, reciprocity, effective redress, functional power decentralisation and

resource control as reflecting current wisdom in conflict analysis. Furthermore, she makes a case for "direct proportional representation" where ethnic groups are guaranteed, in an objective manner, representation in government proportional to their "numeric incidence" in the population. And most crucially, Para-Mallam (2012: 10) points out the need for:

a critical interrogation of religious ideologies to the extent that they promote dogmas and behaviour codes at variance with the democratic principles of tolerance, equality and respect for the sanctity of life. In this regard, through consultation and consensus building, it should be possible to arrive at common norms and rules of engagement predicated on obedience to secular authority.

What the foregoing analysis demonstrates is the inadequacy of "ethnicity" and/or "tribalism" as analytical tools in explaining or rationalizing the numerous conflicts taking place in Africa and the need to take cognizance of vital historical and socio-economic parameters in understanding the situation. Not only would such an approach guard against reinforcing existing prejudices, but is more productive and realistic in seeking effective solutions and remedial actions to the conflicts. With respect to Nigeria, this issue is taken up in more specific terms in the next session which explores the dimensions and challenges of ethnicity to nation-building in the country and its relationship to the professional practice of journalism.

#### **1.4 Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria**

Ethnicity and religion have historically constituted a challenge to the development of democracy, nation building and national integration in Nigeria (Olu-Adeyemi, 2004; Alubo, 2011). Deeply rooted in its history (Oyovbaire, 2001; Ikpe, 2009; Imobighe, 2003; Alubo, 2011), these issues assumed conflagratory dimensions during the prolonged military regime, particularly in the volatile debates regarding Nigeria's membership of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the *sharia* controversy, which divided the polity sharply along religious lines (Alubo, 2005).

Nigeria is a highly complex and pluralistic nation. It is multi-ethnic and multi-religious with Christianity and Islam dominating the landscape of the roughly 150 million people (Oyovbaire, 2001: 4). There are three major ethnic groups (Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani and Igbo) and over 370 smaller ethnic groups (Alubo, 2011: 1). By international standards, the levels of religious commitment, belief and practice in Nigeria are considered as extremely high in both the Muslim and Christian communities (Paden, 2005: 25; Ibrahim, 2002: xiv)). The growing level of religiosity in Nigeria is evident in the multiplication of religious authorities, texts,

discourses and identities (Ibrahim, 2002). There is also an intensity of belief and an expansion of the time, resources and efforts devoted to religion. This intense religiosity, coupled with the ethnic diversity, makes ethno-religious issues volatile. This is particularly so in view of the complexities associated with this growing religiosity, which Ibrahim (2002) associates with anti-democratic norms and practices evident in the religious denominations. Such practices include sectarianism and exclusiveness, intolerance, a propensity to making hate speeches, and undemocratic organisational practices. This is compounded by the intense rivalry and politicization of Muslim/Christian relations in the country.

However, as scholars have also pointed out, the political class and the elite deliberately stoke and exploit ethnic and religious disharmony for political advantages (Ikpe, 2009: 683; Olu-Adeyemi, 2004: 2; Egwu, 2004: 12). Indeed, in the opinion of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2001), numerous actors have a stake in the promotion of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria because the associated arithmetic of numbers underpinning the conflicts translates into jobs, contracts, the creation of local governments and states as well as representation in the national assembly. This provides a good explanation for the “fetishisation” of ethnic identity (Egwu, 2004: 1), that is, the excessive tendency by groups and/or individuals to assert or play-up primordial identities in inter-group relations, a phenomenon that is prevalent in Nigeria’s body politic.

Furthermore, the rising wave of ethno-religious conflicts has been exacerbated by the implementation of the Islamic *Shari’a* criminal code in many states of northern Nigeria soon after the return to civil rule in 1999. As narrated by Alubo (2011), about 10 northern states, led by Zamfara State, introduced the *Shari’a* law into their jurisprudence as from 1999. This generated heightened tension and suspicions within the populace and accounted for violence between Christians and Muslims in these states. The *Shari’a* question has been a long standing issue in Nigeria and has elicited very intensely emotional reactions from both the opponents and proponents of the idea (Yoroms, 2002; Ibrahim, 2002).

#### ***1.4.1 Ethnicity and the Patrimonial State***

Ikpe (2009: 684) provides a basis for understanding ethnic conflicts in Nigeria by associating the phenomenon with the patrimonial state. Patrimonialism, he notes, is clientelist rule in which public officers conduct the affairs of state as a private concern and dispense resources to clients in exchange for loyalty and service. The major features of a patrimonial system include the control of political power by a personal ruler or a cabal of patrons and the absence

of separation between public and private realms for state officials. Also political offices are regarded as rewards and benefits for officials while the exercise of public authority is utilised to serve rulers and officials. The whole system, moreover, is hinged on patron-client networks and relationships. As a tool for manipulation, the political elite mobilise ethnic sentiments and ethnic solidarity in order to capture power through which access to state resources is guaranteed. The subversion of political office for personal gain and as a means of rewarding or excluding access to state resources based on ethnic affiliation, is at the heart of inter-ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. His assertion that “the most destructive consequences of patrimonial politics in Nigeria are the local communal conflicts it generates in most of the states” aligns with the position of other scholars, such as Imobighe (2003) and Egwu (2004) who posit that ethno-religious conflicts are only symptomatic of the character of the nation-state and have constituted a cog in the wheel of progress toward nationhood and democratisation.

Elaborating on this issue of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, Imobighe (2003: 6) links it with the over concentration of its rich oil resources at the central government. This concentration, he argues, means that any group that controls the centre determines how the nation’s resources can be utilized. Therefore, inter-ethnic rivalry to capture power at the centre progressively became a do-or-die game in which the three major ethnic groups became net beneficiaries.

Imobighe points out that the measures devised to create a more ethnically balanced federal structure have only resulted in stiffer competition between the main ethnic groups and tearing apart of the different communities within the same ethnic group, all in a desperate struggle to secure social amenities for their respective communities. In his perception, these ethnic-balancing measures, rather than solve problems, have ironically opened up a Pandora’s box of unending cry of marginalisation by virtually all Nigeria’s ethnic groups. While the minority groups struggle to win recognition, the big three ethnic groups, which no longer get as much of the federal plum like before, have now joined the queue of agitators who allege marginalisation in the scheme of affairs. According to Imobighe (2003: 10), there is a flourishing sub-ethnic consciousness which politicians are deliberately cultivating for their selfish ends and in some instances, have evolved, not even “sub-ethnic, but mini-ethnic identities,” around which they are mobilizing their villages and clans and carving out ethnic kingdoms for themselves.

From this perspective, he argues that most of the conflicts referred to as ethnic conflict in Nigeria have little to do with ethnicity and are grounded in other factors such as political, resource or migration issues. However, conflicts are classified as ethnic when the active protagonists are stratified along ethnic lines irrespective of causality. The problem with that is that in societies where occupational, professional, religious and ethnic boundaries coincide, there is often the tendency to see an ethnic finger intruding on conflicts between individuals and groups from different backgrounds. Imobighe concludes that ethnicity has become a convenient term for covering up the country's societal inadequacies and the people's individual and collective failings. This view resonates with that of Allen and Seaton (1999) who insist that "ethnic conflict" is often used as "lazy shorthand" to interpret or explain issues. Also, conflicts are being attenuated by the pattern of migration and settlement which tends to encourage ethnic compartmentalization, that is, the concentration of ethnic groups in different sections of the city.

Abiodun (2009) corroborates this perspective as he notes the growing phenomenon in Nigeria of differentiation based on ethnicity. He observes particularly that there is a religious dimension to this phenomenon, in which the two major religions in the country, Christianity and Islam, are daggers drawn. Because of the country's configuration, however, the strand of religion is usually intertwined with that of ethnicity. Quoting Odiase-Alegimenlen (2001: 48), he explained that the two-pronged nature of the problem is compounded by the fact that while the majority of northerners are Muslims, a large number of southerners are Christians, thus ensuring that conflicts between any of these groups of people could easily degenerate into religious or sectarian strife.

Ibrahim (2002: xiii) argues in a similar manner that the dynamics between ethnicity and political domination in Nigeria "is found in the crisis of the rentier economy." He notes that the control of national resources, popularly termed "national cake" is concentrated at only one site, the Presidency and "that is why all the mad animals are fighting for it." According to him, "the essence of neo-patrimonial systems such as Nigeria's is that they cannot provide for a growing middle class. As political entrepreneurs continue to multiply, more and more of them will be excluded from the fruits of power. In their desperation, ethnicity and religious bigotry become useful tools for creating paths of access to power."

Alemika (2002: 7) is very clear in his analysis when he states categorically that economic interests are the root cause of most conflicts in Nigeria. He however points out that such

conflicts are often fought and rationalized on non-economic grounds usually religion and ethnicity. This situation, he explains, can be understood if one appreciates that in Nigeria, economic institutions and processes are best maximized with the control of state apparatus. This is because Nigeria is a rentier state, which depends on extraction of royalties from minerals and import charges rather than from production activities in manufacturing and taxation of citizens. He observes that resources so extracted are distributed through a hierarchy of patron-client relationships involving a few elites from the constituent groups competing for scarce resources controlled by government. In this struggle, the elite patron seeks to maximize his personal interest, however “beclouding his selfish agenda by claiming to be fighting for fair treatment of his or her group” (p.7). When elites from an ethnic group fail to maximize their interests relative to those from other groups, they turn round to mobilise ethnic and religious sentiments in pursuit of their objectives. This process, according to Alemika, “masks the underlying class and economic interests, which give rise to ethnic and religious mobilization and conflicts.”

Arguing in a similar fashion, Egwu (2004) points out that the resurgence of ethnic identity and the political mobilization this entails is part of the strategy for seeking power and authority and of attaining material and psychological survival. For him, primordial identities such as ethnicity, regionalism and religion constitute “the technology of power” for capturing or retaining power and control of state resources, which this implies. Ethnicity, he points out, represents a vast resource value in the struggle for power and resources. The key issue, he argues, revolves around which group should control state power and preside over its allocative and distributive functions.

The point being made here is that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are largely orchestrated by elite struggles to control state machinery for resource allocation through which they can access wealth mainly for personal use. In this respect, Olu-Adeyemi (2007: 4) blames the political class for subverting measures devised to safeguard the rights of citizens within democratic parameters. According to him Nigeria is not incapable of inventing such safeguards; “it is simply that the political class, nay the elites, are more concerned with capturing political power for their own use rather than for advancing the cause of majority of Nigerians.” This, he explains, is primarily attributable to the fact that “the political class in Nigeria lacks legitimacy, for it is unable to address the basic problems of national integration. Having failed to bring about genuine development and having also failed to come up with an appropriate integrative outlook for Nigeria, the elites have resorted to divide and rule

politics.” In this regard, the state not only loses capacity to provide the public good; gravely, its image as a neutral arbiter that guarantees the security of all sections of the society is eroded. As state capacity declines, fear of uncertainty heightens, predisposing citizens to resort to other levels of solidarity, including religious, ethnic, regional and other primordial loyalties with a view to getting guaranteed security. This results in constant social tension and political instability and promotes misunderstanding within the polity “as every ethnic group or religious inclination sees the other as a rival that must be out staged by all means.” For him, the concept of national integration has been replaced by the vice of segregation as consciousness is patterned in such a way that each group sees the other as rivals in contest rather than partners in progress.

Olu-Adeyemi also observes that there have been several efforts and strategies by various administrations in Nigeria, military and civilian, at national integration. These efforts ranged from creation of additional states to the establishment of youth integrating programmes like the National Youth Service Corps and building of unity schools all over the country. Others included social mobilization and re-orientation programmes like war against indiscipline, MAMSER, Amnesty programme for ex-militants and constitutional conferences to address contentious issues within the polity. However, Olu-Adeyemi argues that such efforts were never implemented “in the interest of the country but of policy formulators and executors, who often smile to the bank after each moment of discourse on ‘the way forward.’” There is thus pent up anger based on accumulated deprivation, destruction, marginalization, anger and frustration manifesting in the violent explosions.

What the discussion in this section emphasises is that ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are largely rooted in other factors, mainly elite competition for political power through which they can gain access to public resources for personal benefit. The conflicts are however rationalised on non-economic grounds, making efforts to tackle them ineffective. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that wittingly or unwittingly, the Nigerian elite both instigate and perpetuate ethnic conflicts in different parts of the country. This problem is amplified by the crisis of citizenship in Nigeria based partly on the ambivalence of the Nigerian constitution on the issue of ethnic group identity, an issue discussed in the next section of this chapter.

#### ***1.4.2 Ethnicity and Citizenship Contestations***

A critical dimension of the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria is its relationship to the crisis of citizenship. As Egwu (2004) argues, at the core of the crisis of citizenship in Nigeria is the

central place of ethnic group identity in the definition of citizenship or, more aptly, the “differentiated citizenship” imposed by multi-ethnic existence. The 1999 Nigerian Constitution has officially provided for “layers of citizenship” in which one is both a citizen but also an “indigene” of a particular state. This, Egwu explains, results in the binary discourse of “natives” and “settlers” or “indigenes” and “non-indigenes.” Unfortunately, measures designed by public policy to de-escalate ethnicity have ironically exacerbated the problem in the sense that policies such as the federal character principle in appointments and promotions tend to reinforce ethnicity. In the context of scarcity and competition and the readiness of “ethnic entrepreneurs” to resort to ethnic mobilization as well as the context offered by democratization, and political liberalization, communal conflicts and violence have been the consequence. This has fractured communal relationships and dealt a big blow to national integration.

Alubo (2011: 3) notes that these eruptions are sensitively linked to contestations “over identity as a basis of determining who is included or excluded from participation or benefitting from opportunities in particular situations.” Nigerians, he observes, have been divided into two broad categories of settlers and indigenes and these are used as basis for inclusion or exclusion from certain benefits and opportunities.

Ibrahim (2002: x-xiv) identifies three stages into which Nigeria's post-colonial history could be sub-divided. The first phase, 1958-1965, was characterized by the mobilization of ethno-regional identities with the objective of gaining access to regional power. At this stage, the focus of power was in the regions and the struggle for the central government was minimal. The second phase, according to Ibrahim, was the civil war years, 1966-1970, in which efforts were mobilised to fight the war and maintain Nigeria's existence as one country. The third phase was the post-civil war era, "characterised by the rise of the unitary state and the subsequent weakening of regional bases of power." The sole question informing political mobilisation at this stage became the conquest of federal power at the centre. This tendency was further exacerbated by the structural adjustment programme "due to enhanced centralisation, concentration and reduction of resources available to be accessed even at the centre." He argues that the fierce struggle to control the central government has turned politics into a zero-sum game in which groups are obliged to block the access of others or displace those who already have access if they are to eat from the national cake. For him, this



“permanent strategy of blockage has amplified the expression of fissiparous tendencies because all those who are not inside are outside” (Ibrahim, 2002: xii).

Alubo (2011) contends that the freer atmosphere created by civil rule seems to have provided a fertile ground for civil disturbances and the contestations for the broader issues of identity, participation, and citizenship. Many of Nigeria’s constituent groups, he points out, are now regrouping under regional and/or ethnic umbrella and Nigeria is threatened by the possibility of dissolving into ethnic kingdoms. Various ethnic associations now exist championing and campaigning for different sections of the country. For example, there is the *Afenifere* group campaigning for the Yoruba nation in the South-West while *Ohaneze* is doing a similar thing in the South-East for the Igbos. In the old North, there is the *Arewa* Consultative Forum while the Middle Belt Forum similarly is championing the cause of peoples of the Central region.

This drift away from the center to ethnic and regional enclaves, according to Alubo (2011) is a huge movement. He cites one of Nigeria’s former leaders who expresses concern that:

Ethnicity is currently a huge social movement and human investment across the country. It is not only nurtured around the structure and ideology of ethnic nationalities, it is also increasingly becoming a preferred mode of loyalty by Nigerians as opposed to loyalty to the Nigerian state. It is therefore an important subset of the national question (Babangida, 2002: 156).

Alubo further notes that the campaigns for regional and ethnic agendas are so strident that virtually all issues including revenue sharing formulas, key appointments, location of projects, or even allegations of corruption against public office holders, are interpreted from the prism of these regional or ethnic agitations. He links the various civil disturbances and the contestations which lead to them to “the national question,” a term used to denote issues about citizenship, identity, and sense of belonging to, as well as self-determination in one Nigeria. The national question, according to him, thus seems to be a “a huge umbrella into which is folded a range of issues such as sense of belonging, participation in decision making, providing law and order and promoting welfare.” For him,

Nigeria’s existence is not contested; what is less certain is the nature of nationhood. Hence a sense of belonging and participation are keenly debated issues that have remained largely unresolved and have become recurring decimals in the annals of Nigeria’s post-independence history. It could thus be argued that current outbreaks of civil disturbances are rooted in the historical (colonial) past and fuelled by the (mis)management of old structures by various post-independence governments (Alubo, 2011: 56).

Wale Adebani (2009) interrogates the *citizen-deficit* in Nigeria and the contradictions of reconciling indigenous rights with citizenship rights within a typical multi-ethnic postcolonial state like Nigeria. Writing within the context of the struggles of the ethnic minorities of Plateau State against their powerful Hausa/Fulani neighbours, Adebani observes how the struggle for political, economic and social values and rights in these communities often produce violent clashes between these indigenous communities and the settler Hausa/Fulani. He explained that the groups in Plateau State see claims to indigenous status as valid<sup>1</sup> when based on (i) ‘prior’ and ‘permanent settlement’, making the people ‘traditional natives’ – in this case *prior to* the Fulani or any other who are thus ‘settlers’; (ii) ‘exclusive claims’ to territory ‘through historical and homogenous culture’ – a ‘culture’ that is *impossible* to practice on a different territory; (iii) the prior *ownership* is ‘inherited from one’s ancestors’; thus any such group that possesses the foregoing (iv) ‘have rights to their lands, their traditions and culture.’ This definition, he contends, highlights the critical issues at stake including the political, economic, social and religious dimensions of the crises that have engulfed the area and often resulted in violent and bloody feuds.

Adebani notes the roots of this problem partly in the prevarications of the Nigerian constitution on the issue. Amongst other criteria, the constitution defines citizens of Nigeria by birth as “every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence or either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to *a community indigenous to Nigeria*” (chapter 3.25). Furthermore, the constitution, even though recognizes that the federating units in Nigeria are the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja), it also recognizes citizenship on the basis of membership of (ethnic) communities ‘indigenous to Nigeria.’ “By this constitutional provision therefore,” Adebani asserts, “it can be assumed that every citizen is a member of a ‘community’ first, and that only that membership guarantees his/her membership of the Nigerian community.”

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<sup>1</sup> Following sustained and bloody clashes between the minority ethnic groups and Hausa/Fulani in southern parts of Plateau State in 2004, newspapers reported that the minorities adopted a 23-point resolution which would guarantee future peace. The resolution contained a description of who indigenous people are: ‘people who are the first to have settled permanently in a particular area and who are considered as traditional natives...People who have exclusive claims to a place through historical and homogenous culture without an alternative place to practice that culture. Such designation being inherited from one’s ancestors as opposed to their having bought the place of residence, or being given such places free by earlier settlers. Such persons have rights to their lands, their traditions and culture’ (Adebani, 2004b: 3).

Paradoxically, however, the same constitution prohibits discrimination against people ‘on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties’ (Section 15 [2]) (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999). The section further compels the state to ‘secure full resident rights for every citizen in all parts of the Federation’ as well as encourages integrative practices such as inter-marriages between people of different ethnic groups and religions and further promotes the formation of associations cutting across ethnic and religious barriers (Section 15 [3b,c,d]). The significance of this section, Adebawu argues, is that the constitution of Nigeria makes citizenship achievable on an individual basis with full residency rights while discrimination is prohibited. The reality is however very different. Despite the constitutional provisions for citizenship rights and prohibition of discrimination on ethnic or religious bases, in reality the rights and duties of citizens in Nigeria are mediated and largely dependent on their membership of specific gender, ethnic, religious and regional groups. Adebawu locates this phenomenon in the wider political and economic framework, arguing that “the reality of ethno-regional and ethno-religious competition, several years of authoritarian rule, bad governance, mismanagement of natural resources, ethno-religious crises, political crises and economic hardship which, all combined, had limited the opportunities available to citizens and closed the civic space in general (and) also predisposed different communities towards constricting access to whatever limited opportunities existed in their localities through any means.” The easiest of such means, he explains, is identity-based constraints which is practiced everywhere in Nigeria. This agrees with Ibrahim’s (2007: xi) position that indigeneity has become a “potent instrument for the negative mobilization of peoples’ sentiments and feelings in ways that undermine the national political objectives of integration and the evolution of a harmonious political community.”

The inability of the state to meet the citizen’s basic needs further derogates the worth of citizenship while placing worth on indigeneity. The Citizen’s Forum for Constitutional Reform (CFCR) notes the ways in which indigeneity has been used as a basis for emphasizing the ‘little worth’ of Nigerian citizenship given that millions of Nigerians who find themselves in effective residency in places other than where they can claim ‘indigeneity’ or where they can be accepted as ‘indigenes’ are labeled as ‘strangers and settlers’. Those who are so categorized, it observes, suffer all manners of deprivations and effectively are second class citizens in their areas of abode. It doesn’t matter for how long they or their forebears have been there.

Philip Ostein (2009:4), reflecting on this “pathology” of Nigerian citizenship, similarly emphasizes the root problem in the economics of the struggle. “In the end,” he asserts, “the fighting is about access to resources controlled by the federal, state, and local governments, through which 80% of Nigeria’s GDP flows.” Explaining further, Ostein observes that the resources to which access is gained by control of local governments include land, money, jobs, healthcare and more. Administration of these resources is by a system of indigene certificates issued by local governments to ethnic or sub-ethnic groups controlling the area. Other groups living there, even groups settled there for scores or hundreds of years, are excluded or are told to “go back where you came from” if they hope to enjoy benefits associated with indigeneship. Ostein (2009: 8) notes therefore that Nigeria is tending towards “disaggregation into its constituent ethnic and sub-ethnic groups.” A striking aspect of this tendency is the fact that some powers of sovereignty are moving, not towards the Nigerian nation run democratically by its citizens without regard to ethnicity or place of origin, but towards many little principalities run by their indigenes to suit themselves. In this equation, non-indigenes are denied not only access to resources, but also basic rights purportedly guaranteed under the constitution, beginning with basic civil and political rights. Every Nigerian has the full rights of indigenes in one small locality, and only the more partial rights of citizens in every other place.

Ostein identifies certain critical factors which he argues complicate Nigeria’s indigene-settler problem as manifested particularly in Jos, Plateau, the area where this research is based. Six of these complicating factors, particularly relevant to the context of this research, include what he describes as “ethnic ties,” constitutional entrenchment of distinctions based on ethnicity, and the authority vested in the local councils as the sole determinants of who an indigene is. Others are historical contentions, the creation, in controversial circumstances, of Jos North Local Government by the military government and the political demands and posturing of the Hausa/Fulani community in Jos. These factors are briefly elaborated below:

- i. Ethnic ties are enduring and remain powerful in the lives of many Nigerians. Ethnic divisions, it would be recalled, were deliberate colonial policy of the British “indirect rule” system through the powers of the traditional rulers in various parts of the country and the administration of native law and custom specific to particular local groups. The emphasis of this policy was the differential treatment of indigenes and strangers, features which are still prevalent amongst the multitudes of ethnic groups. The failure of the Nigerian state to provide social safety nets for citizens perpetuates older support networks based on ethnicity.

On the other hand, increasing urbanization and other “modernizing tendencies” are eroding relationships based purely on old ethnic ties and identities. This trend results in frequent conflict with the claimed rights of indigenes.

ii. The constitutional entrenchment of distinctions based on ethnicity perpetuates the indigene-settler problem because it gives legal teeth to discriminatory practices which negate the principle of citizenship. The 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria gave birth to the word “indigene” in section 23(1a) where the phrase “belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria” was used in the definition of citizenship. The same constitution introduced the “federal character” concept, a form of affirmative principle for minority-group inclusion in governance. There is also a Federal Character Commission (FCC) established to regulate and enforce federal character and indigenship provisions in appointments to government positions. While the detailed sharing of power and resources based on ethnic identification has helped to “prevent large scale polarization of Nigeria along its major ethnic or regional fault-lines...this has come at a cost of the country’s disaggregation into hundreds of tiny principalities run on the basis of indigene sovereignty” (Ostein, 2009: 4). Such official discrimination allowed by the constitution based on ethnicity and place of origin is a major contributor to ethnic and ethno-religious violence all over the country. As Egwu (2005) also notes, millions of Nigerians who live outside the socio-political space within which they can affirm their indigeneity suffer exclusion and are exposed to all kinds of humiliation. While some have endured deprivations in passivity, others have contested their exclusion, leading to a spate of communal conflicts. In many instances, this has assumed the dimension of violent conflicts with dire consequences for development and national unity.

iii. The authority to determine who an indigene is also complicates issues as this is the sole prerequisite of the local government through the issuance of “certificate of indigeneship” by whoever controls the local government. Therefore in contested territories like Jos, parties fight viciously for the political control of the local government in order to be able to issue their people indigenship certificates and ensure a generous share of the spoils of office to their particular communities. This is essentially what pits the Hausa/Fulani against the indigenous groups in Jos. To the indigenes, the Hausa/Fulani are settlers who presumably have the option of going back to wherever they originated from should they not like being denied rights in Jos. Political settlement of this issue usually is truncated by hardened positions which bastardize electoral processes resulting in more conflicts and violence.

iv. History comes into this fray to shape or reinforce perspectives and ideological framework in ways that complicate the issue. The indigenous ethnic groups on the Plateau successfully fought and defended their territories against the Hausa/Fulani Islamic Jihad of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With the coming of British colonialism however, the Hausas gained peaceful access to Jos and the Plateau and have become a very well established community. In the perception of the Plateau indigenes, what the Hausa/Fulani Muslims could not achieve through jihadist force of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they got on a platter of gold through *pax Britannica* by which they were able to entrench themselves in Jos and now claim indigene rights. In a sense therefore, it is this well-remembered Plateau record of armed resistance to Hausa/Fulani jihadist incursions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently subverted by the British that is now being reasserted and re-enacted in the name of indigene rights (Ostein, 2009: 7). And whereas the Plateau people file out under the banner of Christianity, the Hausas have Islam as their propelling theme, thus putting religion, about the most divisive element in Nigeria's fragile polity, at the centre-stage of the Jos crises.

v. Creation of Jos North Local Government Area: The element of history as a complication links up with a more recent episode, that is, the creation of Jos North Local Government in 1991 by the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida in controversial circumstances, an action which potentially gave the Hausa/Fulani a numeric advantage in the area as the basis for political control. This has unwittingly structured the struggle and turned the local government into a hotbed of political instability and violence.

vi. The Hausas in Jos have their own strong arguments in support of claims over Jos North Local Government Area, primarily, "seeking a fair share of the benefits that should accrue to them by virtue of their citizenship of Nigeria and the long-standing existence of their community in Jos" (Ostein, 2008: 10). Having settled in Jos for possibly hundreds of years, they have now acquired their own cultural identity among other communities as "Jasawa" and it is impracticable for them to be recognized as indigenes of any other local government except Jos North. Therefore, if Jos North denies them indigenship, they must do without this vital status in Nigerian life, and as a corollary suffer many disadvantages and hardships. However to be also noted is the peculiarity in style and attitude of the Jasawa which tends to reinforce perceptions by indigenes of domination which further inspires resistance to the Hausa. This is in the sense that there are several other large ethnic groups such as the Yoruba and Igbo which have settled in Jos just as long as the Hausa, have as much economic interest and have contributed to the growth of the community. These other ethnic groups also suffer

discrimination on grounds of their settler status. However, the major difference is that these ethnic groups are not contesting with the indigenes for political control of Jos or the benefits of indigenship there. Unlike the Jasawa, they have no proprietary feelings toward the city and no ambition to rule. During incidents of violent conflicts, the Jasawa side associates even the Muslims among them with the indigenes. From this perspective, one is tempted to agree with Ostein (2009: 10) that in reality the Jos city's settler problem is a Jasawa problem.

The complicating factors discussed above are further exacerbated by the Nigerian political and economic environment which Ostein notes features widespread illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and large numbers of idle youth available to cause mayhem and destruction. Also compounding the problem of ethnicity in Nigeria are "the venal, petty-minded and short-sighted politicians who never hesitate to stir up trouble by playing on ethnic and religious sentiments; pervasive and unchecked corruption of public office resulting in pervasive corruption of elections and widespread electoral violence; and the sheer incompetence of many public officials...compounded by ingrained habits of autocratic, arbitrary, secretive, and unaccountable rule" (Ostein, 2009: 11).

The ethnic trajectory of Nigeria plotted above is important to this research as it provides a broad overview of the issues within the political economy of the country and this information serves as a backdrop to the enquiry. Beyond the general understanding it provides however, this analysis, as is evident from the discussion thus far, has specific applicability to the region of Nigeria where this research is focused, that is, North Central Nigeria which has witnessed most of the ethno-religious conflicts.

This region, popularly referred to as the Middle Belt<sup>2</sup>, comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Plateau, Taraba, Southern Kaduna, and Southern Bauchi States and, as illustrated

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<sup>2</sup> The conflict in this region is also noticeable in a "conflict of nomenclature" (IPCR, 2008) in which even the accurate description of the area is contested: is it the Middle Belt or North Central Nigeria? Those who associate the area with the historic North of Nigeria insist that it is part of the Northern Region. Many others, however, prefer to construct a different identity for the region and choose to call it the Middle Belt. In this respect, the Middle Belt is as much a political concept as it is a geographical description. The geopolitics of the Middle Belt links areas contiguous in land mass as well as people who share certain affinities of history, ethnicity and religion but which are not geographic neighbours. Thus, certain descriptions of the Middle Belt incorporate ethnic minorities in such places as Southern Borno and Yobe States as members of the zone on the basis of religious affinity as Christians. For Shilgba (2011), all non-Hausa Fulani in the geographical north and central north are Middle Belt people, "the oppressed people deceptively huddled up under the 'One North' of Sir Ahmadu Bello. However geographically, it is generally acceptable to many scholars from the region that the Middle Belt federation consists of people in the present Benue, Nasarawa, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Southern Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Niger, Southern Kaduna, FCT, Southern Gombe and the two minority local government

in Appendix 12, has the largest number of ethnic groups in Nigeria (Alubo, 2011: 11). Unlike the far northern, western and eastern parts of the country which are predominantly Muslim or Christian, the north central has significant populations of both Christians and Muslims. The region has multitudes of ethnic minority groups most of which are Christian, and Hausa/Fulani groups which are Muslim (Yusuf, 2007:237). In addition, there are large numbers of Yoruba and Igbo in virtually all the cities and towns most of whom are Christian and have significant economic interests in the area. Thus conflicts at times begin as business or economic disputes but quickly assume ethnic and religious colouration with the potential to spread to other parts of the country in the form of backlashes and retaliatory attacks.

The multiplicity of ethnic groups within the Middle Belt region, as well as the religious pluralism of the area, partly account for the fact that it has been “over-represented in the table of flashpoints” since return to civil rule in 1999 (Alubo, 2011: 11). The relative material poverty in the zone further makes political pursuit to be based on prebendal politics (Richard Joseph, 1991 in IPCR, 2011: 53), a phenomenon in which “politics and political victory become the password for accessing economic resources from the state by way of plunder and other forms of primitive accumulation.” Prebendalism, often manifested by excessive material inducement, political thuggery, settlement, and other undemocratic practices, further aggravate conflicts in the zone.

Indeed, incessant, violent and bloody riots have become frequent in Nigeria, Africa’s largest democracy and OPEC’s sixth largest oil exporter and have indeed become a defining characteristic of the return to civil rule (Alubo, 2011; Egwu, 2004). Para-Mallam (2012) attributes this partly to the expanded political space afforded by democratization which opened up opportunity for voicing grievance and discontent expressed through identity-based communal conflicts particularly of the ethno-religious type. In a country where accurate figures and statistical information are scarce and often speculative, it is not easy to determine casualty levels in these riots. That the figures must be mind-numbing is however apparent from the numbers being hazarded or claimed. Alubo (2011) for example estimates over half a million deaths within the first few years of civil rule as a result of ethno-religious conflicts and likens the situation to a civil war to denote the gravity of the situation. In more specific terms, Alubo also quoted *The Economist* which reported more than 6000 deaths in civil

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Areas of Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro in southern Bauchi State.” Both names are used interchangeably in current political lexicon.



disturbances in two years between 1999 and 2001. According to *The Economist* (October 20, 2001: 50):

The Muslim-Christian divide has usually defined the combatants. More than 2000 people died in clashes in Kaduna in February 2000, and hundreds more in Aba the following month. In June (2001) hundreds died in similar clashes in Bauchi state, and more than 500 died in Jos, a city in central Nigeria (in September 2001).

As has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, ethnic and religious conflicts are not new in Nigeria, and indeed have probably been an enduring feature of the body politic since independence (Olu-Adeyemi, 2006; Abiodun, 2009). Again, as earlier noted, these conflicts were common during the prolonged military regime. However, with the outset of democratization in 1999, stakeholders presumed that the atmosphere of dialogue, negotiation and compromise, characteristic of democracy, would help diffuse tension and lead to amicable resolution of disputes (Ukiwo, 2003:115). The contrary, however, has been the experience particularly in the northern parts of the country which have witnessed frequent incidents of ethno-religious conflicts.

The paradox of democracy co-existing side-by-side with violent ethnic and religious conflicts has thus become the unpleasant reality of the Nigerian polity since 1999. Scholars like Paden (2005), Alemika (2002), and Ibrahim (2002) have contended that ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria are not only disruptive and distractive of national cohesion and development, but also hold serious and grave implications for international security as its oil wealth and military inventory would be available to destabilize the West African sub-region should the country become a failed state. This is particularly so, as notable groups in the fray, particularly Boko Haram, are now suspected to have strong links with international terror organisations (Nanna, 2014). For this reason, the United States Government, on November 13, 2013, based on recommendations of the Bureau of Counter Terrorism, designated Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and frequently links the organization with the Al-Qaida network in Somalia, Mali, the Maghreb and Yemen (Nanna, 2014).

In summary, the foregoing discourse demonstrates not just the complexities associated with Nigeria's multi-ethnic configuration, but more significantly, the deliberate and sustained exploitation of ethnicity for political ends by the country's elite. Underlying this misappropriation of ethnic identity by the political class is the economics of the struggle, in which access to public office translates to passport to private material accumulation through

unrestrained looting of the public treasury. The struggle for political office becomes ferocious battles of survival with ethnicity a major tool for political mobilization. The factor of religion which “adds fuel to the fire” (Ostein, 2009: 3) complicates this situation by bringing into the fray the emotional commitment of the ordinary citizen which elevates the struggles into do-or-die battles. This is reflected in the Jos conflicts which are the focus of this dissertation. To appreciate the complexity and depth of the issues thrown up by this research, it is important to understand in a logical sequence, the historical and political context of the struggle over Jos city and how these mirror wider national issues and conflicts. This is the focus of the next section.

### **1.5 The Jos Conflicts: A Contextual Narrative**

The conflicts in Jos, the capital city of Plateau State, have their antecedents in the historical development of the city. Jos is a colonial creation, set up by the European tin miners who came to the Plateau in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century soon after the imposition of indirect rule by the British and sustained by the missionaries who established their headquarters in the State (Plotnicov, 1971: 1). The historical antecedents of the city as a reputable tin mining centre account for its cosmopolitan character, boasting of residents from all parts of the country, and from other parts of the world (Best, 2007:5).

Traditionally, it is believed that Jos is founded on land belonging to three ethnic minority groups – Berom, Anaguta and Afizere (Ostein, 2009; Best, 2007; Gofwen, 2011). Plateau State, of which Jos is the capital, has a predominant Christian population and significant Muslim populations in three of its 17 local governments: Jos North, Kanam and Wase. But it is Jos North Local Government Area, hosting the city of Jos and the capital of Plateau State that has been the epicentre of conflicts and contestations.

Jos used to be famed for its peace and tranquillity. But since the early 1990s, the city joined the infamous league of locations, particularly in northern Nigeria, in which violent conflicts have become endemic. The biggest conflict, and which altered in a radical manner communal relations within the city, occurred September 7, 2001 (Best, 2007:1). The bone of contention, primarily, is the ownership of Jos City. The Hausa-Fulani claim ownership by virtue of long and historical residency, having moved to the place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the wake of colonialism and the tin mining industry of Jos. But the minority ethnic groups, Berom,

Afizere and Anaguta, vehemently contest such claims, insisting that they instead are the rightful owners of the place, and therefore the *indigenes*, while the former are *settlers*<sup>3</sup>.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the terms, *indigene* and *settler*, are not mere labels but have serious, sometimes life-changing, implications for those affected in Nigeria. As Best (2007:7-8) observes, indigenship is not a mere status but a status that begets specific political, economic and psychological benefits. He explains that non-indigenes, as defined and understood locally, are not entitled to certain political rights and privileges, while indigenes are assumed to be. This is where the conflict is. The Hausas who migrated into Jos along with other Nigerians from other parts of the country in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have insisted that they are indigenes of Jos. The indigenes of Jos (Berom, Anaguta and Afizere ethnic groups) maintain that the Hausa cannot be indigenes since they can trace where they or their parents came from. They conceded that the Hausa, like other residents of Jos, are citizens of Nigeria resident in Jos as permitted by the Nigerian Constitution.

In articulating their claim to be owners of Jos, the Hausa/Fulani argue, amongst other things, that they founded the town as a ‘virgin land’ and nurtured it to a modern city. They claim to outnumber any other group in the city up to 1950 and presumably to date. Furthermore, they ruled the town traditionally and produced 11 chiefs up to 1947 when they were manoeuvred out of the stool. Significantly, they point out that they have no other place they can call home irrespective of wherever they or their fore-fathers may have originated from. Moreover, they have contributed to the economic growth of the city and control the economy to the envy of the indigenes (Dalyop, 2010: 34). The indigenes, in a counter narrative, trace their occupation of the area beyond living memory, and that they settled in small clans and villages. The Hausa who came first as a result of mining activities first settled in Naraguta and were later

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<sup>3</sup> These identity-laden terms (*indigene* and *settler*) are at the centre of conflicts, not only in Jos, but all over Nigeria. In practice, *indigene* means “coming from a state or local government in Nigeria where your ancestors also came from, beyond living memory” (Best, 2007: 5). As explicated by Best (2007), every Nigerian is a citizen of Nigeria, but however long Nigerians reside in a place outside their ancestral home, they are assumed to be non-indigenes. In other words, there is no road map in Nigeria for transiting from a non-indigene to an indigene. This runs counter to the constitutional concept of universal citizenship as contained in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but the nation does not seem to have any answer to the challenges posed by this anomaly. As Best (2007: 5) further asserts, “there is hardly any communal conflict in Nigeria today that does not provoke the issue of indigeneity... those who are not considered indigenes or who migrated from other places before colonialism to date, for some much earlier, are said to be *settlers* or *non-indigenes*.”

moved to the current city by the colonial masters as part of efforts to develop a Master Plan for the city (Dalyop, 2010:35).

A Judicial Commission of Inquiry set up to investigate the 2001 Jos Civil Disturbances appears to support the claims of the indigenes, on the balance of historical probabilities. According to the Commission, there is “clear evidence that (the Hausa) came for tin mining labour and met the natives, the owners of the town” already settled there. Adopting what it calls “the test of valid and authentic history” devoid of “human manipulation,” the Commission observed that it would amount to re-writing history to support the claim by the Hausa over the ownership of Jos.

Although the ethnic minorities appear to have won the battle of the “traditional history” of Jos, not necessarily so the war in respect of the fundamental political economy issues provoking the conflicts: control of the political and traditional institutions of the city, together with the economic benefits which flow from this control such as appointments and elections, access to government contracts, etc. And as Ostein (2009: 3) notes, religion enters into this issue because the Hausa/Fulani are predominantly Muslim while the indigenous ethnic groups are mostly Christians. According to him, besides the honour of ethnicity, the honour of religion is also there to be defended, if necessary by violent means.

The competition for political power which simmered for many years constituted a major strain on the relationship between the Hausa/Fulani community and the indigenous people of Jos. This dispute however acquired fresh impetus with the creation in 1991 of the Jos North Local Government Area out of the former Jos Local Government. This development came as a complete surprise to the indigenous groups who maintain that they were neither consulted nor ever agreed to such an action. By this action, majority of the indigenous groups found themselves in Jos South Local Government Area while the Hausa/Fulani enjoyed pre-eminence in Jos North. Furthermore, the traditional ruler of Jos, the Gbong Gwom Jos, was isolated in a predominantly Hausa/Fulani area. According to Gofwen (2010:14), the indigenous groups interpreted this as “a conspiracy to take Jos away from them.” These contestations were largely left unresolved and the creation of Jos North appeared to have boosted the Hausa/Fulani hegemonic control of political power in the new local government (Sha, 1998 in Gofwen, 2010). Matters came to a head in 1994 when the two groups openly engaged in violent confrontation over the appointment of a Hausa/Fulani candidate to chair Jos North Local Government and consequent opposition from the indigenes. This conflict

immediately acquired religious and ethnic coloration but was brought under control within 24 hours and did not spread beyond the city of Jos (Best, 2007:7).

A few incidents of violence took place in Jos after the 1994 incident. However, the first major outburst of ethno-religious conflict in Jos history came on 7 September 2001 (Gofwen 2010:17). The proximate cause of the crisis was an altercation involving a Muslim congregation and a young woman following an attempt by her to pass through a road blocked by the Muslim congregation for their Juma'at prayer in a slum neighbourhood in Jos. The confrontation which soon degenerated into an orgy of violence between Christians and Muslims lasted for about one week.

The Justice Niki Tobi Commission of Inquiry, set up to investigate the conflict traced the immediate cause of the crisis to the attempt by one Miss Rhoda Nyam to pass and the refusal of the Muslim congregation to allow her pass during the Juma'at prayers (Plateau State Government, 2009:12-13). However, political squabbles were antecedent to the crisis, chiefly the appointment of a Hausa/Fulani man as Co-ordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) of the Federal Government in Jos North in July 2001. Like in 1994, this appointment was stoutly opposed by the indigenous groups, resulting in highly inflammatory and derogatory utterances and publications by both groups (Gofwen, 2010:18). Violence finally erupted on 7 September 2001, on a scale hitherto unprecedented both in terms of barbarity, length and the magnitude of devastation. From the Jos township areas, the violence spread to other parts of the metropolis and surrounding towns and villages. Human Rights Watch (2001) puts the death toll at more than 1000 persons in the week-long mayhem, while the Niki Tobi Commission cited an exact figure of 904 deaths. The Norwegian Refugee Council (2002) estimated more than 30,000 persons displaced without food, shelter or water. Reprisal attacks in other towns and cities of Nigeria also attended the 2001 Jos crisis. In Kano mobs attacked a church on September 10 and tension was high in other northern towns. In the South-East, mobs reportedly attacked the Hausa in Onitsha with about seven killed. There were attacks reported in other south-eastern towns and in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State (Gofwen, 2010:19).

The 2001 crisis seemed to open a floodgate of conflicts in Jos in general. Appendix 17 shows the major conflicts within this period. This research has focused on six incidents which it considers the major ones in Jos within the decade 2001-2011. The incidents are outlined below:

**September 7, 2001 Crisis:** As indicated above, this was the first major violent conflict in Jos since the return to democratic rule in 1999. Although the immediate trigger was a disagreement involving a Christian lady and a Muslim congregation, the eruption could be blamed on the charged atmosphere in the city, following opposition by the indigenes to the appointment of a Hausa/Fulani man to head a Federal Government post in the city. These protests were rooted in the unresolved dispute over the ownership of Jos city between the indigenous ethnic groups and the Hausa/Fulani.

**November 2008 Jos Crisis:** The immediate cause of the November 2008 crisis in Jos was the local council elections of Thursday 27 November 2008. The elections held peacefully in all of Plateau State, including Jos North, this being the first elections in Jos North since the return to civil rule in 1999. The Hausa/Fulani community which had fielded a candidate through the ANPP party was convinced that the elections had been rigged to favour an indigene at a controversial collation centre. The Justice Ajibola Judicial Commission of Inquiry into the unrest was unambiguous as to who it held responsible for instigating the violence. In the opinion of the Commission, the Hausa/Fulani Muslim youths started the unrest in a violent attack on the people and property of those perceived as their enemies. It observed that the destruction of lives and property that took place during the crisis cannot be justified by a perceived attempt to rig an election. More worrisome, it noted was the pattern of attack in which places of worship rather than party offices were the targets of attack. Individuals were attacked based on their religious leanings rather than political leanings. The whole crisis took a religious dimension (pp.27-30).

**The January 2010 Crisis:** On Sunday 17 January 2010, another major violent conflict broke out in Jos starting from one of the inner areas known as Dutse Uku. The crisis had direct linkages to the 2008 episode in that it revolved around a Muslim man said to be attempting to rebuild his house burned during that crisis in a district heavily populated by Christian indigenes. The man by name Mallam Kabiru was said to have been resisted by Christian neighbours, who were said to be suspicious of the large number of Muslim men he employed ostensibly in the rebuilding work. It is estimated that about 300 people lost their lives in this episode of the Jos conflicts (Gofwen, 2011) while a heavy presence of mercenaries from some northern states was also observed.

**Dogo-Nahawa Massacre of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010:** Dogo-Nahawa is a little village in the Du District of Jos South populated by the Berom ethnic group. In the early hours of 7 March

2010, the village was raided by a group of armed men, widely believed to be Fulani militia, killing over 300 persons, mainly women and children. The immediate cause of the incident was alleged revenge attack by the Fulani for their kith and kin killed in the January 2010 conflicts at Kuru Jenta and Tim Tim villages, also in Jos South Local Government Area (Newswatch, 2010).

**2010 Christmas Eve Bombing in Jos:** On December 24 2010, just as residents of Jos were about last minute shopping and preparations for Christmas, two bombs went off simultaneously in Kabong and Angwa Rukuba, both neighbourhoods predominantly populated by Christian indigenes. Targeted at dense market areas, the bomb blasts, and the ensuing riots, claimed at least 80 lives (*The Punch*, 28 December, 2010). Boko Haram later claimed responsibility for the blasts in a web post, although this was never independently verified.

**2011 Eid-el Fitr Sallah Conflicts in Jos:** This took place on Monday August 29, 2011 at the Rukuba Road Eid Prayer Ground when irate youth reportedly attacked Muslims who were celebrating the Sallah festival of Eid-el Fitr following the month-long Ramadan fasting. About 20 people were killed and many vehicles destroyed in the incident (*Daily Trust*, August 31, 2011: 3; *Nigerian Tribune*, 30 August 2011: 1). Newspaper reports attributed the violence to a clash between some Muslim youth and natives, “over the refusal of the latter to allow the Muslims access to the prayer ground in their area” (*Nigerian Tribune*, 30 August 2011: 1). According to media reports, there had been rumours in the state that some people were planning to disrupt the *Eid-el-Fitr* celebration in the state, especially Jos, in revenge of the disruption of the previous year’s Christmas, which was marred by multiple bomb blasts. In response to the security threats, the police were said to have advised the Muslims not to use that particular prayer ground. However, the Izala sect allegedly ignored this advice, a claim denied by the sect (*Daily Trust*, August 31, 2011: 3).

The conflicts in Jos, within the context of prevailing wider national challenges of ethnicity in Nigeria, pose critical questions on the depth, quality and direction of the country’s democratic experiment and on its capacity to attain national socio-economic objectives. The situation equally raises issues on the roles and responsibilities of various actors in escalating or minimizing these conflicts. The next section will explore the discourses around the mediation of these conflicts by the Nigerian press.

## **1.6 Media and Ethnic Conflicts: A Contextual Analysis**

The previous section has explored the challenges posed by ethnicity to nation-building in Nigeria. This is important as it creates understanding of the political and social terrain within which the Nigerian press operates. The review now examines the relationship between media and ethnic conflicts generally and how this applies to the practice of journalism in Nigeria.

Scholars have noted that media play an important, though complex, part in ethnic conflicts and are usually deeply implicated in the conflicts domestically and internationally (Cottle, 2006; Seaton, 1999; Nasanga, 2006; Olayiwola, 2003; Frère, 2007; Yusuf, 2007). The media provide the first definition of the social groups involved in the conflicts, and are also the source of regular information on them. The media also act as agents of war as they have virtually become the institutions that accord wars legitimacy and judge their outcomes (Seaton, 1999). Cottle (2006) also notes that the media have become the primary means of assessing the effectiveness of military and humanitarian intervention by the outside world.

Frère (2007) contends that information, through its dissemination, withholding and manipulation, has always been a powerful weapon in times of conflict. The appearance of the mass media, she argues, has multiplied this potential by making possible vast propaganda and indoctrination operations. Frère however points out that the media can also be used to strengthen democratic processes by awakening the consciences of citizens, developing a population's ability to exert pressure on its leaders, thus facilitating control over public affairs, amongst other things.

In her opinion the media constitute a two-edged sword. They can be the instruments of both destructive and constructive strategies, especially in societies undergoing change, destabilised by conflicts or in the throes of political liberalisation. History, she observes, is replete with abundant evidence that demonstrate the ability of journalists, "from behind the shelter of their microphones or pens," to incite hatred, provoke violent mass movements, voluntarily manipulate information in the service of war-mongering strategies, promote anti-democratic reflexes, and more or less consciously or perversely create the roots of deep divisions within society. Conversely, Frère points out that media professionals have also often contributed to taking the first step toward democracy, restoring peace in troubled regions, establishing respect and political dialogue between estranged groups and transforming the warriors of yesterday into negotiators in the process of reconciliation. Media, she insists, have capacity to both increase and decrease tensions within countries in conflicts.



Hamelink (2008) argues that while one may have doubts about the media's deescalating or peacemaking potential, at the same time it can be demonstrated that news media can make matters a lot worse and can certainly contribute to the escalation of group conflicts into mass killings. This, he points out, is especially so when media workers become agents for the dissemination of the "elimination belief" and when media are intentionally used as weapons to incite people to commit crimes against humanity.

This issue relates particularly to the role of internal or local media in conflicts which, as noted by Seaton (1999) plays a critical part in the internal mobilization of opinion that is required to move populations towards war with each other. This is done through elaborating and allocating characteristics to groups of people defined as the enemy and elaborating a view of them. As Robert Fisk (1992) argues, the local media in particular play a vital role in reiterating old grievances. In some instances national news media has had the effect of exacerbating conflict as a result of conscious political strategies by political activists. Ordinary people hitherto living harmoniously together as neighbours, friends or associates, suddenly come to perceive themselves as enemies. This "sudden breaking of the seemingly secure bonds of neighbourliness" is manifested in the equivocations of a Bosnian citizen, as recorded by Vulliamy (in Seaton, 1999: 46): "I never saw any difference between a Serb or a Muslim or anyone. But how could I never look at them or greet them or live with them again? We liked each other for 45 years and in the 46th we hate each other." What this indicates is that long standing social relationships can be ruptured through the conscious use and manipulation of the media by political leaders to sow and nurture discord and hate in the polity.

Melone, et.al (2002) also observe the tendency of media in conflict-ridden countries to play a significant role in creating and furthering the "facilitating and triggering factors" in conflicts by, amongst others, utilising "oppositional metaphors" (us versus them) linked to internal and external issues or threats facing the nation. For Seaton (1999: 46), what is important in this process is the success of the media in "helping to make a monster out of the man you know personally, who has lived next door." This process, he explains, depends on inter-locking factors like media structures, the existence of regional monopolies, the regulatory tradition or lack of it, the ownership of the media and how it is financed, and other issues such as biased content. Beyond the direct influence of the media, it also depends on the emergence of a willing-to-be persuaded audience.

Examples abound of the intense preoccupation of the media with conflicts, not only in Africa, but in other regions of the world including the Balkans, the Middle East and the Gulf. Sofos (1999) for instance, links the disintegration of Yugoslavia to the emergence of populist ethno-nationalist discourses in the political spheres of former Yugoslav republics, which were vigorously propagated through the local media. He also cites the Rwandan genocide as a classic example of an incident in which the international press uncritically swallowed politically motivated disinformation that the conflict was ethnically driven and through this helped to legitimise such ethnic perspective which served to exacerbate the situation. This is apart from the activities of local media, notably, Radio Mles Collines which championed the cause of ethnic cleansing through its broadcasts. For Puddephatt (2006: 3), “the media played a pernicious role” in these two conflicts and he holds them as responsible for “directly inciting genocide (in Rwanda) and organising it in the case of Radio Mle Collines while acting as a vehicle for virulent nationalism in the former Yugoslavia.”

Leopold (1999: 238) similarly focuses his analysis on the Ugandan press coverage of the war in northern Uganda, exploring the explanations for the root cause of the conflicts and relating them to a wider discourse on ethnicity in the Ugandan society. He demonstrates that the coverage of the conflict by the local newspapers was often misleading and frequently elaborated ethnic ideologies. Puddephatt (2006: 5) however reaches further into history as he observes that such negative role is not a modern phenomenon as both the Nazis and the Soviet Union “used the media to create a hegemonic climate in which they could easily exercise power.” He asserts that the media is an integral part of the strategy of combatants, and control over local media is an important objective of all parties in conflict.

An important dimension of the media’s handling of ethnic conflict relates to the economic and commercial concerns of the media particularly as modern media organisations have evolved into fast-moving, profit-driven industries (Seaton, 1999; Atkinson, 1999). Critical issues in the political economy of media organisations, and the commercial pressures associated with their operations, therefore have important implications in the presentation and slanting of content. In their Propaganda Model, for example, Herman and Chomsky have noted how factors inherent in modern media structures, specifically issues related to production and profit, have conspired to subvert Habermas’ public sphere concept of the media, and thus give certain classes in society undue influence in media content (Herman and Chomsky, 2002). For Atkinson (1999), the evolving structures of the modern media as fast-moving, profit-driven industries also work to hinder the development of informed and responsible reporting.

McChesney (1999: xviii) raises fundamental issues about structural flaws in the western modern media system, emphasising what he describes as the contradictions between a highly concentrated, advertising-saturated, corporate media system and the communication requirements of a democratic society. Writing in the context of the United States and the Western world, he discusses issues such as the concentration of media ownership, the "decline of journalism," the hyper commercialisation of culture, the globalisation of the corporate media system and its cosy relationship with neoliberal capitalist economy. In McChesney's view, a media system set up essentially to serve the needs of corporate capital "cannot and does not serve the needs of the preponderance of the population." He notes the prevailing trends in which local media, for example, refuse, or are unable to provide critical investigation of local commercial interests in order not to endanger advertising revenue from such organisations. He also explores the highly unethical tendencies of commercial media's propensity to provide favourable coverage of politicians in tacit or overt exchange for favourable media legislation and regulation. In his words, "the corruption of journalistic integrity is always bad, but it becomes obscene under conditions of extreme media concentration" (McChesney, 1999: xviii).

McChesney's critique above, though specific to America and the West, does have relevance for the press in Nigeria which has evolved and is largely patterned after the Western model of journalism (Sobowale, 1995; Oso, 1991). Moreover, the Nigerian press is also largely commercially oriented and the struggles and contradictions associated with the Western press are noticeable with it, as will be discussed shortly. It will also be demonstrated that the commercial orientation has significant implications for the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. To put this issue in a wider theoretical perspective, the next section discusses the issues of critical orientation and critical political economy of media production and their relationship to the practice of journalism in Nigeria.

### **1.7 Critical Orientation in Media Research**

Critical theory refers to approaches to media study that are essentially ideological, that focus on the social dimensions of the mass media and the ways they are used by organisations and others allegedly to maintain the status quo rather than to enhance equality (May, 2005). Unlike positivism and empiricism, this perspective does not merely reflect on the status, but engages the questions of the constitution of reality. The researcher does not claim illusory detachment, but pays attention to the social context in which he operates. From this

perspective, May explains that the production of theory and research are “critical projects” which challenge every form of oppression in society.

In seeking to change the world, critical theory, founded on the work of the Frankfurt School, emphasises that the research endeavour must rise beyond fact-finding or neutrality or the mere testing of hypotheses. As May (2005: 39) explains, “routes to theory such as these become reflections of the status-quo, leaving questions of the constitution of reality, power and its effects upon different segments of the population, unexplained.” Therefore, critical research argues in line with a Marxist standpoint, that the adequacy of social theory is not its ability to discover social facts but its value in informing actions, particularly political actions. Indeed, as Harbermas (1996) insists, theory is considered by its ability to diagnose the ills of society and form part of the process of understanding and explanation that has implications for the transformation of existing relations. For May, therefore, research based on critical theory is measured by its ability to reveal the relations of domination which exist in society. Harvey’s (1990: 2) summation is apt:

At the heart of critical research is the idea that knowledge is structured by existing sets of social relations. The aim of a critical methodology is to provide knowledge which engages the prevailing social structures. These social structures are seen by critical social researchers, in one way or another, as oppressive structures (in May, 2005: 40).

Kellner (2010) points out that, like the newer, postmodern approaches, critical theory offers a multi-disciplinary approach for social theory which combines perspectives drawn from political economy, sociology, cultural theory, philosophy, and anthropology. This, he explains, enables it to overcome the fragmentation endemic in established academic disciplines in order to address issues of broader interest. In this regard, critical theory recognises the epistemological and metaphysical problems with abstracting from the interconnectedness of phenomena in the world. Such abstractions or divisions, according to Kellner, are “one-sided, limited and flawed.” Moreover, in terms of productive social enterprise, Kellner argues that critical theory provides a potentially more useful and politically relevant alternative to quantitative approaches than postmodernist and poststructuralist theory. Critical theory, he contends, advances the conception of a critical and normative theory which is committed to emancipation from all forms of oppression. This contrasts sharply to the subjectivism and relativism, often bordering on nihilism, of postmodern theory and seeks a connection with empirical analysis of the contemporary world and social movements that are attempting to transform society in progressive ways.

In a situation where thousands of citizens are being killed regularly and social relations are deteriorating in Nigeria, it is important to adopt a research perspective which will stimulate proactivity in proposing policy options for the amelioration of these conflicts, apart from contribution to knowledge. This informs my theoretical perspective. Critical theory is relevant to media research because of the media's role as sites of cultural production, frequently owned by either the state or major corporations and always in the service of capital (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005). The approach which is particularly concerned with questions of ownership and control of the media is known as critical political economy (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005) and I consider that it offers the appropriate analytical framework for understanding professional practices of Nigerian journalism particularly with regards to the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts.

Critical political economy, according to Jonathan Hardy (2014), describes a tradition of analysis that is concerned with how communication arrangements relate to goals of social justice and emancipation. This encompasses studies that consider political and economic aspects of communications and which are critical in regard to their concerns with the manner in which power relations are sustained and challenged. These concerns, Hardy notes, have gained momentum particularly as modern existence is now so vitally dependent on communication resources. For him, if there are times when the political and economic aspects of communication could be neglected, they are surely not ours. He argues that, although the contexts have changed radically, the questions asked by radical scholars in the 20th century remain salient: "questions about the control of the media, the impact of commercialization, public and private ownership, inequalities and power relations affecting communication" (Hardy, 2014: 5). Therefore, in connecting the study of the media to broader patterns of social existence and in particular the allocation of resources, critical political economy identifies how communication and culture relate to the processes of production and reproduction within capitalist society. In this respect, Hardy posits that although political economy shares broadly the democratic aspirations of other liberal pluralist accounts of the media in serving citizens, "it challenges the ability of corporate owned media to adequately do so, and mounts a critique of the capitalist market relations on which liberalism is contingent" (p.8). It insists that a more diverse, democratized media system is a precondition for an informed, participatory citizenry necessary for true democracy. On this score, it criticizes the capitalist market for its failure to deliver economic fairness, social justice or the basis for a democratic polity.

Fenton (2012) argues that critical political economy is based upon a concern with the structural inequalities of production and the consequences for representation and access to consumption. By placing issues of economic distribution at its centre, it prioritises the relationship between the economy and forms of democratic politics. Fenton further makes the point that a political economy perspective views the media as promoting the dominant ideology of the ruling classes. In spite of their liberating potential, the media of modern mass communication have contributed to the creation of new levels of social stratification – communication classes which in turn engender new forms of domination. The mass media are an obstacle to liberation and overwhelm all other forms of non-mass media.

The political economy of the media was developed in the late 1960s through a concern with the increasing role of private businesses in cultural production. Golding and Murdock (2000: 15) make a distinction between traditional political economy and critical political economic approaches to the media by highlighting four key differences: (a) Critical political economy sees the economy as interrelated with political, social and cultural life rather than as a separate domain. (b) It is historical, paying close attention to long-term changes in the role of the state, corporations and the media in culture. (c) Critical political economy is centrally concerned with the balance between private enterprise and public intervention. (d) A critical approach goes beyond technical issues of efficiency to engage with the basic moral questions of justice, equity and the moral good. In essence, critical political economy sets out to show how different ways of financing and organising cultural production have traceable consequences for the range of discourses and representations in the public domain and for audiences' access to them.

Fenton (2012) further argues that critical political economy is especially interested in the ways that communicative activity is continuously structured by the unequal distribution of material and symbolic resources. Classically, theorists adopting this approach point to the fact that media production has been increasingly commandeered by large corporations and moulded to their interests and strategies. In the west, this is evident in the push towards privatization and the declining vitality of publicly funded cultural institutions. Critical political economists argue that the nature of the mass media cannot be adequately considered apart from more general economic changes, which in turn require a historical perspective that will locate changes in the mass media within the general context of the processes of industrialization. Part of the debate within critical political economy focuses on issues of

ownership and control of the media. Having power in or control over media is argued to impact upon the capacity to determine or influence the contents of the media.

Manning (2001) similarly points out that public information generated by commercial organisations is likely to be a “cross-breed commodity” (Statham, 1996 in Manning, 2001: 3). This implies that while such information may serve the public purpose of sustaining political debate, it would invariably bear the imprint of the commercial interests responsible for its production. Political economy therefore studies the ways in which material and symbolic resources promote or constrain action and are deployed to secure interests or advantage. In this respect, Manning argues that a political economy approach is useful because it reminds us that the battle to control information flows is a struggle around resources (material and symbolic). Furthermore, the micro-engagements of media organisations occur in the context of the larger political-economic environment – market pressures, proprietorial interests, the formal and informal regulative capacities of government, etc. For Manning, therefore, a key question in contemporary news journalism is the extent to which journalists operating in an increasingly market-driven news environment can find ways of providing comprehensive and diverse news perspectives. He focuses particular attention on two factors, the ownership of news organisations and the positioning of news organisations in competitive markets, factors considered as potential threats to the free circulation of ideas (Manning, 2001: 81). This emphasises that political and economic criteria cannot be overlooked in the political communication process, a phenomenon Habermas terms as “re-feudalisation” of the public sphere (Manning, 2001: 5). The re-feudalisation of the public sphere describes a process whereby communication and the exchange of ideas grows increasingly dependent upon a new group of sponsors and patrons, and upon new structures of authority which pose an increasing threat to the rationality of debate and the universalistic criteria by which arguments should be evaluated. The practical implication of this is that the selection and representation of information in the public domain is undertaken according to commercial or political interests rather than “pure” reason and rationality (Manning, 2001: 5).

Writing within the context of Nigeria, Oso (2013) argues that the dominant theoretical approach to mass communication discourse in the country, and which informs constitutional and policy direction, is the liberal democratic theory. The libertarian theory views the press as the fourth estate of the realm, and has its roots in the western plural/functionalist conception of society. This approach centres media analysis primarily on the freedom of speech, freedom of the press and the autonomy of the media from state control. The libertarian philosophy

broadly sets out three main functions for the media in society: the role of watch dog, provision of information and facilitator of the public sphere. As Oso (2013) points out however, these expectations of the media have been greatly diminished by the political and economic realities within which media production and operations take place. For instance, the watch dog function, considered as the most critical, “has been evacuated of its effectiveness...by the political and economic interests which undergird media production” (Oso, 2013: 15). This is because powerful economic interests have colonised the media, and deprived them of their vitality as independent watchdogs. Quoting Waisboard (2006: 6), Oso argues that proximity to such powerful interests makes the press unlikely to be interested in keeping the same interests at bay. This reality, he argues, “dims the prospects that news organisations can effectively sustain vigilant scrutiny of government and centres of power. Watch dogs do not bite their owners...nor...do they chomp neighbours with whom they have amiable relations.”

Furthermore, within the prevailing economic realities of Nigeria, only the rich and powerful can afford to establish media organisations as the cost of entry is very high. Therefore newspaper ownership in Nigeria is increasingly a phenomenon associated with rich and influential politicians or business people with links to the political establishment. Oso points out that newspapers established in Nigeria recently are owned by serving or former governors, some of whom have been investigated or prosecuted for corrupt practices and money laundering. Oso also argues that the Nigerian mass media has effectively become integrated with capital. Whereas up to the 1970s most of the newspaper organisations were single entities run more for their political importance than as industrial concerns, currently most of the newspapers and private broadcast companies are not only owned by wealthy businessmen-cum-politicians, but are part of corporate organisations often having roots in other sectors of the economy. These newspapers therefore prioritise profit over professional considerations. Oso therefore concludes that the democratic credentials of modern media systems and their ability to serve public interest have been severely compromised by the corporatisation of mass media, commodification of media products, the collapse of the boundaries between the public and the private and the increasing interconnectedness between political and economic power (Oso, 2013: 15). For him, “recent technological, economic and political developments in Nigeria have dealt severe blows on the edifice on which the liberalist account of the media is erected and therefore the media cannot fulfil the mandate of this western-inspired theory” (p.18). This position tallies with Nyamnjoh’s (2005) argument



that it is problematic to evaluate the African media from a liberal democratic perspective without giving due regard to the local socio-political realities of the African society. The next section explores this issue further with a brief overview of the mediation of conflicts by the African press.

### **1.8 Media and Ethnic Conflicts: an Overview of the Press in Africa**

It is useful at this point to examine the literature on the role of the press in Africa in ethnic conflicts as this would serve as a context for exploring the specific situation in Nigeria. The media terrain in Africa presents a mixed bag of conquests and contradictions. On the one hand, scholars have celebrated the rejuvenation of the mass media, which has happened as an integral process of the resurgence of democracy on the continent (Tettey, 2006; Frère, 2007). In this respect, some observers have lauded the media for fulfilling the expectations of democratic theorists like Milton who hold the view that a free press advances the cause of democracy by performing watchdog functions over governments and thus preventing excessive acquisition of power and abuse of citizens (Oluyokun, 2004; Hyden, et al., 2002; Tettey, 2006).

However, there is also what Tettey (2006) calls a “critical assessment” of the African media’s performance that portrays them less positively and has highlighted attitudes that suggest they are irresponsible, unaccountable and a threat to the credibility and sustenance of the democratic process. Aspects of the African media, he notes, have exhibited lack of discretion in their reportage, presuming that there were no limits to what could be written or aired. There have been widespread cases of unsubstantiated allegations and publications of outright falsehood capable of creating political unrest. In Ghana, for instance, the Ghana National Media Commission laments that many practitioners still had difficulty adhering to the principles of ethical and socially responsible press.

Nyamjoh (2005) also observes that the press in Africa is obsessed with the politics of belonging by reporting issues from ethnic and regional perspectives. In his words “the media have assumed a partisan, highly politicised, militant role in Africa. They have done so by dividing citizens into the righteous and the wicked, depending on their political leanings, ideological and regional, cultural or ethnic belonging” (Nyamjoh, 2005: 231). This, according to him, has affected the ability of the African media to serve as impartial and honest arbiters, and have rather divided the society. Particularly with respect to the private press, Nyamnjoh argues that they fuel, rather than curb intolerance, fanaticism and extremism. He cites

examples across the continent of newspapers in Senegal, Mali, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar and Cameroun that have "served as mouthpieces for divisive forces, often reproducing calls for murder, destruction and hatred and generally keeping everyone fearful of a Rwandan-type situation where Radio Miles Collines proved what the media can do to spur ethnic cleansing" (Nyamnjoh, 2005: 56).

Nyamnjoh also discusses specific instances of journalistic irresponsibility in African countries. In Kenya, for instance, he observed that the press appeared more interested to promote hate journalism through exaggeration and politicisation of ethnic tensions than to engage in accurate and responsible journalism. In South Africa, the tendency has been for newsrooms to reproduce "prior metanarratives of social schisms, even when those narratives may be radically inappropriate and counter to available evidence" (p57). For him, it is often a case of much talking without listening and of an exaggerated sense of self-righteousness on the part of journalists who frequently sacrifice truth for a good story. In Sierra Leone, the press has been accused of engaging in cheap propaganda rather than reporting issues that affect the common citizen. In Mali the press similarly features a lack of professionalism and frequently disseminates unverified or partisan news. In most of West Africa, the press engages in "journalistic hooliganism", irresponsibility and recklessness in reportage which often brings their states to the brink of civil war.

A recurrent criticism Nyamnjoh identifies with the private press in many African countries is the tendency to rush to publication after hearing only one side of a story. Also for a fee, editors and publishers allow their newspapers to be used by individuals or groups for blackmail or extortion. In Kenya, for example, the "Gutter Press" can easily be persuaded to kill stories for bribes, employ intimidation to extort money from people or allow their pages to be used for political vendetta (p. 60). According to Nyamnjoh, journalists in many African countries are perceived as the mouth pieces for competing political pressure groups where certain writers or publications become the unofficial mouthpieces of particular interests or politicians or, worse still, are available to be bribed by any faction for the defamation of their rivals.

Nyamnjoh's negative evaluation of the African press agrees with the assessment of other scholars such as Frère (2007), Hyden and Leslie (2002) and Tettey (2006) who argue that the press has not lived up to the ideal of serving as genuine tools for information and education. Neither have they provided effective avenues for encounters and dialogue between conflict

protagonists or acting as a voice for their populations in the discourse of public issues. Rather, they have served mainly ethnic, regional or religious interests. Nyamnjoh blames this situation on the contradictions and tensions of the African in which imported western liberal democratic values and expectations compete with local cultural norms. For him, the prevailing tendency among African journalists and media is indicative partly of their predicament as professionals and institutions expected to fulfil liberal democratic functions in a context where people are clamouring, as well, for recognition as cultural, religious and regional communities. He therefore asserts that such competing claims for their attention “explain the apparent contradictions, hypocrisy and double standards when their actions are appreciated from the standpoint of liberal democracy” (p. 65).

Examining another dimension of the African media problem, Tettey considers the various mechanisms of media accountability, exploring such critical issues as: to whom are the media accountable? Do they serve as a means for pursuing disinterested national agenda? Do they serve parochial interests or are they available to diverse constituencies of the polity? The answers to these penetrating questions, in the light of foregoing analysis, are obviously negative. To redress this situation, Tettey canvasses a strong regulatory environment, based primarily on internal self-accounting on the part of the media, arguing that “ethical rectitude” was critical if the media are to serve as veritable channels for sustaining and continuing the continent’s fledgling democracies. This was important, he points out, because how other political institutions and the body politic perceive, interpret and respond to the issue is consequential for building media systems that play their watch-dog role effectively. He argues further that the extent of accountability within the media is strongly correlated to the level of credibility that they earn from the public regarding their professionalism and integrity and that such public evaluation either solidifies or diminishes support for the media as veritable partners in the democratisation process.

## **1.9 Media Effects Debate**

The argument in section 1.8 above on the role of the African press in ethnic conflicts may however stir up the issue of the extent to which the media may actually be directly liable for conflict. This is the media effects debate which requires a brief explication here. Media effects, according to McQuail (2010: 465) are the consequences of what the media do, whether intended or not. According to him, the entire study of mass communication is based on the assumption that the media have significant effects. However, there is little agreement

on the nature and extent of these presumed effects. Therefore, whereas there is widespread belief that the mass media are a powerful instrument of influence on opinion and of effects on behaviour, there is great difficulty in predicting effects or in proving that they have happened, after the event (McQuail, 2010: 456). In this respect, much research and theorising has taken place to explain the effect or influence of the media on individuals and the society. The major outlines of the debate are indicated below:

- ***Direct effects theory (the all-powerful media):*** this was the earliest of the media effects theories and was based on the assumption that audiences were passive consumers of media products. Media were therefore credited with considerable power to shape opinion and belief, to change habits of life and to mould behaviour in line with the will of their controllers (Bauer and Bauer, 1960 quoted in McQuail, 2010: 458). Direct effects theory, also known as the hypodermic needle approach, is now largely discredited as over simplistic and lacking in theoretical depth. It particularly ignores audience agency and its capacity to make meanings different from that originally intended (Orbe, 2014: 243).
- ***Limited or no effects theory:*** this theoretical perspective assigns a much more modest role to the media in causing any planned or unintended effects. Pioneered by scholars such as Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, this model was supported by research which indicated that media consumers selectively exposed themselves to media messages that were consistent with their existing beliefs, attitudes, and values (Orbe, 2014: 243). As explained by McQuail (2010: 459), it was not that the media had been found to be without effects or influence; rather there was no direct or one-to-one link to be expected between media stimulus and audience response. Instead, media were shown to operate within a pre-existing structure of social relationships and cultural contexts which are significant in shaping the opinions, attitudes and behaviour of audiences including their media choice, attention and response.
- ***Uses and gratification theory:*** this media effects theory acknowledges the capacity of the audience as active users of media who are motivated to use different types of media to fulfil different needs (Katz, Blumler and Gurevich, 1973 in Orbe, 2014: 244). The emphasis here is that people are purposeful in their media consumption and actively select media to satisfy specific needs (Pearce, 2009: 6).
- ***Cumulative effects models:*** recent studies, based on more complex theoretical foundations, recognise a balance between potential media effects and active media

consumption. One of the most popular theories in this perspective is the media agenda setting function. Scholars in this approach such as McCombs (2004) argue that media cannot tell people what to think, but it does tell people what to think about.

- ***Critical cultural studies approach:*** this approach to media effects views the media essentially as a tool of society's most powerful groups to maintain their hold on power. The theory particularly focuses on issues of ideology, race, gender, social class and other forms of human diversity. A key idea of the critical cultural studies theory is that the media plays a key role in maintaining existing power inequalities in society.

As indicated earlier, some of theories of media effects, particularly the direct effect or no effect models have been largely discredited. Others however remain relevant to a holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between the media and audiences. My own position combines aspects of the cumulative effects and the critical cultural studies approaches which recognise both the power of the media and that of the audience. I consider this position as a "social constructivist" view (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989 in McQuail, 2010: 461) which holds that meanings (and thus effects) are created by both the media and the receivers (audience). Moreover, critical cultural studies approach emphasises the role of the media, within a complex of social dynamics and variables, in shaping public attitudes and perceptions of critical issues such as ethno-religious events. This position partly influenced my analysis and perspectives of the peace journalism debate discussed later in this chapter and in chapter 5.

### **1.10 The Nigerian Press and Ethnic Conflict Reportage**

The character of the Nigerian press, particularly the manner by which it covers ethnic conflicts, is best understood through an exploration of its historical development. There is a fairly comprehensive and well documented body of information on the early history of the Nigerian press, particularly its roots in the anti-colonialist struggle (Oyovbaire, 2003; Oso, 1995; Akinfeleye, 1986; Yusha'u, 2009; Olayiwola, 1991; Babalola, 2000). From its small beginnings as a Christian evangelism tool, the press metamorphosed into a major platform for the struggle for independence from British colonial hegemony (Olukotun, 2004; Yusha'u, 2009). Oyeleye (2004) has articulated a clear history of the Nigerian press along three clear phases. The first phase, within the early to mid-twentieth century was the cultural-nationalist anti-colonial phase when, in his opinion, the newspaper industry was at its best. Influenced by the prevailing pan-Africanist movement, the press clearly aimed its anger at the British colonial rulers and manifested a strong cultural-nationalist orientation.

The second phase identified by Oyeleye began particularly from post-World War Two until about the 1980s when the press was less united in its endorsement of a common national identity. According to Oyeleye, although some newspapers, such as the *West Africa Pilot* founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe supported the struggle, most eventually succumbed to a more narrow-minded conception of nationalism defined within ethnic and geo-political boundaries. This sad descent from the lofty heights of pan-Africanism to the abyss of inter-ethnic rivalry was fostered by the formation of ethnic-based political associations. Leading the pack of these ethnic promoters were the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa* for the Yoruba in the South-West, the Ibo Cultural Union for the Igbo of the South-East and the *Jam'iyar Mutanen Arewa* in northern Nigeria. The newspapers, then increasingly owned or controlled by these ethnic overlords, became the platforms for propagating narrow aspirations and for launching "often vitriolic attacks on rival groups" (Oyeleye, 2004: 166). In Oyeleye's words, "the press became not so much a business as it was an essential tool for galvanising nationalist sentiments among the small but growing class of literate city dwellers." This involvement with the media, he argues, led to the formation of new caucuses for the venting of ethnic nationalist ambitions and sowed the seeds of tribal politics in Nigeria.

The third and current phase is marked by the commercialisation and expansion of the press. However, even though there were characteristics of professionalism found in this stage, the press, according to Oyeleye, has not rid itself completely of the primordial nature of the previous stage and the political economic impulse to make profit further complicates matters.

The historical foundation of the Nigerian press as a tool to battle colonial rule has given the press its distinctive combative tone and fighting spirit, or, in the words of Olukotun, (2004: 9) its "protest motif." Its strident, anti-colonial posturing also led to the development of "a militant press genre (which) arose in colonial and early post-colonial history to curb a predatory state" (Olukotun, 2004: 16). Thus, while the historical development of the press has bequeathed to it a legacy of vibrancy and dynamism, the negative attitude to the colonial administration was carried over to the post-independence governments. Sobowale (1995:39-40) argues that Nigerian journalists have not understood that the environment in which they are practising is somewhat different from that in which the pre-independence journalists functioned. According to him, "the orientation to build would appear to be weaker than the tendency to pull down...the journalist is yet to show sufficient understanding of the intricacies and complexities of the environment he is called upon to cover. This accounts for

why the Nigerian journalist is so good at pointing out failures and so poor at suggesting viable options.”

Another well documented feature of the Nigerian press is the fact that the press, in contrast to the electronic media (radio and television) has been dominated by the private sector right from inception whereas the latter was a government monopoly until quite recently (Yusha’u, 2009). This private ownership has had important implications. While it ensured that the newspapers, right from early times, had independence of editorial content, it also meant that the newspapers largely acquired the character and ethnic or regional inclinations of their respective proprietors. In this respect, Yusha’u (2010) for example has pointed out that regionalism and ethnicity are part and parcel of the Nigerian press. He notes that newspapers in Nigeria are categorised into “Lagos-Ibadan axis” and “Abuja-Kaduna axis” representing the southern and northern parts respectively. This regional and ethnic orientation, he notes, is a by-product of Nigeria’s colonial legacy. The position outlined above echoes the views of scholars like Oyovbaire (2001) who, in plotting a history of the media in Nigeria, argues that “the media is highly rooted in south-western Nigeria or the famous Lagos-Ibadan axis which...provides the materialist base for the world-view of the media.”

Regionalism has remained a prominent trait of the Nigerian press over the decades. In the coverage of the 1964/5 elections crisis, for example, Sobowale (1995: 42) asserts that the press was “a study in professional partisanship and journalistic debauchery.” The press was sharply divided along political lines. He argues that the press made itself available to be used “to deceive, to cheat, and fan the embers of hatred, distrust and acrimony” while “truth was absolutely disregarded...sheer expediency and transient political gains displaced all known journalistic norms and dicta...Absolute falsehood and half-truths were reported as facts.” Bitrus (1996) notes that politics based on ethnic cleavages has been a notable feature of the Nigerian press right from colonial times and that this was carried through into independence such that the battle lines between the regions was crystallised in the media.

Similarly, Olatunji Dare (1996) laments the failure of the press during this period to distinguish between the ruling regional party and the government. He asserts that “the situation was such that the media were for all practical purposes party organs financed by the tax payer. Through crude and overzealous partisanship, the papers transformed opponents of the ruling party into opponents of the government and equated dissent with disloyalty.” According to Dare, so polarised had both national politics and the press become on the eve of

the 1966 coup that newspapers could not circulate across regional lines. Vendors were killed or harmed in some areas for selling certain newspapers and some local government councils in the East and West even enacted edicts banning certain newspaper publications from their areas of jurisdiction. And in the Second Republic, Dare observes that many a Nigerian journalist “sold his soul and his craft to the highest political bidder or indeed to anyone who put up a bid.” He notes that without exception, newspapers became organs of whatever political party controlled the state in which they were published.

Another assessment of the press in the coverage of the 1993 presidential elections fiasco similarly criticised the press for performing below the ethical line. According to Biakolo (1994), “the most debased dispositions of men and women were brought to the fore in that poisoned political climate, and the press helped considerably to fan them.” Biakolo insisted that in dealing with an enemy, one does not have to act like them. Unah (1995: 33-34) however disputes this “puritanical” vision of the press, arguing that a vibrant press was required in that instant to confront political rascality. “It may be wise counsel,” he reasons, “for the ...press not to return evil for evil in a sane atmosphere. But in jungle warfare everything is permitted.” In his view, the diversity and variety of the Nigerian press is a healthy development, serving every reader, as it were, his/her preference. “If you wanted the vulgar and the frivolous you read the soft sells; if you wanted a centrist view, you read the moderate newspapers and if you wanted sectionalism, you read the ethno-partisan news journals.” This type of argument however presumes a highly literate and discerning audience which a large section of the Nigerian readership was not, and still is yet to attain. The main point however being stressed here is that the origins of the Nigerian press as a political anti-colonial weapon and its metamorphosis into a tool for ethnic expansionism, have built into it a tendency to partisanship and inflammatory style, and that such a characteristic does not promote moderation and sober judgment in the reportage of highly sensitive issues such as ethno-religious conflicts, whose coverage this research investigates.

Yusha’u (2010) asserts that regional dichotomy is reflected in the way Nigerian newspapers report issues. Particularly in the mediation of nationally critical conflicts such as the Niger Delta Conflict related to oil exploration and environmental degradation, or the Boko Haram conflict in north-eastern Nigeria, Yusha’u contends that the press exhibit the signs of “ethnic and regional parallelisms” in framing the stories of the conflicts. Yusha’u’s regional parallelism concept is modelled after the political parallelism theory of Hallin and Mancini



(2004) which is a situation in which the philosophy of a newspaper coincides with the worldview/philosophy of its proprietors.

Olukotun (2004: 31, 69) however provides another perspective, when, in his discourse of the struggle of the press against state repression during the military dictatorship in Nigeria, he cautioned against a "superficial" reading of ethnicity in media positioning. He argues, for example, that the "allegedly Yoruba-dominated media largely championed the fall from office of Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Yoruba technocrat." According to Olukotun, had ethnicity been the driving force behind media agitation in those years, "one would have expected the so-called Yoruba media to condone the government of Shonekan. As Olatunji (Dare)<sup>4</sup> points out, the values which impelled media opposition in that instant were those of fairness and respect for the rules of the game" (Dare, in Olukotun, 2004: 69)

As indicated above, a well-known characteristic of the Nigerian press is its reputation for vibrancy and fearlessness in critiquing the authorities on affairs of the state and matters of public interest. For Oluyokun (2004) "the Nigerian media are imbued with a self-conscious tradition of outspokenness, which at the limits sometimes teeters on anarchy." Similarly, Oyeleye (2004) observes that the Nigerian media remains one of the most vibrant in Africa. He notes that despite an often difficult operating environment, a small hard-core of "committed journalists" has upheld the reputation of Nigerian journalism as a dynamic, fearless vanguard of public interest. Malaolu (2004) also contends that from inception, the Nigerian press was a militant press: "bellicose in temperament, belligerent in posturing and adversarial in language and perception...It was, and still largely is, a fearless, vibrant and nationalistic press."

Oyeleye however confronts the flip side of this acknowledged vibrancy when he observed that such commendation was not without qualification "because the activities of a large section of the media vitiate against the laudable efforts of this minority and tend to bring the media into disrepute in the eyes of the wider public (Oyeleye, 2004: 157). He cited the Nigerian Media Rights Agenda which charged the media with corrupt and unethical practices that made journalists susceptible to partisanship and non-adherence to the codes of

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<sup>4</sup> Olatunji Dare is erroneously spelt as Olatunji *Dape* in this citation, taken from Olukotun's book, *Repressive State and Resurgent Media under Nigeria's Military Dictatorship, 1988-98*, published by Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala (2004)

objectivity. The Media Rights Agenda, Oyeleye observed, accused journalists of routinely setting aside professional judgment in the performance of their journalistic functions and “engaged in over simplification, exaggeration and outright sensationalism, suppression and outright distortion of facts, political partisanship, bias and ethnicity. They often failed to show religious sensitivity in many of their reports, especially during conflict situations, and almost always did not give all the parties to an issue the benefit of responding to charges laid against them” (Oyeleye, 2004: 161). Political debates and alignments in the press, according to him, reflected divisive considerations, thus weakening the very foundations of the democracy the media fought hard to emplace. And despite relentless surveillance and strident critique and exposure of powerful and well entrenched corrupt practices, the Media Rights Agenda insisted that the press itself was riddled by corruption and unethical practices that undermined its image. A key issue in this respect was that of the 'Beat Associations' which runs counter to the ethos of professionalism in which journalists operate more as "cartels and constantly pressured members of the public to render financial assistance and as well routinely gave bogus awards to 'deserving' members of the public who clearly were undeserving of such honours" (160).

A notable feature of the Nigerian press is its commercial orientation, a feature associated with it right from the pre-colonial times. Oso (1991) notes that the commercialisation of the press was a major factor which shaped its early style and development. The commercialisation of the press, he explained, involved changes in the organisation of the press and the production of news. Whereas the early editors were also the proprietors and owners of their newspapers, and were primarily professionals as doctors, lawyers, engineers, then secondarily journalists, the new epoch reversed the order. Now the proprietor concerned himself with capital and policy while professional journalists took charge of daily production of the newspapers. While the proprietor-editor regarded themselves as politicians, or, more appropriately, as anti-colonial crusaders and their newspapers as political organs for the achievement of certain political goals, the professional journalists were more likely to see themselves as disinterested chroniclers of events (Oso, 1991: 47).

Oso also observes, following Golding and Elliot (1979) that as professionals, journalists often draw on certain values, routines and ideologies “forged in the workshop of a commercial press serving historically particular needs and interests...News evolves then in response to a range of imperatives in its market situation which become incorporated in the working routines and beliefs involved in its production.” An aspect of this market situation, Oso points

out, was the demand for larger circulation and the need to satisfy a heterogeneous readership. To meet this commercial imperative, the press began to emphasise “objective and neutral products.” Quoting Golding and Elliot again, Oso noted that “the search for new and larger readerships drew the press away from strident factionalism and towards a more central band of opinion, in which a mix of apparent neutrality and detachment makes a paper attractive as much as influential.”

Moreover, the move towards more professional journalism also involved a change in the style and presentation of news including the introduction of American style of sensational reporting, use of pictures, banner headlines, short sentences and paragraphs, which brought to an end “the ponderous political essays, long-winded and high sounding phraseology of the ‘Black Victorian’ of Lagos.” According to Oso, the model of this “professional journalism” in terms of style and philosophy, including the values of ideology such as objectivity and neutrality, which informed its practice, was imported from the West. Commercialisation and professionalism led to the separation of journalism from direct partisan political involvement in order to reach a wider readership and increase circulation. This also engendered competition amongst the newspapers in the bid to gain a wider share of the market readership.

The commercialisation of the Nigerian press however did not mean that it completely lost its partisan political character, for as Oso (1991) also observes, the separation of politics from journalism has remained incomplete in Nigeria. The ghost of the past still walks tall in Nigerian newsrooms. For him, although there are no more party owned newspapers, journalism is still often seen in terms of attainment of certain defined national goals – national unity and development. This, he argues, is contrary to the ideals of professionalism with its stress on neutrality, objectivity, disinterestedness and autonomy. Reconciling the demands of the two models creates a lot of tension and conflicts. As Golding and Elliot (1979:3) have pointed out, ‘the dual allegiance of (Nigerian) journalists to the attainment of professional and political goals has created conflicts whose resolutions in daily practice underpins much contemporary Nigerian journalism.

Oso’s position outlined above, while credible, appears to conflate partisanship with politics since journalism anywhere, as the fourth estate, is not separate from politics but is at the heart of it. The analysis is however useful in drawing attention to the tension and conflict within Nigerian journalism and the fact that, as observed by Oyeleye (2004) the press has not

completely rid itself of the primordial and partisan character acquired in the early stages of its evolution. This conflict, moreover, is complicated, according to Oso, by the nature of the Nigerian society which impacts journalism practice, chiefly ethnicity which underpin the tone and orientation of national politics and which has resulted in the ethnicisation of the press. He further points out that geographical location, ownership and ethnicity are linked together in the experience of the Nigerian press.

Commercialisation of the Nigerian press however brought with it other issues which have serious implications for journalistic practice. The often harsh economic operating environment, for instance, predispose the press to the phenomenon of “commercialisation of news” (Omenugha and Oji, 2008) both at the organisational and individual levels. At the organisational level, Oso (2000) has noted how the rise in production costs and dwindling circulation encourage media houses to engage in ethically questionable practices all in the effort to generate income. In some media organisations, reporters now also function as marketing and advertising officers. “For instance, those in charge of specialised pages or columns are made to source for adverts or supplements to support ‘their’ pages or the pages are dropped and probably with the reporter” (Oso, 2000: 30). Omenugha and Oji (2008) have also observed that such commercial imperative had led to sensationalism, and the peddling of half-truths in Nigerian newspapers.

There is also the “brown envelope” syndrome, a situation where journalists demand or are offered gratification to publish or suppress a story (Olukotun, 2004). This problem, which has been associated with distress in the media industry and a reflection of the social malaise, is now a routine and prominent convention of Nigerian journalism and this could be critical in providing balanced reportage of conflicts. Owolabi (2004) also notes certain disturbing tendencies in the press, such as sensationalism and the “front-page syndrome” in which news items considered as most important are “boldly over dramatized on the front page to attract attention and patronage.” Such practices, he argues, are informed purely by commercial, rather than professional considerations and can distort reality, thus fuelling conflict. Owolabi also noted the prevalence of what he termed “cocktail journalism,” a practice whereby journalists only seek out opportunities of meeting politicians, personalities or elite, and partying. This issue is central to the issue of ethics in Nigerian journalism as well as on the matter of news sourcing. He argues that the fierce competition for readership and patronage by the Nigerian press plays into the hands of politicians, warlords and private citizens who manipulate them “to communicate a considerable amount of deception, lying and political

fabrications disguised as facts.” The Nigerian press also features a problem of weak infrastructure and poor working environment, in the form of very low and irregular remuneration within the industry, coupled with lack of professional training and inadequacy of equipment (NPC, 2012; Jose, 1975: 260). These directly impact upon professional ethics and media content, particularly in the reportage of contentious and divisive issues like ethnic and religious conflicts.

This mixed characterisation painted above is evident in several studies that have been conducted on the Nigerian press. For example, Salawu (2009) explored how the media served as the catalyst of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria, in the reportage of the Miss World Beauty Pageant and the Danish cartoons-induced crises in Nigeria. The Miss World pageant-induced crisis occurred in response to a newspaper article in *This Day* of November 16, 2002 considered as cynical of Prophet Mohammed. The article had insinuated that the Prophet would have married one of the beauty queens that were to converge in Nigeria. The Danish Cartoon crisis, on the other hand, led to the killing of many Christians in northern Nigeria towns by Muslim fanatics who were protesting against allegedly blasphemous cartoons published about Prophet Mohammed in a Danish newspaper.<sup>5</sup> This research was conducted against the background of the author’s assertion that the media, as a social institution, are also involved in conflicts in society, either as harbinger, channel of information and analysis of the conflicts, or as part of their escalation or resolution. Salawu (2009: 89) observed the catalytic power of the media in creating an atmosphere of conflict. “The media did not create the conflict, but rather provided the climate for the conflict to be triggered,” he argued. Aligning himself with scholarship on issues of media effects, Salawu notes that the mass media do not have the all-powerful effect in goading people into violence. He explained that the multi-step flow in which opinion leaders are very influential can explain how the violence came about. He however asserts that the media themselves get involved in this ethnic drama in the sense that Nigerian newspapers "narrate ...stories and comment on...conflict based on

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<sup>5</sup> **The Miss World riots** were politically and religiously-motivated riots in Kaduna, Nigeria, in November 2002 and claimed more than 200 lives (see The Guardian UK, 17 February 2003; Weston, 2002). The hosting of the beauty pageant proposed for 7 December 2002 in Abuja, Nigeria’s capital city, had acquired controversy primarily due to objections by some Nigerians on religious and moral grounds. The opposition was strident particularly in Muslim circles. The opposition also came within the context of the tensions and conflicts generated in the polity by the introduction of the Shari’a law in some northern Nigerian states. In the heat of the debates and contests over the hosting of the pageant, an article published in *This Day* newspaper seemed to provide the match stick to light the tinder box of frayed nerves.

**The Danish cartoon crisis** is explained in detailed by Arsenault, Powers and Kirova (2006).

their own ethnic nature" (p.90). Quoting Uduak (2000) and Abati (2000), he observed that the ethnic identity of a Nigerian newspaper is determined by the location of its headquarters, the ethnic identity of its publishers and the main market it seeks to cultivate. In this regard, he asserted that the manner northern-based newspapers narrate and comment on religious riots is different from their southern counterparts. With respect to the Miss World Beauty Pageant riots, for instance, he noted that while southern newspapers were critical of the reactions of the northern Muslims to the *This Day* newspaper publication which apparently triggered the riots, their northern counterparts did not see much wrong in the action of the rioters and were rather only largely critical of what they considered to be "irresponsible and insensitive journalism" of the offending newspaper publication. This clearly demonstrates the regional and religious dichotomy of Nigerian newspapers earlier discussed in this review.

Salawu cites a southern-based Yoruba news magazine, *Alaroye*, which he pointed out engaged in outright play-up of identity politics. In its story headlined "Mayhem in Kaduna," the following statements were made:

What this crisis brought to the fore is the difference between the Hausa and other tribes in Nigeria. The Hausa are greatly different from us; their conduct is not the same as ours...If such a statement angers the Yoruba, what they would do is to write a rejoinder, and explain issues to the writer...But the Hausa do not do this, in particular their leaders...The religion of this Hausa is different from that of the Yoruba (p.80).

The author quoted further from the editorial opinion of the newspaper:

We are opposed to the Hausa's crazy fight; we are opposed to their stupid conduct. We are equally opposed to the idea of perpetrating evil under the guise of Islam...If a Hausa person were to be in power, we know the Hausa would not start the Sharia system...there are many people in Hausa land who can slaughter their mothers because of politics...there are many Satanic children among them.

Salawu (2009) observed that newspapers published in the north had a different view and justified the killings on what they regarded as the insensitivity of the offending newspaper. The northern newspaper columnists who did not toe this "hard line" were castigated by their fellow columnists. This was the case of a guest columnist in the *New Nigerian* who lambasted northern Muslim columnists "seized by the devil delusion of defending professional madness" which to him equates irresponsible journalism (p. 81). Salawu concludes that while objectivity as a hallmark of good journalism is relative, the media should be able to balance

the tension between primordial feelings and national cohesion; and between freedom and responsibility.

What is evident from the narrative above is the fact that although the Nigerian press is vibrant, this vibrancy is also associated with severe derogations which impact significantly on professional and ethical practices. The historical development of the press predisposes it to ethnic affiliation and political partisanship. Furthermore, the commercial orientation of the press, which manifested early in its formation, promotes certain practices that are not only unethical but also outright unprofessional. It is necessary to examine and interrogate these gaps in ethics and professionalism, to identify their roots and possible remedies. This task is accomplished, in the main, in Chapter 6.

Meanwhile, within the context of conflict reportage, it is also important to explore the debates and discourses surrounding the field of media and conflict, particularly the much contested issue of the relationship between the journalist and the conflict which he/she is covering. As Frère (2007: 5) observes, professional journalism, if it respects the rules of balanced information, can help defuse tensions that often arise because of misunderstanding and lack of information between players. One critical question, she argues, however stands out: in covering conflict, can or even must the journalist go further, by directing his or professional practice towards supporting peace initiatives, and if so, does such commitment imply that the journalist has renounced his or her role as a neutral and impartial informer? The next section of the review considers this issue through exploration of new paradigms in conflict reportage. The review focuses particular attention on the concept of peace journalism and conflict sensitive reporting.

### **1.11 Exploring New Paradigms for Conflict Coverage**

The foregoing review of conflict coverage by the press confirms established knowledge in media research on news culture that media representations generally tend to glamorise war, violence and propaganda with negative consequences for the resolution of such conflicts. This has raised critical concerns about mainstream journalistic practice. Indeed, a main criticism of mainstream journalistic practice is its apparent inordinate preoccupation with war and violence and a relative lack of interest in processes of non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation (Cottle, 2006:100). Starkey (2007) has observed the “institutional negativity” of the media in reporting events arising from the often compelling nature of “bad” news which he notes prioritize it over “good” news. Hyde-Clarke (2011: 43) notes the growing

belief that “the media have sometimes fanned the flames of discord by taking sides, reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truths.” Ogenga (2012) argues in a similar vein that mainstream journalism “has done more to escalate conflicts than to resolve them.” For Galtung, (1993: xi), the media “amplify the sounds of guns rather than muting them.” He laments that not only do the media have a perverse fascination with war and violence; they also neglect the forces of peace at work. Galtung attributes the media’s inordinate preoccupation with power and violence to naturalized routines which makes journalists look “only upward in society, registering the sudden and the negative, not the patient, long-term work of thousands, millions of citizens” (Galtung, 1993: 5). Exploring this situation further, Galtung (2011) wonders whether “mainstream journalists are as afraid of peace as authors are of the human condition of happiness, tearing at it the moment it rears its smiling face? Or, even worse, they do not even recognise it when it is there?”

In response to this criticism, there has emerged a journalistic genre which positions itself against established, traditional forms of journalism, challenging foundational news values, dominant agendas, privileged elite access and existing professional journalistic practices (Cottle, 2006; Lynch, 2005; Seaga, et al., 2011). Imbued with a normative agenda, these new genres seek to redress the perceived deficiencies of mainline news representations and better align journalism to projects of social responsibility, economic development, political participation and cultural democracy (Cottle, 2006). These “corrective journalism,” according to Cottle, (2006: 117) share a concern to move beyond traditional news values, routinised journalistic practices, elite source dependencies and institutionalised ideals of professionalism. They all seek “to augment the range of views and voices, perspectives and problems, discourses and debates finding news representation” (Cottle, 2006: 117). Among these new forms of journalism are peace journalism, development journalism, public journalism, human rights journalism, alternative journalism on-line, amongst others (Cottle, 2006; Galtung, 1993; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005, Seaga, 2011). The epistemological and theoretical bases of these new forms of journalism, their conceptual grounds as well as their practical operational frameworks have been matters of sustained debate.

The concept of peace journalism, which this study focuses on, was pioneered in the 1970s by Johan Galtung, Norwegian scholar and a founder of peace studies. It emerged as a criticism of the preference given by mainstream journalism to war, violence and propaganda, to causes promoted by elites and establishments, and to facile and polarized victory/defeat reality constructions (Shinar, 2009; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). According to Lee (2010: 361),



Galtung was critical of the “low road” taken by the news media in pursuing wars and the elite involved, and therefore called on journalists to re-route their reporting to a “high road” for peace where the news media no longer fixate on a win-lose outcome or simplify the disputants into two pugilists slugging it out in a sports arena. Conflict reporting, in Galtung’s conception, should be modeled on health journalism rather than sports journalism. The latter, he explains, is oriented to win-lose, zero-sum, victory-defeat discourse whereas health reporting entails not only reporting about a patient’s struggles with a disease, but also informs about the disease’s causes and cures as well as prevention. In this respect, he argues that good war or conflict reporting should focus on conflict transformation, “using war to find new ways to transform the conflict creatively so that opportunities take the upper hand” (Lee, 2010: 362).

In their seminal work, *Peace Journalism*, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 5) define peace journalism as “when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.” This concept seeks to transform the approach by which journalists depict their stories (Peleg, 2007). Elaborating on this definition, Youngblood (2012) views peace journalism as when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, he argues, also promote the development of societies recovering from conflict. In his words, “these choices – which stories to report, how they are reported (framed) and the words that are used – create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the principles of good journalism” (p.19).

Lynch (2006) locates peace journalism in critical realist theory about the reporting of conflicts. Quoting Wright (1996: 35), he argues that critical realism is

a way of describing the process of ‘knowing’ that acknowledges the reality of the known, as something different from the knower (hence ‘realism’), while fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiraling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence ‘critical’).

He explains that from a critical realist point of view, news is a representation of something other than itself – ‘report of the facts’, even though those facts are ready-mediated by the time the journalist – and readers/audiences – comes into contact with them. Because there are always more facts than can be accommodated in a report, the criteria on which gate-keeping

decisions informing the choice of what to include or exclude are made become salient. “Salience arises from the time-honoured expectations of journalism as a civic tool in democracy, providing a reliable account of what is really going on, to enable informed participation and consent, thus legitimising the exercise of political and other forms of authority in the public sphere” (p.36).

In this respect, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) explain that peace journalism uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting. According to them, reports of conflict can be assessed for their accuracy against evidence gathered about conflict by researchers in the overlapping fields of conflict and peace research. “They are therefore bound to be an improvement on the generally unexamined criteria inscribed in journalistic conventions – conventions which incline reports of conflict towards dominant readings of war propaganda and a preponderance of war journalism” (ibid).

Hackett (2007: 75) also observes that peace journalism draws upon the insights of conflict analysis to “look beyond the overt violence which is the stuff of news... and calls attention to the context, of attitudes, behaviour and contradiction, and the need to identify a range of stakeholders broader than the ‘two sides’ engaged in violent confrontation. In his words:

If war journalism presents conflict as a tug-of-war between two parties in which one side’s gain is the other’s loss, peace journalism invites journalists to re-frame conflict as a cat’s cradle of relationships between various stakeholders.

This manner of reporting requires journalists to distinguish between stated demands, and underlying needs and objectives and to identify and give attention to voices working for creative and non-violent solutions; to keep eyes open for ways of transforming and transcending the hardened lines of conflict. It further calls attention to expanding our understanding of conflict beyond the direct physical violence which is the focus of war journalism, to include the structural and cultural violence that may underlie conflict situations.

Similarly, Peleg (2007) presents conflict theory as a major analytical and normative basis for peace journalism. Conceiving of the media as “third party, facilitator, mediator and arbitrator,” he espouses the view that it can effectively enhance the prospects of conflict transformation, resolution and reconciliation. Ogenga (2012: 1) explains that peace

journalism develops ways of reporting that support conflict de-escalation and that this distinguishes it from “the propagandistic reporting characteristic of war journalism, which justifies and legitimizes conflict.”

Lee (2010: 376) traces the theoretical roots of peace journalism in normative theory “in that peace journalism prescribes, through an expression of judgment, what media ought to do and outlines the moral obligations of journalists to play a significant and meaningful role to promote peace in war and conflict”. He argued that peace journalism is also grounded in communitarian philosophy characterized by a commitment to civic participation, the understanding of social justice as a moral responsibility, and the notion that the worth of an individual is realized only in engagement in and through communities. This position aligns with that of Ogenga (2012) which holds that peace journalism is “socially responsible journalism.”

Pursuing the argument of social responsibility, Kempf (2008) cites documents such as the UNESCO Media Declaration of 1978 which enjoins the media, not only to contribute to peace and international understanding, but also to oppose incitement to war, racism and human rights violations. The UNESCO declaration also requires the media to disseminate information which makes citizens of all nations more sensitive to the needs of others, to secure respect for the rights and dignity of all peoples as well as reduce international tensions and further peaceful and equitable settlement of disputes. The International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism adopted in 1983 calls on journalists to abstain from any justification for, or incitement to, wars of aggression and all other forms of violence, hatred or discrimination (see Irvan, 2006: 35). In light of this, Kempf insists that the aim of peace journalism is to avoid the functionalization of the media for propaganda purposes and to promote constructive conflict coverage that helps to implement journalistic quality norm – even against the interests of the ruling elite. The relevance of peace journalism therefore lies in “its contribution to the effective presentation of issues of global significance to media professionals and to the public...adoption of peace journalism can help delineate the potential global impact of conflicts, call public attention and opinion to such threats; indicate and hopefully satisfy demands for more balanced coverage; and stimulate alternative interpretations and critical reflection” (Shinar, 2009: 452).

Galtung (2002) delineates peace journalism and war journalism as two competing frames in the reportage of war and conflict and produced a schema which identifies four characteristics

differentiating the two frames (see Appendix 1). From this schema, war journalism is said to be violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented. Peace journalism, on the other hand, is peace/conflict, truth, people and solutions-oriented.

Expectedly, the concept of peace journalism is not without controversy and some media scholars and practitioners have raised serious issues with it, insisting that its ethos constitute an assault on the integrity and professional norms of journalism (Lyon, 2007; Hanitzsch, 2007; Cottle, 2006). Journalism, in its classic norms, require from practitioners, truthfulness, fairness, objectivity, neutrality and detachment. As a form of public communication with social expectations, journalism is different from public relations whose major driving force is “success,” measured in terms of achieving specific communication aims externally defined by a client or stakeholder (Hanitzsch, 2007). Objiofor (2010), considering these issues, posed these critical questions: can journalists operate as objective and independent observers and reporters and still promote peace journalism? Is it possible for journalists to be detached, emotionally and psychologically, when covering and reporting on conflicts? How does the ethos of peace journalism enhance or undermine professional journalism practice? Should journalism play different roles in times of war and in times of peace? Critics of peace journalism would respond negatively to these posers.

One of the critics of peace journalism is David Lyon, BBC foreign correspondent who canvasses the view that “the opposite of peace journalism is good journalism” (Lyon, 2007). He insists that the role of journalists is that of “observers not players.” It is not the reporter’s duty to create peace-making politicians. To the contrary, a “new orthodoxy” tends more to narrow than expand the latitude for qualitatively high-value reportage. It can lead to role confusion and undermine both the professional integrity of journalists and journalism overall because it imposes a duty to achieve a societal effect - whereas their duty is to report all sides with professional scepticism. For Lyon, peace journalism is flawed because it incorrectly assumes that the world would be a better place if wars were reported differently. Pitching his tent with the cherished traditions of journalistic objectivity, he contends that it was important that both the reporter and the audience were reassured that “there is no other agenda than explaining what is going on.” The solution, Lyon insists, is to improve the employment of traditional methods in the effort to determine truth through objectivity, to strive for a maximally accurate, agenda-neutral reportage - not a peace journalistic “ethical check-list.”

Another critic, Thomas Hanitzsch, a communications scientist, characterizes peace journalism as “old wine in new wineskins” (Hanitzsch, 2007). Although he admits that the concept itself is not bad, he however insists that it lacks an epistemological foundation while also exaggerating the influence of journalists and the media on political decision-making. Epistemologically, he accuses peace journalism of a naively positivist faith in untrammelled 'truth'. Theoretically, he sees the model as an outdated conception of media effects as powerful and linear. Normatively, he says Peace journalism calls for "bad news" to be suppressed when it jeopardises peaceful outcomes, and for journalism to take on inappropriate advocacy, peacekeeping or campaigning tasks that are better left to political or civic actors.

In reply to these criticisms, Lynch (2007) argues that Lyon's position shows a lack of critical awareness of the structural peculiarities of conflict coverage. Peace journalism, he affirms, goes beyond accurate and comprehensive reportage of facts, in so far as it not only calls for a critical examination of sources, but also of the consequences of reportage. Contrary to Lyon's representation, sources are not passive, and a journalist who quotes them does not merely disclose an already existing reality. To avoid becoming an unintentional accessory of the individual interests of the parties involved in conflicts, one must always be aware that sources are active, “trying to create a reality that does not yet exist.” In deciding which facts to publish therefore, Lynch recommends a critical realist approach to journalists.

We do not have to claim that journalism ‘reflects’ a logically prior reality ... when covering conflicts, we can tread down to find solid ground beneath our feet, by studying and applying what is known and has been observed about conflict, drawing on the overlapping fields of conflict analysis and peace research. We can use this ... to identify what is missing from what we are told by interested parties.

From this perspective, Lynch argues that peace journalism makes possible a representation of conflict that is more accurate, richer in perspectives, more comprehensive, more critical and aware of its responsibility than what conventional war journalism offers.

Cottle (2006), reflecting on the normative implications of peace journalism, believes that it has a herculean struggle if it is to successfully reconfigure established media conventions and repopulate it with different values, views and voices. This, he argues, is partly because in times of war, the media comes under very severe pressure from politicians and militaries to act as conduit for propaganda war. Much of the outcome in such situations depends on the degree of elite consensus on the issues at stake and the depth of war or peace culture within

the polity. The media, Cottle insists, cannot be wistfully insulated from the wider force field of politics and culture or the economic structures and logics that drive its performance. When analysing media reportage therefore, he points to the need to do so informed by the understanding of the wider socio-political and cultural contexts in which the media operates. For him, peace journalism's normative critique and prescriptions are based on an "overly media-centric and insufficiently grounded view" (Cottle, 2006: 105) while its epistemological assumptions erroneously presume that "truth" is always self-evident. It further ignores the "progressive possibilities" of contemporary news media to contain opportunities for the discursive engagement of opposing views and the representation of different histories, identities and experiences.

This position aligns with Hanitzsch's (2007) view that peace journalism research fails to take due cognisance of the institutions and contexts of journalism, and therefore over blaming the latter for unnecessarily militarising popular consciousness and state policies. News values, according to Hanitzsch (2007), cannot take hold without a purchase in popular culture. In addressing the short comings of journalism, proper account therefore needs be taken of structural factors, including news routines, media organisations' need for reliable and credible flow of news, technology, budgets, relationships with advertisers and the legal framework.

Valid as these arguments may sound, Lynch et al. (2011: 13) maintain that editors and reporters do possess critical agency and are not merely cogs in a machine not of their own making. "Structural constraints govern the content of news, but they do not altogether determine it," they insist, adding that "pressure from without and renewal from within are not mutually exclusive avenues...(and ) may indeed be necessary counterparts." Peleg (2007) also argues that peace journalism has enough of novel insights and daring propositions to challenge conventional journalism and defy some of its basic tenets. Contrary to Hanitzsch's (2007) claims, Peleg contends that peace journalism stems from a very clear epistemology, which aims at a more balanced and more comprehensive account of conflict, an account which conventional journalism, due to structural, psychological and habitual constraints, is unable to perform. Consequently, Peleg contends that peace journalism is worthy of being considered as a significant development in journalism research and study.

Kempf (2008) seeks to balance and reconcile these arguments by distinguishing peace journalism from advocacy journalism. Kempf acknowledges that some supporters of peace journalism appear too inclined to underrate established journalistic values like objectivity,

neutrality and detachment and to lump peace journalism together with other names such as ‘journalism of attachment,’ ‘victim journalism,’ ‘justice journalism’ and ‘engaged journalism.’ According to him, disregarding the tools of good journalism, and understanding peace journalism as a form of advocacy journalism, “create a dangerous mix which is prone to abuse the noble goal of peace as a legitimization for biased coverage” (Kempf, 2008: 146), which amounts to peace propaganda. For him, “peace propaganda is nothing other than propaganda ... and a peace journalism that crosses the border to propaganda does not deserve to bear the name of journalism”. However, Kempf also emphasises the normative roles assigned to journalists in democratic societies. He argues that journalism and the media do play essential role in the societal construction of reality and that can be fulfilled in different ways: “through the type of news coverage, they can give an impetus either to escalation or to the de-escalation of conflicts.” For him, there is no debate as to whether journalism is an active participant in the complex processes that make up a conflict. “It already is and always will be,” he asserts. What peace journalism demands, he insists, is merely for journalism to assume responsibility for *how* it fulfils this role.

According to Kempf and Jaeger (2005), taking responsibility will result in good journalism. This however presupposes specific conflict competencies, and whether journalists possess or acquire these competencies should not be left to chance. From this perspective, peace journalism can be viewed as the study of the conditions and possibilities under which journalists can actually perform their work better, even in war and crisis situations, and to provide the necessary competencies. “In order to produce good journalism, journalists need knowledge, competencies and qualifications that go beyond traditional journalistic training to enable them to counteract the escalation-prone misperceptions of reality...” (Kempf and Jaeger, 2005: 151). Acknowledging the social and psychological imperatives of audience reception, Kempf and Jaeger recommend that peace journalism should be conceived as a two-step process. In the first step, during the hot phase of conflict, the focus should be on de-escalation-oriented conflict coverage. This implies “objective, distanced and respectful reportage which is fair to all sides, does not further heat up the conflict, but rather takes a critical distance from war supporters of every stripe and makes the public aware of the potentially high price of violent solution to the conflict. It would, in their opinion, be inappropriate to propose solutions at this phase, since there is a high risk that such reportage would be “unreflectively rejected as unreliable or as hostile propaganda” (p. 155). The

second phase, which follows the simmering down of conflict, is solution-oriented coverage which actively researches for peaceful alternatives and actors.

At a practical level, Hyde-Clarke (2011: 53), citing Dente Ross et al. points out that power and profit directly influence media practices and routines and that the failure of peace journalism to reconcile itself to this reality is one of its major limitations. This concern, according to her, will continue to threaten the ability of the model to move from the class room to the news room unless there is a serious drive to train journalists and alter institutional norms. Hyde-Clarke further argues that peace journalism demands high investment of resources at a time media houses and organisations are generally downscaling staff and operations. She observes that ensuring that all parties are heard requires time and money. Not only are these in short supply, the “increasing juniorisation of the newsroom” involving pronounced use of young personnel straight out of tertiary institutions, means that the necessary skills, experience and knowledge base for more measured reporting may be lacking, thus creating the exact conditions which allow for conflict and ‘othering’ to flourish. The issue of necessary skills and experience and knowledge base for more measured reporting emphasised by Hyde-Clarke tallies with Kempf’s observation that to perform optimally in conflict reportage, journalists need to have certain specific conflict competencies which should not be presumed.

For Africa, engulfed in conflicts and wars (Ogenga, 2012) these issues assume a flair and flavour that are pressing and urgent. According to Ogenga (2012), the non-western press may have the best chance to employ peace journalism, given its proximity to major conflicts. He even asserts that as long as western ideologies of mainstream journalism prevail, it will be difficult to realise peace journalism. Thus, for African scholars (Ogenga, 2012; Hyde-Clarke, 2011; Nasanga, 2007; Onadipe and Lord, 2007), absorbing and living with the bitter realities of conflict and its toll on their beloved countries and continent, the question is not whether peace journalism is necessary, but rather ways to make it feasible.

This section has examined the debates around the concept of peace journalism, which, according to its proponents, offers a more balanced perspective on war and conflict than that provided by mainstream journalism. It is a remedial strategy which attempts to supplement dominant news conventions to give peace a chance (Lynch, 2013). One of the main problems identified with peace journalism, however, is its apparent rejection of journalistic neutrality with a tendency to peace advocacy and peace propaganda. It further tends to overestimate the



impact of journalism on society while underplaying the role of other social actors in instigating or perpetuating conflict. Apart from the contest over principles, there is also the structural problem of implementing peace journalism as a daily newsroom routine. As Jude Collins (2013) argues, conflict is at the heart of media reporting, as it is at the heart of literature and it is needed to drive the story along. Peace journalism has not yet succeeded in offering alternative news values that can compel readership.

Despite these shortcomings and limitations, I consider that peace journalism merits serious research and enquiry. Its emphasis on exploring backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, giving voice to the views of all rival parties and paying attention to peace stories, are notable contributions to the task of conflict reporting. As Lynch (2013) points out, such skills and emphasis would help reporters ‘negotiate’ their readings of situations, open up multiple meanings, equip them to inspect propaganda and other self-serving representations.

### **1.12 Peace Journalism or Conflict Sensitive Reporting?**

Another approach to reporting violent conflict, that bears striking resemblance to peace journalism, is Howard’s (2009) “conflict sensitive reporting” which he argues is necessary for conflict stressed societies. According to Howard, conflict sensitive reporting reflects a modernisation of the original values of the news media and is rooted in the belief that the media in many societies can be a powerful force to reduce causes of conflict and to enable them pursue better conflict resolution. In arguing for this new approach to conflict reportage, he identified two contrasting conceptual and ideological views points in the debate over the role of the press in conflict. The first view point affirms the traditional principle and neutrality of the media. This position, which is the predominant view of western journalists and professionals, insists on distance and disengagement in reportage of conflicts. For this persuasion, journalists in framing stories must not be overly preoccupied about the outcome of their reporting and thus alter their attempted truthful depiction of reality to further any outcome they might personally seek, such as peace.

The other ideological view point on the reportage of violent conflicts is particularly associated with journalism in conflict-affected societies. As Howard (2009) points out, journalists in conflict-stressed countries are more acutely aware than their professional counterparts in democracies of the west that as journalists and citizens, their work may appear as insufficient, superficial and possibly even harmful. Marie-Soleil Frère (2007: 5) captures the perspectives of African journalists on conflict coverage most aptly:

We cover (conflict) simplistically, vividly, incessantly but we do not cover it with sophistication. We don't cover causes, only consequences, and we don't cover solutions.

The main point in Howard's analysis is that a routine and merely traditional mind set and approach to conflict, as practised by established mainline journalism, is inadequate in the conceptualisation of the relationship between modern conflict and the media. In his view, the need for new approaches to reporting violent conflict seem clear especially to journalists in the most conflict-stressed places. Howard notes that although the global environment of conflict is increasingly changing, much of media's approach to reporting on conflict has not changed. Even in the training of journalists, he asserts, conflict is "a curious blind spot" which does not make specific room for skill development in conflict analysis and conflict reporting. Furthermore, traditional journalism skills development has not included study on how best to cover violent conflict, and has ignored any understanding of violent conflict as a social process. Consequently, the dynamics of violent conflict are not much understood by most journalists nor proficiently reported on. Although the environment of conflict has changed over time, many journalists are ill-equipped to address the issue which demands so much of their attention and is devastating their community and are therefore accused of being part of the problem.

The Forum for Security (2014) sees conflict sensitivity as the practice of actively seeking to avoid potentially conflict-inducing language and framing by the press. This is to ensure that while the public is well informed on issues, reporting is not a precursor to, or even instigator of potential conflict. Howard however cautions against journalists taking on peace advocacy roles, no matter how well intentioned as such a practice would negate and put at risk, those "first principles that assure journalism any legitimacy among most citizens." In this respect, he emphasises that it is the independence and the objectivity of the news media that confers on journalism its credibility and influence in informing people who must make the changes towards peaceful resolution of their conflicts. Therefore, rather than take on more roles, Howard argues that journalism in conflict-affected societies should instead "strengthen its original roles" as the source of credible news, a forum for public discourse and debate and a watch-dog. To accomplish such an objective of covering conflicts more effectively implies a greater degree of sophistication and understanding of the nature and process of conflict. He emphasises that rather than advocating what should happen, journalists should report "what can happen, including peace." For him, there is the need to make reporting on conflict "more insightful, more comprehensive and thus more influential since being comprehensive

includes making clearer the possibility of resolving conflict rather than perpetrating it.” Such a pattern of conflict coverage Howard terms “conflict sensitive reporting.” Conflict sensitive reporting, he explains, reflects a modernisation of the original values of the news media and is rooted in the belief that news media in many societies can be a powerful force to reduce causes of conflict and to enable a conflict-stressed society to better pursue conflict resolution.

The central concept of conflict sensitive reporting, according to Howard, is that violent conflict attracts intense news media attention that requires greater analytical depth and skills to report on without contributing to further violence or overlooking peace building opportunities. This is to be achieved through training journalists to better understand conflict and the media’s role in it, he argues. That way, journalists can strengthen their reporting to avoid stereotypes and narrow perspectives on the causes and process of conflict. Furthermore, the media can contribute to a wider dialogue among conflict parties and also explore and provide information about opportunities for resolution. At the baseline, however, Howard insists that the media must maintain its essential standards of accuracy, fairness and balance and responsible conduct.

Conflict sensitive reporting essentially shares the concerns and objectives of peace journalism in the reportage of conflicts. They both stem from a critique of the approach and practices of mainstream journalism which predispose the press to negative reporting. They also make effort to explore the media’s potential in conflict resolution. This involves at least three clear values. The first value is normative, that is, a commitment by journalists to peace or at least an awareness of peace, rather than the traditional professional detachment and disengagement. This implies peace awareness, rather than peace advocacy. The second value is the acquisition of specific skills and competencies in conflict analysis and conflict reportage. That means that in addition to being good general practitioners, conflict reporters should have training beyond the traditional news gathering techniques and should demonstrate capacity in the dynamics of conflict. Thirdly, conflict reporting involves reporting responsibly, observing ethical and professional practices of the highest order.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

This review has attempted to provide a conceptual platform on which to anchor this study dealing with the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press. In this endeavour, it explored three theoretical frameworks: these are ethnic conflicts, ethnicity and nation building in Africa; media and ethnic conflicts in Nigeria; and alternative approaches to

conflict coverage and conflict reportage. The first part enabled a survey of the socio-economic and cultural terrain within which the Nigerian press operates, and how this impinges on its performance. The review demonstrated, not just the complexities associated with Nigeria's multi-ethnic and highly religious configuration, but more significantly, the exploitation and manipulation of these primordial differences by the elite for self-serving ends. Driving this misappropriation of ethnic and religious sentiments, the review noted, is the political economy because political office guarantees access to state resources for the benefit of self and cronies. Prebendal politics and patrimonial rule, which are the hallmarks of public service in Nigeria, often push the struggle for public office into a zero-sum game, too tempting to ignore and too precious to lose. In the resulting do-or-die battles for office or relevance, ethnicity and religion become handy and effective tools for political mobilisation and for rallying communities against one another. This accounts largely for the numerous, pervasive and intractable conflicts plaguing the country and eroding its cohesiveness.

The second part of the review takes a critical look at the mediation of these conflicts by the Nigerian press, reflecting particularly on the history of the press and how this has shaped its worldview and news culture. There is a viewpoint which stresses that the origins of the Nigerian press as an anti-colonial weapon has built into its news culture a tendency to regionalism, ethnicity, partisanship and a strident style which does not promote moderation or sober judgment in the reportage of highly sensitive issues like ethno-religious conflicts. Furthermore, it is argued that the commercial orientation of the press promotes practices which are not only unprofessional, but capable of exacerbating conflicts which plague the society.

Against the backdrop of this reality, the review, in the third part, explored alternative approaches to conflict coverage and conflict reportage. It focused particular attention on the concept of peace journalism, an emerging genre of journalism which problematizes media narratives of conflicts, and canvasses what it believes to be more balanced coverage in order to stimulate alternative interpretations and critical reflection. The concept is concerned for journalism to move beyond traditional news values, routinised professional practices, elite source dependencies and institutionalised ideals of professionalism. It is also anxious to avoid the functionalization of the media for propaganda purposes and to promote constructive conflict coverage that helps implement journalistic quality norms. The review also examined the critiques of this model, particularly its media-centric tendencies, and the possibilities of it eroding cherished values of journalism such as objectivity, neutrality and distance. It finally

explored briefly Howard's conflict-sensitive reporting which is driven by normative expectations similar to those of peace journalism. This approach appears particularly relevant to conflict reportage in conflict-affected societies.

Stemming from the debates and contentions about press reportage of conflicts in Nigeria, one of the issues that readily emerges, and which this research focuses on, is the need for a critical, systematic and detailed investigation of the role of the media in the ethno-religious conflicts of Nigeria. In undertaking this assignment, the research interrogates established media conventions and explores critically the relationship between conflict coverage and conflict escalation and/or perpetuation. In this respect, the study examines the contextual factors which impinge on professionalism and ethical behaviour by the press in the coverage of these conflicts. With particular respect to the emerging concepts and alternative strategies for conflict reportage, the research investigates the perspectives of Nigerian media practitioners and media academics on the principles of peace journalism and explores the applicability of its principles to the professional practice of journalism by the Nigerian press.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter describes and justifies the methodological orientation and the design of the research and explores the epistemological and functional basis of the methods utilised in the study. The chapter first outlines the aim and the research objectives which underlie this study followed by a brief explication of the research context which informs my methodological orientation. Next I discuss the various research methods employed by the study and how I utilised them to corroborate data. The final section dwells on the ethical considerations underpinning the research as well as the limitations and health and safety issues associated with the enquiry. My methodological orientation combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, a strategy employed to enable extensive and rigorous exploration of data.

#### **2.2 Aim of the Study**

As stated in the Introduction, the overarching objective of this research is to explore the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press and to evaluate the implications of this for journalism practice within a democratic setting. In this endeavour, the study aims to critically analyse the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the press and to assess their potential for escalating or minimising such conflicts. Violent conflicts have been witnessed in virtually all parts of Nigeria since the transition from military to democratic rule in 1999. The conflicts have been prevalent in the northern parts, particularly north central Nigeria, an area in which large populations of ethnic minorities co-exist with people from other parts of the country. Scholars, such as Alubo (2011), Paden (2005) and Imobighe (2003) have expressed the view that ethno-religious conflicts pose a serious threat, both to Nigeria's fledgling democratic experiment as well as to the realisation of the development objectives of the country. As an important social actor with the constitutional requirement to "hold government accountable to the electorate," it is important to study the role of the media in covering these conflicts.

To achieve this aim, the research is organised around exploring the overarching research question: *How has the Nigerian press reported ethno-religious conflicts in the country and what are the implications of this for journalism practice in a democratic setting?* Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following inter-related research questions:

1.1 How has the Nigerian press reported ethno-religious conflicts in the country and what pictures emerge from this coverage that might indicate tendencies to escalate or to minimise such conflicts?

1.2 What media frames and representations of ethno-religious conflicts are discernible from the press in Nigeria and what insights could these provide into our understanding of such conflicts?

2. What practical lessons could the peace journalism model offer the Nigerian press in conflict reporting and what are the perceptions of Nigerian journalists and journalism educators of this model?

3. What trends are observable in journalism training and professionalism in Nigeria and what are the implications of these for conflict coverage and general news culture?

4. What are the implications of the Freedom of Information Act for the practice of investigative journalism in Nigeria and in particular the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts?

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. (a) To analyse the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press in terms of professional and normative values of the press and to explore the tendencies to escalate or minimise the conflicts.
1. (b) To identify and evaluate the dominant media frames and representations of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria.
2. To explore the concept of peace journalism as an emerging tool in conflict reportage and examine its applicability to media practice in conflict reportage in Nigeria.
3. To explore the inter-relationship between the professional and commercial environment of news production in Nigeria and how these bear upon the training of journalists and the resulting news culture.
4. To investigate the regulatory environment of media practice in Nigeria and examine in particular the implications of the Freedom of Information Act for investigative journalism and the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

### **2.3 Scope of Study**

The study is centred on violent ethnic and religious conflicts in Jos, the capital city of Plateau State, Nigeria. The focus on Jos, Plateau State, is informed both by the strategic location of

Jos City, as a centre of the Middle Belt and as a highly contested territory by protagonists in the conflicts (Best, 2007). The choice is also based on the intensity and frequency of ethno-religious conflicts in the city since the end of military rule in 1999 and the wide coverage the conflicts have received by the Nigerian press. The time frame for this research, 2001 to 2011, is a ten-year period coinciding roughly with a little over the first decade of democratisation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Specifically, it is the ten-year period from the first major episode of ethno-religious conflict in 2001 within this dispensation when Jos, described as "home of peace and tourism" erupted and has never been the same ever since (Best, 2007; Krause, 2011). As Krause (2011) observes, tensions between ethnic groups rooted in allocation of resources, electoral competition, fears of religious domination and contested land rights amalgamated into an explosive mix. The research focuses on the coverage of selected incidents of violent conflicts by Nigerian newspapers within the period as outlined on Table 2.1 below.

## **2.4 Context**

The upsurge of ethnically-based conflicts in recent times, the complexities of such conflicts and their devastating impact, has provoked diverse discourses and enquiry into the role and mediation of the conflicts by the media (Allen and Seaton, 1999). This is particularly so in Africa, which in the recent past has witnessed a lot of wars, violence and political turmoil (Irobi, 2001). Parallel to this grim dynamic, however, has been the phenomenal growth of democratisation on the continent, and along with it, an upsurge in the growth of the mass media (Tettey, 2006). Therefore, the contributions of the media, in escalating or minimising these conflicts have been serious subjects of research and focus (Frere, 2007; Mbayo, Onwumechili and Musa, 2009; Mutere, 2006; Atkinson, 1999).

The media, according to Manoff (2005: 15) constitute a major human resource "whose potential to help prevent and moderate social violence begs to be discussed, evaluated, and where appropriate, mobilised." For Greenslade (2005, ix) reporting on war and violence is about the most important task for journalists, "the litmus test of journalism" which compels reporters and editors "to confront a host of ethical dilemmas and to question the nature of their occupation." Greenslade observes that war reporting raises critical questions about journalism such as: "how do they report fairly, accurately and compassionately? How do they place isolated events in an historical context? What efforts do they make to try to tell the truth? What is truth anyway?" These difficulties, he explains, are further complicated by "the fact that most modern wars are fought as much through the media as they are on the ground"



and the theatre of war now includes “newspaper offices as well as military headquarters, television stations as well as trenches.”

It is within this broad framework of “media and conflicts” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 34) that my research is located. The specific focus of this research enquiry is Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation which has been embroiled in ethnic and religious conflicts for quite some time. As noted earlier, the incidence of violent communal conflicts with ethnic and religious undertones has increased dramatically since Nigeria’s transition to democratic rule in 1999, a development with negative national and regional implications (Paden, 2005; Ikpe, 2009).

These conflicts pose critical questions on the depth, quality and direction of Nigeria’s democracy and its capacity to attain national socio-economic objectives. As Salawu (2010: 345) has argued, the violent nature of ethno-religious conflicts which often take the form of riots, sabotage, guerrilla warfare and secessionist moves in Nigeria have implications for the political and economic development of the country which makes it an important issue for investigation. The situation also raises questions about the role of the media in these conflicts in terms of their potential for escalating or minimising the conflicts that warrant research attention. This is what this research sets out to investigate.

## **2.5 Research Methods**

In order to implement the objectives of this research, the study has utilised a repertoire of quantitative and qualitative methods in generating and analysing data. These include: Content Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Framing Analysis and Semi-Structured Interviews. In making these choices, I am influenced by the position of Bertrand and Hughes (2005:13) that there is no need for rigidity in the choice of methodology as between quantitative and qualitative methods in media research. According to them, “once you have decided what your question or hypothesis is, any method which is appropriate is acceptable.” Noting the growing inter-disciplinarity of media research, the authors argue that the critical theorist may utilise any method “provided the results of the research can be directed towards improving the social world” (215). The data generated through these methods will be converged through triangulation, which is the application and combination of multiple methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003a: 7).

The methodology adopted for the research not only features a diversity of methods, but also a mix of orientations in the sense that it combines both quantitative and qualitative analytical

tools in generating and analyzing data. Wisker (2007: 75) argues for combining both methods for maximizing the strengths of the quantitative and qualitative data while minimizing their weaknesses. The methods selected for this study signpost the need to gather a variety of data to address fully the objectives of the research.

### ***2.5.1 Quantitative Research using Content Analysis***

The first research question in this study is: “How has the Nigerian press reported ethno-religious conflicts in the country and what pictures emerge from this coverage that might indicate tendencies to escalate or to minimise such conflicts?” This question seeks to understand the patterns of reportage as well as press practices and culture. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to have a global and holistic overview of press coverage, featuring the study of a number of newspapers and involving the analysis of substantial volume of data from the newspapers. Quantitative content analysis, which enables access to, and analysis of large volumes of textual material, is suitable for such task. The method is also suitable for generating and analyzing data with respect to the third research question which explores the viability of “peace journalism” as an alternative model for reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press. Furthermore, frequency counts generated through quantitative analysis would be utilized for the second research question which probes for the frames and representation of ethno-religious conflicts discernible from the press.

Content Analysis is an approach to the analysis of documents and texts that seeks to quantify content in terms of predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner (Bryan, 2004; Berelson, 1952). It is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the context of their use (Krippendorff, 2012). It enables the compression of many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2014). In Holsti’s (1969: 14) words, it is “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.” This method is empirically grounded, exploratory in process and predictive or inferential in intent (Krippendorff, 2012). It enables a systematic reading of texts, images and symbols, though not necessarily from an author’s or user’s perspective. As a method specifically intended for the study of messages, content analysis is fundamental to mass communication research (Lomard, Synder-Duch and Bracken, 2006).

This method has been widely used in media research and Krippendorff (2004, 2012) considers it as potentially one of the most significant techniques in the social sciences. It is

the analysis of texts in the context of their uses. Such analysis, Krippendorff contends, takes into consideration the fact that texts are not just abstract phenomena, but are created to be seen, read, interpreted and acted upon for their meanings. According to him, texts are considered to have implications for human communication, how people co-ordinate their lives, the commitments they make to each other and to the conceptions of society they aspire to, what they know and how they act. This contrasts sharply with natural science methods that rely on detached observations and objective measurement. Krippendorff (2012: 2) explains that although content analysis is not the only research method that takes meaning seriously, “it is a method that is both powerful and unobtrusive. It makes sense of what is mediated between people – textual matter...without perturbing or affecting those who handle that textual matter.”

Krippendorff (2012) argues that unlike researchers who employ other empirical techniques, content analysts examine texts in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed to them does. This, he said, are questions for which natural scientists have no answers and for which their methods are generally insensitive.

In its formative years, content analysts focused mainly on the “popular and simplistic” notion of content (Krippendorff, 2012: 4), that is, questions about “who says what, through which channels, to whom, and with what effects” (Lasswell, 1960). This notion viewed *content*, the what of communication, as an entity that authors think they *enter* into messages and *ship* to remote receivers, who *remove* it for *what it is* and henceforth *share it* among others. According to Krippendorff, this “bizarre notion leads to authors as authorities of what they put into messages and to the conception of content analysts as experts who provide objective accounts of what messages were intended to convey or actually contain.” Modern communication, Krippendorff insists, renders such “container metaphor” as useless and calls for a redefinition of content analysis, “one that aligns content with how contemporary society operates and understands itself through texts.” In this respect, he explained that contemporary content analysis has been constrained to develop a methodology of its own, one that enables researchers to plan, execute, communicate, reproduce and critically evaluate their analysis. This therefore goes beyond a mechanical task and requires “creativity and competence” and procedural logic justified through the use of socially acceptable criteria.

Riffe, Lacy and Fico (2014: 7) make a persuasive case for utilizing quantitative content analysis in communications research. For them, “the only way to logically assess communication content is through quantitative content analysis...only this information-gathering technique enables us to illuminate patterns in communication content reliably and validly. And only through the reliable and valid illumination of such patterns can we hope to illuminate content causes or predict content effects.” For them, content analysis emphasises “direct and objective observation and measurement” which contrasts with reasoning, intuition, faith, ideology or conviction. Such a position amplifies age-old epistemological debates between idealism and empiricism, with quantitative content analysis assuming an empirical approach. This argument should however be moderated by the fact that even in quantitative analysis, elements of the qualitative emerge, prompting Krippendorff (2012: 22, 28) to even question the validity and usefulness of the attempts to construct water-tight distinctions between quantitative and qualitative analysis. As observed by him, content analysis has moved on from its initial fixation on analysis of the physicality of text and is now engaged in examining how individuals use various texts in their respective worlds. This is based on the realisation that texts have no inherent, reader-independent qualities outside of the meanings readers bring to it. Scott (2001: 193) also argues that the content analyst must engage in an act of qualitative synthesis when attempting to summarise the overall meaning of the text and its impact on the reader. Graneheim and Lundman (2004: 105) further point out that even though at its initial stages, content analysis emphasised quantitative approach, over time it has expanded to also include interpretations of latent content. What all of this suggests is that there have been moves to reposition content analysis as not only quantitative, but also qualitative analysis. I am embracing this principle, as this increasingly blurred boundary between the quantitative and qualitative in content analysis will be noticed in my analysis in chapter three where I employ statistical inferences to analyse the patterns of press reportage of ethno-religious conflicts but also devote copious space to what might appear as qualitative descriptions.

Krippendorff (1980) lists six questions which must be addressed in content analysis. They include:

- Which data are to be analysed?
- How are such data defined?
- From what population are the data being drawn?
- What is the context relative to which the data are analysed?

- What are the boundaries of the analysis?
- What is the target of the inferences?

The content analyst could count, among major elements, words or terms, themes, characters, paragraphs, items, concepts and semantics (Stemler, 2014) but generally research would involve a combination of several content analytical elements. In practical terms, doing quantitative content analysis generally involves drawing representative samples of content, training coders to use category rules developed to measure or reflect differences in content, and measuring reliability. The data collected are then analysed to describe typical patterns or characteristics or to identify important relationships among the content qualities examined (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2014). As explained by Tim May (2001: 191-192), this endeavour comprises three stages: stating the research problem; retrieving the text and employing sampling methods; and, interpretation and analysis. The method considers the frequency with which certain words and phrases occur in the text as a means of identifying its characteristics. According to him, the quantitative analyst seeks to derive categories from the data so it can be compared. This involves transforming words or phrases in the document into numbers. The frequency with which a word or phrase appears in the text is assumed to measure its significance. This strategy is also assumed to enhance the reliability and validity of the classified data.

#### ***2.5.1.1 Choice of Newspapers for the Research***

The choice of newspapers for this research was premised on several factors, not least the ease of access to textual matter covering a period of ten years. More fundamentally, newspapers in Nigeria are generally associated with much more critical and problematic content than the broadcast media. This is accounted for partly because until recently, radio and television were the exclusive monopoly of the state (Yusha'u, 2010) thus limiting their independence of scope and content. On the other hand, Nigerian newspapers not only have been mostly privately owned commercial concerns, but also had the historical legacy of championing the anti-colonialist struggle. The “protest motif” (Olukotun, 2004: 9) which developed from this legacy, associates Nigerian newspapers with vibrant and highly critical, even “anarchical” (Oluyokun, 2004) coverage of events, the publish-and-be damned tradition which this study seeks to problematize. With a reputation for vibrancy and fearlessness, newspapers provide rich sources for critical coverage and reportage of issues in the polity and are more trusted by the public to convey trustworthy information than the electronic media. And even though the literacy rate in northern Nigeria (the general area my study covers) is relatively lower than

the southern parts, news and opinion carried by newspapers are influential amongst the elite who manipulate ethnic and religious sentiments for political gains (Ikpe, 2007). The growing use of the internet and mobile devices also implies that an increasing number of people have access to newspapers many of which now have on-line editions which can be accessed for free. All these informed the decision to choose newspapers as the media that would yield the most diverse and most critical textual data for this research.

From a comprehensive compilation of newspapers currently published in Nigeria,<sup>6</sup> I selected four national newspapers based on editorial, ownership and regional considerations for analysis. The four newspapers are: *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *The Guardian* and *This Day*. The newspapers were selected on the following criteria: (a) all the newspapers are national in circulation and coverage; (b) all the newspapers were in active circulation throughout the ten-year period of the study; (c) two of the newspapers have regional biases coinciding with the north-south geo-political and religious divide of Nigeria: *Daily Trust* is northern-based and northern/Islamic biased; *Nigerian Tribune* is south-west based and is biased towards the south and the Christian view point; (d) *The Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers are based in Lagos, the economic power base of Nigeria, and are considered as among the top class national dailies reflecting a national outlook. *The Guardian*, particularly, is an influential newspaper with an intellectual appeal. Both *The Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers are also regarded as among the leading newspapers of record in Nigeria (Obijiofor, 2009: 187).

The choice of the four newspapers is justified on the need to reflect all shades of opinion in the study for balance and fairness and to ensure that the data obtained from the newspapers truly represents the cream of Nigerian journalism. All four newspapers currently have online versions and three of them are listed among the ten most popular online newspapers in Nigeria based on Alexa, a web information company (AABNig: <http://www.aabnigeria.com>).

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<sup>6</sup> Determining the number of newspapers in Nigeria is not an easy task. Though a generally vibrant industry, attrition rate of newspapers is high, in direct response to the vicissitudes of the harsh and unstable macroeconomic and regulatory environment. The late 1980s and early 1990s particularly witnessed a mushrooming of the newspaper and magazine industry. But by the close of that decade, many of the titles had died. Olukotun, (2004: 23) for example reports that over 32 newspaper publications collapsed between 1994 and 1997, due in part to the harsh economics of production as well as political persecution of the private media by the military administration.

(See Appendix 6 for a comprehensive list of newspapers currently in circulation in Nigeria). The weekday and weekend editions of the newspapers were all included in the study and the names of the papers as used here refer generically to all the English language staples produced by each of the newspaper organisations. For example, *Daily Trust* includes the daily edition of the newspaper and weekend editions called *Weekly Trust* (published on Saturdays) and *Sunday Trust*.

#### **2.5.1.2 Pilot Study**

Krippendorff (2012) has advised on the need to trial smaller samples of content analysis method before embarking on a large scale project. In this respect, I undertook a pilot study of two of the national newspapers identified above in the form of quantitative content analysis of the coverage of the incident of ethno-religious conflicts in September 2001. The analysis covered a period of 30 days, one week before the incident, and three weeks after the riots, that is, September 1-30, 2001. The newspapers content analysed in the pilot study are *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*. The former is published in Abuja and has a northern orientation while the *Nigerian Tribune* is published in Ibadan, southern Nigeria, and has a southern editorial orientation.

Flowing from my research questions, I prepared *a priori* coding frame outlining the themes and issues involved in the research. The coding frame was divided into five major sections: the Initial section (Story ID); Part 1: Preliminary Information; Part 2: General Coverage; Part 3: Media Frames and Part 4: Peace Journalism Criteria. The Story ID created a unique and exclusive identity for each coded item to enable easy identification and measurement. I also captured the key words in the headline for use later in qualitative analysis.

Part 1 (Preliminary Information) sought to capture the following facts: incident of the conflict being reported; story type; by-line or identity of the writer, if indicated; regional identity of the reporter/writer; gender of the reporter/writer. Part 2 (General Coverage) coded elements of each story in terms of: Prominence, source of story, balance in the story, back grounding/contextualizing, language and tone. Part 3 (Media Frames) categorised stories based on the dominant emphasis expressed as the cause(s)/solution(s) of ethno-religious conflicts. Part 4 coded stories on the Peace Journalism Criteria.

My first task was to source editions of the two newspapers published for the 10-year period, September 2001- August 2011. In view of the fact that there were not yet reliable and consistent online databases of past editions of all Nigerian newspapers, I had to source for,

and utilise print editions for the research. My first journey in the search for the newspapers was to the National Library of Nigeria, Jos branch. I however discovered that the library was undergoing major renovation and was therefore not open for public use at the time I visited. I therefore proceeded to the University of Jos Library. Here, I obtained some of the copies of the newspapers.

I however encountered some challenges, the first of which was that the Documents and Archival section of the University of Jos Library, where back editions of newspapers are stored, is located at the satellite campus of the University to which electricity power had been disconnected for a long period due to what desk staff described as “certain technical reasons.” The library therefore had no supply of electricity and users had to utilise the natural light of day supplemented by personal lightening devises allowed into the library. Another challenge was that of access to reliable photocopying facilities with which to make copies of relevant pages of the newspapers. As the University Library had no photocopying facilities at that branch, I had to rely on street side vendors, making the work much more tedious, slower and expensive.

The experience at the university library prepared me for the task of sourcing manually the editions of all the newspapers required for the full study. Because most of the newspaper editions for the period of study were not available in the University of Jos Library, however, I had to utilise other libraries, primarily the National Library in Garki, Abuja and the Library services of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos. I also paid a visit to the National Library, Iganmu, Lagos, and the Lagos State Library at Western Avenue, Lagos. Despite these trips, there were still critical gaps which necessitated my visit to the head offices of some of the newspapers in Abuja to obtain the editions I could not lay hands on from any of the library archives. This was the case particularly with *Daily Trust* and *This Day* newspapers. At the *Daily Trust* head office, I was graciously granted access to their library and permitted to take out relevant editions to photocopy. The trip to *This Day* involved searching through piles of newspaper editions in store rooms. As the editions were held together by strings on monthly basis, I therefore had to first search through relevant bundles, untie the strings, photocopy relevant pages, and then re-assemble and tie back the bundles. Needless to say, these were tedious, though absolutely necessary, tasks in the process of securing complete data.



I should note here the almost completely analogue state of the National Library of Nigeria with respect to handling of newspapers, leading to the possibility, as my experience shows, that valuable information which should be stored for posterity could easily be lost, thus creating gaps in knowledge.

### **2.5.1.3 Coding Protocol**

The pilot study was useful in helping to refine my coding protocol. For example, I reduced the analysis period from 30 days to 21 days as a result of the pilot study because I discovered that I had enough information for the analysis within that time frame and there was no need to produce a data set that could become unwieldy. Also, I initially did not code for back page of the newspapers in my pilot study on assumption that the back cover would be devoted exclusively to sports stories. However, I discovered during my pilot study that Nigerian newspapers utilise the back page both for sports and important stories and opinion pieces/columns.

This study covered a 10-year period, 2001-2011. Five major episodes of ethno-religious conflicts were selected as case studies for the research as indicated on Table 2.1. For each conflict episode, the analysis covered a three week period. Also as earlier detailed, the newspapers were manually accessed through the National Library of Nigeria in Abuja and Lagos, supplemented by visits to the University of Jos Library and that of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos. The researcher also visited the head office of *Daily Trust* in Abuja and the Abuja office of *This Day* newspaper to access copies not found in any of the libraries.

Coding of all items on the conflict episodes was conducted for all the issues of the four newspapers published within the crisis periods as follows:

- September 2001 Episode: September 1-21, 2001
- November 2008 episode: November 22- Dec 12,2008
- January/March 2010 Episode: January 12-31 and March 02-21,2010
- December 2010 Episode: Dec 20,2010-Jan 11,2011
- August 2011 Episode: August 23-Sept 15,2011

The details are reflected in Table 2.1 below.

A total of 617 items were coded and analysed from the four newspapers as follows:

<i>Daily Trust</i>	197 items
<i>Nigerian Tribune</i>	150 items
<i>The Guardian</i>	136 items
<i>This Day</i>	134 items

**Table 2.1: Incidents of Ethno-Religious Conflicts**

<b>Incidents of Ethno-Religious Conflicts</b>			
Incident	Description	Date of commencement	Analysis period
September 2001	Ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and Bukuru Metropolis	September 07 2001	September 1-21 2001
November 2008	Jos North Local Government elections violence	November 28 2008	November 22- December 12 2008
January/March 2010	Incidents of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos North and Maza village of Jos South	January 17 2010 and March 07 2010	January 12-31 2010 and March 02-21 2010
Christmas Eve 2010	Incidents of bomb blasts in Jos city	December 24 2010	December 18-January 11, 2011
Eid-el Fitr (Sallah) 2011	Incidents of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos and Bukuru metropolis	August 29 2011	August 23-September 15 2011

In line with Lee (2010: 368), the unit of analysis is the individual story, a definition that includes “hard news stories, features and opinion pieces.” Coding was undertaken solely by the researcher and there was therefore no inter-coder reliability test required. Each item was carefully coded in line with the prepared coding schedule and read critically to identify the various themes represented on the schedule.

### **2.5.2 Qualitative Research using Framing Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis**

One of the features of this research, as highlighted earlier, is that it utilises a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods in data gathering and analysis. It is well recognised that using a combination of quantitative and qualitative data can improve an evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another. Whereas in quantitative content analysis, mathematical and statistical figures can describe the nature of content, this method is limited in terms of the deeper exploration of the latent

content of textual matter, but which might be equally important in understanding and contextualising meaning. Thus, engaging the more interpretive and qualitative methods would illuminate aspects of research not covered by quantitative analysis.

McQuail (2005) notes that quantitative content analysis has significant draw backs, particularly as concealed or latent meanings of text are not always visible in the numeric data generated by quantitative analysis. For May (2001: 192), the method considers product and says little of process since “it deals mainly with what has been produced, not with the decisions which informed its production which tell us so much about its received and intended meanings.” This, he argues, raises an empiricist problem because it deals only with information that can be measured and standardised or simplified into categories. In this preoccupation, it reproduces meanings used by authors in the first instance, as opposed to subjecting them to critical analysis in terms of the political, social and economic context of their production. Also, it might tend to ignore or underplay audience agency in their capacity for interpreting messages differently from the analyst. This could then become a “crude stimulus-response model of human behaviour – that is, what people read is what they think” (p.192). Significantly, May points out that the frequency with which words or phrases occur in a text (a quantitative emphasis) may say nothing about their “significance” within the document (a qualitative emphasis). And as Scott (1990: 32) aptly points out, it may be that a single striking word or phrase conveys a meaning out of all proportion to its frequency and a non-quantitative approach would be better able to grasp the significance of such isolated references. Therefore interpretive approaches utilising qualitative methods are now employed alongside quantitative content analysis to deepen analysis and obtain best results from a research enquiry (McQuail, 2005; May, 2001).

It is important to note, following Denzin and Lincoln (2011) that qualitative research, as a field of inquiry, crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter and is surrounded by a complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions. Some of the concepts, according to them, include traditions associated with foundationalism, positivism, post foundationalism, post-positivism, post-culturalism, post-modernism, post-humanism and the many qualitative research perspectives and methods connected to cultural and interpretive studies. Denzin and Lincoln list some of the methods that fall under the category of qualitative research to include case study, politics and ethics, participatory inquiry, interviewing, participant observation, visual methods and interpretive analysis.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) further point out that as a set of interpretive activities, qualitative research privileges no single methodological practice over another. In this regard, they point out that it is not only difficult to define precisely, but it also has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own. “Multiple theoretical paradigms claim use of qualitative research methods and strategies, from constructivism to cultural studies, feminism, Marxism, and ethnic models of study. Nor does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices exclusively its own. Researchers in this field use semiotics, narrative, content, discourse, archival and phonemic analysis – even statistics, tables, graphs and numbers.”

Seale (1999: 465) agrees with this position in addressing and explicating the debate regarding which philosophical foundation is most appropriate to qualitative research. According to him, any method of social enquiry is a useful tool for research as long as there is clear cut explanation and procedure that can withstand the demands of scientific investigation. In Seale’s opinion, research is a “craft skill” used by researchers in carrying out investigations. This skill, he emphasises, should be autonomous from the need to resolve philosophical disputes and can be acquired from exposure to almost any intelligent methodological discussion, whether from positivists, constructivists or postmodern paradigms, as well as from careful consideration of research studies done by others. Therefore, while not unmindful of philosophical foundations, Seale believes social science researchers should work independently without being bogged down by “distractions.” The argument above informed my decision to adopt a mixed methodological framework in which I utilised both quantitative and qualitative analysis, a strategy which enabled me to explore data extensively and rigorously.

In view of its flexibility and multiple uses, qualitative research is growing in popularity amongst social scientists as it gives opportunity for the researcher to be a participant in data gathering and to use the process of social interaction in enriching data (Yusha’u, 2009: 104). This discussion gives a clear background to the qualitative methods I have utilised in my research, including Framing Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis and Semi-Structured Interviews.

#### **2.5.2.1 *Framing Analysis***

It is recognised that the manner in which the media frame news events is an important variable in the perception of such events by the public (Entman, 1991, 1993). According to Lee (2010: 364), framing is a process of organizing a news story, thematically, stylistically,

and factually to convey a specific storyline. For McCombs (2004) a frame is the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the main point is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration. In Entman's famous words:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993:52)

In other words, it is “the selection of – and emphasis upon – particular attributes for the media's agenda” (McCombs, 2004). How an event is framed by the news media depends on what is included or excluded in the communication text and what is highlighted, hidden or suppressed in the text (Obijiofor, 2010). The essence of framing, according to Entman (1991), is sizing – magnifying or shrinking elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient. As characteristics of the news text, frames reside in the specific properties of the news narrative that encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understanding of them. This relates in particular to the keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images emphasized in a news narrative. The essence of framing however is sizing: “magnifying or shrinking elements of the depicted reality to make them more or less salient” (Entman, 1991: 8-9). The most critical sizing choices involve the overall salience of the event, which determine how much material on the event is available and how prominently it is displayed. According to Entman, the frame of a news portrait can be enlarged so that media reports may penetrate the consciousness of a mass public or it can be shrunk to miniaturize an event, diminishing the amount, prominence and duration of coverage, and thus mass awareness. In this way, the frame contributes to determining the political importance of a news event.

Entman (1991) further argues that news frames exist at two levels: as mentally stored principles for information processing and as characteristics of the news text. As news characteristics, frames are constructed from and embodied in keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images emphasized in a news narrative. Such frames can be detected by probing for particular words and visual images that consistently appear in a narrative and convey thematically consonant meanings across media and time. In Entman's words, “by providing, repeating, and thereby reinforcing words and visual images that reference some ideas but not others, frames work to make some ideas more salient in the text, others less so –

and others entirely invisible...through repetition, placement and reinforcing associations with each other, the words and images that comprise the frame render one basic interpretation more readily discernible, comprehensible and memorable than others.”

My research attempts to find out the framing of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press in order to understand the perspectives that are highlighted or emphasized and those that are suppressed or underplayed and how these contribute to, or detract from, a logical understanding of the conflicts and thus their resolution. In approaching framing analysis, Reese (2014) believes that an interpretive, qualitative approach, rather than quantitative codification, gives greater emphasis to political content of news and how they draw upon a shared store of social meanings. This informs the approach adopted by this study, which is qualitative rather than quantitative.

Framing analysis was operationalized mainly through the examination of the sources and the styles of reporting of the conflict in the press. In constructing the categories for the frame analysis, the research adapted the framing scheme used by Kothari (2010) in which categories were identified to deconstruct each story, particularly the focus of the story, background information provided by the story and the discussion of the underlying problems and solutions proposed. Based on scholarship and previous studies on ethnic and religious conflicts in Nigeria (Imobighe, 2003; Ikpe, 2007; Alemika, 2002; Egwu, 2004), the stories were categorized on the basis of what each emphasized as the cause(s)/solution(s) of ethno-religious conflicts.

Using the story as the unit of analysis, six frames were identified as follows: a story which attributes the conflict to rivalry between ethnic groups was treated as “ethnic conflict”; a story which sees the conflict as war or struggle between Christians and Muslims or as manifestation of Islamic fundamentalism or Jihad was treated as “religious conflict”. Where a story attributes the conflict to poverty, illiteracy, struggle over land or economic resources, the story was constructed as “socio-economic conflict.” If the focus of the story is on intra or inter-party political rivalry or political struggle for offices or advantage, it was classified as “politics/political manipulation” frame. A story attributing the conflict to break down of law and order, criminality, impunity, failure of security or failure or inability by government to protect lives and property was framed as “security/law and order.” Finally, a story which interprets the conflicts as essentially the citizenship question in Nigeria was framed as “citizenship question.”

The four newspapers identified in the discussions of quantitative analysis were used for the framing analysis and also covered the 10-year period of the study. The unit of analysis is the story whether news, feature or opinion (Lee, 2010). Coding was conducted solely by the researcher and frequency tables were obtained to determine the dominant frame in each story. To accomplish this objective, I utilized the values on frames obtained from the quantitative categories as basis for discussions and evaluation of the framing practices of Nigerian newspapers in reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

#### ***2.5.2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis***

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a theory and a method of analysing the way that individuals and institutions use language (Richardson, 2007:1). It emphasizes the use of language as a social practice (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). Critical discourse analysts note that language is not used in a vacuum or in isolation but is grounded within a complex frame of social and cultural practices. In linking linguistic analysis with social analysis, CDA considers language beyond the sentence and attempts to unwrap ideological and other meanings hidden in texts but which have implications for power, dominance and relationships within the polity.

The term “discourse” admits of several meanings, some even contradictory and mutually exclusive (Titscher, et.al, 2000: 24). In an abstract sense, it is conceived of as a category which describes the vast array of meaning-making resources available to people (Fairclough, et. al 2011: 357). In this sense, it may be labelled by an alternative term, “semiosis” having to do with words, pictures, symbols, design etc. This distinguishes it from the other common sense of ‘discourse’ as a category for identifying particular ways of representing some aspect of social life. Within CDA however, discourse is generally viewed as language in use in speech and writing and emphasizes the idea of discourse as constitutive of reality (Fairclough, 2011: 26-27). Discourse, in this sense, considers ‘language above the sentence’ to its active functions and particularly to the relationship between language and power. CDA is therefore a strand of discourse analysis focused on the critique of ideology and power, and the analysis of the manifestation and reproduction of social and political inequalities (Aliyu and Ferguson, 2015: 9).

According to Wodak (1996: 15), describing discourse as a social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and situations, institutions and structures which frame it: the discursive event is shaped by them, but it also shapes them. For her,

discourse is socially constituted, as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps sustain and reproduce the social status-quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Wodak goes on to argue that because discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. For her, discursive practices have major ideological effects since “they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations in the manner they represent things and position people” (Wodak, 1996: 15).

In conceptualizing language as a form of social practice, CDA attempts to make people aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure of which they may not normally be aware (Fairclough, 1993). It contends that the power of language is dependent on the use to which it is put and therefore should be critically studied (Wodak, 2001). In this respect, CDA is “politically involved research with an emancipatory requirement: it seeks to have an effect on social practice and social relationships, for example in teacher development, in the elaboration of guidelines for non-sexist language use or in the proposals to increase the intelligibility of news and legal texts” (Titscher, et. al, 2000: 247).

Fairclough (2010) emphasizes this view when he explains that the broad objective of CDA is to develop ways of analysing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist society. For him, CDA is concerned with the investigation of the tension between two assumptions about language use: that language is both socially constitutive and socially determined. He identifies two ways in which language is socially constitutive – conventional and creative ways. In the conventional sense, language reproduces existing identities, relationships and knowledge forms. Creativity implies the opposite, in that it is through language that social change takes place. Thus, language use can be both reproductive and transforming, depending on the prevailing circumstances (Titscher, et.al 2000). With respect to language being socially determined, the focus here is on the “orders of discourse,” that is the totality of discourse types and the relationships between them in a particular social domain.

In sum, CDA can be considered as the analysis of relationships between concrete language use and the wider social and cultural structures. It is particularly concerned with social problems and the effects of power relations and inequalities in producing social wrongs (Fairclough, 2010: 8). As an interdisciplinary method, CDA is interpretative and explanatory.



It aims to produce interpretations and explanations of areas of social life which both identify causes of social wrongs and produce knowledge which could contribute to righting or mitigating them (Fairclough, 2010). It thus emphasises a systematic methodology and a relationship between the text and its social conditions, ideologies and power relations (Titscher, 2006: 146).

Fairclough (2010) has identified three properties of CDA. According to him, CDA is relational, dialectical and transdisciplinary. In his view, it is relational in so far as its primary focus is not on individuals but on social relations which are complex and layered. Discourse brings to the complexity of social life “meaning and making meaning” (ibid, 3). Fairclough also points out that the relationship between discourse and the complex social relations it engages with is dialectical. Dialectical relations, he explains, are relations between objects which are different from one another but not discrete or unconnected. Thus the different elements or “moments” in the social process cannot be analysed in isolation but in terms of their dialectical or inseparable relationships. In this respect, CDA is not analysis of discourse in itself but analysis of dialectical relations between discourse and other objects as well as the analysis of the “internal relations” of discourse. And in so far as the analyses of such relations cut across conventional boundaries between disciplines, CDA is therefore transdisciplinary and its approach is that of critical realism whose central concern is the socially constructive effects of discourse.

CDA has its origins in critical linguistics of the 1970s when authors such as Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew attempted to show that language was used as an instrument of ideology (Machin and Mayr, 2012). In doing this, texts were studied for the ways they categorized people, events, places and actions to demonstrate that language was part of the way people seek to promote and naturalize particular views of the world. CDA has built upon this by developing methods and theories that could better capture the inter relationship between language, power and ideology and is distinguished by its open commitment to political intervention and social change.

CDA’s focus on social problems, particularly its role in the production and reproduction of power, abuse or domination, has been a subject of academic enquiry (Van Dijk, 2001; Horvath, 2012; Fairclough, 2010). For Horvath (2012) the relatedness of the complex mechanism of discursive practice and their social function is often deliberately left opaque, especially when the need occurs to create and maintain differences in power relations. CDA

seeks to create a framework for decreasing such opacity. This agrees with Fairclough (2010) who conceives of CDA as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between discursive practice, events and texts, and wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes. It investigates how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and it explores how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

Roger Fowler (1991: 9), while examining the critical role of language in mediating reality, focuses particular attention on the news media. Newspaper coverage of events, he notes, is usually presented as the unbiased recording of “hard facts.” Fowler however challenges this perception, arguing that news is a practice, a product of the social and political world on which it reports. Fowler identifies three characteristics of news reports which are of particular significance to my research. The first characteristic is that news is socially constructed; the events reported are not necessarily a reflection of their intrinsic importance but reveal the operation of a complex and artificial set of selection criteria. The second characteristic is that news is a practice, a discourse which, far from neutrally reflecting social reality and empirical facts, intervenes through the social construction of reality. Lastly, news is a representation of the world in language. Because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is represented. Therefore, news, like every discourse, constructively patterns that of which it speaks. It is therefore clear that news is not a value-free reflection of ‘facts.’

In explaining the social construction of news, Fowler (1991: 10) argues that news is always reported from a particular angle. According to him, “because the institutions of news reporting and presentation are socially, economically and politically situated, all news is always reported from some particular angle.” This claim, he notes, is not limited to news as it can be applied to any representational discourse. For Fowler, anything said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position. “Language,” he insists, “is not a clear window but a refracting, structuring medium” (p.11).

In news reporting by the press, this fact is complicated by news selection criteria. Fowler reiterates that although it is commonly assumed that news reports are the accounts of “the real world,” of what happened out there, the reality is a little more sophisticated as events are subjected to conventional processes of selection. In this respect, he points out that events are

not intrinsically news worthy in themselves but become “news” only when selected for inclusion in news reports. He notes that the vast majority of events are not mentioned, and so selection immediately gives a partial view of the world. This, he said, is reinforced by the fact that different media and newspapers treat events differently both in content and presentation. In Fowler’s opinion therefore, “the world of the press is not the real world, but a world skewed and judged” (p. 11).

Paul Manning (2001: 50), writing a decade later, affirmed Fowler’s position in his assertion that far from merely mirroring what happens in the world, the practice of journalism involves “a process of manufacture and fabrication.” This, he explains, does not necessarily mean that journalists deliberately fabricate or lie but emphasises the fact that the production of news involves the routine gathering and assembling of certain constituent elements which are then fashioned to construct or fabricate an account of the particular news events. For him, “newspaper representations of reality are imperfect distortions rather than perfect reflections of reality.”

News selection itself is determined by “news values,” the criteria by which the media determine events for reporting and/or presentation. As explained above, news is not simply what happens, but that which can be regarded and presented as newsworthy. Fowler notes that these criteria are usually undertaken unconsciously in editorial practice and they perform a “gate-keeping” role, filtering and restricting news input and output. Hull (1991) captures it very aptly:

The media do not simply and transparently report events which are “naturally” newsworthy in themselves. “News” is the end-product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.

Philo (1989) similarly explains that news is not so much gathered or found as much as it is made. News, in his perspective, is a creation of a journalistic process, and can even be considered as an artefact or a commodity. The more newsworthiness criteria an item fulfils, the more likely it is to be reported. Negativity is a top news criterion and that explains why negative events usually receive massive coverage.

An important factor affecting the content and presentation of news relates to production schedules and conventions for access to sources. According to Stuart Hall (1973), newsgathering strategies, while ensuring economy of time and effort, are however very

selective, implying that only certain sources and voices are heard. For Fowler, imbalance of access results in partiality, not only in what assertions and attitudes are reported (content) but also in how they are reported (style and form) and therefore the world view or ideology portrayed. “Specific powerful institutions, frequently accessed (with neglect of other sections of the population and other organisations) provide the newspapers with modes of discourse which already encode the attitudes of powerful elite. Newspapers in part adopt this language for their own and, in deploying it, reproduce the attitudes of the powerful. This reproduction happens to be in the favour of the newspaper industry, which is part of the interests of an industrial-capitalist society, with an authoritarian, conservative government, and appropriate ideological and repressive agencies (Fowler, 1991: 15).”

Richardson (2007) identifies three characteristics of journalistic discourse which he argues are clearly inter related and sometimes difficult to disentangle. These characteristics are the language of journalism, its production and consumption and the relationship of journalism to social institutions. In this respect, Richardson points out that sourcing and construction of news is intimately linked with the actions and opinions of social groups. He argues also that it is impossible to construct news without a conception of the target audience. And while it is possible, he insists that it is flawed to consider issues such as contemporary democratic politics, social values and the continuing existence of prejudice and social inequalities “without reference to the formative influence of journalism.” These perspectives are critical to my research which is on representation of ethno-religious conflicts by newspapers. Critical discourse analysis of the newspapers will provide a deeper understanding of how the press has handled these conflicts within the context of the social realities in which the journalists and newspapers operate.

With respect to the practical steps of undertaking CDA, Fairclough (1989) gives three levels of discourse and corresponding three stages of critical discourse analysis. The three discursual levels are (a) *the text* which examines the content of the particular text under examination and the interpretations which this may yield; (b) the *process of production and interpretation*, relating to the manner of textual production and its effect on interpretation; and (c) *social conditions of production and interpretation* which deals with the social factors that resulted in or contributed to the origination of the text and how these influence interpretation. Flowing from these three analytical processes are corresponding three stages of critical discourse analysis including (a) Description: the stage concerned with the formal properties of the text; (b) Interpretation: the stage which examines the relationship between

text and interaction, viewing the text as a product of a process, and a resource in the process of production; and (c) Explanation which deals with the relationship between interaction and social context – with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation and their social effects. This research employs Fairclough's three-stage process of discourse analysis outlined above, that is, the text, the discourse practice and social practice. These three stages of analysis correspond to what others have labelled as the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis.

The analysis is based on the reportage of the January/March 2010 conflicts which witnessed the largest volume of coverage as earlier identified in chapter three. The unit of analysis is the story, including hard news, feature and opinion pieces. For each newspaper, there is a detailed analysis of one carefully selected feature/opinion article and a general examination of other items of coverage within the study period in the light of that opinion piece. I elected to lead the analysis with opinion articles because the discourse in such articles “problematizes the world by taking up the normative dimension of issues and events” within the overall discursive strategy of the news narrative (Greenberg, 2000). Such opinion discourses assume “important communicative function by offering readers a distinctive and authoritative voice that will speak to them directly, in the face of troubling and problematic circumstances” (Greenberg, 2000). That the conflicts examined in this study constitute “troubling and problematic circumstances” for the Nigerian citizen and nation is attested to by the number of casualties and the frequency of occurrence. This research attempts to locate the press within these conflicts and inquires as to whether they are part of the problem or part of the solution. According to Greenberg, “opinion discourse addresses news readers embraced in a consensual relationship by taking a particular stance in relation to the persons and topics referred.” He argues that despite its communicative importance, this news genre has received less sustained theoretical and empirical attention from scholars than “hard” news. Therefore, while it is more routine to analyse “hard” news, a direct focus on opinion articles gets to the heart of a newspaper's overarching editorial posturing and provides a useful “basis for scrutinizing and challenging conventional journalistic standards of balance, fairness and objectivity” (Greenberg, 2000). Also, the analyses of the opinion articles surveyed in this study are cross-referenced to the “hard” news reportage in discovering the representational strategy of the press in the production and dissemination of the “order” in news discourse.

### **2.5.3 Interviews**

According to Tim May (2001: 120), interviewing as a method involves maintaining and generating conversations with people on a topic or range of topics and the interpretations which social researchers make of the resultant data. May (2001) has identified four broad types of interviews in social research: structured interview, semi-structured interview, the unstructured or focused interview and the group interview. Structured interview is mainly associated with survey research and relies upon the use of questionnaire as the data collection instrument. Fontana and Frey (1994) explain that emphasis of structured interview is on standardization of explanations; eliciting only the responses of the interviewee; not prompting or providing a personal view; not interpreting meanings and simply repeating the questions and finally, not improvising. This method is popular in telephone interviews for marketing purposes.

Semi-structured interview, as the name suggests, is a mid-way between the techniques of the structured interview and the focused or unstructured interview. Although questions are normally specified, the interviewer is also at liberty to probe beyond the answers in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardization and comparability (May, 2001: 123). In semi-structured interview, the interviewer can seek both clarification and elaboration on responses as well as probe the answers, thus permitting “dialogue” with the respondent. Semi-structured interviews are useful for their flexibility in allowing partially prepared questions which can be elaborated by the interviewee (Clifford, 2003; Arksey and Knight, 1999). This enables the interviewer to maintain focus while allowing the respondent to go off the script, where necessary, to elaborate and discuss issues that are germane to the topic under discussion. Being an aspect of the qualitative research, Arksey and Knight rightly recommend that fewer interviewees are better than too many. According to May, these types of interviews enable people to answer more “on their own terms while providing a greater structure for comparability over that of the focused interview” (p. 124). The focus is provided by the researcher and the primary objective is to seek understanding rather than generalizations about phenomena ([sociology.org.uk/methfi.pdf](http://sociology.org.uk/methfi.pdf)). Use of open-ended questions allows for deep conversation and enables complex issues to be discussed or clarified. The technique has validity as respondents can answer issues in details (*ibid.*).

Unstructured or focused interview is open-ended and particularly suitable for life-histories, biographical and oral interviews. It is at the “qualitative end” of the research spectrum and emphasizes flexibility and discovery of meaning rather than standardization. Group interview

involves several respondents participating simultaneously in an interview situation. It allows researchers to explore group norms and dynamics around issues and topics under investigation. A group interview, according to May (2001: 125) could involve eight to ten people discussing from between one to two and half hours, guided by an interviewer. Group interviews can provide insights into both “social relations in general and the examination of processes and social dynamics in general” (126).

May recommends the use of the semi-structured interview in situations where a researcher is utilizing interviews “within a range of other methods” in a study. This makes the method quite suitable for my research as it is one of several qualitative methods I am employing to deepen data collection and analysis of the issues raised by my enquiry. Semi-structured interview not only gives great latitude, but also offers opportunity to understand the context and content of the interview and is best conducted by the researcher themselves (May, 2001: 125). This is a main reason I conducted the interviews myself.

To conduct a successful interview, it is important that the issues being investigated are clearly understood by the respondent and that they consent and feel comfortable in the whole process. Moser and Kalton (1983) in May (2001) particularly emphasize accessibility, cognition and motivation on the part of the respondent. Accessibility has to do with respondent’s capacity to provide the information required while cognition relates to their understanding of what is expected of them and if they are comfortable with the interview exercise. Motivation is winning the confidence of the respondent and making them feel that their input is valuable, thus securing their active cooperation and participation. To achieve this goal, I ensured that my questionnaire framework outlines clearly the aims of the investigation and that the guide questions are clear and concise (see appendix). Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face with only one being done through the telephone. The different scenarios tasked the interviewing skills of the researcher. For example, ability to recognize emotions through listening in a telephone interview; ability to keep the interest of respondents during the interviews, most of which lasted an average of 45 minutes; the balance between obtaining adequate responses over the telephone and huge mobile bill as Nigeria has no landline facilities, etc.

Following the initial quantitative and qualitative analyses, I was able to structure the interview questions in order to study the context of media production in Nigeria. The themes and issues explored in the interview include: conflict reportage by the Nigerian press with

particular reference to ethno-religious conflicts; standards and quality of journalism practice in Nigeria; peace journalism as an alternative practice framework in conflict reportage; journalism training in Nigeria and Freedom of Information Act. A guide questionnaire was sent to prospective respondents ahead of the interview appointments, with clear wordings of assurance of anonymity, confidentiality and professional handling of all opinions and information gathered in line with ethical requirements.

A combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques were employed to select participants and key informants for this research (May, 2001:95). The effort was to obtain opinions of key informants as well as those of a representative cross view of media practitioners and academics on the issues being discussed. A total of seventeen people were interviewed, ranging from university professors and lecturers to media managers and media practitioners (see Table 2.2). In line with the Birmingham City University's ethical guidelines which require anonymity for participants/interviewees, respondents are not identified by names. They are however listed by their organisations and/or job titles to indicate the variety and scope of responses.

The interviews were analyzed using grounded theory which is "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 2). Grounded theory is the notion of "generating new theory from data, as opposed to testing existing theory" (Birks and Mills, 2010: 2). Charmaz (2014) points out that grounded theory methods can complement other approaches to qualitative analysis, rather than stand in opposition to them. She views grounded theory as "a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages" and that they provide "flexible guidelines," not "methodological rules, recipes and requirements." Similarly, Birks and Mills (2012) argue that grounded theory could be used to provide insightful and incisive analysis whether one is pursuing ethnographic stories, biographical narratives or qualitative interviews. And Charmaz (2014) insists that diverse researchers can use basic grounded theory strategies such as coding, memo writing, and sampling for theory development with comparative methods "because the strategies are, in many ways, transportable across epistemological and ontological gulfs." Even where a researcher is not interested in theory construction, but aims primarily for "cogent synthesis of ...data," grounded theory helps achieve such goals expeditiously (Charmaz, 2014). According to Charmaz, "the immense effectiveness and efficiency of grounded theory strategies also are useful to professionals who write essays, policies, reviews and reports.



They benefit from using grounded theory strategies such as coding and memo writing” as these increase the analytic import of any work and speed up completion.

Grounded theory provides detailed, rigorous and systematic criteria for analysing qualitative data. Analysis using grounded theory involves basically three levels of coding: Open, axial and theoretical coding. These three stages, according to Jones and Alony (2011), are sequential and consecutive rather than iterative.

Open coding, the first level of coding, involves the examination of raw data (interview transcripts) and coding through a process “which fractures the interview into discrete threads of datum” (Jones and Alony, 2011) which are then collated to form categories of similar phenomena. At this stage, the researcher closely and minutely analyses data line-by-line, word-by-word in order to produce concepts and categories that fit the data (Strauss, 1987). Through this process, the researcher is able to identify a list of emerging themes and codes.

The second level of coding is the axial or selective coding and involves grouping similar categories and themes together in line with the emerging concepts. The final stage is theoretical coding when core categories have become saturated and involves the analysis of concepts according to the main areas of investigation.

**Table 2.2: List of Interview Participants**

Participant 1	-	Research Professor/Media Academic, NIPSS
Participant 2	-	Lecturer in Mass Communication, University of Jos
Participant 3	-	Professor of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano
Participant 4	-	Lecturer in Mass Communication, Ahmadu Bello University
Participant 5	-	Lecturer in Journalism, University of Jos
Participant 6	-	Media Executive/Media Adviser to State Governor
Participant 7	-	Managing Director, Newspaper
Participant 8	-	Political Editor, national newspaper
Participant 9	-	Senior Editor/Reporter, national newspaper
Participant 10	-	Former State Correspondent, national newspaper
Participant 11	-	Abuja Chief Correspondent, Foreign Radio Station
Participant 12	-	Features Editor, State Government-owned Newspaper
Participant 13	-	State Chairman, Nigerian Union of Journalists
Participant 14	-	Prominent woman Journalist and Health Correspondent
Participant 15	-	National Secretary, Nigerian Union of Journalists
Participant 16	-	Director, Nigerian Press Council
Participant 17	-	Professor of Mass Communication, Lagos State University

#### ***2.5.3.1 Emerging Themes and Concepts from the Interviews***

Following the transcription of each interview, an initial analysis was undertaken which involved bringing out in bullet points the main issues emerging from the interview. Transcriptions and analyses were done in the sequence of the interviews. Therefore each analysis was compared with previous and subsequent ones. This process helped to focus the interviews as the issues were progressively distilled and analysed.

Several words and concepts stood out from the interviews. Words such as ethics, freedom, professionalism, corruption, ownership, training, investigation were a common refrain cutting through the scripts. Indeed, after I had conducted eight of the interviews, it appeared that subsequent encounters merely clarified or substantiated earlier issues, but hardly added dramatically fresh perspectives to the discourse. Of course, each interview encounter

constituted a unique experience, providing a different flavour to the discourse, and enriching the researcher's perspective on the complex issues under investigation.

Comparing the individual analyses enabled me to produce tables featuring concepts common to the various issues canvassed during the interviews. From these tables, I then produced a synthesis of emerging themes and codes to guide further analysis and discussion (See Appendices 7 and 8). A careful analysis of these themes and concepts would disclose the following nine themes which flow from the responses: ethno-religious bias/partisanship; poor work conditions; ethical concerns; ownership issues/influence; commercialisation; training/capacity; audience expectations; investigative journalism; sources. Having regard to the inter-related nature of these themes and following careful evaluation, I collapsed them into five categories as here indicated: partisanship/ethno-religious bias; work conditions; ethics and accountability; ownership/commercialisation; training/capacity building.

In order to provide scope and context for the treatment of these codes, they are discussed and analysed under three broad thematic categories related to my main areas of investigation. The thematic categories which anchor the analysis of the interviews and the issues identified are: Professionalism and Media Ethics; Peace Journalism and Conflict Reportage and Press Freedom and Accountability. The analysis follows the Charmazian interpretivist grounded theory approach which "seeks to define conditional statements that interpret how subjects construct their realities... to produce local truths" (Fox, 2014).

## **2.6 Ethical Considerations**

Some ethical issues arise from the application of the research methods outlined above, particularly with the sourcing and handling of information. In social research, ethical decisions are defined in terms, not just of what is right or just in the interests of the research project, its sponsors or workers, but critically, about the interests and welfare of the participants in the research (May, 2001: 60). Knowledge is not a politically neutral product, contrary to positivism and empiricism (May, 2001: 60). Thus, social researchers need to be aware of ethical issues implicated by their inquiry and must ensure that their decisions and methods are morally and legally above board. Among the basic principles that govern data collection are consent by participants, right to privacy and security for respondents and treatment of participants with respect and as autonomous agents (Frankel and Siang, 1999; Oppenheim, 1993).

Birmingham City University's ethical guidelines (paragraph 3.5) places informed consent at the heart of ethical research. This is also in line with the guidelines of the British Sociological Association, sections 16-18, which require researchers to explain to participants fully the nature and purpose of the study and that they can withdraw from the research at any time (BSA, 2002). In this regard I ensured that data collection instruments explained clearly the research rationale in order to win the confidence and expressed consent of participants and institutions, particularly those who were interviewed.

Having regard to the sensitive and emotive nature of my subject of inquiry, I was aware of the need to protect participants and sources from physical and/or emotional harm or distress by complying particularly with the ethical principles of confidentiality of information, security and well-being of participants and anonymity of participants (BCU, 5.4). I accomplished this by ensuring that information obtained is stored and handled with integrity and professionalism and in line with provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. In view of the ethnic and religious diversity of the Nigerian society, I ensured that all shades of opinion were reflected in data collection and analysis in a fair and balanced manner. This I did in the choice of newspapers for analysis and also in the choice of interviewees.

Despite these general principles, May (2001: 60) notes that knowledge is not a politically neutral product and that ethical decisions partly depend on the values of the researchers and their communities. This introduces some complications in the relationship between ethics and social research and two possible approaches: (i) a deontological approach which conceives of research ethics as universal rules applicable inflexibly to all places and at all times, and (ii) consequentialism which places emphasis on the context of research. For May (2001: 61), neither extreme is healthy. What is productive, he reasons, is reflexivity on the part of the researcher which enables a recognition of basic ethical standards and avoidance of rigidity and inflexibility which could dull sensitivity to the context of research (May, 2001: 61-62). For this reason, the British Sociological Association code of ethics requires, for example, that "guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity given to research participants must be honoured, unless there are clear and overriding reasons to do otherwise" (in May, 2001: 61).

The value of this discussion to my dissertation is that it enabled me to focus critical attention on my own positionality in relation to the subject of enquiry - as a Nigerian and a Christian minority from the region in which the ethno-religious conflicts that are the focus of my investigation, have taken place. I am also a resident of Jos and a first-hand witness to several

of the conflicts described in this study. As a journalist, all these factors imply that I am very close to the subject of enquiry. This awareness enabled me to guard against emotional attachment and to ensure that the gathering and interpretation of data complied with the highest standards of professionalism and that my personal beliefs and religious convictions have not obstructed or unduly coloured my judgment or analysis. On a positive note, I should draw attention to the fact that my employment as editor at Nigeria's prestigious National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies facilitated access to all levels of interviewees and documents. This has served me in good stead in the conduct of this study.

With respect to health and safety, I carefully assessed the risks associated with my research, primarily, concerns over safety in travel around Nigeria, particularly when I needed to interview participants in risk-prone areas. I ensured that I travelled only through appropriate public or private means of transportation and that I was well advised before setting out on trips about security situations in my destination. Furthermore, I have maintained the confidentiality of opinions expressed by interviewees in order to protect their integrity particularly on contentious issues.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **TRENDS AND PATTERNS OF REPORTAGE OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS BY THE NIGERIAN PRESS**

#### **A Quantitative Content Analysis of Nigerian Newspapers**

##### **3.1 Introduction: A Brief Overview of the Analytical Chapters**

This chapter is the first of four empirical chapters of the dissertation. Based on quantitative analysis, it provides a foundation for the three other analytical chapters which mainly utilise qualitative methods. The chapter explores research question one, which seeks to establish the patterns of reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press and the implications of this for escalating or minimising the conflicts. Chapter four, which follows, explores in greater depth the issues observed in this chapter, utilising qualitative methods in order to ground analysis and understanding. It enquires particularly on the framing and representation of ethno-religious conflicts and how this clarifies or obfuscates the underlying issues in such conflicts.

Chapter five examines the practices of the Nigerian press within the context of emerging alternative frameworks for conflict reportage. Specifically, it utilises content analysis and semi-structured interviews to explore the principles of peace journalism as a basis for interrogating established practices and news culture. This is with the aim of identifying lessons that might emerge for the journalism profession in Nigeria in respect of conflict coverage. The last chapter explores the context of journalism practice in Nigeria through a consideration of the political and economic factors which underpin news production as well as the training of journalists. Semi-structured interviews are employed to accomplish this task which provides opportunity for critical engagement with media practitioners and media educators on the issues highlighted in the earlier chapters.

##### **3.2 General Reportorial Trends**

This chapter aims to explore and analyse the trends and the practices of Nigerian newspapers in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. The objective is to produce and delineate a robust understanding of the character and style of the Nigerian press in the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts and to provide a basis for engaging with the issues that arise from these trends. As stated in chapter two, the specific research question the chapter attempts to answer is:

## **How has the Nigerian press reported ethno-religious conflicts in the country and what pictures emerge from this coverage that might indicate tendencies to escalate or minimise such conflicts?**

To accomplish this objective, the chapter employs quantitative content analysis to explore the issues in two broad sections. The first section dwells on what I term general reportorial trends and is related to vital indices like sources of stories, gender and ethnic profile of correspondents and the prominence given to stories. The second section focuses on the quality of reportage, and explores complex and problematic issues such as balance and bias in news reportage, language and tone in presentation and contextualisation of issues. Frequency tables and charts are utilised in the discussion to enrich the analysis. I argue that the general quality of reportage is more likely to exacerbate ethno-religious conflicts in the country.

### **3.2.1 Story Types**

A total of 617 items were coded and analysed covering news reports, features, editorial pieces and others such as letters to the editor and advertorials. The distribution of these items over the various story types are as follows: news reports: 393 items (63.7%); features/opinion pieces: 152 items (24.6%); editorial opinions: 21 items (3.4%); “others” (letters to the editor, reader responses, advertorials and paid press statements/releases, etc.): 51 items (8.1%) (See Table 3.1)

Table 3.2 shows the distribution of these stories amongst the four newspapers content analysed. The table shows a fairly balanced distribution of coverage amongst the newspapers in all the story types. It is however observed that about 32% of all the stories were published by the *Daily Trust* whereas all the other newspapers each had between 21% - 24%. The preponderance of *Daily Trust*’s coverage could be explained by the fact of geographical and ideological proximity. The *Daily Trust* is a northern-based newspaper with headquarters in Abuja whereas the other three papers are published in Lagos and Ibadan even though they all have regional offices in Abuja. Therefore the *Daily Trust* is the closest to Jos in geographic terms. More than geographical proximity, the paper is also closest to the conflict in political and ideological terms and will therefore devote strident attention to the conflicts. As was earlier noted in chapter one, the issues in the Jos conflict relate primarily to contestations over ownership of the tin city between those who regard themselves as the aboriginal founders and the Hausa/Fulani who are regarded as settlers. The former are predominantly Christian, while the Hausa/Fulani are mainly

Muslim. The *Daily Trust's* ideological orientation towards northern and Islamic interests (Galadima, 2010: 48) therefore explains its sustained coverage of the conflicts in Jos. This confirms Shinar's position that "geographical distance might influence coverage in that the more a society is involved in the conflict itself and the closer it is to the conflict region (in historical, political, economic or ideological terms), distortions of the conflict perception will be stronger" (Shinar, 2009: 456). This then explains why the *Daily Trust* devoted more space to the issue than others newspapers in the sample. Thus, unlike what Obijiofor (2010) found in the coverage of the Niger Delta conflict, proximity clearly has an influence in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by Nigerian newspapers.

**Table 3.1: Story Type**

Story Type			
S/N	Type of Story	Total Frequency	Total %
1	News Story	393	63.7
2	Editorial	21	3.4
3	Features/Opinion	152	24.6
4	Others (Letters, reader responses, advertorials, paid press statements, etc.)	51	8.3
	Total	617	100.0

**Table 3.2: Story Type by Newspaper**

Story Type by Newspapers							
S/N	Newspaper	News Story	Editorial	Features/Opinion	Others	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Daily Trust	114	6	51	25	197	31.8
2	Nigeria Tribune	99	5	34	12	150	24.3
3	The Guardian	93	7	33	3	136	22.0
4	This Day	87	3	34	10	134	21.7
	Total	393	21	152	50	617	100.0

### 3.2.2 Regional Profile of Reporters

An observable feature of the coverage is that 78% of all the stories filed on the conflicts were by reporters and correspondents of the various newspapers. Guest writers and syndicated columnists make up 6.5% (See Appendix 7). This indicates the importance the newspapers attach to the issue under consideration as they all have resident correspondents in the conflict city and devote a lot of space and attention to the conflicts.



A closer look at the correspondents and writers of these stories shows that 43% are from the northern region including the middle belt which, geographically and geopolitically, is a part of the northern region. Southern correspondents and writers make up 41% (Table 3.3). By way of explanation, I was able to identify the regional profile of reporters/correspondents mostly by their names. Names are distinct identity markers in Nigerian culture and Nigerian names can easily be traced to their regional and/or ethnic origin. In this respect, I have the added advantage of early exposure to people from all parts of the country, having attended a Federal unity school for my secondary education. This exposure stood me in good stead in recognising/determining the regional identity of most of the newspapers writers/correspondents on this issue. I recognise the limitations in this method of identifying people, as factors such as inter-ethnic or inter-racial marriages or other variables may interfere with this principle. I therefore devised other measures to crosscheck the identity of reporters. First, I know some of the correspondents personally, having worked in the newspaper industry at some point. I also contacted reliable sources to verify the backgrounds of reporters in a few cases I had doubts. I did not code for the religious affiliation of reporters/correspondents as this would be even more difficult to determine from just the name. Furthermore, other indices, such as the educational or professional qualification/experience of correspondents, which could also impact content, were not coded as primary attention is on ethnicity in line with the subject of enquiry.

The data above shows an even distribution of correspondents in terms of regional identity across the four newspapers which I find interesting, considering the fact that three of the newspapers are published in the southern cities of Lagos and Ibadan. A comparative analysis of correspondents across the newspapers however paints a slightly different picture. As is evident from Table 3.4, 76% of correspondents/writers on this issue for the *Daily Trust* are of northern extraction while 78% of those of the *Nigerian Tribune* are from the south. As explained in chapter two, these two newspapers are regionally inclined, the *Daily Trust* towards the northern region, championing northern/Islam issues and the *Nigerian Tribune* being the counter-poise, focusing on southern/Christian interests. The other two newspapers, *The Guardian* and *This Day*, have a more even correspondents profile. *The Guardian* has an almost equal percentage of writers on this issue (45% south, 42% north) while *This Day* is south 50% and 34% north. These facts are important for this research as some studies, such as Yusha'u (2009) and Galadima (2010), suggest that there is a relationship between the regional profile of Nigerian media personnel and the type and nature of stories they report in

the coverage of national issues. While this assertion may hold some truth, it is however problematic as would be demonstrated in a fuller discussion of the issue while considering balance and language use below.

**Table 3.3: Regional Identity of Writers**

S/N	Regional Identity	Frequency	Total %
1	North	168	23.2
2	Middle Belt	149	20.6
3	South	298	41.3
4	Not Clear/Not Applicable	108	14.9
	Total	723	100.0

**Table 3.4: Comparative Analysis of Regional Identity of Correspondents/Writers**

Comparative Analysis of Regional Identity of Writers							
S/N	Newspaper	North	South	Middle Belt	Others/Not Clear	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Daily Trust	137	17	36	39	229	31.7
2	Nigeria Tribune	9	119	5	20	153	21.2
3	Guardian	10	82	66	23	181	25.0
4	This Day	12	80	42	26	160	22.1
	Total	168	298	149	108	723	100.0

### 3.2.3 Gender Profile of Correspondents/Writers

An interesting profile in the make-up of the reporters and correspondents of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria is that it is an almost exclusively masculine territory. Only 2.5% of the reports and opinion pieces were authored by women, while 85% were contributed directly by male authors. This gender ratio is significant when it is observed that, ironically, women and children are usually the most adversely affected by ethno-religious conflicts (*Daily Trust*, 12 September, 2001). The voice of the victim, as it were, is silent in everyday media discourse and representation of ethno-religious conflicts.

This issue provokes deeper reflections as it indicates the gender ratio of male-female journalists in Nigeria and this has implications for content. Scholars such as Strong and Hannis (2007), Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig (2003), and Lafky (1983) argue that a male dominated newsroom may produce stories that emphasise male sources and male attributes such as triumph, controversy or dispute. An analysis of the incidence of by-lines in

newspapers around the world by Global Media Monitoring Project (2005) found that globally, female journalists overall accounted for only 29% of headlines. Among the reasons advanced for the under representation of women in the news media are family commitments which prevent women from working the inflexible hours required of journalists, and outright sexism (Strong and Hannis, 2007).

Anyanwu (2001) argues that the dominant orientation of Nigerian mainstream media is that women are largely seen and not heard. According to her, “their faces adorn newspapers. However on important national and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the story only gains prominence if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene.” Anyanwu explains this situation in terms of historical tradition of male dominance of the local media. She cites a survey by the Independent Journalism Centre (ICJ) in Lagos and the Centre for War, Peace and the News Media in New York which found that 80% of journalists in Nigeria are male. This, she explains, has led to a domination of the news media by men and a preponderance of male perspectives in the reporting of news.

In the opinion of some scholars such as Gallagher (1981) and Strong and Hannis (2007), if women dominated the newsroom, not only would more stories about women be told, but news stories would increasingly reflect female characteristics of harmony and cooperation. This issue has important implications for the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press as the voice of the woman reporter, if properly harnessed, could well make a difference in the tone, orientation and content of the media towards resolution, rather than exacerbation of the conflicts.

**Table 3.5: Gender Profile of Correspondents/Writers**

S/N	Gender	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Male	522	84.6
2	Female	15	2.4
3	Not Clear	38	6.2
4	Not Applicable	42	6.8
	Total	617	100.0

### ***3.2.4 Prominence and Extent of Coverage***

The data at Table 3.6 show that ethno-religious conflicts receive a lot of prominence in the Nigerian Press. The four newspapers content analysed featured 35% of the stories on the front and back pages and one-third of these were front page lead stories. Within the first two

weeks of each of the incidents, the newspapers featured the issue on a daily basis, suggesting the importance with which the issue was perceived. Each of the newspapers produced editorial comments in at least three of the conflict episodes and, in several cases, two editorials in the space of one week. *Daily Trust*, *Nigerian Tribune* and *The Guardian* each had an editorial on the 2001 conflict episode; for 2008, *The Guardian* and the *Nigerian Tribune* each had two editorial pieces while *Daily Trust* had one. In the January/March 2010 conflict episodes, both *Daily Trust* and *The Guardian* published three editorial opinions on the issue and *This Day* had one. In August 2011, *Daily Trust*, *Tribune* and *This Day* each published an editorial piece. This suggests the seriousness and sustained attention paid the issue by the Nigerian press and confirms previous evidence that the Nigerian press is proactive in the coverage of burning national issues (Olukotun, 2004).

An element of proactivity in the coverage of the conflicts relates to the capacity of the newspapers to scan and foresee or forecast conflicts. In this research, several of the newspapers reported on the impending crisis in Jos just before the September 2001 conflict. *Nigerian Tribune* accurately predicted on 6 September 2001 that trouble was brewing in Jos. In a news report headlined: "Tension mounts in Jos over council's status," the paper warned that the prevailing peace in Jos, the Plateau State capital, "might be punctured as the Hausa/Fulani community under the aegis of Jasawa Development Association and Plateau State Youth Council, are set for a show down over the indigenous right of Jos North local government area of the state."

Similarly, *This Day* newspaper on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001 ominously had a story captioned, "Religious Crisis Brews in Jos." The report asserted that the relative peace being enjoyed by residents of Jos might evaporate "if urgent actions are not taken by relevant authorities to avert imminent showdown between Christian indigenes of the area and the Hausa-Fulanis, who are mainly Muslim." Also the newspaper had been addressing some of the issues underlining the conflict. For example on September 1, 2001, it had an article titled: "One North, Different People" in which the writer explored the "centrifugal forces" plaguing the politics of the region, primarily ethnic and religious conflicts.

Such proactivity should ordinarily be a positive factor in containing the crises if decision makers creatively utilise information available from the press and other credible sources to guide public policy. This does not seem to be the case in this respect and the question remains how the press could pick up early signals of conflict, while government officials appear

completely ignorant of such dangers? In the case of the 2001 conflict in Jos, while the press was warning of impending trouble, the state governor was heading out of the country for foreign vacation, and had to hurry back when the crisis had broken out.

In comparative terms, the coverage appears to be even across the incidents. However, January/March 2010 incident is double the average number (223 stories) and this is explained by the fact that six weeks, rather than three, were effectively analysed (three weeks in January and three in March 2010). This is based on the fact that, according to the Nigeria Police, the March 2010 incident was a direct retaliation by one of the parties to the injuries suffered the previous incident in the month of January 2010. For this reason, I treated the two incidents as one, and this explains the increase in the number of stories coded.

**Table 3.6: Prominence**

<b>Prominence</b>			
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Placement of Story</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1	Front Page Lead	80	13.0
2	Front Page	96	15.6
3	Back Page	32	5.2
4	Inside Page Multiple Pages	18	2.9
5	Inside Page	391	63.4
	Total	617	100.0

### **3.2.5 Sources of News Reports**

Table 3.7 gives an indication of the sources relied upon by the press in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. From the list, I have identified four major sources of press information: These are:

- Official sources (including security agencies, federal and state organs and institutions).
- Religious organisations, that is, Christian and Muslim faith leaders and institutions.
- Civil society including non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and prominent individuals.
- Newspaper investigations

These four sources account for news and information on ethno-religious conflicts in the following proportions: official sources: 39%; religious organizations: 17%; civil Society: 18%; and newspaper investigations: 17%. Of lesser significance is wire service and news

agencies which account for 2% while quite a sizeable 7% is unattributed. This last finding corroborates research evidence that Nigerian newspapers often do not reveal their news sources (Obijiofor, 2010.)

The evidence here agrees essentially with what is already known about the Nigerian press, which is that it relies principally on official sources in reporting conflicts (Obijiofor, 2010; Galadima, 2010). This is attributable to the media's habitual reliance on elite sources. This practice is reinforced in conflict situations due partly to problems of access during violent stages of such conflicts (Kothari, 2010). This culture of elite-dependence results in devoting undue media focus and resources to coverage of the actions of officials, and not enough attention to investigating the underlying causes of the conflicts, part of which are structural problems resulting from the policies and actions of such officials.

It is notable that religious leaders and religious institutions are high on the list of news sources on ethno-religious conflicts. Relaying the views and opinions of religious antagonists in a volatile conflict situation immediately poses its peculiar dangers for potentially escalating such conflicts. Abiodun (2009) has already noted that in incidents of religious violence in Nigeria, "the religious leaders and other elites have always been the propelling force." Musa (1994: 5) similarly argues that there is a tendency by the Nigerian media to "open partisanship that follows the line of thought of their proprietors and that characterises his (sic) politics especially in times of crises..."

This point is significant as academic literature demonstrates that news sources play an important role in perpetuating political and economic hierarchies (McQuail, 2003). In an extensive study of media content, producers and audiences, Philo and Berry (2004) found that journalists covering the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not only report a source's view, but also directly endorse it depending on the source's status. The authors explain that the motives of sources and journalists' endorsement of them can shape how diverse perspectives and explanations are selected for stories. Ammina Kothari (2010,) in a study of the Dafur conflict, also argues that the news production process is complicated by how sources will report the event depending on the audience. According to her, "outright lies or biased perceptions can be communicated by sources which reporters or audiences might not always be able to distinguish" (Kothari 2010: 211). Following Strentz (1989), Kothari maintains that "the direction and the facts of news (are) shaped by how, what and who defines the story, giving sources greater power in framing the information" (p. 211). She argues further that sources

are not neutral, but have their agenda for information sharing (p.222). Manning (2001: 55) also argues that the pressure of news deadlines and the importance of obtaining information rich in news values, encourages dependency upon official sources, whether they be government departments, sources associated with parliaments and the formal policy-making process, the police or the other state social control agencies. These institutions, he points out, are likely to be newsworthy because they are powerful and affect the daily lives of audiences. As a result, this may privilege the powerful in a routine and systematic manner with regards to the struggle over news agenda. As I noted in chapter 1, religious institutions are powerful in Nigeria and by relying so closely on them as primary sources of information in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts, the Nigerian press is in danger of unwittingly communicating “biased perception” or “outright lies” and thus further obscuring the issues underlying the conflicts.

**Table 3.7: Sources of News/Reports**

<b>Sources of News/Reports</b>			
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1	Official Sources	354	39.1
2	Religious Organizations	150	16.6
3	Civil Society	163	18.0
4	Newspaper	157	17.3
5	Wire Service/News Agencies	20	2.2
6	Unattributed/Other	62	6.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>906</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **3.3 Quality of Reportage**

The discussion above has focused attention on issues that directly or indirectly impact coverage and have implications for textual content. Of particular interest are the indices associated with the ethnic and gender profile of reporters, sources of story, and prominence given to stories. I will now focus on the quality of reportage and explore the issue of partisanship and bias in reportage, language and tone of presentation and the contextualisation of issues and the implications of these for content.

#### **3.3.1 Partisanship and Bias in Reportage**

According to Lee and Maslog (2005: 370), partisanship is bias for one party in a conflict. Peh and Melkote (1991: 60) see bias as the unbalanced presentation of facts and opinions. This,

they explain, manifests in different ways, such as source bias, unbalanced presentation of controversial issues, emphasis on the exceptional event rather than the process or context, the frequent use of packaged formula, selection and omission of information and frequent reliance on partisan sources such as official communiques, press releases, speeches and interviews with leaders. I have coded for four of the features of news bias outlined by Peh and Melkote, including unbalanced presentation of issues; source-bias and reliance on partisan sources, and emphasis on the exceptional rather than the process or context.

Table 3.8 shows that 40% of all stories published by the four newspapers on the conflict were reported or written from a partisan standpoint. A comparative analysis of the newspapers on this score however reveals some striking differences. As is evident from Table 3.9 *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*, the two regionally-oriented newspapers, have a much higher percentage of partisan stories than the two nationally-oriented papers. Up to 55% of *Daily Trust*'s reports are partisan while *Nigerian Tribune* has 41% partisan reports. This compares sharply with *The Guardian* where only 22% of reports are adjudged partisan and *This Day* which has 37%.

An issue that I investigated was whether there was any relationship between story type and balance. Appendix 10 shows that out of 393 news stories, 136 or 35% were partisan, while 38% of 21 editorials were partisan. For features it is 47% while 'others' is 66%. From this analysis, it can be deduced that there is no marked difference between the major categories. It is not surprising if features and editorials are biased or partisan, but more difficult to explain is why such a relatively large percentage of news reports are partisan. Again, it is to be observed that news stories and editorials have similar balance profile, suggesting that the editorial posturing of a newspaper greatly shapes news content. This calls to question the notions of objectivity in news reportage.

The category "other" has the highest partisanship profile of 66% (Table 19) which is explained by the fact that this category of reports is made up mainly of advertorials/paid press statements and of letters to the editor. While publication of letters to the editor is at the discretion of the newspaper, there is a contractual obligation to publish advertorials as they are paid for. Therefore I consider it important to discuss this feature of newspapers in some depth. I observed that advertorials on ethno-religious conflicts are usually placed by interested persons and organizations who, in several cases, take extremist and/or emotional positions on issues in the conflicts. Advertorials are a prominent feature of Nigerian



newspapers and are often used by protagonists in ethno-religious conflicts to put forward their points of view unedited. A few examples below will illustrate this point.

On December 19, 2008, an advertorial was published on page 36 of *Daily Trust* thus:

Re: The position of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria Plateau State Chapter on the recent political ethnic/religious crisis in Jos – Putting the records straight (Daily Trust, 19/12/2008).

This full page advertorial was sponsored by a Muslim organisation as a rejoinder to certain issues addressed in an earlier advertorial by one of the major Christian groups in Nigeria, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, with respect to the November 2008 crisis in Jos. This rejoinder accused the earlier write up as being “biased and malicious trite” and “a calculated attempt to divert attention from the second attempted genocide on the Hausa/Fulani of Jos”.

A similar full page advertorial was sponsored by the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) in *Daily Trust* of 5 January 2011 with the title: “YOWICAN AND THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE IN NIGERIA” (see Appendix 16 for the full text). This advertorial was said to be a response by the Muslim students to a news report credited to the youth wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria in Plateau State on the worsening security situation in Jos. The Muslim youth, in the advertorial, expressed consternation at the “unsubstantiated cum dangerous allegations by various Christian groups against Nigerian Muslims.” The organisation said it had hitherto kept mute “in the belief that silence is usually the best answer to those groundless claims.” It said however that, “given the sensitivity of some of the allegations made by Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN), we deem it necessary to clarify some issues for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of peace and harmonious co-existence in our dear nation.” The advertorial accused the Christian youth of being disrespectful to the leader of Nigerian Muslims. It claimed further that the Christians, by their assertions exhibited a “combination of shallow-mindedness, intellectual immaturity as well as religious extremism and unwarranted chauvinism”. They were a gang of youth “with a staunch hatred and prejudice against Muslims and Islam.”

Drawing from my own experience in newspaper journalism in Nigeria, I know that the tone and wordings of these advertorials, if submitted as news or press releases, would have been moderated and edited. However, they escaped such gate-keeping and professional moderation by being published unedited as advertorials. This is because, as essentially marketing

products, advertorials do not necessarily come to the attention of the editors but secure the rite of passage to the public sphere through the commercial route.

On December 10, 2008, an advertorial was published in *This Day* newspaper being the text of a press conference addressed by a member of the Nigerian Federal Legislature representing Jos South/Jos East Constituency in the House of Representatives. The full page advertorial was a response to what the writer described as a “biased, provocative and vexatious editorial” opinion published by *Daily Trust* newspaper on the November 2008 Jos crisis. According to the advertorial, the editorial opinion fell below the professional standards and should have been titled, “Jos sectarian crisis: the Hausa Muslim community view.” The advertorial challenged all the claims made by *Daily Trust* newspaper in the editorial and further raised issues regarding what was perceived in some circles as a partisan response by the Presidency to the crisis in Jos:

If the Berom/Christian community is backed by the Plateau State Government, who then is backing the Hausa/Muslim Community? Is it the Local or Federal Government? Does this explain the frightening media report that a sitting governor is refused audience by Mr. Rule of Law?<sup>7</sup>

There are many other advertorials levelling and trading accusations against one group or the other or written as rejoinder to previously published articles in any newspaper. Two examples cited below are apt:

On Friday 26 August 2011, an organisation owned by a Hausa/Fulani put out an advertorial in *Daily Trust* newspaper titled:

Advertorial: Plateau State Government, Berom Traditional Rulers and Some Security Agents are behind the Jos crisis (Daily Trust, 26 August 2011, p.52).

This advertorial alleged that the State governor was taking sides with his Berom ethnic group against the Hausa/Fulani Muslims and was partisan in his approach to governance. It cited instances in which Hausa/Fulani were attacked or dispossessed of their cows and the state government did nothing whereas anytime there was an attack on any Berom community, the state governor would personally show up to express sympathy and concern. For this

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<sup>7</sup> President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2010) made the rule of law a cornerstone of his administration. Therefore referring to him in the write-up as “Mr Rule of Law” was a type of sarcasm to challenge what the writer perceived as an inconsistency on the part of the President in adhering to rule of law and dealing evenly and transparently with all the parties to the conflict.

organisation, the problem on the Plateau was traceable to the governor's biased administration and the hatred of his kinsmen against Hausa/Fulani.

A few days later, on Friday 9 September 2011, another organisation, the Berom Youth Movement, predictably issued a rejoinder in the form of an advertorial in another newspaper, *This Day* newspaper (page 50). The advertorial was titled:

Re: Plateau State Government, Berom Traditional Rulers and some Security agents are behind the Jos crisis (*This Day*, 9 September 2011, p.50).

As expected, this full-page rejoinder attempted to counter the allegations raised against the Berom and Governor Jang in the earlier publication that they were the perpetrators of the conflicts. More than that, however, the write-up also tried to establish a wider historical and national context to the conflicts in Jos by associating them with the Danfodio Islamic Jihad and alleged contemporary religious and territorial hegemony by the Hausa/Fulani. According to the advertorial:

The Jos Plateau...has always been the main target of attacks by the Hausa/Fulani due to the serenity of its environment, weather and the desire to impose Islam on (the) diverse inhabitants of the Middle Belt on their way to southern part of the country for the same purpose... What is more, some Southern States of the country have also tasted the bitter pill of the Hausa/Fulani aggression.

Another advertorial by the Jam'atul Nasril Islam, a very powerful Islamic group, in *Daily Trust* (17/01/2011) lamented alleged secret killing and disappearance of over 50 Muslims in Jos North and asserted that the state governor was personally responsible:

The Jam'atul Nasril Islam (JNI) is dismayed by and condemns in no uncertain terms these wanton acts of murder and violence. It is our wish to reiterate that we hold the Plateau State Government and governor Jonah Jang squarely responsible... (*Daily Trust*, 17 January, 2011).

On 28 January 2010, a little-known organisation which styled itself as the "Movement for the survival of the Plateau (MASSOP)" placed an advertorial in *This Day* newspaper, raising alarm on "Another attack on Jos." Conversely, on 3 March 2010, a Hausa/Fulani group placed an advertorial in *Daily Trust* titled: *Plateau ardos (Fulani chiefs) allege genocide against their people by Berom terrorists* (*Daily Trust*, 03 March, 2010).

A few things are noticeable from the on-going discussions about advertorials in Nigerian newspapers on the subject of ethno-religious conflicts. First, is the regular and prominent use of advertorials by interest groups in the conflicts in Jos to assert or challenge facts and

opinions which constitute the critical issues in the conflicts. For example, within the 2010/2011 sample frame, 10 advertorials were published within a four week period. Secondly, these advertorials are published unedited and size and placement within the newspaper are determined strictly by what is paid for. Thirdly, any person or group of persons or interest group with financial capacity can buy up space in a newspaper to publish their point of view on an issue, no matter how contentious or inflammatory. Fourthly, advertorials on the conflicts are published unedited even when the script is poorly written and riddled with errors of grammar and tenses as can be seen in a few of them. Fifthly, as can be noticed from the examples cited, with a few exceptions, advertorials are usually placed in newspapers perceived as either favourable to, or at least not antagonistic of, the cause of those canvassing the issues in the write-up. Thus advertorials may serve to reinforce existing media narratives and perpetuate partisan perceptions. Finally, the prevalence of advertorials on the conflicts suggests the seriousness with which interest groups seek to deploy the perceived power of the press in support of their cause. This aligns with findings by Kothari (2010: 221) that people in conflict situations struggle to get media attention as a strategy for gaining favourable outcomes.

Perhaps to stem possible excesses associated with advertorials, the management of the *Daily Trust* newspaper issued a “Policy on publication of Advertorials, Petitions and Related Materials” (Friday December 31, 2010, p.60) in which the newspaper organisation attempted to balance “our desire to give voice to the concerns of the voiceless and to protect public officers and institutions from unfair and demoralising attacks.” The newspaper said it took “very seriously its responsibility to the public to publish all points of view, including those we do not share,” insisting that this was the function of an independent, liberal newspaper dedicated to the pursuit of the common good. The paper however asserted that it was also aware that “professional agitators” can utilise the pages on newspapers to malign people and institutions on “spurious grounds.” On this basis, the

**Table 3.8: Story Balance**

S/N	Category	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Partisan	246	39.9
2	Non-Partisan	371	60.1
	Total	617	100.0

**Table 3.9: Comparative Analysis of Story Balance**

Comparative analysis of story balance							
S/N	Category	Daily Trust	Nigeria Tribune	Guardian	This Day	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Partisan	107	62	30	49	248	40.2
2	Non-Partisan	89	88	107	85	369	59.8
	Total	196	150	137	134	617	100.0
	Total %	31.8	24.3	22.2	21.7	100.0	

Management of the newspaper issued what it described as “a more stringent policy” for placing advertorials and petitions (see Figure 3.1).

The policy requires that writers of advertorials disclose their full identity, and must also “substantiate” any accusations made in their write-ups “with evidence which can stand before a court of law.” The company, according to the policy, reserves the right to “reject any piece considered to be libellous, containing assertions without supporting facts and figures.” In the alternative, however, the company is prepared “to enter into an indemnity agreement” with the authors of such advertorials that it may perceive to be baseless, libellous or fictitious, “which will put the onus of proof squarely on them.” The newspaper company stressed its resolve “not to shy away from publishing fair and balanced criticisms of any government or individuals, which is in the nature of free exchange of ideas.”

The policy on advertorials by the *Daily Trust* is a creative attempt to curtail the publication of frivolous and unsubstantiated materials in the guise of advertorials. However, it has not completely addressed the fundamental problem of the possibility that individuals or organisations could, through the commercial route, effect the publication of fictitious, libellous or inflammatory content on the pages of the newspaper once they indemnify the newspaper.

From a critical political economy perspective, advertorials constitute vital sources of revenue for the media. While they provide opportunity for people to air their opinions, they may also contradict the principle of free flow of information among citizens by giving wealthy individuals or organisations undue advantage in public discourse as they can easily buy up space and time to propagate their philosophy and world view. This discussion therefore highlights the tight-rope media organisations must navigate between editorial concerns and commercial imperatives in the operations of newspapers.

This section has discussed bias and partisanship in news reportage in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. The data shows that a high percentage of reports and stories published on the incidents were partisan. Partisanship was associated particularly with the newspapers that had overt regional inclinations. The study finds no marked difference between story type and balance in presentation, raising questions on the issue objectivity in news reportage. Another finding is the prominent use of advertorials by conflict protagonists to propagate their opinions in Nigerian newspapers.

### **3.3.2 *Language and Tone***

Sensationalism has been described as “attention-grabbing news” (Anderson and Alan, 2008: 487), reports published or written in a manner primarily to boost sales rather than reporting that informs the readers about the significant issues of the day. Sensationalism places emphasis on the wrong elements and misleads the public. And as Anderson and Alan (2008: 487) observe, “news that misleads the public prevents it from accurately determining which course of action to take...Important news can be trivialised and trivial matters given undue attention.” This section examines the use of language and considers whether a story is couched in sensational or moderate tone. Table 3.10 indicates that almost 50% of all stories published by the newspapers on the issue are sensational in nature. Stories are considered as sensational if they are one-sided, speculative and/or published without attempts to verify or interrogate facts or claims. A comparative analysis of the newspapers’ language use however reveals that the *Nigerian Tribune* and *Daily Trust*, both regionally-oriented papers, have relatively higher proportions of sensational reports. *Nigerian Tribune* has 63% while that of *Daily Trust* is 58% as shown on Table 3.12. *The Guardian* and *This Day* have fewer incidents of sensational stories at 30% and 43% respectively.

An element of unbalanced presentation of facts and opinions relate to the emphasis on the exceptional rather than a focus on context and process. This section therefore discusses contextualisation of issues, that is, whether the pattern of coverage pays due attention to root causes or is concentrated on immediate events. Table 3.11 reveals that 62% of all the reports focused on the immediate events and did not attempt to explain the root causes and context of the conflict. This finding is in line with research evidence that the press, in covering conflicts, focuses on events rather than context (Kothari, 2010). Kothari quotes Boykoff and Boykoff (2007) who define first order journalistic norms as a preference for the novel and dramatic in news stories, personalised to provide a human interest angle. By impacting on

news production and the content of the story, these norms lead to the omission of information about the context, another element of partisanship. A combination of sensational and event-focused reporting results in largely superficial reportage lacking in critical analysis and reflection.

### ***3.3.3 Spotlight of partisan and sensational reports***

The analysis of data in this chapter so far indicates that much of the coverage of ethno-religious conflict by the newspapers in the study is partisan and superficial. I will now highlight and discuss a few examples of partisan and superficial reports from the papers. I begin with a front page lead story by the *Nigerian Tribune* of 29 September 2001 which reads:

“Ex-Head of State, Governor behind Jos massacre” (Nigerian Tribune, Sept 29, 2001, front page lead).

Although a high sounding, authoritative headline, the report itself is speculative with no credible investigation by the newspaper. The story is said to emanate from a position paper prepared by some unnamed stakeholders called “the larger Jos/Bukuru residents.” In its lead paragraph, the story claimed that a former head of state of Nigeria, acting in concert with a serving civilian state governor sponsored and provided logistics for the Muslim fundamentalists who caused recent mayhem in Jos and Bukuru metropolis. However, the report provided no credible evidence to support this assertion. In the third paragraph, the report alleged that embattled residents of Jos/Bukuru told the Plateau State chapter of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) that the ex-general “was sighted in Jos on Thursday and Friday, September 6 and 7, 2001 visiting leaders of the Hausa/Fulani communities to provide support in the planned violent clash.” The newspaper presented the report as if these were established facts, not mere allegations contained in a report prepared two days after a major incident of riots in which many people were killed. Indeed, the report did not use the word “alleged” or “allegation” or such other caveats normally employed in reports of this nature to create some distance, but chose to be affirmative in the apparent endorsement of the “submission.” In paragraph 4, the report accused the (incumbent) governor of providing logistics for the movement of selected soldiers from Bauchi to Jos to support the planned violent clash between the Muslims and the Christians.

Those who are familiar with Nigerian politics are likely to immediately guess who the “ex-head of state” and the “incumbent governor” refer to. There was however no attempt by the

newspaper to obtain their own side of the story to such sensitive allegations. This is an example of sensational reporting based on rumour and unverified or out rightly misleading information which would contribute little to explicating the situation. This is capable of escalating the conflicts.

On September 6, 2001 (p.4), *Nigerian Tribune* published a story with the headline: “Tension mounts in Jos over council’s status.” This story raised the alarm that the “prevailing peaceful atmosphere in Jos, capital of Plateau State, might be punctured as the Hausa/Fulani community under the aegis of Jasawa Development Association and Plateau State Youth Council, are set for a show down over the indigenous right of Jos North local government area.” The narrative of this highly contentious story which was published coincidentally just one day before the riots of September 7, 2001 however made attributions to only one of the parties, the Plateau Youth Council, and in paragraph 5, apparently takes sides with the party making the allegations by stating that they “tendered” documents which “support” incitements by the other party without telling readers the source or authenticity of such documents. According to the report, “the chairman of the youth council ... tendered a ten-page document to support an inciting material from the Hausa/Fulani community in the council.” Also, “exhibits” were tendered including “hand written inscriptions” such as ‘vote for Muslim party’ and the Hausa inscription ‘*zabi jam’yar Musulumi kada kuzabi krista yayi mulkin wanna kassa Nigeria*’” (vote only Muslims, don’t vote Christians to govern Nigeria). By its manner of reportage, the newspaper appeared, wittingly or unwittingly, to have endorsed the authenticity of the documents including the “hand written” ones. Published one day before the eruption, this reportage may not have assisted much in clarifying the issues to the average reader.

On December 28, 2010, *Daily Trust* published a lead story on the front page with the caption, “14 Jos clashes victims get mass burial.” The story opened with the lead: “Fourteen people killed in Sunday’s ethno-religious clashes in Jos were buried in mass graves yesterday. The fourteen, among them a teenage boy, were killed in the attacks triggered by the Christmas Eve bombings in the Plateau State capital.” For a lead story on an incident in which both Muslims and Christian were killed, and given the volatility of the situation, it is surprising that the newspaper used only one source, an Islamic religious organization, making it appear as though there were only Muslim casualties. Similarly in paragraph 3, the report quoted the officials of Jam’atul Nasril Islam (JNI), which disclosed that several other people were at various hospitals receiving treatment for injuries they sustained, ranging from gunshots,



machete cuts and fire burns during the Sunday violence. This report indicates bias in selection of details featured as it omits information on casualties of other faiths. It also shows source-bias in relying on partisan sources for information. This is capable of creating the impression that only Muslims were killed in the fracas, thereby raising religious tensions.

Another story from *Daily Trust* Sunday edition of January 9, 2011, with the banner headline: “Jos Erupts Again.” This story evidences elements of source-bias and unbalanced presentation of controversial issues. The report, in explaining some security breaches in the state capital, quotes only Muslim sources and publishes only names of Muslim casualties. In the lead, it said, “Jos the Plateau state capital, erupted again yesterday following a report that eight persons who were returning from a wedding ceremony in Mangu Local Government Area were killed”. The second paragraph questions the accuracy of this story by providing information which suggested that the panic was occasioned by a political rally:

Another version, however, had it that the panic in Jos was as a result of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) ward congress going on in the state and that crisis had started when the venue for the congress was changed.

The report said the police “confirmed both versions” but continued the one-sided narrative which attributes the violence to the alleged killings. It named the Muslim casualties but said nothing about those who were killed as a result of the burning of the luxurious bus, likely to be southerners and Christians. The report quoted the Ulama’a elders Council (an Islamic organization), which “corroborated the story,” and lamented the killings, saying the attack on Muslims in Jos had assumed an alarming proportion.

The *Guardian* front page report of 13 September, 2001 with the caption: “Jos boils again, residents take refuge in Army barracks” exhibited source-bias in citing only the leadership of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) while leaving out Muslim sources in a conflict involving people of all faiths, Christians, Muslims and others. This is more so as the Christian body had made serious allegations against Muslim sects. The report which followed “a chat” with the *Guardian* correspondent, quoted the Secretary-General of CAN as “blaming the attacks on Nigeria’s continued membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).” There were both Christian and Muslim casualties in this incident, but above report skews the information in a way that creates the impression as though only Christians were affected. The one-sided emphasis slant is inimical to fairness and balance, hallmarks of good journalism.

Although objectivity is a cardinal value of journalism, it has been found that the individual biases and motives of journalists and their sources do impact coverage of conflicts (Kothari, 2010: 211.) With particular respect to the Nigerian press, scholars like Yusha'u (2009) and Galadima (2010) have attempted to establish a relationship between the regional and religious identity of reporters and patterns of coverage of national issues such as ethno-religious conflicts. I therefore return, at this point, to the issue, to what extent, regional identity may have impacted content in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts under study. What is evident from this research, first of all, is that the two regionally oriented newspapers have a predominance of reporters and writers from their respective regions. The other two papers, with respect to the writers on this issue, have a more balanced staff reportorial team in regard to regional mix. Secondly, I have also observed that the two regionally oriented newspapers have a preponderance of partisan and sensational stories. It would therefore seem to suggest some type of relationship between regional identity and reportage.

However I need to point out that the state correspondents of *The Guardian* and *This Day* newspapers for most of the study period were Muslims from the Middle Belt of the northern region.<sup>8</sup> Again, one of the two state correspondents of *Daily Trust* for a good period of the study period was a Christian, while the other was a Muslim.<sup>9</sup> These facts do not seem to have altered or affected the overall pattern of reportage. I therefore conclude that the regional and/or religious identity of reporters alone would be insufficient explanation for editorial outcomes in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. Other factors, such as ownership, editorial philosophy, target audience and market forces as well as the preponderance of staffing profile at the headquarters are also very important in determining content. This is confirmed by the observation of Salawu (2009) that Nigerian newspapers narrate stories and comments based on their ethnic identity which itself is determined by the location of its headquarters, the ethnic identity of the publisher and the main market it seeks to cultivate.

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<sup>8</sup> The Plateau State correspondent of the *Guardian* for the entire study period was Isa Abdulsalami, a Muslim from Kogi State while that of *This Day* for most of the period was Seriki Adinoyi with a similar profile.

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<sup>9</sup> The Plateau State correspondents of *Daily Trust* between 2010 and 2011 were Andrew Agbese, a Christian from Benue State and Mahmud Lalo, a Muslim from the far north.

**Table 3.10: Language and tone**

<b>Language and Tone</b>			
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1	Sensational/Inflammatory	307	49.8
2	Moderate	310	50.2
	Total	617	100.0

**Table 3.11: Background/Context**

<b>Background/Context</b>			
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Total Frequency</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1	Immediate Focus	381	61.8
2	Root Causes	236	38.2
	Total	617	100.0

**Table 3.12: Comparative Analysis of Language and Tone**


<b>Comparative Analysis of Language and Tone</b>						
<b>S/N</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Daily Trust</b>	<b>Nigeria Tribune</b>	<b>Guardian</b>	<b>This Day</b>	<b>Total %</b>
1.	Sensational/Inflammatory	113 58%	95 63%	41 30%	58 43%	49.8
2.	Moderate	83 52%	56 37%	95 70%	76 57%	50.2
	Total	196	151	136	134	100.0
	Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	

**Figure 3.1: Daily Trust's Policy on Publication of Advertorials and Petitions**

60
DAILY TRUST
Friday, December 31, 2010

*To Our Esteemed Readers, Advertisers and Contributors*

## POLICY ON PUBLICATION OF ADVERTORIALS, PETITIONS AND RELATED MATERIALS



**M**edia Trust Limited, publishers of Daily Trust, Weekly Trust, Sunday Trust and Aminiya newspapers take very seriously its responsibility to the public to publish all points of view, including those we do not share. We think this is the function of an independent, liberal newspaper dedicated to the pursuit of the common good. We are also conscious of the fact that it is a shortsighted business policy for a newspaper to shut out a particular point of view for its own reason or due to pressure from powerful institutions and advertisers.

But we are also aware that professional agitators can use the pages on newspapers to malign governments, companies and individuals on spurious grounds.

Caught between our desire to give voice to the concerns of the voiceless and to protect public officers and institutions from unfair and demoralizing attacks, we have been forced to develop a more stringent policy for the placement of advertorials, petitions and other related materials in the pages of our newspapers.

**The new policy is depicted hereunder**

1. The writer(s) of such advertorials must not be anonymous but people who can stand by what they say, with their full names and address.
2. If there is any accusation against any person or organization, such writer(s) must substantiate the claims with evidence which can stand before a Court of Law. For example, if they claim that a contract was inflated, they must show Media Trust, relevant documents to back this up.
3. The placement must be fully paid for, before it is carried.
4. The author(s) should be prepared to accept corrections or alterations made by us but the

corrected version would be submitted to the author(s), before publishing.

5. The publishers have the right to reject any piece considered to be libelous, containing assertions without supporting facts and figures to prove the authenticity of such claims.
6. In the alternative, we are prepared to enter into an indemnity agreement with those who place such advertorial which will put the onus of proof squarely on them.
7. Media Trust employees that collect such materials have been instructed to contact the Advert Manager, who will also consult further with the relevant superior officers to analyze the piece before placement is made.
8. If the publishers of Daily Trust, Weekly Trust, Sunday Trust and Aminiya newspapers reject any material regarded as unprintable based on the above consideration, they will not enter into any correspondence with the author(s).

Finally, we wish to assure our readers that we will not shy away from publishing fair and balanced criticisms of any government or individuals, which is in the nature of free exchange of ideas.

This, we will continue to do in our free opinion columns and with advertorials where some readers feel strongly enough to pay for them.

We thank you for your support and assure you that we will do our best to keep your trust.

Signed:  
MANAGEMENT



### 3.4 Summary

This chapter has explored the trends and patterns of reportage of Nigerian newspapers in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. Employing quantitative content analysis, it examined basic reportorial issues as well as the quality of coverage of the conflicts. Through this, I have been able to establish and delineate the practices of the Nigerian press in mediation of sectarian conflicts. First amongst these is that ethno-religious conflicts enjoy wide coverage by the press. Furthermore, the press is proactive in scanning the environment and forecasting important issues in the polity. This confirms what is already known about the Nigeria press, that it is vibrant and active in discussing national issues. Another important finding is that in reporting conflicts, the press relies mainly on in-house resources in terms of reporters and correspondents. Contrary to what has been suggested elsewhere however (Obijiofor, 2009; Galadima, 2010), this study finds that the regional identity of reporters is not a major factor in the overall pattern of coverage. Other factors, such as ownership and the editorial philosophy of the newspaper are important considerations in the overall outcomes of coverage. The

chapter further noted that coverage of ethno-religious conflicts is an almost exclusively male preserve as female reporters and correspondents are absent or present only in negligible numbers. The female voice and perspectives are therefore silent in media discourse of ethno-religious conflicts. This has important implications for the direction and quality of reportage.

The chapter also confirms the widespread elite-dependence as sources of news and the relative neglect of alternative voices in the narrative of ethno-religious conflicts. In this respect, the practice of relying on partisan sources, particularly religious leaders, has serious implications for the ability of the press to report in a manner that would assist in identifying the root causes of the conflicts and the measures for their resolution. An interesting feature of reportage is the prominent use of advertorials by protagonists of conflicts to canvass their views or to challenge opinions expressed by opponents. I observe that the nature and frequency of advertorials could serve to reinforce existing media narratives and perpetuate partisan perceptions and therefore obviate the search for the resolution of conflicts. Therefore, the policy of moderating such advertorials in crisis reporting, as initiated by one of the newspapers in the survey, is a move to be encouraged.

With respect to the overall quality of reportage, the chapter observed that a high proportion of stories published on the conflicts are partisan and sensational, lacking in depth and critical analysis. Partisanship is particularly manifested in bias in selection of sources and omission of information about context. Several stories reviewed used one-sided sources and opinions or published rumours and unverified or distorted information without any critical investigation. These practices would contribute little to explicating or clarifying the situation to enable readers better understand the root causes of ethno-religious conflicts and the choices before them in resolving such conflicts. I therefore argue that the general quality of reportage is more likely to contribute to escalating, rather than minimising the conflicts. However, quantitative analysis which the chapter has employed did not provide much scope for in-depth textual analysis which would shed greater light on some of the issues highlighted by this chapter. This is the task I undertake in the next chapter which employs qualitative methods to enable deeper exploration of the latent content of textual matter in order to better understand the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FRAMING AND REPRESENTATION OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CONFLICTS BY THE NIGERIAN PRESS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a broad overview of the pattern of coverage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press, accomplished primarily through the examination of numeric data from quantitative content analysis. This focused mainly on the physical properties of text and the generalisations deducible therefrom. As I pointed out in chapter two however, physical properties of text in themselves cannot tell the whole story. There is need to also focus on the latent content of textual matter in order to understand and contextualise meanings (McQuail, 2005; May, 2001). This chapter therefore examines the detailed strategies and styles employed by the newspapers in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. Two qualitative methods, framing analysis and critical discourse analysis, are employed in this regard. The overall objective of the chapter is to answer the second research question posed by this study:

What media frames and representations of ethno-religious conflicts are discernible from the press in Nigeria and what insights could these provide into our understanding of such conflicts?

Furthermore, the chapter contributes to the understanding of the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria and the role of such mediation in escalating or minimising the conflicts. As Richardson (2007: 7-8) argues, journalism, more than any other form of communication, has the power to shape our understanding about events, ideas, people and the relationship between them. For this reason, Richardson canvasses the need to investigate, not only the function of journalism, but also the form and content of the messages it conveys and the discourse processes through which such messages are produced and consumed. This will reveal how newspaper texts may be implicated in the production and reproduction of social inequalities and provide tools for describing and accounting for language and methods of analysis and critique in order to become more critical of newspaper discourse.

This explanation provides a context for approaching the second research question. I have utilised both framing analysis and critical discourse analysis as analytical tools in a two-step process. In the first part of the chapter, I outline the sizing and thematic frames and discuss in detail the textual or stylistic frames utilised in the coverage. The second part employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to discuss the representation of ethno-religious conflicts by the

Nigerian press. In this respect, the thematic frames identified in the framing analysis provide the major planks around which the CDA is woven. Observations and conclusions are then drawn from the analyses to provide greater understanding of the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press.

## **4.2 Framing of Ethno-Religious Conflicts**

Framing addresses the issue of salience in a communication text. It implies the processes in which a story is organised to convey a central organising idea or specific story line (Entman, 1993; Lee, 2010). Through framing, it is possible to discern a newspaper's definition of a particular reality and how it evaluates or treats issues around such reality. In conducting a framing analysis of the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts by Nigerian newspapers, I seek to understand the central ideas which drive media narrative of these conflicts, what issues stand out in the perception of the newspapers, the differences and similarities in such perceptions and the implications of these for providing analysis and solutions to the problems. I have organised the framing analysis in two parts. The first part considered the sizing and thematic aspects of framing, which enabled me to identify the relative importance accorded the issue and the frameworks within which it is discussed. The second part dwells on the textual or stylistic framing, that is, the detailed editorial and other devices employed to convey meaning consistent with the central idea.

### **4.2.1 Sizing/thematic Framing**

Frame sizing addresses the overall salience of the event in the flow of news – how much material is devoted to the event and how prominently it is displayed (Entman, 1991: 9). Consistent with conventional journalistic practice, the most important stories are placed either on the front or back pages of Nigerian newspapers. Table 4.1 shows in percentages the placement of the stories within the four newspapers being studied, indicating that over a third of all the items within the study period were placed on the front and back pages. Table 4.2 focuses on the frame sizes according to the incidents of ethno-religious conflicts surveyed. The 2008 episode had almost 40 percent of the stories on the front and back pages within the three week period of analysis. None of the episodes had less than 30 percent of the coverage displayed on the front and back covers. All the newspapers devoted almost equal attention to the issue, suggesting that it was regarded as a matter of critical importance by the press. The volume of coverage may also be explained by the fact that ethno-religious conflicts contain what Boykoff and Boykoff (2007) describe as “first order journalistic norms,” that is, a

preference for the novel and dramatic in news stories, personalized to provide a human interest angle. Ethno-religious conflicts also command serious attention in Nigeria because, as earlier explained in chapter one, ethnic and religious boundaries coincide in many parts of Nigeria. This makes conflicts with such colouration easily combustible, with a capacity to spread across the nation in the form of retaliatory attacks.

Beyond the frame's size are the specific messages and explanations adduced by the newspapers as responsible for the conflicts. This is what this study refers to as thematic framing. Three dominant frames are observable from the table: "religious conflict" (31%) "security/law and order" (28%) and "ethnic conflict" (20%). The others are "political manipulation" (14%), "socio-economic conflict" (4%) and "citizenship question" (3%). These themes will be discussed in detail within the CDA.

**Table 4.1: Placement of Stories within the Newspapers**

Placement of Stories within the Newspapers			
S/N	Placement of Story	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Front/Back Pages	208	34
2	Inside Page	409	66
3	Total	617	100

**Table 4.2: Placement of Stories according to Incidents of Ethno-religious Conflicts**

S/No.	Placement of Story	Sept. 2001	Nov. 2008	Jan/Mar 2010	Christmas 2010	Eid-el-Fitr 2011	Total Frequency	Total %
1	Front/Back Pages	38 (37%)	40 (39%)	74 (33%)	31 (30%)	25 (30%)	208	34
2	Inside page	66 (63%)	63 (61%)	149 (67%)	73 (70%)	58 (70%)	409	66
	Total	104(100%)	103(100%)	223(100%)	104(100%)	83 (100%)	617	100

#### **4.2.2 Textual Framing**

Textual frames, having to do with the properties of news narratives, considers, amongst other things, the key words, metaphors and concepts employed in the various texts. As Entman (1993: 7) explains, narrative finally consists of nothing more than words and visual images. Therefore, it is possible to detect frames by probing for particular words and visual images that appear consistently in a narrative and convey thematically consonant meanings across media and time. In detecting textual execution of frames, Entman also makes a case for



comparing media narratives of events that could have been reported similarly. This, he argues, helps to reveal the critical textual choices that framed the story but which could have remained submerged in an undifferentiated text. He insists that unless narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably, because the framing devices can appear as natural choices of words or images. Comparison, however, would help to establish that such choices are not “inevitable or unproblematic but rather are central to the way the news frame helps establish the ‘common sense’ or widespread interpretation” (Entman, 1993:6). Following Entman, therefore, I engaged in comparative textual analysis of two newspapers in the study which mirror the north-south geopolitical trajectory of Nigeria. The newspapers are the *Daily Trust* and the *Nigerian Tribune*. I also focused on the reportage of the November 2008 episode of ethno-religious conflicts which was triggered by elections into the Jos North Local Government Area. The results of the elections were disputed, leading to protests that degenerated into riots, killings, arson and destruction of property. Over 400 persons were reported killed in the incident. This analysis utilizes opinion articles as these can more directly reveal the editorial posture of the newspapers. (See Appendix 4 – Synopsis of Opinion Articles).

Table 4.3 shows key words and concepts employed by the newspapers in their various write-ups. In order to create a structure for the analysis, I have grouped these key words and concepts under three major headings of Results, Responsibility and Remedy for the conflicts. In the first category, words and concepts describing the damage or effects of the conflict are categorised under ‘Results of the Conflict.’ The second category are words or concepts related to liability or agency, that is, who did it, and these are grouped under ‘Responsibility for the Conflicts’ while words and concepts suggesting the way forward to prevent future conflicts are classified under ‘Remedy for future conflicts.’

#### **4.2.2. (a) Results of the Conflicts**

The first category of key words and concepts are those which describe the destruction and damage caused by the conflicts. *Daily Trust* employs frequently such words as carnage, epidemic, mayhem, insanity, cold blooded murder. *Nigerian Tribune* uses words and concepts like barbarians/barbarity, mayhem, orgy of violence, deadly onslaught, dangerous weapons, hacked down, tears, slaughter, and murder. The list above suggests a commonality of perception that the conflict/riots have inflicted significant and avoidable damage to lives

and property. This is not surprising as Alubo (2011) estimates over 500,000 people killed within the first few years of democratic rule in Nigeria and likens the situation to a civil war.

However, a critical reading shows that there are marked differences in the accounts of the newspapers regarding the types of persons or property reported or emphasized as affected by the riots. The overall textual framing device in *Daily Trust*'s narrative of the November 2008 conflict conveys the message that the conflict is carnage targeted at Hausa/Fulani Muslims who are the main victims. The narrative also emphasizes the political economy dimensions of the conflicts as it focused primarily on issues of economic relationships between the various ethnic groups in Jos. A few examples of narratives producing this picture would illustrate the point. A story published December 5, 2008, (page 13) with the headline: "Jos Massacre, Our Government's Folly?" dwelt essentially on the losses suffered by the Hausa and the relative differences in wealth distribution between the Hausa and the indigenes. According to the paper,

Looking through a report carried on NTA and AIT televisions, the choice or selection of the businesses destroyed in Jos leaves no one in doubt as to motive and economic warfare waged against the Hausa Muslims...

The author then admonishes "the natives in Plateau State (to) understand that no Hausa or Fulani is responsible for the poverty which spread among them; no Hausa or Fulani is responsible for their irresponsible lifestyle of drinking and laziness." Another story on December 11, 2008 (back page) accused the state governor of personal hatred for Hausa/Fulani. It characterised him as "a diminutive ex-military man, who seems to be far too consumed with hatred and with a most backward perspective about relationships in a multi-ethnic community. If Jang had been born in Rwanda, he almost certainly would have been described as a 'genocidiare.'" (Jos killings: failure of politics and leadership, *Daily Trust* December 11, 2008, back page).

The *Daily Trust* also challenged the narrative of other newspapers which it claimed focused undue attention to casualties from a particular ethnicity or were acting on stereotypes. Writing on December 12, 2008 (page 13) a columnist alleged that the press was "always sloppy in covering such riots, married to its stereotypes and being of the same mindset."

The *Nigerian Tribune* narrative of results of the conflict, although more diffused, is nevertheless skewed to emphasise victims and interests from the southern parts of Nigeria, particularly the south-west Yoruba region. For example, six of the 14 articles analysed

focused on, or made several references to the three national youth service corps men killed during the riots, with an emphasis that all were Yoruba killed by Hausas. Such reports, including an editorial opinion, gave vivid accounts of the killings and also details of the home towns, family and educational backgrounds of these three victims. In such reports, as “Jos Mayhem: How these corps members were slain”; “Jos: the slain corps members” and “Leke’s parents to NYSC: you have replaced my son with paper,” the newspaper devoted detailed attention and generous space to narratives affecting people of the south-west.

What this suggests is that even in the reportage of casualties and damages, ethno-centrism takes centre stage. Newspapers may have their editorial focus but this would not justify a complete blind spot for reportage on casualties from particular groups in a national tragedy by a national newspaper. For example, the *Daily Trust* never reported the killings of the three national youth corps members during the riots, a story which was covered by most other newspapers. Similarly, the *Nigerian Tribune* did not carry reports about children killed in some Islamic schools during the riots in Jos and indeed only *Daily Trust*, amongst the newspapers in the study, focused on this story. These selective omissions suggest that in media narratives of ethno-religious conflicts, citizens are valued based on ethnic, regional or religious affiliations. This framing pattern is capable of perpetuating existing cleavages, and as a corollary, exacerbating ethno-religious conflicts.

#### **4.2.2. (b) Responsibility for the Conflicts**

The second category of concepts and key words from the narratives relate to agency or responsibility for the conflicts, that is, who or what caused the riots? A critical examination of the concepts here discloses sharply contrasting perceptions of liability or responsibility for the riots. For *Daily Trust*, the key concept around which the whole narrative is woven is *genocide*. In the newspaper’s perception, the 2008 conflicts were genocidal attacks motivated by deep hatred for Hausa/Fulani Muslim “settlers” of Jos by the “indigenes.” What took place, it insists, was mass murder and ethnic cleansing hatched and executed by the State’s Governor, Jonah David Jang, who is therefore personally liable. The newspaper also accuses the mainstream Nigerian press of being partisan, sloppy and stereotypical in its perception and reportage of the conflict and the issues flowing from it, and of the Hausa/Fulani in general. This stereotype, it believes, fostered the atmosphere for the genocide and made the press to also downplay it. The *Nigerian Tribune*, on the other hand, does not suggest anything near genocide in its framing, but locates responsibility for the conflicts in such issues as

religious intolerance, introduction of sharia, culture of impunity and criminality targeted against southerners and non-Muslims. For the *Nigerian Tribune*, responsibility is hinged on the concept of butchery: that the riots were perpetrated by hoodlums sponsored by political hegemonists.

The use of the word ‘genocide’ by the *Daily Trust* serves to portray the “indigenes” and their leaders as ruthless, brutal and dangerous. Likewise, *Nigerian Tribune’s* choice of the emotion-laden word ‘butchery’ might also depict the Hausa/Fulani “settlers” as savages, who are blood thirsty, and unfeeling. Although these are highly contentious and emotive views, what the narratives suggest is that in the relationships between citizens and the various inter-ethnic and religious communities in Jos, there is troubling inhumanity and disregard for the sanctity of life. And media narratives are not providing fresh vistas in tackling this inhumanity. One thing both papers are agreed on however is that election rigging and electoral malpractices are major contributors to social disharmony.

#### **4.2.2 (c) *Remedy for the Conflicts***

The last set of concepts/key words relate to the solutions or remedies suggested as antidote for the conflicts. In this respect, both papers recommend punishment of alleged perpetrators of the riots, but there are different emphases on who is to be so penalised. For *Daily Trust*, the main offenders, Governor Jang and his “gang” of elites, should be charged with genocide and visited with the full wrath of the law. *Nigerian Tribune* calls for stiff punishment for the rioters and their sponsors whom it believes are well known to the authorities. The “barbarians,” the paper said, should be behind bars. One of the writers even recommends self-defence by northern Christians as a permanent solution to being attacked by Muslims. Both papers canvass free elections as panacea for conflict and as a way of ensuring the emergence of the right leadership.

*Daily Trust* also canvasses implementation of constitutional provisions for full rights of citizenship, and to de-emphasize the indigene-settler dichotomy. Finally, *Daily Trust* insists on what it terms more balanced and fairer reportage of events by the Nigerian press. *Nigerian Tribune* calls for the scrapping of the National Youth service Corps scheme or a radical restructuring of the scheme to guarantee safety and security of participants.

**Table 4.3: Key Words and Concepts**

<b>DAILY TRUST</b>	<b>NIGERIAN TRIBUNE</b>
<b>Results of conflicts</b>	<b>Results of conflicts</b>
Carnage High crimes Lack of relief Ouster of community Denial of rights Children killed Hausa/Fulani trapped Muslims killed/buried Muslims killed in cold blood Victims exclusively Muslim Victims of bad governance Cold blooded murder Jungle justice Despicable sectarian crisis Islamic school burnt Arson Vehicles burnt down	Deadly onslaught Dangerous weapons Days of fury Orgy of violence Colossal loss Tears Mayhem Slaughter Mercenaries Destruction
<b>Responsibility for conflicts</b>	<b>Responsibility for conflicts</b>
Genocide Genocidal elite Mass murder Ethnic cleansing Jang and gang Deep hatred Media bias/partisan Security failure Leadership failure State sponsored terror	Barbarians Barbaric Butchery/butchers Mercenaries Premeditation Hausa/Fulani Jihad Islamic intolerance
<b>Remedy for future conflicts</b>	<b>Remedy for future conflicts</b>
Punishment/full weight of law Punish Jang Remove Jang/state of emergency Guarantee full rights of citizens Remove indigene-settler dichotomy Ensure credible elections Press reformation	Punishment/imprisonment of offenders Tackle issues in the crisis Scrap or modify NYSC National dialogue Self-defence Credible elections

### 4.3 Summary of Framing Choices

Discussions in this section show that ethno-religious conflicts are framed prominently by the press. The analysis also shows that certain thematic frames are common, notably, ethno-religious conflict and security, law and order frames. However, a close examination of the texts reveals that the newspapers are preoccupied with different concerns and perceive problems in vastly dissimilar manner. *Nigerian Tribune* emphasizes casualties from the south-west while *Daily Trust* is preoccupied with Hausa/Fulani and Muslim losses. Thus

there is a disparity in the details of what is being emphasized or displayed by the different newspapers. The contrasting emphases and narratives confirm earlier findings that regional biases are important in the perceptions, interpretations and evaluation of issues by the Nigerian press. Even in the reportage of factual phenomena such as the nature and number of casualties, the judgment of significance or even occurrence, was perceived from a regional prism.

#### **4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Ethno-Religious Conflicts by the Nigerian Press**

Having examined the framing strategies utilised by the newspapers, this section employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to discuss the representation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press. This analysis is based on the reportage of the January/March 2010 conflicts which witnessed the largest volume of coverage as earlier identified in the quantitative content analysis. The unit of analysis is the story, including hard news, feature and opinion pieces. For each newspaper, there is a detailed analysis of one carefully selected feature/opinion article and a general examination of other items of coverage within the study period in the light of that opinion piece. I elected to lead the analysis with opinion articles because the discourse in such articles “problematizes the world by taking up the normative dimension of issues and events” within the overall discursive strategy of the news narrative (Greenberg, 2000: 519). Such opinion discourses assume “important communicative function by offering readers a distinctive and authoritative voice that will speak to them directly, in the face of troubling and problematic circumstances” (Greenberg, *ibid*). That the conflicts examined in this study constitute “troubling and problematic circumstances” for the Nigerian citizen and nation is attested to by the number of casualties and the frequency of occurrence. This research attempts to locate the press within these conflicts and inquires as to whether they are part of the problem or part of the solution. According to Greenberg, “opinion discourse addresses news readers embraced in a consensual relationship by taking a particular stance in relation to the persons and topics referred” (Greenberg, 2000: 520). Moreover, even though such articles are subjective accounts, in reality, they are often perceived by the average reader to carry an objective-like status, associated with the opinions of the newspaper as an elite institution. Furthermore, the opinions expressed are usually perceived to be consistent with the world view point of the newspaper as an organisation with the capacity for opinion formation (p. 520). He argues that despite its communicative importance, this news genre has received less sustained theoretical and empirical attention from scholars than

“hard” news. Therefore, while it is more routine to analyse hard news, a direct focus on opinion articles gets to the heart of a newspaper’s overarching editorial posturing and provides a useful “basis for scrutinizing and challenging conventional journalistic standards of balance, fairness and objectivity” (Greenberg, *ibid*). Also, the analyses of the opinion articles surveyed in this study are cross-referenced to the “hard” news reportage in discovering the representational strategy of the press in the production and dissemination of the “other” in news discourse.

#### ***4.4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis of Daily Trust coverage of ethno-religious conflicts***

From the content analysis undertaken earlier, it was noticed that *Daily Trust*, amongst the newspapers studied, gave this incident the widest and most prominent coverage. The feature article I have chosen to analyse is titled:

***“Jang, the media and the genocide in Jos this time”*** (*Daily Trust*, 20/01/2010: back page). (See Appendix 5 for full text of article.)

CDA is the analysis of the linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems and I chose this article because it is incredibly rich in Nigeria’s discursive challenges and illuminates the various conflicts and contradictions within the polity. And, as would be demonstrated, its tone and style rhyme with the general reportorial and editorial direction of the newspaper in the coverage of the conflicts under study. Critical discourse analysis explores not just the grammar or composition of a text, but how the passage communicates a message and how this can promote or challenge prejudice, inequality or stereotype. In accomplishing this, the discourse analyst undertakes a three-stage analysis focusing on the text, the production process and the socio-cultural context. This is the micro, meso and macro level analysis and this is the framework within which my analysis would progress.

The headline of the story is instructive in its ringing declaration: *Jang, the media and the genocide on the Plateau this time*.

The article has employed very skilful narrative, rhetorical and grammatical devices to put across the main theme of the write-up, which is that a Christian state governor has mobilized his Christian populace to attack in cold blood a helpless and hapless Muslim minority population and that this “genocidal” attack, though clear and evident, has been deliberately and systematically ignored or down-played by the Nigerian press which is biased against the Hausa/Muslim.

The write-up has 19 paragraphs spread over two columns with a central ‘blurb’ and published on the back cover of the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010 edition of the newspaper. It is the main article on the back cover published as a regular “The Wednesday Column.” A key word in this headline is *genocide* which carries a definite article and in introducing the subject, the author remarked:

At this point the reader must be wondering what trying to explain my error last week has got to do with the subject of today, namely the genocide that has been perpetuated against Muslims in Jos and its environs since Sunday.

The first sentence introducing the subject matter of the write-up is definitive that there has been genocide. McGregor (2003) has argued that language is not used arbitrarily; it is purposeful. This aligns with what Fowler (1991) had earlier observed that linguistic expressions in a text in the form of words, syntactic choices etc. have ideological implications for representation. This is why it is important to examine such usages in the newspaper article. In talking about “the genocide that has been perpetuated against Muslims...” the author employs presupposition to make the reader assume that there is an established case of genocide. This way, the article is able to mask the problematic nature of the usage, and is able to proceed with the argument without the need to clarify or define the “genocidal” situation.

In setting the scene, the article employs a historical analogy (paragraphs 1-6) to draw a parallel between the infamous Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh, and Governor Jonah Jang of Plateau State. Timothy McVeigh, according to the article, was motivated in his acts by vengeance and the desire to settle scores as narrowly defined by his peculiar sense of justice and his deranged personality. In using this analogy, the article implies that vengeance and hatred of Hausa/Fulani Muslims motivate government policy in Plateau State and that this explains the incidents of violent conflicts in the state.

This position is spelt out using the active voice: *as governor he has openly taken sides with his kith and kin and those of (his faith)*. According to Fowler (1991), the active voice is utilized to help establish a clear picture of the agent performing the action in order to focus on responsibility for such action. Other elements of the active voice include the following:

*“He seems to wilfully encourage his kith and kin to declare open season on the others”* (paragraph 9)

*“They seemed hell bent on finishing what they started on November 28, 2008”* (paragraph 10).



*“The willful manner with which the authorities in the state have allowed its own citizens and residents to be hunted down, killed and maimed and their properties destroyed” (paragraph 13)*

*“As usual Jang, the commissioner of police and their accomplices can rely on the media to downplay the genocide this time just like they did the last time” (paragraph 15)*

Through this device, the article is able to clearly establish agency with regards to whom it holds responsible for the alleged genocide.

Another rhetorical device used is ironic distancing device, “so-called” to identify and contest certain terms/words in popular usage. Most paragraphs from paragraph 10 down contain the expression “so-called settlers” or “so-called Muslim settlers” and “indigenes.” What this portrays, in effect, is that even though these usages are common in the national political lexicon, the author considers them as unreal or illegal or unrecognized. Examples of such usages and contestations include:

*“As at the time of this writing hundreds of so-called settlers have been murdered in cold blood”*

*“As usual the so-called settlers have been blamed by the state authorities and the preponderance of the media”*

*“...the crisis started over an objection by some indigenes to an attempt by a so-called settler...to renovate his house”*

*“Here it is significant that this wanton killings of so-called settlers and the destruction of their property...”*

The frequent usage of this device confronts a very contentious issue in the polity relating to citizenship and the rights and privileges flowing therefrom, but this I will discuss in detail later in this chapter while considering the representation of the conflicts using critical discourse analysis. It however immediately discloses, without equivocation, the position of the writer (and the newspaper) on this issue. As noted earlier in chapter one, the indigene-settler phenomenon is a serious source of conflict in Nigeria and, as Sayne (2012) points out in a recent report for the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the conflicts appear to be growing deadlier and more numerous with time. In Sayne’s perception, the distinction between citizens who are deemed indigenous and those who arrived more recently is contentious because it reinforces and is reinforced by other identity-based divides in Nigeria including ethnicity, language, religion, and culture and can be longstanding and deeply felt.

This situation is however best understood within the wider contexts and fault lines: a population divided between two world religions, multiplicity of ethnic groups, economic rivalries between herdsmen and farmers and extreme inequality in wealth distribution. These boundaries sometimes coincide, as in Jos where some of the fighting is between Muslim Fulani herdsmen and Christian Berom farmers. Thus, in Jos, religion, ethnicity and economics are powerfully at play igniting and reinforcing conflicts carefully orchestrated by politicians. It is not surprising that the *Daily Trust*, a northern newspaper, would take a position which vigorously disputes the categorization of Hausa as settlers in view of the political and economic disadvantages this portends for the group.

A device used prominently in this write-up is known as “naming.” The name by which an author or article identifies a person or phenomenon is critical to the reader’s conception of, and to an extent, attitude to, that object. People possess a range of identities, which could be used to describe them accurately, but not with the same meaning. The option chosen in a particular text might therefore serve specific social or political objectives. Bloomaert (2005:11) quoted in Richardson (2007: 49) explains that apart from referential meaning, acts of naming also produce indexical meaning. Naming therefore has an ideological implication for creating or perpetuating stereotypes and world-views. The descriptions given to people or things also influence the picture or imagery that emerges of the person or object so described.

Employing this device, the article weaves its analysis around the personality of the state governor who is identified mainly by his last name, “Jang.” In backgrounding the governor’s official titles and paraphernalia, the article probably seeks to focus searchlight on the governor’s personality and character, “his humanness,” (Richardson, 2007) since it is discussing issues of motive, vengeance and personal liability. Only once is he referred to as “Governor Jang” (paragraph 13) where the author discloses about him meeting with two of his (indigenous) predecessors in office, and the outcome of that meeting is the escalation of the conflict. This would suggest that Jang, employing his full executive authority, co-opted two of his predecessors to orchestrate “this wanton killings of so-called settlers and destruction of their properties.” The paragraph reads in part: “Here it is significant that this wanton killings of so-called settlers and the destruction of their property only escalated AFTER a meeting by Governor Jang and two of his predecessors, Chiefs Solomon Lar and Dariye...” (Emphasis added).

In an earlier article, titled *The Media and the genocide in Jos* (December 3, 2008) the author had provided context for Governor Jang's alleged grievance against Hausa/Fulani Muslims and therefore revenge mission. According to him, Jang harbours "deep hatred for the Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly Muslim" just like other minority Christian leaders "from what they regard as historical wrong done their forefathers by a colonial system that supported feudal rule in the north." He continues the argument:

For Jang, this historical wrong took a personal dimension when he was retired in August 1990. This only seemed to have deepened his hatred towards the "hegemonists" (*Daily Trust*, December 3, 2008).

In paragraph 10 of the current article, the whole incident under focus is described ominously as a "finishing" operation: "they (Christian indigenes) seemed hell-bent on finishing what they started on November 28, 2008." This conjures a picture of a carefully planned, premeditated operation consistent with the theme of genocide which is the focus of the article. Moreover, in this genocidal operation, the governor, the state police commissioner (a Christian) and the media are all "accomplices" (11) who either turn a blind eye or down-play the weight of this human tragedy.

The writer is able to create the strong impression about the division in the community through continuous usage of including and excluding words and phrases such as: *only one-side...the other side...they seemed hell bent...what they started...their accomplishments...their investigative job for them.*

The feature article analysed above is typical of the tone and orientation of the newspaper's coverage of the incidents, both in its news, feature and opinion pages. There is a clear pattern, for example, of focusing reports on the personality, rather than the office, of Governor Jang, in a way that questions his integrity and capacity. Prominent headlines in this regard include:

- Imams want Federal Government to remove Jang
- Jos: when Governor Jang lost control of his domain
- Fulanis massacred in front of Jang's house
- I blame Jang for the Plateau crisis
- Plateau Fulani Ardo allege genocide against their people by Berom terrorists

An article published December 5, 2008, titled *Jos and Epidemic of Insanity (I)* devoted two full columns to speculating about Jang's plans to commit genocide. According to the author, an influential columnist of the newspaper, "Jang's plans for genocide, reportedly hatched several months ago, had two recognisable steps." It alleged that the elections were fixed for a

Thursday instead of “the usual weekend, so that the announcement of the result of the rigged poll would be made the following day, a Friday, the Muslim day of congregational worship, and is expected to inflame passions and lead to protest, and, if that happens, the ethnic cleansing machine will register maximum casualties.”

Furthermore, the narrative and reportorial style, which foregrounds one side of the story while downplaying competing voices, is evident in prominent reports on the conflict. For example, the first story of the 2010 crisis (January 18, 2010) had a front page lead story with the headline: “*Many killed in Jos violence.*” The first paragraph reports that “at least a dozen people were killed and many others injured in fresh sectarian violence in Jos, plateau State, yesterday...” The paper attributes the information to the police and unnamed “witnesses” who “told *Daily Trust* that the crisis erupted ...after an argument on the rebuilding of homes destroyed in the November 2008 clashes.” However, in the following paragraph, the report quotes the official of an Islamic organisation disclosing that “there were 10 corpses at the Central Mosque and 16 people were taken to the hospital with gun-shots wounds.” The official also said “they had received a report of over 20 corpses lying at Angwan Duala.”

The next paragraph quotes *Reuters* news agency which it said “counted 12 bodies at the Jos University Teaching Hospital and at the Central Mosque, and the agency said there were reports of as many as 20 dead and several houses destroyed.” The report continues by quoting resident and local journalist, Musa Habibu (a Muslim, by the name), who told AFP news agency: “I was at the Jos University Teaching Hospital, where I saw nine dead bodies and six people injured with machete cuts on admission.”

What is noticeable in this report is that in the very first news story on the incident, the newspaper quoted Muslim sources mainly while casualties were identified as either at the Central Mosque or in the hospital, giving the impression that such casualties were all Muslim. The use of figures in scattered fashion is probably to convey the picture of confusion and magnitude of loss: *10 corpses at the central mosque...16 people taken to hospital...20 corpses lying at Angwan Duala...12 bodies at the hospital and mosque...20 dead.*

The following day, January 19, 2010, the paper had another lead story: “*How Jos crisis began, by man on the spot.*” The first paragraph sets the tone for the religious conflict discourse:

The crisis that engulfed the Plateau state capital of Jos on Sunday started at Dutse Uku on the outskirts when Christian youth tried to stop a Muslim man from renovating his house that was destroyed in November 2008 riot, according to Alhaji Kabir Mohammed, the man at the centre of the storm.”

The story which runs into 10 paragraphs in two pages is devoted exclusively to narrating the conflict from the view point of this one man. On January 20, 2010, the paper had another story, “*JNI counts 138 bodies.*” The first three paragraphs are based exclusively on reports obtained from Muslim sources, particularly Jama’atul Nasril Islam (JNI). In the lead, the newspaper reported that JNI had counted 138 bodies from the skirmish. It continued the narrative:

Officials of the JNI, Mallam Danjumamai Khalid and Hajiya Khadija Gambo Hawaja told our correspondents that people were bringing corpses and the wounded to the mosque which serves as collection and first aid centre for victims.

The JNI officials said on Sunday evening, they buried 71 bodies and by Monday they had 68 bodies in the mosque.

This pattern of reporting is replicated in most of the other stories on the incident.

As stated earlier in chapter one, CDA practitioners generally analyse texts at three levels: micro, (or textual) level, meso (or production) level and macro (or social relations) level. The discussion so far has sought to examine the textual or micro content, to examine what is being said and the linguistic and grammatical devices employed to convey meaning. CDA however advocates that texts should also be analysed in their full social and historical contexts in order to fully comprehend their meaning (Johnstone, 2008; Richardson, 2007). For my study, this type of analysis would enable a better comprehension of the style and worldview of the *Daily Trust* newspaper and its editorial practices.

It has been already noted in this chapter that in the coverage of the conflicts in this study, *Daily Trust* emphasizes the frames of religious conflict and ethnic conflict. This is not surprising for several reasons. Firstly, as a privately-owned newspaper, published in northern Nigeria, it has a northern and Islamic orientation in its editorial policy (Yusha’u, 2009; Galadima, 2010). *Daily Trust* is owned by Media Trust, a private Nigerian newspaper publishing company based in Abuja. It publishes the English language *Daily Trust*, *Weekly Trust* and *Sunday Trust* and the Hausa language *Aminiya* newspapers. Established in 1998, this newspaper is one of the few viable newspapers in northern Nigeria currently, with a national circulation base and so it is widely read and consumed by the northern elite who are

its primary audience. It is also the largest circulating newspaper currently in northern Nigeria. Oso (2005: 13 in Galadima, 2010: 48) asserts that the *Daily Trust* is perceived, not just as a northern ethnic newspaper, but as a religious organ. This perception is probably reinforced by the fact that most of its board of directors and its management and editorial teams are composed of Muslims<sup>10</sup>. Articulating its own mission statement, the paper had declared when it was established that “there is at the moment not a single private daily newspaper north of the River Niger, and the people of this vast area are...forced to read about themselves as they are seen by others...” Therefore the strident preoccupation of the newspaper with issues of concern to northern Nigeria may be understood from this perspective.

The micro-level analysis shows a pattern in which the narrative focuses attention on the personality of the state governor and weaves around this the allegation that the crisis in Jos Plateau is a carefully planned genocide against Muslim Hausa/Fulani. The style also foregrounds one side of the story and downplays or confronts competing narrations of the situation. I argue that the *Daily Trust*'s preoccupation and style is located partly in its editorial philosophy which is skewed in favour of the northern and Islamic interests. This reportorial style appears narrowly focused and does not engender alternative problem analysis which could offer clearer perspectives on the causes of ethno-religious conflicts and their possible solution(s). In the next section, I examine the narrative of the *Nigerian Tribune*, a southern newspaper with a contrasting worldview to that of the *Daily Trust*.

#### **4.4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis of the Nigerian Tribune Coverage of Ethno-religious Conflicts**

According to Richardson (2007), one of the ways of conducting CDA is to study the institutional and editorial differences in newspapers. This prompts the selection and analysis of sample articles from the *Nigerian Tribune* to see how the paper has handled the Jos ethno-religious conflicts. As pointed out in chapter two, the *Nigerian Tribune* is a southern-based

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<sup>10</sup> According to available record on its website, the board of directors of Media Group, publishers of *Daily Trust*, is composed of an almost entirely Muslim group including Kabir A Yusuf, Chairman/CEO; Ishaq A. Ajibola, MD/COO; Manir Dan Ali, Executive Director, Usman Abdullahi, Bello Damagum, Abdullahi Shuaibu and Rabi'u Garba, directors. The management/editorial team is made up of Kabir Yusuf, Chairman/CEO; Ishaq Ajibola, MD/COO; Manir Dan Ali, Executive Director/Editor-in Chief; Mahmud Jega, Deputy Editor-in-Chief; Aliu M. Akoshile, Associate Director, Business; Shehu O. Mohammed, General Manager, Management Services; Garba Aliyu Abubakar, DGM (IT); Peter Omananyi, AGM (Production); Habeebs Pindinga, Editor (Daily Trust); Theophilus Abah, Editor Sunday Trust and Akeem Mustapha, Advert Manager.

daily newspaper whose editorial bias is towards southern Nigeria and is “Christian” in orientation (Yusha’u, 2009). This contrasts with the *Daily Trust*.

The opinion article I have chosen to analyse in detail is titled: “*Still on Jos Crisis*” (*Nigerian Tribune*, March 8, 2010, p.18: see Appendix 6) and it attempts to explain the conflict within its perennial nature and its wider socio-political ramifications. In constructing the title of the article as “Still on the Jos Crisis,” the author nominalizes the issue, suggesting that the article is not focusing on any particular angle. “Jos crisis” immediately assumes a distinct and independent phenomenon. Indeed, a survey of many newspaper stories within this period shows that “Jos” has almost become a metaphor for “crisis” and stories are woven around this word in ingenious, though mostly sensational, manner.

Fowler (1991) has emphasized the importance for critical analysts to note, in a discourse being studied, the terms that habitually occur, what segments of the society’s world enjoy constant discourse attention. This is referred to as the lexical register. In this context, Fowler (1991: 85) speaks about “over-lexicalization” which is the existence of an excess of quasi-synonymous terms for entities or ideas that are a particular preoccupation or problem in the culture’s discourse. In this respect, the term “Jos” or associated phrases such as *Jos violence*, *Jos carnage*, *Jos Mayhem*, *Plateau crisis*, *Jos massacre* etc. have been over-lexicalized in the Nigerian press as synonym for violence, instability and religious intolerance. This has ideological implications for the perception of the state and its people if such an image becomes ingrained in the national lexicon contrary to the state’s perception of itself as “the home of peace and tourism.” Even when a conflict or incident occurs in another local council far away from Jos town, newspapers still utilise the catchphrase “Jos” in constructing the headline or leads, probably to gain attention and patronage.

The opening paragraph of the story confirms this concern as it laments: “Plateau, a state once known for peace, tolerance and harmony – by both ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’ has been plagued by an orgy of hatred, hostility and bloodshed in recent times.” Like in the *Daily Trust*, this article puts the words “indigenes” and “settlers” in inverted commas to underscore the problematic nature of their usage and the discourses around such usages. Unlike the *Daily Trust*, in paragraph 2, the article does not label the conflict as genocide but seeks to contextualise and situate it within a wider national controversy. According to the article:

Many have presented the crisis as an isolated, state-backed cleansing of Muslim minority by Christian majority. They have tried to play down on the

criminality, violence and carnage of Maitatsine, Boko Haram and other jihadist groups in other states of northern Nigeria.

While the article has attempted to give the conflict scope, it has however not stated categorically if, in its opinion, there might actually have been a “state-backed cleansing of Muslim minority” and if this was in retaliation for the “criminality, violence and carnage of ... Boko Haram...in other northern states.” This also raises the worrying question as to whether the illegal and criminal activities of a group of fanatics in one part of the country justify unprovoked killings in another part of the country and whether it is right for citizens to take the laws into their hands in any circumstance. This question should be considered within the context of the apparent inability or failure of government to protect citizens in crisis times, leading to all sorts of self-help initiatives by communities to defend themselves. It is instructive that a writer in the *Nigerian Tribune* advocated that Christians in northern Nigeria should rise to defend themselves as a panacea to incessant attacks from Muslim fanatics.

One of the features of this article is its frequent reliance on vague or indirect sources to make serious attributions or generalizations. For example, paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 all begin with such phrases as: ‘many people have presented the crisis’; ‘some people have attributed the problem to’; ‘many analysts have it look as if’; ‘many analysts have failed to point out’; ‘I agree with those who have said that.’ Horvath (2012) points out how the complex mechanism of discursive practice and their social function is frequently and willingly left opaque especially when the need occurs to create and maintain differences in power relations and that CDA seeks to create a framework for decreasing this “opacity” in order to unravel the ideological implications of such discourse. In the instance of the article under consideration, the repeated use of such vague phrases along with collective nouns such as ‘many analysts’ and ‘many people’ enables the writer to legitimize claims and points of view without actually showing any rigorous evidence to substantiate such claims.

It is based on such a vague source (“those who said”) that a serious claim like the one quoted below was made: “I agree with those who said that the Muslim settlers’ community sustained heavy casualties in the latest outbreak of violence.” The author relies on “those who said” to assert that there were “heavy casualties” suffered by the Muslim settlers’ community. It then attempts to justify this unsavoury situation on the arguments of another vague source (an unnamed “anyone”). “...Anyone who has been following the conflict in Jos and Plateau State as a whole would know that the local community, including settlers from other ethnic and religious backgrounds has recorded heavy casualties in the past.”



The *Nigerian Tribune* article characterizes the conflict episode as “the Plateau butchery” which is a nominalization, both concealing the agency and minimizing the effect (as it is able to avoid uncomfortable questions like: who is the butcher? Who was butchered? How was the butchery perpetrated?). In concealing the agent, the sentence masks responsibility for the action and provides leverage for the politicization of the issue which follows. The situation, as it were, is depersonalized and materialized, wherein the focus no longer is on human beings being killed, by other human beings, but on religious balancing between Christian and Muslim casualties and political calculations between Christian and Muslim politicians.

In terms of the relationship of this article to the general reportorial pattern of the newspaper, it would be noticed, for instance, that the reports and articles in the *Nigerian Tribune* frequently use “Jos” as a metaphor for “crisis” and “conflicts.” The use of vague sources and generalizations to make serious claims has earlier been noticed in the reportorial style of the paper. For example, a headline news story of September 10, 2001 titled: “*Ex-Head of State, Governor behind Jos massacre*” (*Nigerian Tribune*, Sept 29, 2001, front page lead). This was a front page banner headline in which the newspaper alleged that a former head of state and a serving state governor were the sponsors and master-minds of the 2001 ethno-religious. The report however was based on mere speculations lacking factual proof to support the huge assertions and was credited to unnamed stakeholders. Another instance of the use of generalizations is associated with the story headlined: “Tension mounts in Jos over council’s status” published by the paper on September 6, 2001. Here, the paper relied on one source in a rather sensitive story with no attempts to reach the other parties.

The discursive strategy of *Nigerian Tribune* features mainly the use of generalisations, vague sources and nominalisations in the coverage of the conflicts. The result is a style which tends towards the superficial treatment of issues. One similarity between the two newspapers is that they both seem to contest the indigene-settler dichotomy, although the *Tribune* does not label the conflicts as genocide neither does it focus its narrative on any one personality. I will explore these contrasts more fully in the next section which deals with the social context of the coverage.

#### **4.5 Exploring the Social Context of the Reportage of Ethno-religious Conflicts**

Fairclough, Mulderrig and Wodak (2011) have provided some principles which could inform CDA at the level of social analysis. These include utilizing CDA to address social problems; unravelling power relations embedded in discourse; determining ideological work in

discursive events; revealing historical and contextual relationships in discourse and exploring the interpretative and explanatory potentials of discourse. In line with this, this dissertation has utilised the last two principles in relating the textual and discursive analysis to social analysis. This is done in conjunction with the conflict frames earlier identified in this chapter.

One of the analytical principles is the historical context of discourse. According to Van Dijk (2008c, in Fairclough et al, 2011) “discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking the context into consideration.” The historical context of discourse emphasizes the fact that discourses are connected to other discourses. This also involves issues of inter-textuality and cultural knowledge as each discourse is inevitably related to, and inter connected with, previous or current and on-going ones. In this dissertation, for example, it is evident that there are several allusions within the texts being analysed which “presuppose certain worlds of knowledge and particular inter-textual experience” on the part of readers (Fairclough, et al, 2011: 372). For example, such words as *settler* and *indigene* can only be fully appreciated if the reader has a knowledge of the history and politics of inter-ethnic relations in Nigeria generally, and in particular the struggles of minority ethnic groups to assert themselves within the context of hegemonic Nigerian federalism. Similarly, words like *maitatsine*, *sharia*, *Islamic law*, *jihad* and *political Islam* require an understanding of their historical context to appreciate the weight of the issues being stoked or addressed.

When the article in *Daily Trust* says: *This time, however, they seemed hell bent on finishing what they started on November 28, 2008*, the reader’s prior knowledge of the events of November 2008, and the socio-political dimensions of those events, are immediately called forth, including other issues such as elections rigging in Nigeria, security challenges confronting the country, the capacity of relevant security and governmental agencies to gather and utilize intelligence information in a prompt and effective manner. Here we also notice interplay of the themes of ethno-religious conflicts and those of security, law and order. In speaking about *they*, the writer creates a “we-they” categories in which “they” are the perpetrators and “we” the victims. But as this study demonstrates, victim is in the eye of the beholder. Each side blames the other and the press narratives have not provided much clarification in this respect. However, since each group has a store of historical grievances, unaddressed and unresolved, the wounds fester and conflicts do not abate.

The same thing applies with respect to the following sentence from the *Nigerian Tribune*: *Since 1999, the imposition and implementation of sharia law by Muslim majority states have escalated tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in northern Nigeria*. Here, readers are

presumed to be familiar with the year 1999 in which Nigeria transited to civilian democratic rule after a long military interregnum; the impact of military rule on the polity; the nature of the political transition; issues of the sharia debate in northern Nigeria etc. This issue touches on the theme of religious conflict. This is further illustrated in its very critical and contemporary manner when the writer asserted: *They have tried to play down on the criminality, violence and carnage of Maitatsine, Boko Haram and other jihadist groups in other states of northern Nigeria.*

The expression: *violence and carnage of Maitatsine, Boko Haram and other jihadist groups* is related to other discourses around the very contentious debates surrounding the activities of extremist Islamic organizations and the approaches to dealing with, or resolving such problems. It also highlights the contrasting perceptions of the issue of insurgency linked to religion, in which the discourse usually follows a simplistic north-south/Christian-Muslim divide; and the complexities of the issue in the Middle Belt areas which have mixed populations and where ethnicity and religion are many times co-terminus. *Boko Haram* in this passage also brings up the fact that this phenomenon has been a concern in the media and some would argue that had government taken more proactive measures over the years, the organization would not have grown to assume the national security concern that it is today whereby innocent citizens and groups, including schools, churches and public places are targeted for destruction and in which innocent children are being kidnapped.

To illustrate this point, I elaborate on one of the issues here. The debates around the concepts of *indigenes* and *settlers* have deep constitutional and socio-economic ramifications and are at the heart of many communal conflicts in Nigeria. The constitution of Nigeria 1999 in section 14 confers citizenship rights on all Nigerians irrespective of ethnicity, religion, place of birth, etc. and guarantees the right of abode in any part of the country without discrimination. Alubo (2011) has however noted that there is a wide gap between the practice, as distinct from the principle, of citizenship in Nigeria, particularly within the context of the contests for identity, access to and control over resources and positions. This, according to him, is because primordial considerations such as *indigene* and *settler* intervene to subvert the universal and inclusive principle of citizenship enshrined in the constitution. Anyone born outside the “native home” of the ethnic group of his parents is regarded as a *settler* and this status is permanent as there is no road map for a settler to ever become an indigene. As Alubo (2011: 44) explains, there are elaborate processes to ensure that inclusive citizenship is discounted for the narrower concept of indigeneity. One of such arrangements

is the issuance of certificates of indigene to give privileges and opportunities (such as scholarship and employment) which are denied others. The Federal Government also uses indigeneity as the basis for determining federal character, a policy, which among others, provides that employment and other opportunities should reflect the diverse origins and, in practice, give opportunities to people who may have lower qualifications but are from educationally disadvantaged states.

It is a paradox that the constitution, while espousing inclusive and universalistic principles of citizenship, also legitimizes practices which detract from or even contradict these principles. A major feature of such practices is the federal character policy which is aimed at fostering national unity and promoting a sense of belonging within the Nigerian diversity. Section 14.4 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, holds that the composition of government agencies at all levels and the conduct of the affairs of government should be “carried out in a manner as to recognize the diversity of the people within its area of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people of the federation.” And in section 14.3, the Constitution also holds that government business should “reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no preponderance of persons from a few states or a few ethnic or sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.” The federal character policy is enforced by the Federal Character Commission, an agency created specifically for this purpose. The commission also ensures another contentious policy known as *quota system*. In effect, “sections of the Nigerian constitution and other legal documents such as certificate of indigeneity give legal teeth to the ‘nativisation’ of citizenship” (Alubo, 2011: 45).

In practice, therefore, the state legitimises ‘nativisation’ and hence the contention that ethnic divide and rule is part of nation-building strategy in Nigeria’s post-colonial governments (Alubo, 2011: 45). The World Organisation Against Torture (2011) further notes the burden that the distinction between “indigenes” and “non-indigenes” places on citizens as the two groups effectively have different rights, which results in discrimination and inequality of access in critical areas of life. For example, non-indigenes have to pay higher fees to be admitted to good public schools and while paying the same taxes, they are discriminated against in employment in the civil service.

These contestations are attenuated in Central Nigeria, particularly Plateau State, where large numbers of ethnic minorities live with many others from different parts of the country. According to Egwu (2009: 73), conflicts on the Plateau have been facilitated by the rise in minority consciousness which has led to the construction of Middle Belt identity. This is based on the “perception that the indigenous ethnic minorities have been dominated by the Hausa/Fulani community in the control of commerce and politics in which the former had been reduced to spectators.” As early as the pre-independence period, the tin mining city of Jos witnessed inter-ethnic conflicts and riots. Plotnicov (1971) has given a historical account of the 1945 rioting between Hausa and Ibo ethnic groups in Jos and identified three factors underlying the riots. The most critical of the factors, in his opinion, is economic competition due to increased inter-ethnic contact and competition over trade and land resources. Another reason was status insecurity in the sense that “the Ibo were gaining prominence, and the Hausa were feeling politically insecure as a result of the activities of the nationalist NCNC led by Azikiwe” (Plotnicov, 1971). In more recent times however, the struggle has been between Hausa/Fulani and the ethnic groups, particularly the Berom, who insist that they are the indigenes of Jos. This relationship with the Hausa Fulani is particularly problematic because of the complications religion brings to the fray, since the latter are mostly Muslim while the former are Christian in orientation. Therefore conflicts which might be essentially ethnic or economic easily assume religious coloration.

Alubo (2011: 44) therefore concludes that the nature of the violence on the Jos Plateau is largely defined by these contestations between the *indigenes* and *settlers*. According to him, the issues relate to perceived advantages about who is favoured and/or marginalized and how each group attempts to attain what it considers as its rights and entitlements. “Central here are political appointments with all they portend for creating opportunities,” (p.44) he argued. One of the things this analysis demonstrates is that although the press has labelled these conflicts as ethnic or religious, other issues actually drive them, and it is important to unravel such issues.

Critical discourse analysis is also interpretative and explanatory. According to Fairclough, et al, (2011), discourse can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the context and audience. Such interpretation, they explain, can occur through the lens of feelings, beliefs, values and knowledge. This point is clearly visible in the different ways the newspapers in this study covered the ethno-religious conflicts in Jos. The perceptions and characterization of the conflicts by *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune* are radically different in several

respects. Whereas *Daily Trust* sees clear-cut genocide against Muslims, motivated primarily by an “ideology of hatred for the so-called Muslim settlers” by a Christian governor and populace, the *Nigerian Tribune* has a different thesis. According to it, the violence on the Jos Plateau is a response to “Islamic partisanship that holds sway in most states of northern Nigeria.” Militant Islam, it argues, has led to the emergence of militant Christianity. “The Islamic partisanship in Muslim majority states has caused the emergence of Christian partisanship in Plateau and other Christian majority states,” the paper contends.

To drive this perspective home, the article conclusively takes a position diametrically opposed to *Daily Trust*’s worldview:

The crisis in Plateau is intricately linked to, and caused by, the political and jihadist Islam that prevails in northern Nigeria. The Plateau butchery cannot be resolved without rooting out militant and political Islam. Muslim politicians must stop using elective positions to further Islamic agenda and implement Islamic law. Muslim politicians must learn to uphold democracy and universal human rights and stop foisting Islamic theocracy on the people.

This confirms Fowler’s position that news reports are not necessarily the accounts of “the real world” but are mediated by the social, economic and political environments within which the institutions of news reporting, such as newspaper organisations, are situated (Fowler, 1991). This is evident also in the perception of *Daily Trust* newspaper on the general reportorial style and editorial position of other Nigerian newspapers on the conflict. Paragraph 15 of the article I analysed, for example, claims that

“the police and their accomplices can rely on the media to downplay the genocide just like it did the last time.”

This statement suggests not just frustration with the dominant press narrative of the conflict, but also significantly, touches on the history and development of the Nigerian press in which media power and ownership pattern are historically skewed in favour of the southern parts which control what is popularly known as the “Lagos-Ibadan axis” press (Oyovbaire, 2001). As the southern parts of the county are also Christian, it is then argued that the philosophy and world-view of the dominant press is Judeo-Christian (Oyovbaire, 2001; Yusha’u, 2009) and that this spells an ideological disadvantage in the representation of northern issues and interests in the press (Yusha’u, 2009). *Daily Trust*’s argument therefore seems to be that the Nigerian press is ideologically programmed to be anti-Islam and anti-Hausa/Fulani, and that this, in its perception, explains why the press subjectively blames every crisis on the Plateau

on Muslim Hausa/Fulani. This position is highly contentious and contestable. In so far as it has some bearing on content and representation of issues, however, it has critical implications for the reportage of such issues, as already demonstrated. The superficial treatment of issues by the *Nigerian Tribune*, on the other hand, is no less disadvantageous to proper and informed understanding of these issues and this also has critical implications for representation.

For example, the dominant frame used in the coverage by the newspapers is that of “ethno-religious conflicts.” However, a close reading of most of the stories suggests that this description is more of an off-hand label or loose definition of the conflicts reported by the newspapers without much analysis or reflection. This pattern of reporting has the potential to mask possible deeper issues in these conflicts. For, as has been pointed out by scholars (Imobighe, 2003; Alemika, 2002), using ethnicity or religion and associated primordial factors to explain conflicts contributes to obscuring societal inadequacies and the individual and collective failings of the people. This position rhymes with the assertion by Allen and Seaton (1999: 11) that media often use ethnic conflict as “lazy shorthand” to interpret or explain complex issues resulting in “muddled and misleading” representation of contemporary conflicts.

The complaint by *Daily Trust* about people of northern Nigeria being unfairly represented by the Nigerian press has particular significance for the people of the Middle Belt, where the Jos Plateau, my area of study is located. For whereas a newspaper like *Daily Trust* has become well established and champions the cause of Muslims and far northern people (Galadima, 2010: 48) there is no viable national newspaper which overtly and consistently canvasses Middle Belt viewpoints. This led recently to the establishment of an internet discussion forum called *The Middle Belt Dialogue* formed mainly to provide a medium for articulating issues affecting the region. *The Middle Belt Dialogue* is an online discussion forum for members of the Middle Belt Forum, a socio-cultural organisation representing the minority populations of Nigeria’s middle belt region. This Dialogue, which is a free listserve hosted on Yahoo Groups (Ette, 2012)<sup>11</sup>, was born partly as a response to a feeling of underrepresentation and misrepresentation of the area in main stream Nigerian and international media, as a

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<sup>11</sup> A listserve is an online discussion group which enables people with a common interest to network and interact on their shared interest. There are numerous list serves such as those offered by Yahoo Groups or Google. As Ette (2012) notes, list serves allow even small ethnic nationalities to become global players by providing avenues for members everywhere to keep abreast of developments back home.

consequence of which the existing political and economic cleavages and marginalisation of the region were being reinforced and perpetuated. It was felt, particularly, that the Middle Belt peoples were often represented in unfavourable or inaccurate light in the media. The Dialogue serves as a medium where members could exchange ideas on topical issues within the framework of the overarching concerns of the geo-political Middle Belt and its relationship to the larger Nigerian polity. Amongst other things, this forum is utilised to elaborate or contest mainstream media representation of the middle belt region or persons (Tsado, 2013). For example, on December 6, 2012, an article was posted on the Dialogue titled: “Northern Nigeria: Different strokes for different people.” This article, whose main argument is the alleged discriminatory treatment of northern minorities (Middle Belt peoples) by the dominant Hausa/Fulani, had earlier been published in a national daily, and was flagged on the Dialogue because, as the author claimed, “it was edited beyond recognition” by the newspaper which published it. The original article was then posted on the Dialogue for the attention of members. This occasioned many comments which are illustrative of the perceptions of the people with respect to media representation of the Middle Belt area. Here are examples of such comments by different contributors to the forum:

- i. *“We must speak out. They must know that they don’t hold monopoly of the media.”*
- ii. *We should begin to contribute money to respond to any attack on our people and the Middle Belt in the media or otherwise.”*
- iii. *“I know (the article) was tampered with, but that did not take away the substance. Your comments have inspired those of us who have just discovered that our identities have been subsumed in a larger political conspiracy.”*
- iv. *“The Middle Belt Dialogue must create a fund to push for the publication of this kind of reasoning for the world to know.”*
- v. *“Can we publish (the article) in another newspaper?”*
- vi. *“You should know how these things are done. We just have to pay somehow, since we don’t have our own newspaper. Imagine how helpless we are. No one newspaper to fall back on.”*
- vii. *“What about creating an online newspaper?”*

In comment (i) above, (*We must speak out. They must know that they don’t hold monopoly of the media*) “**they**” refers to the Hausa Fulani, who in the perception of this writer are monopolising the media at the expense of “**we**” (the Middle Belt peoples). This perception is the theme of the discussion in the other comments, leading to the exasperation: “Imagine how



helpless we (the Middle Belt People) are. No one newspaper to fall back on,” meaning, a newspaper either from the south or the north, which ‘speaks’ for the Middle Belt. So while the north complains of misrepresentation by the southern press, a segment of the north (the Middle Belt) complains of marginalisation by both the southern and northern press. The main point in all of these is that in its representational pattern, the north feels marginalised or misrepresented by the mainstream press which is dominantly owned by southerners and based in Lagos or Ibadan. But for the people of the Middle Belt, this is a double jeopardy of misrepresentation, first, by the southern press, which the people of the region feel does not understand their worldview, and by the northern press which does not sympathise with their worldview.

With respect to conflicts in the Middle Belt region, Owojaiye (2013) has asserted that these fights are not religious but economic, arguing that corruption and mismanagement by successive northern leaderships have left millions of youth in the region unemployed, poor, hungry and disaffected, making them susceptible to manipulation and extremism. Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka (2012) arguing in a similar vein, emphasizes the political angle in the “current season of violent discontent.” He insists that although economic factors have facilitated the mass production of the terrorist fighters, yet those he describes as political opportunists and criminal leaders have deliberately bred and nurtured them for their selfish goals. In his words, “they have been deliberately bred, nurtured, sheltered, rendered pliant, obedient to only one line of command, ready to be unleashed at the rest of society” (Wole Soyinka, *New York Times*, February 2012).

In considering this issue, Tetey (2005) poses this searching question about the African press: “does the press exhibit discernment and sophistication in its analysis or does it trudge along mindlessly in the political paths plotted by protagonists of crises?” For the Nigerian press, the answer to this question, in light of evidence presented above, would suggest the latter. This has obvious negative significance for clarifying the nature and depth of the issues driving these conflicts and how they may be resolved.

#### **4.6 Summary**

This chapter has focused on the framing and representation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press. Using framing analysis and critical discourse analysis, the chapter has established a number of important observations. First, is that most of the stories are framed and represented as “ethno-religious conflicts” even though that label is a casual label which

has not been thoroughly analysed or scrutinised. This is attributable to sensationalism and superficial reportage and lack of investigative reporting. Secondly, although the conflicts enjoy a lot of prominence in the press, there are differences in the emphases and narratives on the causes and effects of the conflicts. A section of the press alleges genocide while the others do not even hint at it. The contrasting emphasis can be located in the regional and religious inclinations of the newspapers, a tendency long associated with Nigerian journalism. For example, the press was divided along religious lines during the controversy surrounding Nigeria's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986 and the sharia riots of the early 2000s (Galadima, 2010: 82).

The pattern of representation of the conflicts tends to coincide with existing social and political cleavages. On the surface the conflicts appear to be driven by identity-laden issues like ethnicity and religion. Critical analysis however indicates that other issues are at the root of conflicts, chiefly competition for political office and the economic benefits that come with it, corruption, poverty and inequality, and elite manipulation of primordial loyalties. By its inability to investigate these issues thoroughly, the Nigerian press has failed in its public duty and is implicated in the production and reproduction of social inequality. The representation of issues, rather than clarify, tends to muddle up issues. This is capable of reinforcing and perpetuating prejudices within the polity. The overall pattern of coverage is thus problematic and as troubling as the situations producing it.

These findings confirm established knowledge in media research on news culture that media representations generally tend to glamorize war, violence and propaganda with negative consequences for the resolution of such conflicts. The question is whether this situation is inevitable. This question brings up issues connected with current debates around conflict de-escalation reportage and systematic thinking about ways to utilize the potentials of the media, not to fuel conflicts, but to minimize them (Hyde-Clarke, 2011:43). This "growing field of media and conflict" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 34) proposes that equipping journalists with appropriate skills in conflict reportage makes them more effective professionals capable of covering conflicts more accurately and taking responsibility for their involvement in the events and processes on which they report. How might this apply to Nigerian journalism? It is to these issues and questions about conflict de-escalation reportage, and how they might be relevant particularly to the Nigerian press scene, that the next chapter turns.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**PEACE JOURNALISM:**  
**EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CONFLICT COVERAGE AND**  
**CONFLICT REPORTAGE BY THE NIGERIAN PRESS**

**5.1 Introduction**

One of the main issues highlighted in chapter four is the tendency of the Nigerian press towards negative reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. Both in its framing and representational styles, concerns about sensationalism, exaggeration and simplification were noted. My findings revealed that there was a lack of rigour in investigation and analysis while issues of regionalism and religious biases and their possible impact on reportage were also noted. These tendencies, I argue, are capable of escalating, rather than minimizing ethno-religious conflicts.

This pattern of reportage is not peculiar to Nigerian journalism, as universally, newsroom mentality on the coverage of conflicts and wars generally follows the popular dictum, “if it bleeds, it leads” (Hawkins, 2011: 263). This suggests that media often give priority to conflict and war at the expense of playing a positive role in the attempts at conflict resolution and securing peaceful outcomes. As various studies demonstrate, mainstream journalism is dominated by negativity (Lynch, 2006; Starkey, 2007; Hyde-Clarke, 2011; Moge kwu, 2013; Sharp, 2013). Hyde-Clarke (2011: 43) notes the growing belief that the media often fan “the flames of discord...reinforcing prejudices, muddling the facts and peddling half-truth.” Sharp (2013) also argues that journalists, far from being disinterested purveyors of unproblematic truths, are implicated in the creation and spread of ideas and images that shape political discourses that exacerbate violent conflict.

These concerns and debates, as noted in chapter one, find voice in new journalistic genres, which have emerged as a counterpoise to established, traditional journalistic forms. These “challenger paradigms” (Hackett, 2013: 36) seek to redress perceived deficiencies of mainline news representations of conventional journalism and to more critically align journalism to projects of social responsibility, economic development, political participation and cultural democracy (Cottle, 2006). This chapter attempts to explore these new approaches to reporting conflicts with specific reference to the concept of peace journalism and its possible applicability to the Nigerian press. The first section of the chapter investigates the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts through the paradigm of peace journalism. This is

accomplished through a content analysis of selected newspapers based on criteria established by Galtung (1993). The second section discusses the findings from interviews with Nigerian media practitioners and media academics on their perspectives of the concept of peace journalism. The content analysis delineates the orientation of the Nigerian press while the interviews explain and give context to such orientation. The chapter highlights positive contributions which the concept could make to the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts but also recognizes the practical difficulties to its application in the Nigeria press environment.

## **5.2 Brief explication of interview sample and process**

A brief explication of the interview sample and process is necessary at this point. As indicated in chapter two, the interview participants were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques (May, 2001; Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). The first technique involved drawing up a tentative list of interviewees made up of media practitioners and media academics from different media organisations and institutions across the country. The selection did not attempt any systematic demographic representation of categories such as gender, education, ethnic or religious affiliations. What was of critical concern, in line with Tremblay (1957), was participants' capacity to provide informed opinion on the issues being canvassed. Such selective sampling, according to Tremblay, maximises the chances of identifying knowledgeable key informants who can provide relevant information. Snowballing enriched the initial list through obtaining recommendations from those already interviewed as well as providing useful guide to locate potential interviewees. Of the 17 participants interviewed, 10 are media practitioners while six are media academics. One person is a director of the official press regulatory agency, the Nigerian Press Council.

There were five women in my initial sample: a former editor of an influential national newspaper and social development activist; two heads of mass communication/media departments in universities; one newspaper correspondent and a notable media personality who has expressed critical views on press coverage of conflicts. However, the woman editor was difficult to track and unfortunately died in a stampede. One of the female heads of department declined to be interviewed while the second one appointed a male colleague to represent her on account of circumstances beyond her control at the time scheduled for the interview. The female correspondent similarly was unavailable. This explains why only one woman features on the interview schedule. This fact has however not impaired the quality of

views or data obtained from the interviews as all the participants are experienced professionals and/or academics, capable of providing informed opinions on the questions posed. Two of the media academics, for example, are professors who have headed communication departments in universities. Amongst the media practitioners, two have been managing editors of newspapers while others are experienced correspondents and writers. There are also two officials of the professional body of journalists in Nigeria, the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ).

Boyce and Neale (2006) emphasise the need, in qualitative interviews, to develop interview protocols involving the rules that guide the administration and implementation of the interviews. These, they explain, are the instructions that are followed for each interview to ensure consistency between interviews and thus increase reliability of findings. In line with the above, my interview protocol included asking participants for their consent and giving assurances of confidentiality in conformity with ethical guidelines. I produced one set of questions for all participants, with each interview ranging from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted using Audio Memos on my iPad with almost limitless capacity for recording and storage. This facility also had provision for sharing or emailing recorded material, a feature which enabled me to backup copies of interviews in virtual storage (Dropbox/Google Drive) for easy access across devices and protection against loss of data.

The issues canvassed in the interviews can be grouped under two broad headings. The first has to do with the critique of mainstream media in conflict reportage: what is the general perception of media practitioners and media academics on the normative concerns of peace journalism? The second area deals with the judgment of respondents about the principles and precepts proposed by peace journalism advocates for addressing the deficiencies identified with mainstream journalism: what are the perspectives of Nigerian journalists and media academics on the approach of peace journalism to conflict reportage vis-a-vis traditional journalistic values? The issues are discussed in 5.5 below.

### **5.3 Peace Journalism and Ethno-religious Conflicts Reportage in Nigeria**

Peace journalism is a growing field of interest to professionals in both the developed and developing countries and to researchers and activists interested in the media-conflict nexus (Lynch, Hackett and Shaw, 2011: 8). In challenging mainstream news values in conflict coverage, advocates of peace journalism argue that the press, by its style, wittingly or unwittingly, entrenches cultural and structural violence capable of escalating conflicts, particularly in fragile societies like Nigeria. Opponents of peace journalism, on the other hand, insist on the role of journalists, not as arbiters in conflict situations, but as neutral agents of information, who serve society by mirroring both its strengths and weaknesses. Action to redress such weaknesses, they opine, lies outside the purview of the media (Jimoh, 2014: 70; Loyn, 2007). These contested positions necessitate further enquiry into these issues. This informs my investigation here of the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press measured against the standards of peace journalism.

#### **5.3.1 Findings**

From the evidence in Table 5.1 below, the general orientation of the coverage of the conflicts tends towards war journalism. For example, the analytical category “expected results of conflicts” reveals a firm win-lose orientation (68%) with only 31% predisposed to a win-win framing. With respect to social orientation, almost 80% of the stories rely on elite-sources while less than 20% are ‘people oriented’ sources. About 57% of stories use victimising/demonising language or emotive words.

The political orientation of the coverage discloses a more variegated picture. Although tending towards war journalism generally, several of the variables show some signs of peace journalism framing. The table shows that although partisanship was expected, this is not so clear cut as 58% of the stories are non-partisan, while 40% display a partisan characteristic. Sixty two per cent of all the stories employ a two-party orientation and 61% label good and bad guys. Also 66% emphasize differences while 32% focus on agreement. Almost 75% of the stories relate to “here and now events” while 24% relate to the wider content. With 80% of the stories focused on visible effects of conflict, the professional orientation is decidedly framed towards war journalism, more so as 88% of the coverage is reactive. Overall frequency count shows 67.5% war journalism framing.

The orientation of the Nigerian press is typical of mainstream media style which emphasises violence, blood and destruction, indexed to political and economic factors. Even in developed

countries like America, the media, in its handling of such issues as the “war on terror” has been accused of acting as willing lapdogs of the military-industrial complex instead of being critical watchdogs of society against the excesses of the political establishment (Jimoh, 2014: 70). In Nigeria, Isola (2010) (cited in Jimoh, 2014: 69) documents instances where “crass insensitivity” on the part of the media contributed to stocking political violence in the Western Region in 1965 and Ondo State in 1983. This he explains in terms of the political and economic factors connected to media ownership, political interests and commercial patronage.

**Table 5.1: General Orientation of Coverage**

Analytical category	War Journalism	Frequency	Peace Journalism	Frequency
Expected outcomes Winning orientation	Win-lose (zero-sum) orientation	417 (67.6%)	Win-win orientation	189 (30.6%)
Professional orientation Visibility of effects Reactivity	Visible effects  Reactive	485 (78.6%) 543 (88.0%)	Invisible effects  Proactive	121 (19.6%) 62 (10%)
Social orientation Elite or people orientation Language	Elite orientation  Victimising language	491 (78.6%) 349 (59.6%)	People-orientation  Non-victimising language	115 (18.6%) 255 (41.3%)
Political orientation Partisanship  Good and bad tagging  Differences  Party orientation  focus	Partisan  Labels good and bad guys  Emphasises differences  Two-party  Here and now events	247 (40%)  375 (60.8%)  409 (66.3%)  385 (62.4%)  455 (73.7%)	Non-partisan  Avoids labels  Focuses on agreement  Multi-party  Wider contexts	359 (58.2%) 231 (37.4%)  196 (31.8 %)  221 (35.8%)  150 (24.3%)

### Comparative analysis of war/peace journalism framing

In order to deepen analysis, I undertook a comparative analysis of the war/peace journalism reportage in the four newspapers. The various findings are tabulated below. With respect to the social orientation, Table 5.2 indicates that all the newspapers rely overwhelmingly on elite sources for their stories. Below is a sampling of headlines from the newspapers showing elite sources.

**Table 5.2: Comparative Analysis: Social Orientation (%)**

Source orientation	DT N=197	NT N=150	GD N=136	TD N=134
Elite/official sources	91.4	86.0	74.3	80.6
People-oriented sources	7.6	14.0	22.1	16.4
Language				
Victimising/demonising language	58.4	64.7	47.1	54.5
Non victimising/non demonising language	40.6	34.7	49.3	41.8

- Jos crisis latest: Sultan, others call for calm (*Daily Trust*, 11 September 2001)
- NLC cautions on Jos disturbances (*Nigerian Tribune*, 17 September 2001)
- Plateau takes stock, blames clash on ethnicity (*The Guardian*, 11 September 2001)
- Religious crisis brews in Jos (*This Day*, 5 September 2001)
- Hausas are settlers in Jos – Dan Manjang (Special Assistant to Plateau State Governor) (*Daily Trust*, December 6 2008)
- Mark blames Jos crisis on political class (*Nigerian Tribune*, 5 December 2008)

The above headlines are attributable to the government, religious institutions, security agencies or labour organisations, which define and contextualise the conflicts. Elite sourcing, as earlier discussed in chapter three, is a prominent feature of mainline journalism, a practice which Hackett and Carroll (206: 131-42) identify as one of the opponents of the “democratic ideal” in social communication which currently privileges certain institutions and persons. One of peace journalism’s stated goals is to broaden the range of voices accessed in the public arena, particularly those of peace builders and the victims of violence in conflict situations (Hackett, 2013: 51). By over relying on elite sources in reportage of ethno-religious conflicts, the Nigerian press diminishes the opportunity to engage in the critical analysis of



social structure “beyond the quotidian spectacles of conventional news” (Hackett, 2011: 51). Such analysis could contribute to revealing and minimising the cultural and structural violence that underlie and fuel physical violence. In Hackett’s opinion, peace journalism’s prescription to broaden the range of sources by consciously searching for the voices and options for peaceful resolution can be considered as one of the dimensions of its challenge to conventional war reporting (Hackett, 2013: 43).

In terms of the political orientation of the coverage, the regionally-oriented newspapers (*Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*) exhibit more war journalism characteristics than the other two newspapers. This is true in all the indices that make up this analytical category. For example, 54% of all stories in the *Daily Trust* and 44% in the *Nigerian Tribune* are partisan. This contrasts with *The Guardian* and *This Day* in which only about 23% and 33% of the stories are partisan respectively. Still on political orientation, about 71% of items in *Nigerian Tribune* and 63% in *Daily Trust* use good and bad tagging devices whereas for *The Guardian* and *This Day*, it is 51% and 57% respectively. Over 70% of all stories in the regionally oriented papers emphasise differences while over 65% of all the items in the said newspapers frame the conflicts as between two parties in a tug of war. The other two newspapers analysed by the research exhibit lesser tendencies in all of these classifications (see Table 5.3 below).

**Table 5.3: Comparative Analysis: Political Orientation (%)**

Partisanship	DT N=197	NT N=150	GD N=136	TD N=134
Partisan	53.8	44	22.8	32.8
Non-partisan	45.2	56	76.3	66.2
Good and bad tagging				
Labels good and bad guys	62.9	70.7	50.7	56.7
Avoids labels	36	29.3	45.6	40.3
Differences				
Emphasises differences	69.5	78.7	52.2	61.9
Focuses on agreement	29.4	21.3	43.4	35.1
Party orientation				
Two-party	65.0	73.3	50.7	58.2
Multi-party	34.0	26.7	45.6	38.8
Focus				
Immediate context	81.7	85.3	58.1	64.9
Wider contexts	17.3	14.7	38.2	31.3

I discuss below some examples to support the findings of Table 5.3. With respect to two-party framing, for instance, most of the stories in the newspapers reported the conflicts as

between two parties, either Muslims versus Christians or indigenes versus settlers. On September 5, 2001, *This Day* newspaper published a story with the headline: *Religious crisis brews in Jos*. The story, in the first paragraph, raised the alarm that the relative peace being enjoyed by residents of Jos in Plateau State may elude them if urgent actions are not taken by relevant authorities “to avert imminent show down between Christian indigenes of the area and the Hausa-Fulani who are mainly Muslims.” This style of reporting is a typical example in which the papers routinely and uncritically grouped disputants/combatants along religious and ethnic lines, thus setting the tone for later discourse. On September 9, 2001, *The Guardian* reported that no fewer than 50 persons had been killed in the sectarian crisis that was ignited “between Moslems and Christians.” On the 20<sup>th</sup> day of the same month, the paper had a story which defined the conflict as between Hausa and Berom over the ownership of Jos. The story asserts: “Jos, if you like it or not, is a Hausa town. It was established by the Hausa. It was not established by the Birom (sic). Though it is in Birom territory, but Hausa were those who established the town” (*The Guardian*, 25 September 2001).

Fixation with two-party framework amounts to simplification and obscures other factors or stakeholders driving these conflicts. For example, Blench and Dendo (2013) point out the dimensions of the conflict as represented by contests over access rights to farming and grazing lands between farmers and pastoral Fulani in the area and how easy access to small arms within the feuding communities is driving and deepening such conflicts. There is also the issue of cattle rustling and other criminal activities. Simplistic categorizations therefore into two-party framework of Muslim-Christian conflict by the press shift focus from the deeper issues and is unhelpful to finding solutions to the conflicts.

There is no marked difference in the professional orientation of the coverage, as all the newspapers tended to report preponderantly the visible effects of the conflicts in a reactive manner as is evidenced from Table 5.4 below.

**Table 5.4: Comparative Analysis: Professional Orientation (%)**

Visibility of effects	DT N=197	NT N=150	GD N=136	TD N=134
Visible effects	82.1	88	69.9	73.1
Invisible effects	17.8	12	26.5	23.9
Reactivity				
Reactive	91.4	91.3	80.9	86.6
Proactive	7.6	8.7	14.7	10.4

Below are headlines from the newspapers as examples of reporting mainly visible effects of the conflicts, neglecting the structural and cultural damage:

- 200 killed in Jos villages raid (*Daily Trust*, 8 March 2010)
- Fulanis massacred in front of Jang's house (*Daily Trust*, 25 January 2010)
- 500 killed, 75 houses burnt in fresh Jos crisis (*Nigerian Tribune*, 27 January 2010)
- 300 feared killed in fresh Jos violence (*The Guardian*, 8 March 2010)
- Black day in Jos: JNI counts 138 bodies (*Daily Trust*, 20 January 2010)

With respect to the expected outcomes of the conflict, it is observed that coverage among all the newspapers tend evenly towards war journalism irrespective of regional orientation. Most of the papers feature a win-lose coverage frame on the 70% margin, except *The Guardian* which has 55% as is shown on Table 5.5 below.

**Table 5.5: Comparative Analysis: Expected outcomes of the conflicts (%)**

Winning orientation	DT N=197	NT N=150	GD N=136	TD N=134
Win-lose/zero-sum orientation	69.0	74.7	55.1	70.1
Win-win orientation	29.0	25.3	41.2	26.9

Examples of win-lose orientation:

Jos Boils again: Federal Government reads riot act – the Federal Government has warned that it had the capacity, will and resources to deal squarely with those faceless people behind the recurring incidence of religious upheavals in the country (*Nigerian Tribune*, 13 September 2001, back page).

In most parts of the state capital yesterday, church services were not held as worshippers stayed at home for fear of being attacked by Moslems (*The Guardian*, 10 September 2001, p.2).

What this comparative analysis suggests is that the Nigerian press framing of ethno-religious conflicts tends towards “war journalism.” The *Daily Trust* and the *Nigerian Tribune*, both with a regional orientation, share this characteristic in a fashion more distinct than the other two papers examined. The most notable indices of war journalism include elite orientation, two-party orientation in reportage, visibility of effects of conflicts, presentation of issues with little context and analysis. I argue that this style, in so far as it contributes to obscuring underlying causes, perpetuating structural and cultural violence and privileging certain views and opinions, is capable of exacerbating ethno-religious conflicts.

#### **5.4 Factors in “War Journalism” Framing**

In explaining the tendency of the Nigerian press towards war journalism, it is useful to examine news selection conventions and the factors which influence the framing of conflicts by the Nigerian press. As has been noted earlier in chapter one, media conventions generally emphasise negative news over positive news. According to Chaudhary (2001), scholars examining the third world media news content find that, in line with the western tradition, they overplay bad news and dwell on disasters and dramatize and sensationalise things. Third world press, he asserts, place undue emphasis on negativism, as much as their western counterparts. Contrary to popular expectations, Chaudhary finds no sharp distinctions in the news values and news filter criteria between third world journalists and those of the western practitioners. The popular news values of interest, proximity, prominence, conflict, novelty, human interest and timeliness are applicable to mainstream journalistic practice everywhere. Manning (2001: 63) similarly observes that comparative studies of newsrooms in various parts of the world confirm that despite differences in culture and social formation, tried and tested subjects such as news of political elites and powerful people, sex, crime, law and order are common favourites among news editors. It can therefore be argued that news selection criteria are similar across nations, with no radical differences between media systems of third world and western countries. The Nigerian press news conventions are aligned to this universal news format.

This established news format is not only prevalent in Nigeria, but is amplified by the news culture fostered by the circumstances of the historical development of the Nigerian press as a tool for the anti-colonialist struggle (Yusha’u, 2009; Oyovbaire, 2003; Olayiwola, 1991; Babalola, 2000). This historical foundation of the press as a weapon of battle in the struggle for independence against British colonialism gave the Nigerian press its distinctive combative character or “protest motif” (Olukotun, 2004: 10). This fighting spirit has been carried over into successive independence governments (Olukotun, 2004). Malaolu (2004) contends that from inception, the Nigerian press was a militant press: “bellicose in temperament, belligerent in posturing and adversarial in language and perception.” The press, largely privately owned, has been noted consistently as anti-establishment and highly critical of public personalities and institutions (Malaolu, 2004). The historical foundation of the Nigerian press, and the combative culture which this has engendered, predispose it to tendencies to frame conflicts in contentious terms, contrary to the ethics of peace journalism.

The commercial orientation of the Nigerian press, earlier discussed in chapter one, also has implications for this discourse. For whilst it guarantees a measure of editorial independence from the government, it also dictates a tendency for the newspapers to acquire the character and ethnic or regional inclinations of their respective proprietors (Salawu, 2009). Furthermore, commercialism promotes what Owolabi (2004) has characterised as the “front-page syndrome” in which news items considered as the most important are “boldly over dramatized on the front page to attract attention and patronage.” Such practices, Owolabi insists, are informed purely by commercial, rather than professional considerations and can distort reality and fuel conflict. This agrees with Hyde-Clarke’s (2012) position that moderation and a tempered approach to news which peace journalism requires, is not appealing to commercially-driven media enterprises. Similarly, Moge kwu (2011: 245) points out that the economic interests of the media would dictate an emphasis on events over process. “Process,” he argues, “is obviously more time-consuming to report than event. Also, getting information from official sources is less complex than seeking out possible view points from all stakeholders in the conflict, just as dualism is easier to deal with than pursuing different groups’ perspectives and interests involved in the conflict.” Furthermore, a combination of professional constraints and commercial interests also encourage reactive, sectional reporting contrary to sound journalism and this is inimical to communal harmony.

### **5.5 Perspectives of Nigerian Journalists and Media Academics on the Concept of Peace Journalism**

The previous sections of this chapter have focused critical analysis on the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press based on the criteria of peace journalism. This is in pursuit of one of the objectives of this research which is to engage with the controversial concept of peace journalism and the differing views on its epistemological validity and the practicalities and value of its application in real life contexts. Accomplishing this objective has involved problematizing journalistic news culture in order to discern and challenge established and naturalised practices which might predispose the press to certain outcomes considered as unwholesome to communal peace. Peace journalism as a growing field of research provides a set of tools for such an interrogation, even though its own principles and approaches are also contested.

The analysis in section 5.3 above indicates that the general orientation of the Nigerian press is towards “war journalism,” a framing pattern which I argue contributes to exacerbating ethno-religious conflicts. The discourse about peace journalism is an attempt to explore fresh

paradigms for conflict reportage and to see if this journalistic genre could add value to Nigerian journalism. In this respect, I considered it necessary to obtain and discern the perspectives of media practitioners and media academics on the relevance and import of peace journalism for the Nigerian press. This is the preoccupation of this section which features interviews with Nigerian journalists and journalism educators. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the issues canvassed in the interviews have to do, first with the critique of mainstream media in conflict reportage, that is, the general perception of media practitioners and media academics on the normative concerns of peace journalism. Secondly, the interviews also focused on the judgment of respondents about the principles and precepts proposed by peace journalism advocates for addressing the deficiencies identified with mainstream journalism; that is, the perspectives of Nigerian journalists and media academics on the approach of peace journalism to conflict reportage vis-a-vis traditional journalistic values. These issues are discussed below.

#### ***5.5.1 Mainstream Media and Conflict Reportage***

Most of the respondents share the concerns of peace journalism advocates about mainstream journalistic coverage of conflicts. They are particularly concerned about the negative tone of the coverage which they argue could contribute to obscuring the nature and cause of the conflicts. For Participant 1, this concern is anchored on the “decline of quality journalism, the absence of investigative journalism which goes beyond the scandalous dolling out of scare and violent messages for the sake of yellowish journalism.” As it is currently, he sees the press as incapable of piercing “the veneer of surface reportage which centres on violence, incoherence and blood.” He attributes the prevailing style to “commodity interest of newspaper production” and welcomes any serious attempts to “take journalism out of this mainstream warfare troupe, to a place where journalism mediates the cause of conflict and participates in the search for peace, stability and harmony.” Participant 4 similarly attributes media negativity in conflict coverage to the ownership pattern of the private press who are either politicians or business people linked to government or professionals who are also contractors. He reasons that with such an ownership background, sentiments, other than professional considerations, can easily creep into coverage.

Participant 8 shares the same opinion and links sensationalism with the factor of competition and drive for profit and market share. According to him, the press in Nigeria makes money through “sensational reporting and catchy headlines” reinforcing a fixation with negativity

and the possibility of acting the scripts of conflict protagonists. In his opinion, “terrorists live on publicity and as long as they can capture the headlines, they will keep in their sinister ways.” Participant 6 does not discount the importance of market considerations in the operations of newspapers, but argues that profit should not be the only motive; lives and relationships should be primary consideration in reportage as this would enable the press to be more critical in its analysis. According to him, “people who have lived together for over 100 years are suddenly on each other’s throats. The political leadership is implicated in such issues and the reporter should bring in critical perspectives even for the leader to see.”

Participant 5 reiterates the conventional definition of news of which conflict is a major value and wonders how peacefully one can report violent conflict. He however shares the view that journalists should assume responsibility for the consequences of reportage since they are part of the society and need peace to practice their profession. The militant approach of the Nigerian press, Participant 9 notes, is “a socialisation,” an orientation imbibed by the press as an anti-colonial instrument. This approach, he opines however, has active purchase in the polity which constitutes its audience.

The discussions here suggest that participants are generally favourably pre-disposed to the idea of peace journalism as they share the concerns about the overly negative approach of mainline journalism to conflict coverage. They however see difficulties in its practical implementation in terms of the ownership pattern of the newspapers, the serious competition in the industry, the ingrained culture of militancy and sensational reporting and the definition of conflict as a major news value. The position of Nigerian media practitioners and media academics is in contrast to that of western journalists who are generally opposed to the very idea of peace journalism (Hanitzsch, 2007; Loyn, 2007). This confirms the assertion by scholars such as Hyde-Clarke (2011), Ogenga (2012) and Hackett (2011) that peace journalism is likely to find more ready acceptance in societies where the media is perceived to have contributed to socially destructive internal conflict or ethnic tensions. In Hackett’s (2011: 45) view, the political roles and professional norms of journalism may be more open to self-reflexive change in transition societies “than they are in Washington, London or other imperial citadels.”

### ***5.5.2 Peace journalism versus journalistic objectivity***

Journalism is associated with certain principles, one of the most important of which is objectivity, the requirement that journalists report facts impartially and dispassionately.

Hammond (2007) considers objectivity in terms of three distinct, though inter-related, concepts: truthfulness and accuracy, neutrality, and detachment. Journalists are expected to be dispassionate and neutral so as not to let their own emotional responses and political allegiances get in the way of reporting truthfully. According to Hackett (2011), objectivity has positive connotations such as the pursuit of truth without fear or favour. According to McQuail (1992) in Hackett (2011: 37) objectivity represents goals that journalists should strive for: values concerning journalist's ability to impart information about the world (accuracy, completeness, separation of fact from opinion) and values concerning the stance that reporters should take towards the value-laden meanings of news (detachment, neutrality, impartiality and independence, and avoiding partisanship, personal biases, ulterior motives or outside interests).

Although a long standing canon of western journalism, scholars have pointed to the shortcomings of existing journalism when measured against the stated ideals of objectivity. In problematizing the epistemology of objectivity, Hackett (2011: 41-44) points out that journalism inherently involves choices: it is a matter of representation, not of reality-reflection. Echoing Lynch and McGoldrick (2005a), Hackett argues that despite its acclaimed disinterestedness, conventional 'objective' journalism enshrines practices that predictably favour some outcomes and values over others. For example, based on their previous experience of the media, powerful sources do create 'facts' that they anticipate will be reported and framed in particular ways. Thus every time journalists re-create those frames, they influence future actions by sources. By focusing on physical violence divorced from context, and on win-lose scenarios, conventional 'objective' news unwittingly incentivizes conflict escalation. In Hackett's words, peace journalism "challenges the very epistemological basis for a stance of detachment, calling instead for journalists to be self-reflexive vis-à-vis the institutional biases of their routine practices, the dangers posed by certain framing and sourcing choices, the non-passivity of sources, the interventionist nature of journalism, and the potential of its becoming an unwitting accomplice to war propaganda" (Hackett, 2011: 42). This critique informs the stated goal of peace journalism, that is, to report conflicts in ways that would enhance non-violent responses to conflict. The question however is whether this goal is ethical and attainable. What indeed is the perspective of Nigerian media practitioners and media academics on the approach of peace journalism to conflict coverage vis-à-vis traditional journalistic values?



The responses to this question show a variety of opinions and perspectives on the issue. The majority of the participants perceive no fundamental conflict between traditional journalistic values and peace journalism while a few expressed misgivings, anchored, not on conceptual opposition to the principles of peace journalism but on the dynamics of its implementation within the Nigerian news environment. For Participant 3, peace journalism and mainline journalism are “closely related.” According to him, “journalism is also about peace, not for war. We are also concerned for development, not destruction.” He however argues that the standard principles of peace journalism need to take due cognizance of the peculiarities of the African society and should be so contextualised, contending that if social conditions do not promote peacefulness, then peace journalism will be futile. According to him, widespread poverty, injustice, corruption and weak institutions would obviate the acceptance of peace journalism by the media and the audience. This response underscores the point made by scholars like Hanitzsch (2007) that resolving conflicts in society go beyond journalistic reportage and that a media-centric approach obscures the role of other stakeholders in conflict.

Another respondent, Participant 17, sees a dilemma surrounding journalism and conflict reportage in that while journalists are required to be objective, they are also expected to assume some responsibility for peace, which he argues is a major factor for development and social stability. Some people, he pointed out, have argued that “the journalist is no peace maker, just a reporter who reports the way he sees it within his human limitations.” He however gives the counter narrative to the objectivity argument by pointing out that “journalism is a very powerful instrument in terms of setting agenda, and in terms of providing a framework for the people.” In his opinion, what is required in conflict coverage is a “middle ground” in which the journalist reports all the sides of an issue rather than concentrating on a two-party framework. He explains further:

There are not just two sides to an issue. There are so many sides and it is our duty to look at all these sides. It is when you concentrate on two sides that ... antagonism becomes the major focus of journalism. But if you consider that there are some grey areas on every side, that there are people preaching moderation ... who may not be very vocal like the protagonists on both sides ... journalism (should) look for these people and give them a voice in the news columns which may change the perceptions of some people on both sides.

In Participant 17’s opinion, the essence of this “middle ground” approach to covering conflict is to report conflicts within contexts, to create understanding that could lead to compromise

and reconciliation. For him, this form of reporting is best characterised as “conflict sensitive journalism” rather than peace journalism. In being sensitive to conflict, the reporter asks critical questions that would highlight issues beyond the stated demands of the vocal conflict protagonists, and give voice to other stakeholders marginalised in a two-party narrative.

Participant 4 explores the theme of conflict sensitivity further by asserting that undue focus on conflict highlights a fundamental inability on the part of the Nigerian press to grasp the role of journalism in society, which is “to serve as a watchdog of the society, not to destroy the society but to watch so that it will be better.” Nigerian journalists, he argues, have not been able to balance “public interest with owner interest” which accounts in part for the tendency to sensationalism in reportage for the sake of profit. “If you pick Nigerian newspapers and look at the headlines, it is as if they are in a negativity competition. And even the Nigerian readers have been conditioned to such pattern of reportage so that if they don’t see negative stories, they don’t think there’s anything newsworthy.” For him, the tendency by Nigerian newspapers to report ethno-religious crises on the surface, laced with exaggerations and distortion of figures and casualties, reflects a mind-set conditioned on conflict which needs fundamental overhaul.

This point resonates with other participants who identify routinised journalistic tradition as an obstacle in the way of reporting conflicts more creatively and responsibly. According to them, there is a tendency among journalists to say ‘this is the way journalism is practised; this is the way reporting is done. Therefore all these things you are bringing up are alien to journalism.’ Such professional orientation, they argue, is a major obstacle to innovation which needs to be overcome to enable journalists appreciate the need to evolve new strategies to cope with changing social dynamics. They are however concerned about the general level of education in the industry and whether the intellectual and language capacity of the average Nigerian journalist is such as to appreciate and practice the principles of peace journalism.

Some of the respondents, particularly Participants 1, 4, 6 and 17 point to the policy dimension of this issue by suggesting that the endemic nature of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria should prompt the media and policy makers to explore for ways of using the press to tackle the problem rather than carry on in routine ways as if all was well. Participant 6 shares this point of view on policy, arguing that “because our country is conflict endemic...we need

things that will promote and protect peace and communal harmony.”<sup>12</sup> Participant 17 calls for critical review of news values by incorporating “relevance” as a major criterion for judging newsworthiness. Relevance, he explains, relates to the social value of a story. In achieving this, he argues that journalists should ask such questions as: “Is this story relevant?” “Will it add value to the society or is it just for us to sell our newspaper?” Participant 6 echoes the issue of news values when he recommends that “whatever is being reported should have an element of benefit for the society.” For him, if a report causes more problems for the nation or a community, more killings or destruction, “then ask yourself whether it is worth reporting.” He insists: “we should use journalism, not to destroy but to build; not to create enemies but to make friends and improve relationships. Be part of reconciliation, not antagonism.”

A review of news values, Participant 17 argues, would address another problem, what he characterises as the “clash of values in journalism practice” particularly in Africa. In his perception, there is a disconnect between journalism principles and practice, which is a major problem particularly for journalists in Africa and the third world. The principles of liberal democracy which inform the dominant inherited model of western journalism seem to be at variance with the African cultural background. Whereas liberal democracy privileges the individual, African culture emphasises the community. Therefore, reporting should be in the interest of the community, not the individual. He clarifies further:

Our responsibility as journalists and media organisations should be, what can we do to make the community stable and harmonious? That creates a lot of problems: inherited principles which seem to be the dominant model all over the world and our own internal cultural dynamics seem to be at conflict, and it is a problem.

The issue discussed above echoes Nyamnjoh’s (2005) concerns about the contradictions and tensions in African journalism in which imported liberal democratic values compete with

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<sup>12</sup> Participant 6, a former President of the Nigerian Guild of Editors, narrated an experience with a former President of Nigeria when at a private audience, he asked the President about his view of Nigerian journalists. He continues the narrative: “He said he was unhappy with them because they do not know where to draw the line. He said in South Africa when there was an HIV/AIDS pandemic, the press, as a national policy, played it low so as not to discourage foreign investment, but Nigerian journalism does not make room for such overarching national goal, something all of us agree to, something to protect and defend. Everyday people write about disintegration of this country.” Participant 6 asserts that there are editors and journalists who do not believe in the unity of Nigeria while there are others whom he said are fixated on anger and hatred. For him, this attitude of “thinking backwards into the future” is unproductive. He believes that journalism should help in shaping and moulding public perceptions and attitudes more favourable to Nigeria’s national unity.

local cultural norms. It also highlights the debate about the philosophy of journalism education in Africa and the long-standing argument over issues of relevance – that is, the non-African basis of the programmes available. There is a perception that the programmes have adopted largely western models which reinforce western cultural influences on the African mass media and detract from developing indigenous practices most suitable to local needs (Sharon and Scotton, 1987). Elaborating on this debate with respect to conflict reportage, Lynch (2008: 303) argues that the “modernization” approach, geared towards the implantation of western-style precepts and methods for reporting conflicts, does not adequately address the local needs of African and third world societies. He therefore espouses the “critical pedagogical approach” to journalistic training which, in covering conflicts, will challenge mainstream media’s assumptions about who and what is newsworthy and entrench the most rigorous journalistic standards. The goal, according to him, is to promote “solutions-oriented dialogue.”

Three respondents (Participants 8, 9, 10), all media practitioners, were more reticent about peace journalism. According to Participant 9, the general orientation of the press is towards conflict escalation and the idea of peace is alien to many journalists. Correspondents generally are concerned about whether a story would be used, if it would attract prominence and also generate sales. So the concept of peace journalism is alien to many journalists in this country. Participant 8 was more direct in his assessment. Perceiving peace journalism as “making people have a bias towards peace instead of war,” he proposes that “this might in a way contravene the values of ideal journalism especially if what you are doing is not factual.” He also argues however that “even without (peace journalism), there is a way we need to report these things in order not to exacerbate issues. We need to exercise care and caution and be sensitive to conflict.”

Participant 10 queries anything which could suggest “burying some truths” but also emphasises the need for balance and caution in reporting conflict. “There should be a balance in not just looking at the negatives and, as it were, promoting the activities of terror organisations. I think we should be discussing conflict sensitiveness, not peaceful journalism.” For Participant 15, who is also a national official of the NUJ, there appears to be little appetite for this type of journalism currently in Nigeria. In his perception, “very few people want to promote this aspect of journalism. Rather, you see people delving into areas that are dangerous and that can be detrimental to this country. If you follow the coverage of the crises in Jos, for example, you will see that even the international media was noticed

counting corpses in worship places, and the moment these things get out, people get agitated because of the obvious insinuation of tying corpses to particular religions.”

### ***5.5.3 The Peace Journalism Debate in Perspective***

The debate in this section about peace journalism suggests a variety of opinions and perspectives on the subject. While some participants support the idea, others are more reticent, voicing objections that are associated with misgivings in their understanding of the concept. Those who raise issues with peace journalism are, amongst other things, concerned about its apparent value-laden assumptions and the insinuation that journalists somehow may have to “cover-up” some facts in order to “promote” peace. On the practical everyday tasks of news gathering, they are also concerned that undue preoccupations with peace journalism could cost reporters valuable scoops and potential headline stories which will raise both the profile and the professional standing of the journalist, as well as boost newspaper sales, important considerations which drive decision-making in the industry. Similarly, peace is not a news value yet and what is required, in their estimation, is more accurate and “balanced” reporting rather than a new type of journalism.

It is however also evident from the discourse above, that, even allowing for “the Hawthorne effect” (Landsberger, 1985)<sup>13</sup> in which participants could possibly answer to please the researcher, many of the participants support the idea of peace journalism, but are concerned about likely difficulties in its practical implementation. Prominent among such difficulties are the lack of education and the low capacity of many Nigerian journalists to understand and appreciate fully the concept and principles of peace journalism. In order words, the issue here is not about peace journalism but basic aptitude and language capacity for routine journalistic work. This feeds back to the issue of training and the inadequacies discussed in the next chapter.

The militant orientation of the Nigerian press and the resulting combative news culture would also be a herculean task to surmount. Furthermore, the ownership pattern of the press, linked

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<sup>13</sup> “The Hawthorne effect” (Landsberger, 1985) holds that people have a tendency to do things to please the researcher, and this can result in artificial results. According to Jones and Alony (2011), researchers should be aware of this as a possible source of potential bias. I am conscious of the possibility that my respondents, being mostly Nigerians in responsible positions themselves, would want to be seen to be supporting peace and therefore respond in a manner they think a researcher on peace journalism would want. To minimise this and to obtain participants’ true feeling as much as possible, I ensured that my style of interview and the questions posed are such as would tease out their real position on the issues being explored.

to the political economy of news production and the fierce competition in the industry are other serious obstacles observed. Again, the wider social context of gross inequality, misuse and abuse of power and resources, resulting in poverty and unemployment, which predispose sections of the polity to anger and protests, are vital issues to be considered in the quest to implement peace journalism.

Nevertheless, there seems to be recognition by most participants that the prevailing journalistic style and negativity of conflict news reportage, dominated by partisanship, sensationalism, exaggeration and manipulation of information, needs to be addressed. There is also the conviction that journalism, within the context of conflict-afflicted societies like Nigeria, should contribute consciously to peaceful settlement of disputes. Indeed, I discovered during the course of the interviews that there is now in existence a “National Association for Peace and Conflict Journalists” established in 2014 to facilitate training and practice on how best to report peace, security and conflict issues, and to ensure particularly that women are adequately involved in peace processes and decision-making. This association was formed following a training workshop for journalists in some northern states of Nigeria, supported by the European Union. Among other things, the workshop “examined how a paradigm shift could be achieved by reporting from a peace perspective while de-emphasising on reporting and writing about violence as is being done now.”<sup>14</sup> The participants also considered measures that could be put in place to encourage more and better reportage on peace and security as well as guarantee women’s participation in the process. Another point to note is that while there are divergent responses to the label “peace journalism,” many participants are comfortable with more neutral descriptions such as “conflict sensitivity”, “conflict reporting” or “conflict sensitive journalism” all of which in essence incorporate the values of peace journalism.

#### ***5.5.4 Peace Journalism and the issue of Ethno-centrism***

An issue that needs to be further explored relates to ethno-centrism which scholars such as Sanem and Ross (2012) and Irvan (2006) present as one of the biggest challenges to the practice of peace journalism and which they argue is called up with virulence in conflict situations. Discussing peace journalism in the context of international conflict, Sanem and

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 7: Communique at the end of 2-Day Workshop for Journalists from Project Pilot States of Adamawa, Gombe and Plateau held 19-20 August, 2014

Ross (2012: 8) argue that journalists, who are members of their national communities and define their identities in national terms, cannot simply step outside of their nationally determined views on conflict. Unlike foreign journalists, they are inside the conflict and inevitably affected by it and, therefore, may find it extremely difficult not to take sides. By simply calling journalists not to be biased towards one side in the conflict, peace journalism fails to provide adequate, effective tools for journalists whose homeland is involved.

In the context of Nigeria, religious and/or ethnic identity of journalists is the equivalence of nationalism as a factor inhibiting the practice of peace journalism in local conflicts involving people of opposite religion or ethnicity. As some of the interview respondents pointed out, journalists emotionally side with their co-religionists and ethnic compatriots among whom they probably live and work and many find it difficult not to take sides. In fact, some journalists might even consider it a duty to employ their profession to defend or promote the interest of their religion or ethnic group, or may fear reprisals or isolation should they take a public stand contrary to the perceived opinion of their “side.” In Nigeria, most people, including journalists, are either Muslim or Christian and there is mutual suspicion of “the other.” Peace journalism research must therefore provide tools which address the issue of ethnic and religious commitment of journalists in coverage of local conflicts which, in Nigeria, is the equivalence of nationalism in international conflicts. This issue extends to the audience because, as Hanitzsch (2007: 5) argues, readers are not likely to see any value in peace journalism where vital issues bordering on identity or security are at stake.

## **5.6 Conclusion: Obstacles and opportunities for Peace Journalism**

This chapter set out to explore practical lessons the concept of peace journalism could offer Nigerian journalism in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. This investigation was undertaken within the context of findings that the press is violence-oriented and that it is implicated in the spread and perpetuation of the conflicts. One of the notable observations in this exploration is that while Nigerian journalists and media academics appear to be generally favourably disposed to the epistemology and philosophy of peace journalism, this is not reflected in newspaper content. I therefore argue that there is a gap between precept and practice. Based on my findings, I further argue that this gap however offers opportunity for creative action in at least three areas. First, at the conceptual level, neutral labels such as conflict sensitive reporting appear to be more readily acceptable than “peace journalism” which, to some people, connotes a bias. Nomenclature is important in this debate, as the interviews have demonstrated. Therefore, I will argue for adoption of a name which

incorporates and hybridises peace journalism and conflict sensitivity. Such conflict responsive journalism espouses media reform while paying attention to the professional values of journalism. I reason that this would address what Irvan (2006) characterises as journalistic level obstacle to the very concept of peace journalism and make it more easily acceptable to media professionals.

Secondly, there is need to prioritise conflict reporting in the journalism curriculum, as discussed in more details in chapter six. In this respect, the UNESCO manual on conflict sensitive reportage developed by Howard (2009) would be a good starting point. Practical conflict reporting principles outlined by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) and Tehranian (2002) would also be relevant in this respect. As Kempf and Jarger (2007) point out, reporting conflict demands special skills of journalists and the possession of such skills should not be presumed but systematically and deliberately acquired. Therefore, equipping journalists and media houses with practical tools for reporting conflict in a newsworthy manner would take care of media institutional level obstacles (Irvan, 2006) to peace journalism, particularly the need to operate profitably.

Thirdly, practical initiatives such as the formation of the National Association of Peace and conflict Journalists discussed above should be encouraged and supported to facilitate training and capacity building amongst media practitioners in conflict reportage. There will also be need to strengthen the institutions of journalism practice, as discussed in chapter six.

The discussion in this chapter confirms Lee's (2010) observation about the challenges posed by traditional newswriting on peace journalism, challenges which include fundamentals such as the very concept of news values and the inverted pyramid formula for reporting war and conflict. This dilemma is further compounded by the fact that current conventions are constrained and even dictated by power and profit in often fiercely competitive media environment. Commercial interests, the profit motive and sectional and/or local socio-political interests all come to bear on conflict reportage. As observed by Hyde-Clarke (2012: 45) existing media structures are influenced by "structural hierarchies that include journalists themselves, their training, editorial processes, ownership patterns and pressures by advertisers and the public." This dilemma does not however lessen the "moral culpability" of journalists when covering conflict and war but instead clarifies the debate in terms of where action lies in the effort to secure better quality conflict reportage. In the opinion of Hackett (2011), peace journalism would gain momentum only in the wake of reformation and



transformation of the media and other socio-economic and political structures which influence it. The next chapter addresses issues in the context of media production and explores the issues of structure and media reform with particular reference to conflict reportage.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **EXPLORING THE CONTEXT OF NEWS PRACTICE IN NIGERIA: PROFESSIONALISM, TRAINING AND PRESS REGULATION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses earlier carried out in chapters three, four and five of this dissertation indicated that a high proportion of news reports and comments by the Nigerian press in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts are partisan and sensational. The pattern of coverage of the conflicts suggests that the Nigerian press engages in practices which tend to further escalate tensions and exacerbate the conflicts. The representations of the conflicts tend to confuse, rather than clarify, the issues, thus reinforcing and perpetuating prejudices within the polity. I argue, particularly from the discussions in chapter five, for the adoption of journalistic practices that are sensitive to conflict, and for appropriate structures in training and advocacy which would support and facilitate such practices.

These findings raise critical issues about professional practices and how these inter-relate with the environment of news production and news content. The situation necessitates an investigation into the professional and commercial contexts of newspaper production in Nigeria and the implications of this for the prevailing news culture. This entails an examination of the context of news production and journalism practice in Nigeria through interviews with media practitioners and media scholars in order to explore various issues thrown up by the quantitative and qualitative analyses. This includes exploring the inter-relationship between the professional and commercial environment of news production in Nigeria and how these bear upon the training of journalists and the resulting news culture. It also seeks to investigate the regulatory environment of media practice in Nigeria and examine in particular the implications of the Freedom of Information Act for investigative journalism and the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. In specific terms, the chapter addresses the last two research questions as follows:

- What trends are observable in professionalism and journalism training in Nigeria and what are the implications of these for conflict coverage and general news culture?
- What are the implications of the Freedom of Information Act for the practice of investigative journalism in Nigeria and in particular the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts?

The chapter is organised under three broad thematic categories related to areas of my investigation. These thematic categories include professionalism and media ethics; journalism training and capacity building and press freedom and media accountability. As indicated in chapter two, these themes were explored through semi-structured interviews with media practitioners and media academics selected to obtain a wide range of opinions on the issues under investigation. From the analysis in this chapter, I affirm the need for the evolution of a journalistic paradigm which reports conflicts in manners more productive to social harmony. I identify the pivotal role of training and education in this regard and further argue for the strengthening of the institutional frameworks for journalism practice to attain this objective.

## **6.2 Professionalism and Media Ethics**

The Nigerian press is notable for its vibrancy (Oluyokun, 2004; Malaolu, 2004), a characteristic associated with its historic foundations as a weapon for the anti-colonial struggle. This characteristic is however qualified by equally notable weaknesses, including the tendency for sensational and inflammatory reports of events (Oyeleye, 2004) as evidenced by the findings of this research. It is to be noted that no participant in this research disagreed with the observation that the press coverage of the ethno-religious conflicts under investigation had a negative tone. All respondents, both media academic and practitioner, readily agreed that the concerns about the press were well founded.

The concern, however, transcends professional culture to issues of competent and ethical practice. In the opinion of several respondents, Nigerian journalists, particularly in the coverage of conflicts, act in ways that obviate responsible practice and contribute to aggravating violent conflicts. Participant 15, a national officer of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), for example, stated that the use of language by the press and the manner in which reports are presented tend to heighten tension and pitch one group against another. These concerns align with the observations of scholars like Adaja (2012) that Nigerian journalism is in a crisis of credibility where professional norms are routinely violated and abused. Omojola (2014: 169-170) emphasises the importance of ethical conduct in the practice of socially responsible journalism. For him, an undisciplined journalist is a risk to both his employer and audience.

An important question which arises from this discussion is what might account for this pattern of coverage. Among the most recurring explanations for this outcome include journalistic partisanship, poor work conditions for journalists and the influence of ownership.

As most participants mentioned these three reasons, I consider it important to explore them in greater detail in order to obtain the detailed perspectives of Nigerian professionals and academics on issues of professionalism and ethics, particularly as they relate to the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in the country. This informs the discussions in this section.

### ***6.2.1 Partisanship/ethno-religious Bias***

Participants identified two levels of factors as responsible for predisposing the Nigerian press to bias and partisanship in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. The first level relates to factors in the external context of the press and these include ownership of the press, the political environment and journalists' personal prejudices and primordial loyalties. The second level of factors has to do with the internal context of the press or what Participant 17 calls "intra-professional issues" which impact reportage. This refers particularly to the practice culture which places conflict high on the news value chain.

With respect to the external context of the press, Participant 17 argued that ownership and control are critical, because historically the Nigerian press has tended to align their coverage along the interests or concerns of the dominant political class which invariably own most of the newspapers organisations. Even the government-owned press has tended to satisfy the dominant political faction in government. This agrees with the widely held perception that Nigerian newspapers easily acquire the character and ethnic or regional inclinations of their proprietors (Yusha'u, 2009; Adaja, 2012). Therefore, factors other than professional considerations of the duty to inform, educate or enlighten interfere with the reporting of conflicts. In this regard, Oso's (2013: 18) observation that only the rich and powerful can currently establish newspapers in Nigeria due to the huge capital outlay is important. Not only does this give such people preponderant access to the public sphere in propagating their views on highly contested issues, the possibility of manipulating the press to distort coverage is increased by the factor of ownership and control. Participant 7 agreed with this line of reasoning. For him, although the press has the responsibility to educate, enlighten and enhance cohesion, in actual operation, "you find that because of the ownership pattern, and the goals of the proprietors, the journalism in Nigeria finds itself reporting from certain biases, the most predominant being ethnic and religious biases."

Another factor in the external environment is Nigeria's political structure and ethno-regional and religious configuration. In the opinion of respondents, Nigeria is a highly fractured society with many fault-lines and national institutions, including the media, tend to align with

the various cleavages. They therefore argued that the press covers issues along these ethno-religious lines and this is reflected in both the news and opinion pages. The third external factor which predisposes the press to partisanship is the journalists' own prejudices and inability or unwillingness to create distance between personal biases and professional duty. Partisanship arises because journalists write from the perspective of protecting or projecting Islam or Christianity. Participant 7 asserted that Nigerian journalists have not been able to transcend their self-identity or group interest in reporting issues. Commenting on this issue of ethnic and religious bias on the part of journalists, a notable Nigerian columnist, Mohammed Haruna, argues that it constitutes the most important issue of ethical journalism in the country (Haruna, in Yusha'u, 2009: 265). According to him, most Nigerian journalists appear to assume the posture of "my kith and kin first, right or wrong," and this provides room for politicians to exploit this weakness of Nigerian journalism by putting an ethnic or religious spin on most issues.

Participants 1 and 4 attributed religious bias and partisanship to the low level of education and professional training of journalists which they observed have declined. For Participant 1, it is professionalism which makes the journalist a liberalised reporter. In his words, "Because there is little professionalism, journalists fall easy prey to uncritical reportage of religious perspectives and are therefore unable to give policy direction and strategy, or envision a clear approach in finding solutions to the conflicts". Participant 4 argued that the press which is supposed to be the 4<sup>th</sup> Estate of the Realm is caught up in the national fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines. Coupled with this is the fact that there are thousands of people who call themselves journalists that are not trained; "so all they do is go to the field, see what catches their fancy and then look at it from the prism of their background. This greatly erodes ethics," he concluded.

Parochial tendencies, which inhibit national cohesion and harmony, explained Participant 6, lead journalists to give in to what he called "very vile sentiments" which result in "destructive rather than constructive journalism." He recommended that journalists reporting on crisis situations should ask themselves: "is this reportage constructive and will it bring peace or will it escalate conflict in the society? This, I think, should be the challenge of journalism in a society like ours." This argument echoes issues discussed in the previous chapter, particularly the argument that in covering conflicts, journalists should assume responsibility for their coverage, rather than adopt a "neutral disseminator role" (Weaver, 1998 in Irvan, 2006: 3).

With regards to the internal context of the press, the main issue identified by participants relates to very definition of news which places conflict as a prominent news value, and which they believe predisposes the media to certain predictable outcomes. This professional orientation which privileges conflict, when juxtaposed against the commercial interests of media organisations, makes up the internal context that explains the observable pattern of press coverage of ethno-religious conflict. Participants opined that in the quest to increase circulation, or advertisements, the press tends to play up issues that will attract audience attention. This emphasises the “economics of media and cultural production” in this discourse. The issue of conflict as a dominant news value is one around which there is growing debate, particularly in reformist media circles (Hackett, 2011; Lynch, 2008). Irvan (2006) points out that research on news selection processes establish that journalists choose those stories which fulfil the basic criteria of newsworthiness. Among those values are a focus on the immediate and a search for drama, all of which are features of conflict. For this reason, Wolsfeld (2004, in Irvan, 2006: 3) argues that the default mode of the press is to cover tension, conflict and violence. This is linked with the commercial interest of the press, which leads Wolsfeld (2004: 39) to assert that “the greater the influence of commercialism on the news content, the less likely the media can serve as serious and responsible forums for public debate.” This therefore calls for further interrogation of this practice.

Bias and partisanship have been long standing issues associated with Nigerian journalism even in pre-colonial and early independence days when newspapers were employed primarily as tools for propagating ethnic and regional agendas (Oyeleye, 2004). What these interviews disclose is that over 50 years after independence, these phenomena still drive newspaper content and they obviate professionalism and ethics. For Oso (2013), “the radical or rather voluble and quarrelsome character of the Nigeria press” stems largely from the cantankerous nature of Nigerian politicians and the ethnic cleavages within the system. According to him, the Nigerian press is perceived as sectional in orientation and coverage of political issues. Within the context of volatile communal relationships prone to frequent violent blow-outs, this issue has negative implications for the mediation of such conflicts.

### **6.2.2 *Poor Work Conditions***

The issue of the poor and deplorable conditions under which Nigerian journalists work is one that has been much discussed. The Africa Media Barometer in its 2012 survey of Nigeria expressed misgivings on “the poor status of the welfare of journalists, with poor pay...” (The Press, 2012:17). Participants cited this issue as a critical contributor to the negative character

of press reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. Participant 1, for example, argued that “the personal economy of journalists is poor, so they are available to be commoditised.” Participant 3 pointed out the problem of resource constraint and how that fuels unprofessional practices. Some media, he disclosed, lack effective correspondents and so depend on “doubtful sources including the internet and thus perpetuate the errors from such sources.” He further pointed out that some newspaper houses do not pay their correspondents but leave them to fend for themselves. This practice of relying on “cheap labour” by newspaper houses which do not pay their correspondents, leads to all sorts of malpractices. According to him,

Journalists take advantage and go about blackmailing people and extorting money in the name of journalism. In such a situation you can hardly get objective reports. A lot of reports are planted, paid for or somehow influenced by other unprofessional notions.

Participant 13, a state chairman of the Nigerian Union of Journalists and Participant 9, a senior reporter with a national newspaper, all corroborated the assertion that newspapers employ correspondents whom they do not pay and that work conditions in the journalism sector are generally poor. This, they also argued, predisposes some journalists to unethical and unprofessional practices as survival strategies. Participant 16, a director with the Nigerian Press council, agreed that poor work conditions encourage journalists to “cut corners” but relates the issue to the challenges of operating a newspaper business since media owners “will tell you they can pay only when they have money.”

Considering the political economy of media production in Nigeria, Oso (2013: 16) observes that the Nigerian press has not benefitted from the expansion in the Nigerian economy. Whereas sectors like IT and construction declare huge profits and are expanding, Oso points out that the media have instead contracted, with issues like poor staff welfare, poor sales and advertising revenue rampant. All these, he notes, have affected capacity and in the circulation war, different formulas, including sensationalism, are being tried to attract readership and patronage. What is evident from the foregoing section is the fact that not only are journalists generally poorly remunerated, the operational environment also predispose media personnel to practices that are unethical and unprofessional all of which have negative implications for the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

### ***6.2.3 Ethical issues/accountability in Press Reportage of Conflicts***

The issue of ethics and its relationship to professionalism in media practice featured prominently amongst the participants of this research. Ethics is fundamental to journalism

because mass media practice is based on a set of essentially ethical concepts such as trust, objectivity, honesty, privacy and freedom (Odunewu, 1998). Journalism stands or falls by the ethical conduct of its members and the respect or otherwise which this confers on the press from the public (Tettey, 2006; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Frere, 2007). This explains why ethics was a reverberating issue for virtually every participant in the research. Participant 15 identified ethics as the major challenge of Nigerian journalism in the coverage of conflicts, insisting that many newspapers merely circulate hate language in the name of reports. According to him, “some of the reports (on the Jos crisis) were stage-managed by interest groups and the journalists, as gullible as they are, fell into this and reported the way those people wanted them to report.”

Ethics is measured against a set of guidelines known to members of an organisation and expected by the public or recipients of the services of the said organisation. For Nigerian journalists, there is a published Code of Ethics as prescribed by the Nigerian Press Organisation made up of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN). The Code of Ethics, composed of 15 sections, relates to issues such as editorial independence, accuracy and fairness, privacy, privilege/non-disclosure, decency and discrimination. Other sections deal with reward and gratification, violence, children and minors, access to information, national interest, social responsibility, plagiarism, copyright and press freedom and responsibility.

In evaluating the ethical conduct of the press, participants focused particularly on the issue of reward and gratification linking it with ownership, the poor wages available in the sector and how these all breed corruption, partisanship and mediocrity. Participant 8 asserted that “journalists in Nigeria, particularly as they are not well remunerated, write with bias to favour one stakeholder or the other.” Participant 5 explored the issue deeper however in his remark that although the salary of an average journalist may be small, some of them display lifestyles that are disproportionate to their pay, bringing up questions as to how they are bridging the gap. For him, this suggests the possibility of unethical practices by some journalists to survive or to enrich themselves at the expense of their calling. Such practices include receiving payment from sources which they are supposed to monitor and report, bringing up issues of divided loyalty. According to him, research has shown that some journalists are on the payroll of state governments. He therefore asks: “how won’t there be divided loyalty? And how objective will be the reports?”



Participant 5 further identified what he described as a dangerous practice whereby journalists are paid according to the number of reports they file. He argued that “technically” the publishers of such newspapers have no control over them since they are not staff. He also spoke about the category of journalists referred to as ‘PCPC’ – Press Centre Press Corps – composed of journalists that have no newspapers or organisations they work with but parade themselves as media men, interview people, “collect money and move on.” Such faceless reporters, in his opinion, get away with unethical practices such as blackmail as they are virtually accountable to no one in their daily professional conduct.

What this discussion suggests is that unethical practices in the Nigerian press are significantly dictated by the unwholesome work environment of the press. As Participant 15 observed, “if you don’t pay your journalists well, somebody will pay them to do the work. So politicians will pay journalists to distort facts or tarnish the image of individuals.” Participant 15 also disclosed that the working environment in many media houses is not conducive for efficient practice, observing, for example, that “journalists trek long distances to cover assignments; or they are given assignments without transport fares to the venue. Many media houses are not willing to invest in the safety and training of journalists but are more concerned for the profit they can get out of their organisation. Journalists hardly have an insurance cover.”

The Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists is currently under review to update and reinvigorate it. The existing code dates back to 1998, during the military era and therefore requires amendment to reflect the realities of the democratic dispensation as well as developments in the field. For example, even aspects of the language need to be made gender sensitive (e.g. sections 3(A) and 5(i)). The existing code is titled: “Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists.” However, the revised draft code of ethics proposes a new title: ‘Nigerian Journalists’ Code of Ethics and Declaration of Rights.’ This title suggests some dynamism probably in line with the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. The preamble of the revised code also suggests some dynamism and a clear philosophical direction for Nigerian journalism in the debates over media role in conflict. In paragraph 2 of the preamble, for example, the revised code defines the social duties of journalists:

The social duties of journalists in Nigeria include the advancement of the right to freedom of expression, access to information, freedom of the press, media independence, conflict transformation and peace building.

It could be argued that in proposing “conflict transformation and peace building” as social duties of the journalist, the framers of the code of ethics believe that the press should engage

with conflicts in a manner that is both proactive but professional. In Article 11, the proposed revised code of ethics states that it is the responsibility of the journalist to work for the prevention or reduction of conflict, promotion of reconciliation and advancement of the common value of peace without compromising the duty to inform. It requires of journalists to “use restrained headlines and images in reporting tensions and conflicts; to keep to the facts and avoid blemish or slants in reporting tensions and conflicts; and to be cautious in reporting figures and identity of casualties in conflicts.”

Operationalising these provisions would no doubt raise the debates over issues of objectivity and balance in reportage. Nevertheless, these provisions suggest a determination by Nigerian journalists to strengthen the foundations for improved professional practice in conflict reportage. The provisions further confirm the observation I made in chapter five that Nigerian media practitioners are favourably disposed to the innovations in conflict coverage such as are being canvassed by the proponents of peace journalism, although they do not use such explicit terminology.

In enforcing the ethical code for journalists, participants identified the potential role of the professional body of journalists, particularly the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) which most regarded currently as weak and ineffective. This was attributed to perceived corruption within the organisation and inappropriate relationship of the leadership at various levels with politicians. According to Participant 17, “the NUJ, to me, exists more or less as an avenue for the executives at both the state and national levels to take care of themselves.” Critical issues such as training and welfare of journalists were being neglected, in the opinion of respondents, while more time was spent visiting government officials. A study for the UNDP by Pate, Adeyanju and Yahaya (2012: 44) concluded that the NUJ was not only financially weak, but suffers credibility/perception challenge even among the members. Moreover, over-reliance by the organisation on the government for almost all needs undermines the moral basis of its operations as a watchdog.

Various issues impinging on the capacity of journalists to practice professionally and ethically have been discussed in the foregoing section. Ingrained partisanship, stemming from external and internal factors, poor work conditions and the prevalence of unethical conduct were cited by participants as issues contributing to the low level of professionalism in the press, particularly as it affects the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. The next section focuses on

a related issue, that is training and capacity building of journalists and how this relates to the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts.

### **6.3 Journalism Training/Capacity Building**

The issue of training and capacity building is another factor cited by participants as being responsible for poor quality reportage of ethno-religious conflicts. The Nigerian Press Council puts the number of journalism training institutions as at mid-2014 at “over 64” most of which operate the mass communication curriculum approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for universities and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for polytechnics and monotechnics (The Press, 2014: 4). In the opinion of participants of this study, many Nigerian journalists are not thoroughly equipped for their calling. It was argued, for example, that poor quality reports on conflicts sometimes stem from lack of requisite language skills evident in the low capacity of many graduates of mass communication in recent times. Apart from that, participants also pointed out the existence of many “quack journalists,” those who have no training or instruction for the work. Pate, Adeyanju and Yahaya (2012: 18) noted this when they observed that Nigerian journalism is widely infiltrated with unqualified hands but who get employed by proprietors looking for cheap labour. They further observed that both the regulatory authorities and the media platforms appear weak in enforcing minimum standards in the industry. All these detract from the quality of reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

Several of the participants observed that many institutions of mass communication and journalism are springing up rapidly without requisite staff and equipment. With respect to staffing, the senior cadre personnel are said to be particularly few and several of the new institutions depend on visiting lecturers. Some of the participants also disclosed that the average staff-to-student population was 1:150 instead of the NUC prescribed ratio of 1:40. A participant, who is a lecturer in one of the universities, revealed that he teaches classes that are up to 300 students and asks, “What serious thing can I do with those students individually?”

There are also concerns about the journalism and mass communication curriculum which some of participants believe need restructuring or updating to align with rapid technological and social developments. A particular issue respondents focused on relates to the structure of the Mass Communication course obtainable in most schools in Nigeria, which participants contended needed to be unbundled into its component parts to enable students engage in more

focused learning relevant to the specialties in the industry. This aligns with the position of scholars like Oso (2012) who express concerns about the reductionist tendency which equates communication studies with mass communication. Oso argues that communication is a field, not a discipline. Oso further emphasises the inter-disciplinary outlook of communication studies which he argues gives the field its dynamism and relevance to contemporary social life. Other scholars and practitioners, similarly, emphasise the need to restructure and standardise the curriculum to incorporate areas of entrepreneurial and management studies to make graduates globally competitive (Odunlami, 2014: 45; Alao, 2010: 1; UNN, 2012). Pate, Adeyanju and Yahaya (2012: 44) point out a dimension of deficiency in the journalism training programmes in terms of its being overly skills-oriented with little emphasis on the political economy and social realities of the Nigerian nation. This results in the institutions producing technically skilful professionals who are ignorant of the multicultural and political circumstances of Nigeria. This, they explain, is responsible for why the press is inundated with shallow reporting lacking in depth and historical relevance. Furthermore, the Association of Communication Scholars and Professionals of Nigeria (ACSPN) in a 2014 communique emphasised the need for institutions to move beyond traditional methods of teaching and learning and to re-design the media and communication curriculum. Of particular interest to this dissertation is the position of the ACSPN that conflict reporting should be included as a central part of the new curriculum.

The challenge of journalism training in Nigeria includes ensuring that the institutions meet the UNESCO's core competencies for journalism education. These competencies include:

- Competencies in general knowledge and intellectual ability;
- Professional techniques of research, writing, editing, design and production;
- Ability to use the tools of journalism and to adapt to new technologies and innovative practices;
- Professional understandings, including ethics;
- Knowledge of journalism's role in society, including journalism's history, the organisation of the news media, the laws circumscribing journalism; and
- Knowledge of best practices in journalism

Another concern about journalism education in Nigeria, in the opinion of Participant 17, is the inadequate "hands-on experience," the exposure of students to practical experience in the industry. Although an integral part of the course, he observed that the instability in Nigeria's

university system occasioned by frequent strikes by staff and students, often short changes the industrial experience. According to him, in some schools instead of three months, it is cut down to a few weeks in order to accommodate time lost to strikes. Thus students do not get the required level and quality of experience and exposure from the industry.

Some participants also identified as a weakness the fact that journalism at the moment is not being treated as a profession, in the sense of minimum entry qualifications and enforcing the code of ethics. For participant 4, “until journalism is chartered, you are not likely to have serious change.” Some of the participants discussed the institutional platforms of journalism profession including the schools, the regulatory authorities and the professional bodies and concluded that they are all weak and compromised and could not currently guarantee ethical practice. The issue of professionalism is however contentious, as explained by Participant 16 from the Nigerian Press Council whose agency has the statutory responsibility to register journalists, a function not being performed at the moment.<sup>15</sup> He noted that there are three major elements to being a profession: entry qualifications, code of ethics and effective regulations to implement the code. He explained that because journalism is fluid and touches all aspects of life, it would be problematic insisting that personnel be drawn only from those trained in core journalism. However, he insists that no matter the background, all practitioners need to be trained in the basic principles and code of ethics of journalism. Participant 7 sees the issue of professionalism as the main problem of Nigerian journalism. Professionalism, in his view, is not just the academic knowledge, but must be grounded in ethical conduct. According to him,

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<sup>15</sup> The Nigerian Press Council established in 1992 by the military has not enjoyed wide acceptability by the Nigerian newspaper proprietors because of fears that the Council could be used by government to muzzle the press. In 2010, a court described the Nigerian Press Council Decree No. 85 of 1992 as amended by the Nigeria Press Council (Amendment) Decree No. 60 of 1999, as “oppressive, overbearing and grossly not compatible with the standard of a society.” According to Participant 16 of this research, a director in the Council, the controversy surrounding the Council has resulted in refusal of critical stakeholders in the newspaper industry to nominate members to the Board of the Council, thereby stalling its operations. The Participant also said that the Council has limited funding. Nevertheless, the Council has partnered with organisations like the National Universities Commission and the National Board for Technical Education, with support from the UNDP, on journalism curriculum development in universities and polytechnics. The Nigerian Press Council has set for itself the lofty mission “to serve journalism and its public by facilitating access to information; promoting the privileges of journalists and ensuring conformity with the code of ethics; accredit journalism training and carry out capacity building, documentation and research on press development, and provide the cheapest and effective means of adjudication for complaints between journalists and the public” (The Press, 2014: 42). There is a critical need to re-think the operational basis of the Council as a parastatal of government so that it can evolve into an independent newspaper ombudsman respected and acceptable to all stakeholders.

what destroys journalism today is that whereas we stand on a high pedestal of moral platitude, preaching and pontificating about what is right and wrong, we ourselves have fallen short because if you talk of brown envelop, you think journalists. All these are the things that schools of journalism should address. They must bring out thorough professionals.

The issues discussed so far are inter-related and inter-connected, with each reinforcing the other negatively to affect journalism practice in Nigeria. While partisanship fuels uncritical and unprofessional reportage, poor conditions of service encourage corruption and unethical practices and inadequate training and capacity exacerbate and entrench these patterns. Changing the dynamics should contribute to improving the situation in the sense that better education of journalists would increase professionalism and reduce partisanship; improved conditions of service should enhance ethical practice which in turn will result in higher professional standards, particularly in the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

Apart from training and education, another important factor impinging on the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts is the regulatory environment of press practice. Exploring the context of conflicts, for example, requires thorough investigative work by journalists, a task that could be undermined by anti-press laws and regulations such as the official secrets act, all of which hinder access to vital public information. These issues constitute the focus of discussion in the next section.

#### **6.4 Press Freedom and Accountability**

The Constitution of Nigeria tasks the media with the role of upholding the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people (section 22). A critical determinant of the effectiveness or otherwise with which it performs this role is contingent on the regulatory environment and structures within which it operates. With particular respect to the coverage and reportage of conflicts, the safety and security of the press and adequacy of access to vital information are key to any attempts to get at the roots of ethno-religious and communal crises. This makes it important to interrogate the regulatory environment of press practice and how this impacts on content. This is in line with my last research objective which is to investigate the regulatory environment of media practice in Nigeria and to examine the implications of the Freedom of Information Act for investigative journalism and the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

This task has been accomplished in three steps. The first step involves a brief historical overview of press regulation in Nigeria and a survey of aspects of the 1999 Constitution

dealing with press freedom. This is undertaken to provide a background for the clamour for the Freedom of Information law. The second step analyses the salient provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, particularly its potentials for investigating the causes of ethno-religious conflicts. Finally, I obtain the views of media practitioners and media academics on the implementation and impact of the Act.

#### ***6.4.1 From Draconian Laws to Freedom of Information Act: A Brief History of Press Regulation in Nigeria***

From its inception, the press in Nigeria, like many parts of Africa, has witnessed unease in its relationship with public authorities. Chick (1971) records the British Colonial Governor-General of Nigeria, in an address delivered to the Legislative Council in 1946, as making some trenchant comments on journalistic indiscipline in the territory under his charge:

Our press is free - free to abuse, to sabotage effort, to kill enthusiasm, to impute bad motives and dishonesty, to poison the springs of goodwill and foul the well of trust, to impregnate the body politic with envy, hatred and malice – in short free to do the Devil's work.

Chick notes that this complaint was familiar even then, for, as he observes, social divisions run deep in Nigeria and any polarisation of opinion around a key issue, or exacerbation of mistrust, tends to conjure up the spectre of communal violence. “Those in authority have always been uneasily aware of the fragility of civil order and it is not surprising that newspapers should be regarded as potentially disruptive in such a situation,” he remarked.

Acting on assumption that journalists are able to excite latent animosities and to build disparate sources of friction into a sense of compelling grievance, Chick observes that the colonial administration showed an almost “obsessive concern” with problems of press control. This “adversarial” legacy (Oyovbaire, 2001) of the press dictated that it was in constant opposition to the political class even when Nigerians took over governance after independence. Because of this, Oyovbaire (2001) points out that a section of the Nigerian political elite began to dislike the nature of reportage of the Nigerian press, labelling it the “Lagos Press.” And because most of the newspapers were actually founded and based in Lagos, this created for it an instrument for the propagation of a role, which was nationalistic, yet geo-politically partisan.

Omu (1968) further confirms that at independence, nationalists in the opposition transferred their hostility to the new government manned by fellow Nigerians. Thus right from colonial times, governments in Nigeria had devised anti-press laws to check-mate what a colonial

administrator characterised as “dangerous instruments in the hands of semi-civilised negroes” (Omu, 1968:288). The first law of sedition appeared in 1908 with two other policy instruments enacted against the press at various times (Omu, 1968). Post-independence constitutions of 1963 and 1989 made no specific provisions for press freedom, beyond the clause specifying a general freedom of expression for all citizens (Agbaje, 1990). The prolonged military rule in Nigeria was characterised by draconian decrees and policies aimed at suppressing and gagging the press. The most noticeable of these were the infamous Decree No. 4 of 1985 under which journalists were jailed for reporting or publishing information considered as classified or improper; and Decrees 43 and 48 of June and July 1993 both considered as amongst the most draconian in the annals of the Nigerian press (Bitrus, 1996).

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution currently in operation has provided specifically for press freedom in section 39(1). This section states that Nigerians have the right to freedom of expression and freedom to have an opinion and impart same without interference. Section 39(2) provides for freedom to establish media organisations without interference from government or others. The constitution however comes shy of providing specific clauses to outlaw press censorship or to guarantee editorial independence or forbid state interference with editorial content (Ogbondah, 2003). This gap has important implications for fair coverage particularly in terms of state-owned media organisations, and generally for the press. Furthermore, the same section 39(2) prohibits individuals or private organisations from operating the electronic media except as authorised by the President. This authority vests in the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission.

Importantly, section 39(3) constrains the freedom of expression through provisos which allow the government to enact laws:

- For the purpose of preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of courts or regulating telephony, wireless broadcasting, television or exhibition of cinematograph film; or
- Imposing restrictions upon persons holding office under the Government of the Federation or of a State, members of the Armed Forces of the Federation or members of the Nigeria Police Force or other government security services or agencies established by law.



The 1999 constitution, in section 45(1) further permit laws to be made to restrict information:

- In the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health, or
- For the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.

It is therefore noticeable that the freedom of the press in the Constitution comes with significant derogations. For example what constitutes “public morality”? Who defines “morality”? Such nebulous statements are capable of misuse by overzealous officials against the press as witnessed recently when the military authorities seized and destroyed newspaper editions of some national newspapers. These loopholes in part account for the molestation and attempt to muzzle the press even by the civilian administration of Nigeria. The incidents of maltreatment of journalists, such as those involving Isioma Daniel of *This Day* newspaper, Rotimi Durojaiye of the *Independent* newspaper and Gbenga Arubela of African Independent Television (AIT) amongst others (Abone and Kur, 2014) readily come to mind.<sup>16</sup> Thus even after transition to civil rule, the press was still constrained in the performance of its responsibilities. According to the international organisation, Reporters Without Borders, “Nigeria embodies a paradox. On the one hand, it is a country where freedom of news and information is effective so far as the pluralism and vitality of the media are concerned, and on the other, it has one of Africa’s worst records for infringements of press freedom and a worrying level of danger for journalists” (May 12, 2012).

This formed the backdrop to the demand for the enactment of the Freedom of Information Law in Nigeria. The Freedom of Information Act was signed into law in Nigeria on May 28, 2011 after 12 years of legislative and executive rigmarole which saw the bill passed twice, the first version having been refused assent by the President in 2007 (Mmadu, 2011). Mmadu (2011) notes that the passage of the Act was welcomed with excitement, not only by the media and civil society organisations, but Nigerians in general. This was because of the cloud of secrecy with which government business was shrouded, bolstered by such legislations as

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<sup>16</sup> Isioma Daniel was a young Nigerian reporter for *This Day* newspaper who received death sentence (*fatwa*) from some Islamic organisations and had to flee to exile in Europe over an article in 2002 allegedly blasphemous of Prophet Mohammed, and which article sparked widespread Miss World pageant riots in Nigeria.

Rotimi Durojaiye of the *Independent* and Gbenga Arubela of Africa Independent Television (AIT) were charged for sedition in 2006 in connection with materials published on the cost of a presidential jet purchased by the Obasanjo administration (see Abone and Kur, 2014).

the Official Secrets Act which empowered public officials to withhold vital information from the press and citizens. “In such a scenario,” Mmadu explains, “the FOI Act is designed to put an end to the pervasive culture of secrecy and usher in a culture of transparency and openness.” He argued that the FOI would also have a restraining influence on the endemic culture of corruption by exposing wrong doing and mismanagement of government finances and transactions, and therefore enhance integrity in public life. Importantly, the FOI should encourage political participation by the ordinary citizen, who, alienated by prolonged military rule and “unrepresentative civil rule,” had been indifferent to the exercise of power. In Mmadu’s words, “the FOI Act is expected to empower a common Nigerian with a capacity to take part in the political process as an active citizen with adequate information about issues of government and replace the culture of silence with that of activism” (Mmadu, 2014:120-121). This last point is particularly important to this research because individuals and communities require authentic and timely information to be able to engage rationally with issues in conflict so as to resolve tensions and differences in amicable manners. In the reportage of conflicts by the press, FOI has the potential to create or facilitate access to credible information which would empower citizens to scrutinise and challenge elite policies and actions calculated to trigger conflicts and crises for selfish purposes.

The FOI in clause 2 gives every person a legally enforceable right of access to records, documents and information in the custody of public officials and institutions, subject to the exemptions specified in the Act. An applicant does not need to demonstrate any specific interest in the information being applied for. The Act also entitles applications in clause 3 to institute legal action to enforce their right to access in cases of denial.

Other notable provisions of the Act are as follows:

- Public institutions are required to proactively publish certain types of information through print, electronic and online means and to regularly update the information.
- Apart from public institutions, the Act covers private entities performing public functions, providing public services or utilising public funds.
- An applicant should receive information being requested within 7 days or explanations for refusal.

The Act exempts certain categories of information from the general right of access. In clause 11(1) the Act states that ‘a public institution may deny an application for any information the

disclosure of which may be injurious to conduct of international affairs and the defence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Scholars, such as Abone and Kur (2014), and Dunu and Ugbo (2014), identify weaknesses in some of the provisions of the Act or in the Nigerian environment that could undermine its effective implementation. Among these is the possibility of loose definition of “national security” or “international affairs” as an exemption clause. The question is what constitutes information that is injurious to conduct of international affairs and the defence of the Federal Republic of Nigeria? Other possible impediments include: the culture of impunity in Nigeria in which court orders are flouted recklessly by powerful interests and government officials; litigation time and cost in cases of refusal; existence of contrary laws such as Official Secrets Act and the lack of a supervisory body to nurture and enforce the Act.

Dunu and Ugbo (2014) point out moreover that access to information does not necessarily lead to greater citizen participation, state accountability and state responsiveness. This is because there are structural and political barriers which hinder both the capacity and incentives of governments to produce information, and the ability of citizens to claim their right of information and use it to demand better governance and public services (Daruwala and Nayak, 2007). In the next section, I examine the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and its impact on press reportage four years after it came into existence. This examination is done through interviews with media practitioners and media academics.

#### ***6.4.2 Freedom of Information Act in Practice: What Difference?***

Participants of this research, in evaluating the impact of the FOI after more than three years of its enactment, gave low scores to its implementation by the Nigerian press. Most of the respondents expressed the opinion that the Act has had minimal impact on Nigerian journalism for various reasons, the first of which is that journalists themselves have not adequately understood and digested the provisions of the Act. This is attributable, in their perception, to a combination of laziness and insufficient depth in Nigeria’s journalism, with practitioners who are both intellectually and morally equipped to operate the Act. Therefore, the euphoria which attended the passage of the Act and its signing into law about four years ago has not been matched by commensurate energy and action to utilise the law.

Another reason adduced by participants for the low implementation of the Act is corruption, both within the media and in the larger social framework. Within the media, participants cited unethical practices such as blackmail, non-payment of salaries, and the “brown-envelope”

syndrome which they point out diminish the moral clout of the press to hold government to account. Associated with this is the lack of capacity by media organisations to undertake investigative journalism due to resource constraints and lack of requisite manpower. According to Participant 3,

When cases of blackmail, corruption, non-payment of salaries are rampant within the media itself, how can such an institution be a corrective agent? Can such an institution have the courage to confront government and insist on the release of information? Do we have the moral standing?

In this respect, a situation arises where the use of the Act is said to be politically motivated, that is, when public officials release critical information to the media with the purpose of damaging the reputation of some other officials. Some participants cited ownership of the press as an obstacle to the implementation of the Act in the sense that some proprietors are also politicians or government contractors and therefore will not be enthusiastic to deploy their media to investigate issues in which they or their associates may be implicated.

Outside the media, official bureaucracy is cumbersome and, in the opinion of some respondents, still thrives in secrecy despite the existence of the Act. It creates deliberate obstacles for even those who attempt to utilise the law, mainly non-governmental organisations. By a recent court ruling, the FOI Act is applicable only to federal level affairs, and does not affect state and local governments which have not domesticated the law within their domains. This, some participants observed, severely limits the operational scope of the Act, and is a factor in its low implementation.

The issue of ownership and resource base as obstacles in the implementation of the FOI Act bring up philosophical issues underlying the crusade for the Act and the expectations built around it. As Oso (2013: 15) observes, the debate for a constitutional guarantee for freedom of information was informed by the liberalist perspective of the media in which the press is the fourth estate of the realm which performs watchdog functions over the government. However, Oso also points out that this expectation of the liberalists is compromised by important structural issues, first among which is that only the rich and powerful can afford to establish media organisations in view of the expensive capital outlay. In Nigeria, for example, newspapers recently established are owned by either politicians or powerful individuals. The implication of this is that the watchdog function of the press is eroded by the political economy of media production. Having been colonised by powerful economic interests, the

press has lost its vitality as watchdog. Therefore, the high expectation hinged on the press through the passage of the FOI Act needs to be moderated by this reality.

Another issue with the liberal perspective driving the FOI is what Oso (2013: 19) describes as the industrialisation of the mass media and the public relationization of political communication. The industrialization of the mass media implies that commercial considerations have become major deciding factors in media operation. This necessitates cost reduction in vital areas of professional operation, particularly personnel and news gathering duties, such as investigative journalism. Conversely, there is increased space and attention to coverage that could yield revenue from advertisements and circulation. The point here is that economic factors, rather than professional considerations, increasingly drive content and this has negative implication for the operationalisation of the FOIA.

Participants 2, 9, 10 highlighted a significant challenge to FOI Act in the refusal of state governments to implement the law in their domains, on claims that it is a federal law which needs to be “domesticated” by their State Houses of Assembly before it enjoys jurisdiction in the states. According to Participant 10, “the battle in Lagos State is instructive. Politicians<sup>17</sup> do not want to be checked in Nigeria. They may find their way around Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). But the media check is what they dread most.”

In addressing this issue of bureaucratic bottlenecks however, Participant 15 believes that journalists themselves need to show more persistence in testing the “resilience of the Act.” He insists that when journalists have earned the confidence of the general public, the FOI Act will work better. “If journalists would persist, they would easily get willing civil servants who will give information. Unfortunately, in a few instances even civil servants who volunteered information ended up being victims because a journalist would trade that information for money. So people are apprehensive at dealing with journalists on these matters.” For Participant 16, whose establishment has already organised some training activities on the Act for journalists, the press is still far from really utilising the Act. “Some are complaining but have never used it. Some have not even read the Act,” he observed.

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<sup>17</sup>There was a recent court case in Lagos in which an NGO sued the government for refusing to provide information on the utilisation of a foreign loan. The government based its refusal on claims that the FOI Act has not been passed by the State Assembly and the court ruled in favour of the state government.

Some things stand out clearly from these interviews. First, that in the perception and evaluation of media practitioners and media academics, the FOI Act has had no significant impact on journalism practice in Nigeria, contrary to initial expectations. Not only is implementation weak, but there is a paucity of effective knowledge of the Act by the media, a knowledge above the catch-phrase to critical understanding and internalisation of the provisions of the law for action. This situation is directly related to both the quality of journalism as well as the environment of practice which features poor conditions and weak facilities. Bureaucratic bottlenecks anchored in rampant corruption within the public sector constitute major obstacles in the implementation of the FOI Act. This is made worse by the prevalence of internal corruption within the media itself, both among the proprietors and practitioners. These factors, juxtaposed against the apparent lack of training and weak professional capacity of many journalists for investigation and practice at the high levels envisaged by the Act, are issues which need to be addressed. Press freedom provides the atmosphere for effective practice. Accountability and ethical conduct inspires public trust and effectiveness of practice.

## **6.5 Conclusions**

This chapter has given context to the research on press coverage of ethno-religious conflicts by exploring the environment of media practice in Nigeria, the challenges faced by journalists and the constraints and opportunities. This was accomplished by examining three broad themes: professionalism and media ethics in Nigeria; training and capacity building; and, press freedom and media accountability. These themes were explored in interviews with media academics and media practitioners carefully selected to obtain a rich diversity of opinions and perspectives. Through the interviews and explications in the chapter, I have been able to delineate certain issues which explain the pattern of coverage and the nature of representation of ethno-religious conflicts in the previous chapters.

With respect to professionalism and media ethics, the interviews indicated that issues such as partisanship, biased coverage, corruption and other unethical practices long associated with the Nigerian press appear to be enduring. This is primarily because of the unfavourable work environment and weaknesses and inadequacies in the regulatory environment in terms of training and professional enforcement of ethics. For example, the institutions of journalism training have been multiplying across the country without commensurate increase in facilities and staffing. This has negative implications for the quality of products being churned out for the industry and a corollary implication for media content. Furthermore, the professional

body of journalism, particularly as represented by the Nigerian Union of Journalists, is weak and/or compromised in instances. Also, there is no generally acceptable ombudsman for the industry as the Nigerian Press Council remains a controversial organisation. There is inadequate mechanism for self-regulation in the newspaper industry which would enhance the professional integrity of the Nigerian press. All these have negative implications for quality reportage and coverage of ethno-religious conflicts.

Although the regulatory environment appears to have improved with the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), evidence suggests that this has not impacted news practice significantly. This is because, amongst other things, FOIA has not resulted in more investigative journalism, neither has it made any difference to the manner violent conflict is covered or reported. Furthermore, the Act does not seem to have been properly digested and understood by stakeholders particularly the media. The FOIA therefore remains a huge potential to be explored and utilised by the Nigerian press in deepening professional practice, particularly investigative journalism and other duties which contribute to more effectively holding government accountable to the people.

The last four chapters have provided opportunity to analyse in detail the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press. Through these analytical chapters, I have explored the pattern of coverage as well as the representation and framing of the conflicts. I have also had opportunity to problematize and interrogate established journalistic practices and news culture through the lens of new concepts in conflict reportage. Specifically, I explored the philosophy of peace journalism and discussed its applicability to the Nigerian press scene. Lastly, I considered the context of news production in Nigeria, focusing on the political and economic factors which underpin operations in the sector.

Through these analyses, I have been able to establish the position that the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the Nigerian press tends to escalate, rather than minimise, the conflicts. In light of this, and consonant with emerging trends in conflict coverage, I argue for the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, a proposal which I discuss more fully in the Conclusion.

## CONCLUSION

This study has explored the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts by the press and examined their potential for minimising or escalating such conflicts. It focused particular attention on the Nigerian press and its coverage of violent incidents of sectarian and communal clashes in Jos, Plateau State, an area at the critical fault line of Nigeria's north-south, Christian-Muslim geopolitical dichotomy. It addresses the wider debates around the reporting of war and conflict, particularly the contentious issues of the relationship between media and conflict and explores the implications of this relationship on the course of violent intra-state sectarian conflicts. Using a data collection strategy which featured a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, it attempted to locate the Nigerian press within these conflicts, and examined how they may be implicated in the escalation or exacerbation of the conflicts. The study finds both the quality of coverage and the representational pattern of issues by the press as contentious and problematic. It therefore argued for the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, a variant of the peace journalism paradigm, encompassing a set of professional and ethical standards which would ensure that the press reports conflicts much more sensitively and in a manner that would not aid their escalation. To achieve this, it identified training and education as central in equipping and re-orienting journalists towards new paradigms of practice in conflict reporting. It further argued for the strengthening of the institutional platforms of journalism practice and press regulation in order to secure better professional output in media content.

The role of the media in conflict is a broad and sometimes controversial subject. Research on news culture, however, confirms that media representations tend to glamorise war, violence and propaganda (Lynch, 2005; Hackett, 2007; Cottle, 2006). This has raised critical questions about mainstream journalistic practices in the coverage of conflicts and scholarly arguments as to whether journalism is a participant or a detached observer in the conflict cycle. Therefore, critical to this dissertation are the debates and contentions inspired by emerging alternative concepts to mainstream journalistic treatment of conflicts (Galtung, 2002; Cottle, 2006; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2009; Hackett, 2011; Blasi, 2004). I examined the trends in this debate, exploring the possibilities of the emergence of a new journalistic paradigm which can challenge the endemic negativity of the press and the existing "institutionalised bystander" approach to conflict reportage by mainstream media (Geelen, 2002).



This dissertation makes tangible contributions to the literature on the media-conflict nexus by providing empirical data and new perspectives on press coverage of ethno-religious conflicts. The study confirms the preponderance of mainstream news values in conflict reportage, which it argues contributes to the entrenchment of structural violence capable of escalating conflicts. This finding echoes the anxieties and debates about the public role of the news media in a democracy, particularly what Manning (2001: 13) has characterised as “the politics of news sources” and the differential opportunities granted by the media to contesting voices and interests. It confirms Manning’s assertion that journalism does not merely mirror events; rather it is a representation of reality shaped by several factors including commercial market signals, pressures generated by organisational imperatives and deadlines, the level of managerial supervision and interaction with routine sources of news (Manning, 2001: 51-53). My research provided evidence which supports the assertion that journalism is unavoidably a participant in the conflict cycle, not a detached unobtrusive observer. Similarly, Hackett (2007: 2) has noted that in conflicts, media are not mere observers, “but are simultaneously a source of intelligence, a combatant, a weapon, a target and a battlefield.”

In arriving at this position, my research has taken cognisance of the political economy of news production, particularly the ownership of news organisations and the positioning of news organisations in competitive markets, factors considered as potential threats to the free circulation of ideas (Manning, 2001: 81). This emphasises that political and economic criteria cannot be overlooked in the political communication process, a phenomenon Habermas terms as “re-feudalisation” of the public sphere (Manning, 2001: 5). The re-feudalisation of the public sphere describes a process whereby communication and the exchange of ideas grows increasingly dependent upon a new group of sponsors and patrons, and upon new structures of authority which pose an increasing threat to the rationality of debate and the universalistic criteria by which arguments should be evaluated. The practical implication of this is that the selection and representation of information in the public domain is undertaken according to commercial or political interests rather than “pure” reason and rationality (Manning, 2001: 5). While it is possible to overestimate the influence of advertising, commercialism and public relations, it is nevertheless true that communication, particularly through the mass media, can never entirely escape the effects of the conditions under which it is produced. This has serious implications for the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts.

In carrying out this research, I utilised a methodological approach combining quantitative and qualitative analysis, a strategy that enabled me to explore data extensively and rigorously. In

order to adequately interrogate the issues and questions thrown up by the enquiry, I employed a theoretical framework incorporating ideas from ethnicity, media and ethnic conflicts, critical political economy as well as debates about alternative approaches to conflict coverage and reportage. This assisted in analysing professional practices of Nigerian journalism and their relationship with conflict and to canvass the argument for a re-orientation in style and comportment leading to the adoption of a news culture which does not aid conflict escalation.

In canvassing the adoption of conflict responsive journalism, this study has called attention to two critical problem areas of the Nigerian press in the reportage of conflict: the problem of orientation and the institutional platforms of journalism practice. On the first problem, the negative orientation of the press, imbibed from its pre-colonial days, is an issue which requires deconstruction, to enable journalists to appreciate and become better equipped to report conflicts in a manner productive to communal harmony, especially in view of the endemic nature of conflicts in Nigeria. In this respect, I share the position of Sharp (2013) that if journalists are to fashion their narratives in such a way as to avoid driving conflicts towards a violent endgame, understanding conflict dynamics or conflict analysis must be the first tool of choice for the professional reporter. Such an understanding would also force a re-think of professional responsibility that “eschews the serial excuse of neutrality and acknowledges the material impact of media of communications” (Sharp, 2013: 189). What is envisaged is a reportorial style which both mirrors and constructs conflict narratives in a way to guarantee, in Geelen’s words, “timely, accurate and responsible information” (Geelen, 2002). This requires a re-orientation through training in conflict analysis and advocacy to create awareness and acceptance of this brand of journalism. This also has implications for curriculum development in journalism education and training with respect to conflict reportage and action-oriented interventions by relevant stakeholders.

In chapter five where I explored the concept of peace journalism, I problematised the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts through the lens of this concept whose stated goal is to make media discourse on conflicts more transparent and balanced in order to stimulate alternative interpretations and more critical reflection (Galtung, 1998; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005). It seeks to protect conflict from what Kempf (2007: 1) characterises as the “fateful propaganda trap into which traditional war reporting is continually falling.” I observed through primary data that the general orientation of Nigerian newspapers is towards “war journalism,” that is, the routinised, western-style news conventions which emphasise negative news over positive news. This negative orientation of the Nigerian press, I

suggested, has its roots in the historical foundation of the press as an anti-colonialist tool which has given the press a distinctive combative character or “protest motif” (Olukotun, 2004: 15). The political economy of newspaper production further obviates moderation and a tempered approach to news which peace journalism advocates (Mogekwu, 2011; Hyde-Clarke, 2012). These issues are compounded by findings in chapter 3 which suggest the prevalence of unprofessional practices such as exaggeration, simplification and distortion of information by the press in the coverage of the conflicts. Chapter 4 similarly disclosed a tendency to superficial treatment of issues and inclinations to regional and religious biases in reportage. I observed that this pattern of reportage is capable of reinforcing and perpetuating prejudices within the polity and obviating what Lee (2000) terms as the ideals of good journalism: objectivity, balance, fairness and thoroughness.

The second problem which my dissertation called attention to relates to the institutional contexts within which journalism in Nigeria operates. Through discussions with media practitioners and media academics in chapter 6, I demonstrated that these institutional contexts, particularly the regulatory and professional bodies, are weak or compromised. This is on account of unethical and unprofessional practices or because mechanisms for enforcing guiding rules and ethical conduct are non-existent or ineffective. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of journalism training in the recent past has not been matched by the development or acquisition of commensurate facilities and human resources. Interviewees suggested that this has negative impact on the quality of graduates being produced from the training institutions and corollary negative implications for ethical and competent practice in the reportage of conflicts. Ill-equipped institutions would lack capacity to impart knowledge which meets the UNESCO model curricular for journalism education including competence in professional standards, journalism and society and knowledge of the world (Odunlami, 2014: 356-357). Therefore strengthening the institutional context of news production through relevant policy review would address significant issues relating to training, ethical conduct and professionalism.

The concept of conflict responsive journalism which I have proposed develops from Howard’s (2009: 5) “conflict sensitive reporting” (CSR) whose goal is to “make reporting on conflict more insightful, more comprehensive and thus more influential.” Conflict responsiveness is therefore a hybrid of Peace Journalism and CSR and connotes alertness, competence, proactivity and appropriate professional response to mediation of conflict. As I demonstrated in chapters five and six, Nigerian journalists and media educators are positively

pre-disposed to the philosophical underpinnings of reformist paradigms like peace journalism, which argue that in covering conflicts, journalists should take responsibility for the consequences of their reportage. There is, however, a disconnect as such convictions are not reflected in newspaper content. Conflict responsive journalism is proposed to provide a strategy to bridge this gap by focusing attention on critical aspects of practice including institutional structures which perpetuate current news culture. However, in advocating conflict responsive journalism, rather than peace journalism, I am aware of the mixed reactions to the latter and the apparent ready acceptance of more neutral descriptors that do not appear to make journalism practice contingent on overly normative commitments. It also demonstrates awareness that “media-oriented peacebuilding” (Frere, 2007) alone, important as it is, cannot secure peace. Beyond the individual journalist, institutional structures of journalism, political economy, professional norms and other systemic influences must be engaged (Fawcett, 2002; Hanitzsch, 2007; Sanem and Ross, 2012). Further academic investigation is required to explore the institutional dimensions of this proposal and the structures needed to refocus the press for better conflict coverage rather than mere routine reportage of violence in manners that could escalate it.

### **Limitations and New Directions for Conflict Reportage**

Researching the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria has indicated the need to further interrogate established journalistic conventions and news culture, particularly as they relate to conflict reportage. New journalistic genres like peace journalism which engage in such critique of mainline news practices remain a subject of much debate and conversation (Hackett, 2011; Seaga, et.al (2011); Hanitzsch, 2007). However, as I have demonstrated in this study, the idea that journalism should play an active role in conflict resolution is one that is gaining ground amongst media practitioners, particularly in a country like Nigeria which has been conflict-endemic. I do recognise, in line with Hyde-Clarke (2011: 12), that structural hierarchies influence media structures and that there could be a tendency to media-centrism in this effort. I am however persuaded by the argument of Seaga, et.al (2011) that such hierarchies do not in themselves lessen the “moral culpability” of journalists when covering conflict but rather clarify the debate in terms of where action lies in the effort to secure better quality conflict coverage. Therefore more research is required in this field as it affects Nigeria especially due to prevalence of violent communal conflicts and the need to understand and minimise them.

The focus of this dissertation is on print journalism. I realise from doing the research however that it now prompts investigation of other journalism tools, particularly the online environment. This is with specific regard to use of new media, encompassing the internet and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook as well as mobile technology software like WhatsApp and Viber. Although these are becoming more and more pervasive as channels of mass communication in Nigeria (Obijiofor, 2010; Odunlami, 2014), the need to maintain critical focus excluded consideration of these from my research. Similarly, investigation is required into the role of the audience in these issues, not just as consumers, but also as producers of news. These areas require further investigation in order to obtain more rounded perspectives on the role of the media in ethno-religious conflicts.

This dissertation has studied the mediation of ethno-religious conflicts, endemic features of Nigeria's Fourth Republic since return to democratic governance in 1999. These conflicts pose obstacles to national unity and development, and portend dangers to the West African sub-region. The study recognises the pivotal role of information providers in conflict, a role Onadipe and Lord (1998) argue could be manipulative or constructive. The main focus of my research has been on how to engage the press constructively in the mediation of these conflicts in order to minimise them and to strengthen peace building. I hope this modest contribution will stimulate further discourse towards equipping the Nigerian press to more creditably fulfil its social responsibility to report conflicts creatively and competently.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Characteristics of Peace and War Journalism

Peace/conflict journalism	War/violence journalism
<p><i>Peace/conflict-oriented</i></p> <p>Explore conflict formation,  x parties, y goals, z issues  general 'win-win' orientation</p> <p>Open space, open time;  causes and outcomes anywhere, also  in history/culture</p> <p>Making conflicts transparent</p> <p>Giving voice to all parties;  empathy, understanding</p> <p>See conflict/war as problem,  focus on creating new understanding  of conflict</p> <p>Humanizing all sides;  the more so the more terrifying the  weapons</p> <p><i>Proactive:</i> prevention before the violence/war  break out  Focus on invisible effects of violence,  (trauma and glory, damage to  structure/culture)</p>	<p><i>War/violence-oriented</i></p> <p>Focus on conflict arena,  2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general  'zero-sum' orientation</p> <p>Closed space, closed time;  causes and exits in arena, who threw the  first stone</p> <p>Making wars opaque/hidden  'us-them' journalism, propaganda, voice  for 'us'</p> <p>See 'them' as the problem,  focus on who prevails in war</p> <p>Dehumanizing 'them';  the more so the more terrifying the  weapons</p> <p><i>Reactive:</i> waiting for violence to erupt before  reporting</p> <p>Focus only on visible effect of violence (killed,  wounded and material damage)</p>

<p><i>Truth-oriented</i></p> <p>Expose untruths on all sides</p> <p>Expose all cover-ups/lies</p>	<p><i>Propaganda-oriented</i></p> <p>Expose 'their' untruths</p> <p>Help protect 'our' cover-ups/lies</p>
<p><i>People-oriented</i></p> <p>Focus on suffering everywhere; including on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless</p> <p>Reveal the names of all evil-doers</p> <p>Focus on people as peace-makers</p>	<p><i>Elite-oriented</i></p> <p>Focus exclusively on 'our' suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouth-piece</p> <p>Reveal only the names of 'their' evil-doers</p> <p>Focus on elite peace-makers</p>
<p><i>Solution-oriented</i></p> <p>Peace = non-violence + creativity</p> <p>Highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent future war</p> <p>Focus on structure, culture the peaceful society</p> <p>Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation</p>	<p><i>Victory-oriented</i></p> <p>Peace = victory + ceasefire</p> <p>Conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand</p> <p>Focus on treaty, institution the controlled society</p> <p>Moving on to next war, return if the old flares up again</p>

**Source: Johan Galtung: Peace/conflict journalism vs. war/violence journalism**

## **Appendix 2**

### **CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING FRAME**

#### **Story ID**

This identifies a particular story from the lot in the sample and consists of 12 digits: newspaper code – date – story number (xxx-xxxxxx-xxx)

Newspaper code: 3 digits (for example, 101)

Date: 6 digits (for example, September 7, 2001 = 090701)

Story number: 3 digits (for example, 001 (the number would have been assigned on copy of newspaper)

The ID in this example is: 101-090701-001

Note: the codes assigned to the newspapers in this study are as follows:

Daily Trust: 101

Nigerian Tribune: 102

The Guardian: 103

This Day: 104

#### **Key words in headline:**

(This is required for easy identification of story and for further treatment at later stages of the research)

### **PART 1 – PRELIMINARY INFORMATION**

#### ***Incidence of Ethno-Religious Conflict***

The study will be investigating five different episodes of ethno-religious conflicts and each of the incidents will be identified as indicated below:

1. September 2001

2. November 2008

3. January/March 2010
4. Christmas Eve 2010 (December 2010)
5. Eid-el-Fitr (Sallah) 2011 (August 2011)

### ***Story Type***

Stories will be categorized according to type to enable us observe and discuss several issues later such as: relationship between story type and media frame, comparison of news coverage with other items, etc.

1. News story
2. Editorial
3. Feature/Opinion
4. Other

### ***By-line***

This is the identity of the reporter/columnist or the credit line given to a reporter or columnist on a story.

1. Correspondent/Staff Reporter/Columnist
2. Guest writer/freelance reporter
3. Anonymous

### ***Regional Identity of Reporter/Correspondent/Columnist***

Indicate whether the writer of the story is identified by name and if so whether from the name or other description, their broad regional identity can be inferred.

1. North
2. Middle Belt
3. South
4. Other
5. Not clear/not indicated



## **Contact**

Indicate whether there is contact information (i.e. telephone number or email address of writer in the by-line.) Among other things, this information might assist in making contacts with journalists for the semi-structured interviews stage of the research.

## **Gender**

This is the gender of the reporter/correspondent/columnist or writer

1. Male
2. Female
3. Not clear
4. Not applicable

## **PART 2 -GENERAL COVERAGE**

### ***Prominence***

Here we will categorise stories according to their placement in the newspaper. This will be used to discuss issues relating to the amount and quality of coverage given the conflicts, issues of sensationalism, etc.

1. Front page lead
2. Front page
3. Back page
3. Inside page (double/multiple pages)
4. Inside page

### ***Source of Story***

This is the person or organisation to which the writer has attributed the story. This will enable me discuss several issues: which sources do newspapers rely on most in reporting ethno-religious conflicts? Is the press elite or people-oriented? What is the relationship between news sources and the framing of stories? How is source-bias reflected or moderated in conflict news reportage?

1. Security Agencies: Police/Army/Special Task Force/State Security Service, etc.
2. Plateau State Government/Other state governments/local governments
3. Federal Government/National Assembly
4. Christian organisation/Church/Christian personality
5. Muslim organisation/Mosque/Muslim personality
6. Community based organisation/ethnic associations
7. Non-governmental organisations/Civil society
8. Individuals
9. Newspaper investigations
10. Wire service/news service
11. Other
12. Unattributed

### ***Balance in the Story***

1. Story is partisan, biased, sensational, exaggerated, reflects only one shade of opinion
2. Story is non-partisan, neutral, restrained, reflects all shades of opinion

### ***Backgrounding/Contextualizing***

1. Story focuses on the here and now – no explanation of causes and long term consequences
2. Story reports root causes and consequences, provides a historical perspective

### ***Language and Tone***

1. Uses inflammatory, sensational language
2. Uses moderate, concise language

## **PART 3 – MEDIA FRAME**

### ***Frames and Representations of Ethno-Religious Conflicts***

(Here stories are categorized on the basis of what the press is emphasising as the cause(s)/solution(s) of ethno-religious conflicts)

1. Ethnic conflict frame (story attributes conflict to rivalry between ethnic groups such as Berom/Hausa, Hausa/Igbo etc)
2. Religious conflict frame (story attributes conflict to war between Christians and Muslims; Islamic fundamentalism or jihad; etc.)
3. Socio-economic conflict frame (story attributes conflict to poverty, illiteracy, socio-economic imbalance, struggle over land and property etc.)
4. Politics/political manipulation frame (story attributes conflict to intra and inter-party political struggles between groups and individuals on the Plateau)
5. Security/law and order frame (story attributes conflicts to break down of law and order, criminality, a failure of security agencies to perform effectively, failure of government to protect lives and property, inability of government to bring perpetrators to justice)
6. Citizenship question frame (story interprets conflicts as essentially the citizenship question)

## **PART THREE 4: FRAMING OF STORIES ON THE PEACE JOURNALISM CRITERIA**

### ***Reactivity:***

1. Reactive (newspaper waits for conflict to break out or about to break out before reporting it.)
2. Proactive (newspaper anticipates, starts reporting before conflict breaks out.)

### ***Visibility of effects of conflict***

1. Visible effects: Reports mainly the visible (physical) effects of conflict such as casualties, death toll, damage to property.
2. Reports also invisible effects of conflict such as trauma, social and cultural damage.

### ***Orientation***

1. Elite oriented: story focuses mainly on officials, leaders and elite as actors and sources of information.
2. People oriented: story focuses on common people as actors and sources of information.

### ***Differences***

1. Story focuses mainly on differences that led to the conflict/conflict outcomes focused on violent options
2. Story also reports areas of agreement that might lead to a solution to the conflict/conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement

### ***Focus***

1. Immediate context: story is focused mainly on the 'here and now.'
2. Wider context: story also provides background and historical perspective giving the root causes and consequences of the conflict.

### ***Good and Bad Tagging***

1. Story dichotomises between good guys and bad guys, victims and villains in the conflict.
2. Story avoids labelling of good guys and bad guys and simplistic moral judgments.

### ***Party involvement/orientation***

1. Two-party orientation: story characterizes the conflict as between two

parties only in which one party wins and the other party loses

2. Multi-party orientation: story adopts a multi-party orientation and gives voice to many parties involved in conflict.

### ***Partisanship***

1. Partisan: biased for one side of the conflict.
2. Non-partisan: neutral, not taking sides.

### ***Winning Orientation***

1. Zero-sum orientation: one goal: to win.
2. Win-win orientation: many goals and issues, solution oriented.

### ***Language***

1. Victimising language: story uses victimising language (e.g. genocide, massacre, vicious, barbaric, savage, fanatic, devastated, pathetic, defenceless.)
2. Absence of victimising language: story uses moderate language with precise descriptions and reserves strongest language only for gravest situation

## Appendix 3

### CONTENT ANALYSIS CODE SHEET

STORY ID: XXX-XXXXXX

#### A. Key words in headline

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#### B. Incidence of conflict

- ☐ 1. September 2001
- ☐ 2. November 2008
- ☐ 3. January/March 2010
- ☐ 4. Christmas 2010 (December 2010)
- ☐ 5. Eid-el-Fitr 2011 (August 2011)

#### C. Story type

- ☐ 1. News story
- ☐ 2. Editorial
- ☐ 3. Feature/opinion
- ☐ 4. Other

#### D. By-line/Tagline

- ☐ 1. Correspondent/Reporter/Columnist
- ☐ 2. Guest writer/freelancer/syndicated
- ☐ 3. Reader
- ☐ 4. Anonymous

#### E. Regional/Ethnic Identity

- ☐ 1. North
- ☐ 2. South
- ☐ 3. Middle Belt
- ☐ 4. Not clear/can't tell

**F. Contact**

- ☐ 1. yes
- ☐ 2. No

**G. Prominence**

- ☐ 1. Front page lead
- ☐ 2. Front page
- ☐ 3. Back page
- ☐ 4. Inside page(double/multiple pages)
- ☐ 5. Inside page (single sheet)

**H. Source of Story**

- ☐ 1. Security Agencies (Police/Army/Joint Task Force, SSS, etc.)
- ☐ 2. Plateau State Government/other state governments/local governments
- ☐ 3. Federal Government/other government agencies/National Assembly
- ☐ 4. Christian organisation
- ☐ 5. Muslim organisation
- ☐ 6. CBOs/Ethnic associations
- ☐ 7. NGO/civil society
- ☐ 8. Individuals/ordinary citizens
- ☐ 9. Newspaper investigations
- ☐ 10. Wire service/news service
- ☐ 11. Other
- ☐ 12. Unattributed

**I. Balance**

- ☐ 1. Partisan
- ☐ 2. Non-partisan

**J. Background/Context**

- ☐ 1. Immediate focus
- ☐ 2. Root causes

## **K. Language and Tone**

- ☐ 1. Inflammatory/sensational
- ☐ 2. Moderate

## **L. Media frames**

- ☐ 1. Ethnic conflict
- ☐ 2. Religious conflict
- ☐ 3. Socio-economic conflict
- ☐ 4. Politics/political manipulation
- ☐ 5. Security/law and order
- ☐ 6. Citizenship question

## **M. Peace Journalism Framing**

### ***Reactivity***

- ☐ 1. Reactive
- ☐ 2. Proactive

### ***Visibility of effects***

- ☐ 1. Visible effects
- ☐ 2. Invisible effects

### ***Orientation***

- ☐ 1. Elite-orientation (emphasis on elite and official sources)
- ☐ 2. People orientation (emphasis on 'people' sources)

### ***Differences***

- ☐ 1. Emphasises differences
- ☐ 2. Focuses on agreement

### ***Focus***

- ☐ 1. Immediate context (emphasis on 'here and now' events)
- ☐ 2. Wider context (emphasis on longer term processes and aspects)



### ***Good and Bad Tagging***

- ☐ 1. Labels good and bad guys
- ☐ 2. Avoids labels

### ***Party Orientation***

- ☐ 1. Two party
- ☐ 2. Multi-party

### ***Partisanship***

- ☐ 1. Partisan
- ☐ 2. Non-partisan

### ***Winning Orientation***

- ☐ 1. Win-lose/zero-sum
- ☐ 2. Win-win

### ***Language***

- ☐ 1. Victimising/demonising language/emotive words
- ☐ 2. Avoids victimising/demonising languages

victimising/demonising language

## Appendix 4

### Synopsis of opinion articles surveyed in *Daily Trust* and *Nigerian Tribune*

Daily Trust	Nigerian Tribune
<p><b><i>Ignoble, condemnable, unspeakable</i></b></p> <p>(Editorial Comment 3/12/08 front page)</p> <p>Blames riots on leadership failure of Gov. Jang, elections rigging and inter-ethnic rivalry</p> <p><b>The media and the genocide in Jos</b></p> <p>(3/12/08, back page)</p> <p>Postulates the conflict as a genocide hatched by Gov. Jang and his Berom ethnic group. The media is biased and blind in their coverage</p> <p><b>Jos massacre: our government's folly?</b></p> <p>(5/12/08, p.13)</p> <p>Labels the crisis as genocide caused by Gov. Jonah Jang and Plateau state government and illustrates the culture of impunity and leadership failure in Nigeria.</p> <p><b>Jos and epidemic of insanity (1)</b></p> <p>(5/12/08, back page)</p> <p>A highly critical piece on the person and character of Gov. Jang, allegedly the master-mind of the genocide against Hausa/Fulani Muslims.</p> <p><b>Hausas are settlers in Jos</b></p> <p>(6/12/08, p.4)</p> <p>An interview addressing the contentious indigene/settler issue</p>	<p><b>Governor Jang's underbelly</b></p> <p>(4/12/08 p13)</p> <p>Editorial speculating about those who perpetrated the crisis.{</p> <p><b>The wuthering heights of Jos</b></p> <p>(7/12/08 p11)</p> <p>Questions the continued relevance of the compulsory National Youth Service Corps scheme in light of incessant killings of corps members in northern Nigeria</p> <p><b>Blood, blood everywhere</b></p> <p>(7/12/08 p13)</p> <p>Decries the scant regard for life in the country and laments especially the Yoruba victims of the riots.</p> <p><b>Jos mayhem: how these corps members were butchered</b></p> <p>(7/12/08)</p> <p>Paints a graphic narrative of the killings of three corps members from the south-west region.</p> <p><b>We need national confab now more than ever before</b></p> <p>(8/12/08 p35)</p> <p>Interview with a notable academic evaluates the state of the nation.</p>

<p><b>The Jos macabre: “Government said the Plateau State local government elections were free and fair. But you will be shocked by what we discovered.</b></p> <p>(7/12/08, front page)</p>	<p><b>Jos: the slain corps members</b></p> <p>(8/12/08 p13)</p> <p>Editorial describing in graphic details the killings of the three corps members and evaluates the state of the NYSC scheme.</p>
<p><b>Jos killings: failure of politics and leadership</b></p> <p>(11/12/08)</p> <p>Blames crisis on Gov. Jang and the general paucity of credible leadership in Nigeria, attenuated by culture of elections rigging.</p>	<p><b>Leke’s parents to NYSC: you have replaced my son with paper</b></p> <p>Graphic narratives on the killings of the three youth corps members and comments during the funeral of one of them.</p>
<p><b>Still on the media and the genocide in Jos</b></p> <p>(10/12/08)</p> <p>Raises critical issues about perceived Nigerian press bias against Hausa/Fulani and Muslims; questions the objectivity of highlighting murder of “Christian” youth but blind to the fate of Muslim school children killed in same crisis; doubts credibility of reports on mercenaries in the crisis.</p>	<p><b>Jos killings: matters arising</b></p> <p>(7/12/08 p3)</p> <p>Blames elections rigging as root cause of riots. Discusses manipulation of religion and ethnicity by ruling class. Accuses northern Christians of timidity and canvasses self-defence as panacea to being attacked by Hausa Muslims.</p>
<p><b>Jos and epidemic of insanity (111)</b></p> <p>(12/12/08)</p> <p>Criticises perceived partisanship of the dominant Nigerian press and its alleged unprofessional conduct in reporting the conflicts.</p>	<p><b>Jos violence: calling it what it really is</b></p> <p>Challenges assertions and claims of genocide by another newspaper and attempts to clarify historical issues in the conflicts.</p>
<p><b>Jos crisis political, not religious</b></p> <p>(14/12/08)</p> <p>Argues that the crisis is purely political and</p>	<p><b>Jos fracas as wake-up call</b></p> <p>(17/12/08 p12)</p> <p>Argues that revolution is inevitable except</p>

<p>ethnic, not religious, as Muslims of other groups are never fighting Christians like the Hausa/Fulani Muslims.</p>	<p>things shape up in the country.</p>
<p><b>Jos Mayhem 2008: Matters Arising</b></p> <p>(16/12/08)</p> <p>Raises issues about the alleged partisan role of the Plateau state government and security agencies and calls for an independent inquiry.</p>	<p><b>Still on Jos violence</b></p> <p>(17/12/08 p12)</p> <p>Argues that the conflict is provoked by the ambition of the Hausa/Fulani Muslims to dominate others in Jos and Nigeria.</p>
<p><b>Re- The media and the genocide in Jos</b></p> <p>(19/12/08)</p> <p>A rejoinder rebutting the logic and soundness of some of the basic assertions in an earlier article.</p>	<p><b>The butchers of Jos</b></p> <p>(11/12/08 p12)</p> <p>Laments the contradictions in Nigeria's federalism and attributes crisis to culture of impunity. Records alleged phone conversation with murdered corps members.</p> <p><b>The Jos carnage</b></p> <p>(13/12/08 p45)</p> <p>Argues that social misery and culture of impunity caused the riots. Laments the killing of the three youth corps members.</p> <p><b>In the Name of God? No, not in His Name!</b></p> <p>(14/12/08 p12)</p> <p>An emotional tribute to the three corps members killed in the riots.</p>

## THE WEDNESDAY COLUMN

Mohammed Haruna

ndajika@yahoo.com

SPORTS  
REPORT

## Re: Jang, the media and the genocide in Jos this time

**P**redictably my column last week provoked a lot of reactions, most of them hostile. By Tuesday I had received 210 texts from readers of *The Nation*. Quite a lot of them were not just critical. They were downright abusive. I've emailed all of them to the newspaper's editor for selection and publication, of course, at his discretion.

Because Glo had since blocked the text only number for my *Daily Trust* column which is published same day as *The Nation*, I didn't receive any texts from the readers of the former. However, I received a few emails from readers of both.

Given the intensity of the emotions the killings in Jos has generated I decided to publish below and without any comments but with a little editing for grammar two of the more restrained emails I received for what they are worth.

Sir,  
I read your write up on the back page of *The Nation* and to say the least I am disappointed. A select few of our northern brothers and sisters have by omission or commission taken the privilege of media access to spurn outright falsehood or taken sides wrongly on the basis of faith. I rarely read the *The Nation*, so cannot say with certainty what your views were when the Christians were the butt of attacks in Bauchi and other northern cities. But I doubt much if you accused the governors of complicity the way you now accuse Governor Jang.

It is irrational and irresponsible to relate the escalation of the crisis to the meeting of the Governor and past Governors Dariye and Solomon Lar. It is wrong to support in anyway the senseless carnage in Jos.

The root cause of this renewed intolerance is traceable to so many years of subjugation of the indigenous non Muslim tribes in the north. For so long these people have been so marginalized and brutalized by the powers that be in the north, I remember reading one of your write up of a friend who though had the best result in your class in the university but was happy selling beer after may be several years of frustration. This guy I guess has no one like some of you who get nominated to public board positions not because of your intellect but whom you know.

It is an open secret that a northern Christian needs to work ten times harder than your brothers and sisters to achieve a quarter of their comfort. As an opinion molder, the society expects you to help bring this systematic discrimination that has stunted the growth and progress of the average northern Christian because of his faith and not elevate religious irredentism to a passion.

If you have watched closely the current administration seems to have set an agenda of sending the average northern Christian to the pre 1999 years and reverse the little gains they achieved post 1999 under Obasanjo. How do you justify a situation where a federal institution located in a state that is multi-religious has a council of ten members with nine Muslims and one Christian from outside the north? How do you justify a situation where your own former deputy governor was made the chairman of the council of a university in the north but rejected because his so called brothers were uncomfortable with a minority Christian superintending over a university "they" own?

How do you justify a situation where the collectively owned institutions of the north have become the birth

right of certain people? How do you candidly justify a situation where a minority Christian Professor is not competent enough to be the Vice Chancellor of ABU and even the old Adamu Ciroma unable to support injustice resigned as Council Chairman while the President looked the other way?

Mallam did we hear a whimper from you when the President openly took sides in the Jos crisis of last year? Even the most vilified OBJ was more statemanly and had to openly insult a Christian cleric.

If you take the statistics you will find that a great number of the guys who graduated during your time in the north from the minority tribes have been systematically sent to their graves because of this callous agenda of control.

The panacea to the recurrent crisis in the north lies in people like you studying the problems that divide us and bring up a workable solution and not inflaming passion.

It is an open secret that a northern Christian needs to work ten times harder than your brothers and sisters to achieve a quarter of their comfort

Finally Mallam, let's focus on opening the competitive space in the north so that so many of our people will have access to quality education. Land, credit and a conducive environment for economic activities devoid of invisible barriers of hate, religion and tribe. The north has suffered enough from the senseless conflagration occasioned by hate.

Ally Ahmadu Sir,  
I read both your articles and I can only pray to God Almighty to continue to guide you and give you more wisdom to continue the good work (protecting the noble truth).

It is very unfortunate that a person like Jang is entrusted with people's lives in his hand even though he has more than proven that he is incapable.

The only way forward I see is to advise the so called "settlers" to leave Jos to where they will not be seen as settlers be it Kano, Katsina or any where they can call home. This is the only solution UNFORTUNATELY.

I say so because the killing will not stop and at the end of it NOTHING will happen. There will only be committees, investigations, panels, heated arguments in the upper and lower chambers and lots of articles but no finger will be raised against anyone.

Muhammad Mustapha

Sir,

Your write up which appeared simultaneously on the back pages of *Daily Trust* and *The Nation* newspapers of Wednesday, January 20, 2010 is full of vain attempts to demonize and crucify innocent people of Plateau State that have for so long endured and tolerated agents of global terror who are bent on fighting for a weak god whom cannot defend himself, unless weak mortals fight for him.

Hence the various practices and attempts at blowing up aircrafts and public structures at the slightest perception that that god has been slighted. Tolerance and endurance have limits, and the breaking point seem to have arrived. No more will the Church allow the accused to pursue its long term agenda of obliterating it from the surface of the earth. JESUS was crucified as a lamb - meek and gentle, but He resurrected as the LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH!

Mamman Faliya



HARUNA Babangida

## Haruna Babangida on trial at Feyenoord

**N**igerian winger Haruna Babangida has arrived in Rotterdam for a trial period with Eredivisie powerhouse Feyenoord. The former Barcelona starlet will get the chance to earn himself a contract over the coming days.

The 27-year-old attacker wore the shirt of Russian side Kuban Krasnodar last season, but Babangida is eager to return to western Europe and has apparently set his sights on a move to the

Eredivisie. However, it remains to be seen whether Feyenoord will be able to offer Babangida a contract, even if he impresses. The Rotterdam side are being plagued by financial trouble and will have to offload a player before making a move on the transfer market.

"He certainly has the skills to add something to this team. However, we will probably not sign him unless we sell someone else," said Feyenoord coach Mario Been to Sportweek.



SANI Kaita

## Kaita slumps after game

**S**uper Eagles midfielder, Sani Kaita, on Monday night slumped immediately after Nigeria beat Zambia to qualify for the semi-final of the Africa Cup of Nations.

Kaita was rushed to hospital in an ambulance from the pitch.

Kaita, who was kicked on the stomach by Zambia's Felix Kantogo, was stretchered out briefly during the match, returned to complete the pulsating game.

A member of the Eagles' medical team, told NAN that he was treated in hospital and discharged later.

The midfielder came back to the team's camp at about 1 a.m.

"Kaita was exhausted after the match, he also sustained injury in the match, but he is now okay."

"He has since joined the team, he just needs some rest, he will be okay," the official, who pleaded anonymity said.





## Still on Jos crisis

By Leo Igwe

**P**lateau, a state once known for peace, tolerance and harmony – by both ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’ has been plagued by an orgy of hatred, hostility and bloodshed in recent times. The latest outbreak of violence left hundreds of people dead and thousands injured or displaced.

Many people have presented the crisis as an ‘isolated’, state-backed cleansing of Muslim minority by Christian majority. They have tried to play down on the criminality, violence and carnage of Maitatsine, Boko Haram and other jihadist groups in other states of Northern Nigeria.

Some have attributed the problem to the hostile and volatile relationship between indigenes and the mainly Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers in the state. No doubt, this is a major factor in the crisis in Plateau. But, there is more to it than anyone would make us understand. It is not only in Plateau State that we often experience some tension between indigenes and settlers. Such tensions occur in many states across the nation. So, why has the situation in Plateau turned to be a recurrent nightmare in the last few years?

Many analysts have made it look as if Plateau State is ethnically homogenous. That the indigenes are of an ethnic group, while the settlers belong to one ethnic group. This is not the case. Plateau State is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. In fact, Plateau is one of the most ethnically diverse states in the country. The same is applicable to the settlers in Plateau. They come from different ethnic backgrounds-Yoruba, Hausa, Igbo, Tiv, etc. The Hausa-Fulanis are not the only settlers in Plateau. What many analysts have not tried to find out is the reason

the recent conflicts in Plateau have mainly been between the ‘indigenes’ and Hausa-Fulani settlers, not with the Yoruba, Igbo or Tiv settlers in the state.

Some people have made it seem as if all the ‘indigenes’ of Plateau State profess one religion-Christianity, while the settlers belong to another religion-Islam. This is not the case. Plateau State is religiously diverse. There are Christians, Muslims, Animists and adherents of other faiths and beliefs. Though, Christians are at the majority, that does not rule out the fact that there are indigenes of Plateau who profess other faiths, including Islam. And Muslim indigenes have been living in peace with the Christian and Animist counterparts for decades. The settlers also come from different religious backgrounds- Islam, Christianity, traditional religion, etc. So, the question is this: Why is it that the conflicts have been between the Plateau indigenes-of different ethno-religious backgrounds and the Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers?

The conflict in January was the latest in the series of clashes between the indigenes and Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers. To draw one’s conclusion from this incident alone, without making reference to other past cases of ethno-religious bloodbath in Plateau and other states of Northern Nigeria would not be balanced. I agree with those who said that the Muslim settlers’ community sustained heavy casualties in the latest outbreak of violence. But, anyone who has been following the conflicts in Jos and Plateau State as a whole would know that the local community, including settlers from other ethnic and religious

backgrounds has recorded heavy casualties in the past. In fact, it was reported that Muslim militants, wearing army uniforms started the killings in January.

Many analysts have failed to point out the role of fanatics and militants from the Muslim settlers’ community in the recurrent ethno-religious carnage in Plateau State, since 2001. Personally, I see a kind of connection between the crisis in Plateau and the wave of Islamic fanaticism, political and jihadist Islam sweeping across Northern Nigeria.

Since 1999, the imposition and implementation of sharia law by Muslim majority states have escalated tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Muslim politicians elected by the people used their positions to foist Islamic theocracy on the entire population, including indigenes and settlers from different ethno-religious backgrounds. Non-muslims were forced to live under sharia law by state governments, that donned the ‘Islamic partisan’ cassock’.

In some states in Northern Nigeria, like Kaduna and Bauchi, the imposition of sharia law sparked religious riots, clashes and cleansing. Non-muslims, particularly those in other Northern but non-sharia implementing states have been living in fear, suspicion and mistrust, particularly of Muslim politicians. They are afraid of voting them into power or of supporting them politically, because they could use their positions to impose sharia law and promote Islam.

So, what appears to some people as the Christian partisanship of the Plateau State government is a reaction to the Islamic partisanship that holds sway in most states in Northern Nigeria. What we have in Plateau is a situation where militant

***“Some have attributed the problem to the hostile and volatile relationship between indigenes and the mainly Hausa-Fulani Muslim settlers in the state. No doubt, this is a major factor in the crisis in Plateau. But, there is more to it than anyone would make us understand.”***

Islam has led to the emergence of militant Christianity. Political Islam had bred political Christianity. The Islamic partisanship in Muslim majority states has caused the emergence of Christian partisanship in Plateau and in other Christian majority states in the country.

The crisis in Plateau is intricately linked to, and caused by the political and jihadist Islam that prevails in Northern Nigeria. The Plateau butchery cannot be resolved without rooting out militant and political Islam. Muslim politicians must stop using elective positions to further Islamic agenda and implement Islamic law. Muslim politicians must learn to uphold democracy and universal human rights, and stop foisting Islamic theocracy on the people.

Section 10 of the Nigerian Constitution says that, “No part of the Federation or state should adopt any religion as state religion.” Politicians in Plateau and other states in Northern Nigeria should learn to steer religion away from politics. They should learn to keep mosque, church and state separate. Some people have called for the perpetrators of the latest Plateau butchery to be brought to book. But, I think this should apply, not only to those who orchestrated the killings in January, but also all those responsible for the religious attacks and carnage in Plateau since 2001, including those groups and individuals from the neighbouring states who have been supplying militants on both sides with army uniforms arms and mercenaries.

• Igwe lives in Ibadan

## **Appendix 7**

### **Interview Guide for media academics and media practitioners**

Topic of Research:

Media, Democratisation and Ethno-Religious Conflicts: The Press and the Dilemma of Peace Building in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (2001-2011)

General Quality of Reportage

In my recent analysis of the coverage of the Jos crisis, I noticed that a high proportion of news reports and comments tended to be partisan and sensational. The press coverage of the conflicts is such that could further escalate tensions and exacerbate the conflicts. What do you think might account for this?

It is observable that very few female reporters and analysts cover, or write on, the Jos crisis. It therefore appears that the feminine voice is largely absent from the newspaper discourses of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria. What concerns do you think this pose?

What do you consider to be the main challenges facing Nigerian journalists in covering ethno-religious conflicts?

Peace Journalism

One criticism of mainstream journalism in the coverage of conflicts is that it gives undue attention and preference to violence and war while neglecting commensurate attention to peaceful settlement of disputes. This criticism has inspired the emergence of new genres of journalism which attempt to correct what they perceive as imbalance in the coverage of conflicts such as ethno-religious riots. One of these emerging genres is known as 'peace journalism' whose main goal is to report conflicts in a way that will enhance non-violent responses to conflict.

Do you share the concern expressed about mainstream journalistic coverage of conflicts?

Are you conversant with the concept of peace journalism?

If you are conversant with the concept of peace journalism, what do you think of its approach to conflict coverage, vis- a-vis core journalistic norms and values such as neutrality and objectivity?

Peace journalism, amongst other things, proposes that journalists should be specially trained and equipped with conflict resolution skills which it believes will make them more effective professionals in covering conflicts. What is your opinion of this suggestion?

What do you think might be the main obstacles to implementing peace journalism by the Nigerian press?

## Journalism Training

The institutions and schools for journalism training have multiplied in recent times. How would you assess the state of journalism education in Nigeria?

What do you see as the main weaknesses of Nigerian journalism vis-à-vis professional practices today and how might changes in journalism education address these?

Some scholars have suggested that conflict reporting should be a special course in the curriculum of journalism institutions in Nigeria. What is your view on this proposal?

## Freedom of Information Act

Nigerian journalists, media practitioners and media academics fought hard and long to get the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act passed into law. How do you think the FOI Act has impacted on journalism practice in Nigeria?

How well do you think Nigerian journalists are doing in taking advantage of the FOI Act to improve the quality of investigative journalism and to make public officials accountable?

With particular reference to conflict coverage, in what ways do you think FOI has impacted the reportage of ethno-religious conflicts in Nigeria?

What do you consider to be the practical constraints faced by the press in the implementation of the FOI Act?

Do you think the FOI Act has resulted in more investigative journalism by the Nigerian press?

## General

Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for the Nigerian press in its coverage of ethno-religious conflicts?

What is your assessment of the role of the professional body of journalism practice in Nigeria with regards to improving standards, and the overall quality and integrity of Nigerian journalism?

Regardless of ideological differences amongst the Nigerian press what do you see as the main issues of professional practice that needs addressing in order to raise the standard of journalism in the country?



## **Appendix 8**

### **Interview Cover Letter**

Dear Sir/Ma

I am a postgraduate student of Birmingham City University, Birmingham, United Kingdom. I am also the Institute Editor at the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru, Jos, Nigeria.

I am currently engaged in a PhD research on the topic: Media, Democratisation and Ethno-Religious Conflicts: The Press and the Dilemma of Peace Building in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (2001-2011).

The overarching objective of this research is to critically analyse the performance of the Nigerian press in the coverage of ethno-religious conflicts and to evaluate their potential for escalating or minimising such conflicts.

As part of my field work, I need to interview selected media practitioners and media academics to obtain their views on issues germane to my studies. In this respect, I have the honour to request your kind audience to interview you on matters related to my research objectives.

The attached questionnaire will guide our discussions during the interview. Please be assured that all responses and information obtained in the course of this exercise will be treated professionally and with utmost confidentiality.

I hope I can count on your cooperation and look forward to your positive response. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

**Jacob Tsado**

## **Appendix 9**

### **Open coding of interviews**

Quality of reportage  
Ethno-religious bias  
Ethics  
Poor work conditions  
Ownership influence  
Investigative reporting  
Commercialisation  
Inadequate training  
News culture  
Sources  
Audience expectations

#### **Peace Journalism**

Ownership  
Commercial pressures  
Partisanship/ethno-religious bias  
News culture  
Inadequate training/skills  
Ethics  
Audience expectations  
Awareness  
Curriculum development  
Already being taught in few places  
Association of peace journalists

#### **Journalism training**

Rapid expansion  
Grossly inadequate staff/equipment  
Obsolete curriculum  
Disconnect with industry  
Hope

FOI Act

Ignorance of the law

Implementation weak, ineffective

Bureaucratic bottlenecks

Ownership influence

Rampant corruption within/outside media

Non-domestication

Investigative journalism

Capacity

Advocacy

### **Professional bodies**

Issues: ethics/discipline

Relationship with government –cosy

Training

Professionalism

### **Gender issues**

Patriarchy

Feminine orientation

Stereotyping

Population of female journalists

Girl-child education issues

Changing trends

### **Main challenges of the press**

Professionalism

Ethics

Partisanship

Commercialisation

Training/capacity

Working conditions

Corruption

Equipment

Ownership

Insurance

Audience culture

Weak regulatory environment

### **Recommendation**

Transcend ethnic boundaries

Proactive countering of ethno-religious narratives

Welfare of journalists

Insurance

Language training

Training and updating

Ethical foundations

Professionalism

Strong self-regulatory mechanism

News culture

## Appendix 10

### Extracts of different thematic frames

#### ***Religious Conflict Frame***

In a front page lead story on September 10, 2001, titled, “calm gradually returns to Jos,” *Daily Trust* writes:

*Normalcy is gradually returning to Jos, the Plateau State capital, after the violent religious crisis which rocked the city over the weekend.*

Another story on September 12, 2001, appeals directly to religious adherents:

*The Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammadu Maccido, has appealed to Muslims and Christians in Jos and all over the country to let peace reign as leaders of both religions asked adherents to give peace a chance.*

On September 17, 2001, *Daily Trust* published a feature story titled, “Jos crisis: aftermath of a prolonged rivalry.” This story attempted some back grounding of the crisis, but hinged explanations for the conflicts largely on religious rivalry between Christians and Muslims which is further complicated by overlapping ethnic differences. Excerpts:

*The violence that erupted between Christians and Muslims in Jos, capital of Plateau State last Friday has reportedly claimed over 1000 lives.*

*Two weeks before the eruption, tension was said to have heightened over the appointment of Alhaji Mohammed Mukhtar Usman (**Hausa Muslim individual**) as coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme in Jos North Local Government Area.*

*Again reports indicate that the crisis might have been heightened by a statement purportedly issued by the Jasawa Development Association (JDA), a Hausa Muslim group, calling on people in the area to vote a Muslim as the council chairman.*

The story then highlights the ethnic dimension:

*Controversy over whether or not Hausas in Jos (are indigenes) has been on for about two decades. While most Hausas resident in Jos claim to be natives of the area, the Jarawa and Anagutas have always refuted the claims.*

Other newspapers reflected the religious conflict frame variously as excerpted below:

#### ***This Day newspaper***

Tuesday September 5, 2001: the newspaper published a story with the headline: *Religious crisis brews in Jos*. The story then attributed the brewing crisis to conflict between Muslims and Christians when it said in the lead:

*The relative religious peace enjoyed by residents of plateau state ...may elude them if urgent actions are not taken by relevant authorities to avert an imminent showdown between*

*Christian indigenes of the area and the Hausa-Fulani who are mainly Muslims. (This Day, September 05, 2001)*

On September 8, the main front page story was headlined: *Curfew in Jos as violence erupts*. The religious conflict frame was obvious in the narrative as it speculated on the immediate cause and effects of the eruption:

*The air of gloom that has hovered over Jos, the Plateau State capital was punctured yesterday when violence erupted at about 2.30 p.m., after the Muslim Jumat prayers. Though the immediate cause of the incident, which resulted in the burning of two churches could not be ascertained as at press time, THISDAY investigations however showed that the incident may not be unconnected with the rivalry between the Muslim Hausa/Fulanis and Christian indigenes in the Jos North Local Government Area...*

*The two churches which were razed down in the Kwararafa area were Church of Christ in Nigeria and Assemblies of God Church...Unconfirmed report said a mosque was also razed down in the Nasarawa area...Hordes of security men were seen mounting security around the central mosque to forestall an imminent reprisal from the Christians.*

Also on September 10 was another story headlined: *50 feared dead as Jos violence escalates*. The narrative continued:

*The religious violence which broke out on Friday between Muslim Hausa Fulani and Christian indigenes in Jos... assumed a frightening dimension as more lives and property were lost to the crisis...Among the property burnt is the guest house of the Bauchi State Governor, Alhaji Adamu Mu'azu...Until his election, Mu'azu was resident in Jos where he had a flourishing business. He attended a Christian school in the town and was well respected by both Christians and Muslims. (This Day, September 10, 2001, front page lead).*

### **The Guardian**

Religious conflict frame was featured in some of the stories in *The Guardian*. For example the story on the front page on September 10, 2001 described the conflicts as “sectarian” The headline was: *Fresh killings in Jos, religious leaders sue for peace*.

*Even with the heavy presence of soldiers on the streets of Jos...the sectarian crisis which disrupted its peace at the weekend, is far from being over. Secret killings by religious fanatics ... are still common place. (The Guardian, September 10, 2001, front page)*

Another story names the parties to conflict as “Christians” and “Moslems”:

*No fewer than 50 persons have been killed in the sectarian crisis which was ignited on Friday between Moslems and Christians (Guardian, September 9, 2001, front page lead).*

### **Nigerian Tribune**

A lead story in the *Nigerian Tribune* spoke of “violent religious riots.”

*Food crisis hits Jos: Uneasy calm returns:*

*Acute food crisis has hit parts of Jos...affected by two days of violent religious riots at the weekend. (Nigerian Tribune, September 10, 2001, front page).*

A news feature in the *Nigerian Tribune* of 16 September was titled: Religious Riots: Has Jos lost its soul, peace? In one of the paragraphs, the report described a scene in which

*Immediately the pandemonium broke...business activities (were) paralysed and Christians also descended on Muslims in their midst.*

### ***Ethnic conflict frame***

The ethnic conflict frame attributes the conflict to rivalry between ethnic groups, particularly between Beroms and/or other indigenous groups and the Hausa/Fulani. This frame is closely related to the religious conflict frame and many times are inter-twined. Some examples are cited here:

### ***Nigerian Tribune***

On September 06 2001, *Nigerian Tribune* published the following story:

*Tension mounts in Jos over council's status: The prevailing peaceful atmosphere in Jos, the capital of Plateau state, might be punctured as the Hausa/Fulani community under the aegis of Jasawa Development Association and Plateau Youth Council are set for a show down over the indigenous rights of Jos North local government area.*

*Nigeria Tribune reliably learnt that the controversy over the true indigenes of Jos which has been raging for a long time was rekindled about a month ago as a result of the appointment of one Alhaji Usman Mohammed, a Hausa/Fulani, as the coordinator of the national poverty eradication programme for the council.*

The *Nigerian Tribune's* ethnic narrative is also obvious in a feature article on 16 September 2001, "Has Jos lost its soul, peace?" in which the paper recounted that

*A week before the crisis there had been seemingly (sic) tension hovering over the ancient city (of Jos) as a result of the appointment of one Alhaji Mukhtar Mohammed, an Hausa/Fulani man as the coordinator of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) for Jos North Local government, an appointment which did not go down well with the indigenes who saw it as a slap on their faces...*

*Since his appointment as NPAE coordinator for the council, offensive and threatening posters has (sic) been flying around Jos by both the Hausa/Fulani community under the aegis of Jasawa Development Association and the Plateau Youth Council. The Jasawa are claiming indigenous right of Jos North Local Government being the first to settle there while the indigenous people are saying they are mere settlers.*

Another story in the *Tribune* titled, "NLC cautions on Jos disturbances" features the religious and ethnic frames:

*The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has cautioned warring factions in Jos Plateau State to cease fire as the country "cannot afford to be divided by religious (sic) and ethnicity."*

An Editorial comment by the newspaper labels the conflict as "ethno-religious." In the opening paragraph, the paper stated:

*Jos, the capital of Plateau State and famed haven of tourism and hospitality, erupted in an orgy of ethno-religious violence recently...The uprising...first began as a religious altercation and gradually assumed the line of an ethnic face-off with the Hausa/Fulani, who*

*are regarded as settlers in the city, confronting the aborigines. Incidentally, the former are predominantly Muslim, while the latter are Christians...*

The *Nigerian Tribune* then gave the issue a wider perspective as a pervasive national problem when it pointed out that:

*The eruption in Jos is a sad commentary on the way people from different ethnic stocks cohabit in the country today. There is massive distrust, pent up anger and animosity, fear of domination and marginalisation, and above all, suspicion of religious repression.*

*Nigerian Tribune* also highlighted the complicating and highly emotive introduction of shari'a law in many of the northern states as a background context:

*Since the sharia swept through parts of the north, many areas not completely dominated by Muslims have had to be on guard, to ensure that sharia zealots do not infiltrate their cities and impose the code on them. It is therefore a relationship akin to that of the cat and mouse between Muslims and non-Muslims.*

### ***Daily Trust***

*Daily Trust* features the ethnic conflict frame in several articles and reports. For example, a feature article titled "Jos Crisis" said:

*...if any section of the Jos community is marginalized, it is the indigenous community which is made up of Berom, Anagutas and Afizeres. These are the veritable owners of Jos town from prehistory itself. Which is why the appointment of the coordinator of the poverty eradication programme from a community other than the indigenous ones aroused the ire of the people and is one of the fundamental causes of the conflagration.*

The piece then attempted to put the religious angle in perspective thus:

*Religion and the episode at the mosque which could have been benignly ignored was merely a thin and convenient veneer and a weak hook on which to hang an excuse to go on a killing spree.*

*Daily Trust* also focused on this frame in another story:

*Hausa community hosts AD, condemns violence :...( the Hausa chief) appealed to the governments to mount a campaign "to enlighten the various tribes and religious zealots that we are one irrespective of race, tribe or religion (18 September 2001).*

On September 11, 2001, The Guardian flashed this headline on the front page:

*Plateau takes stock, blames clash on ethnicity*

This Day had earlier produced an article on 05 September 2008 with the title:

*One north, different people*

### ***Reports constructed on the Security/law and order frame***

The security/law and order frame refers to stories attributing the conflict to break down of law and order, criminality, impunity, failure of security or failure and/or inability by government to protect lives and property. On 13 September, 2001, *Daily Trust* had this story:



*Jos riots: CLO flays government, police: the civil liberties organization has indicted the Plateau State Government and security agencies over what it described as their alleged negligence in the handling of the religious crisis that engulfed the state capital in the past few days. (This Day, 13 September 2001, front page).*

Another story said:

*Fighting erupts again in Jos: Federal Government warns trouble makers.*

*Another round of fighting has erupted in Jos even as the federal government has warned that it would deal squarely with those behind it...Reacting to the renewed fighting, the Federal Government said it had “the capacity, will and resources” to deal squarely with “those faceless people” behind the incidents of ethno-religious upheavals in the country. (Daily Trust 13 September 2001, front page).*

*The Guardian newspaper also featured this theme in a story titled: Plateau, security outfit warn against breach of peace. According to the paper,*

*The Plateau State Government and the state joint security forces have warned individuals and groups against breaching the peace as such would be severely punished... the government and security outfit said they would not fold their hands and watch trouble makers disturb the peace (The Guardian 24 September 2001, p.4).*

And the police authorities were reported by *This Day* newspaper as reassuring citizens that the riots would not spill to other towns:

*Riots won’t spill over – Kaduna Police (This Day, 15 September 2001).*

Still on this frame, the *Nigerian Tribune* reported the concern of the Federal government on the breakdown of law and order in one of the prisons following the riots:

*Federal government probes killing of prisoners in Jos crisis.*

*The federal government has instituted a judicial commission of inquiry to investigate the killing of several prison inmates and the destruction of lives and property at Jos prison during the recent mayhem in Jos (Nigerian Tribune).*

The newspaper also lamented the apparent dismal performance of the security agencies and the government in nipping the riots in the bud despite reports early warning signals.

*It is condemnable that the carnage in Jos still occurred despite alleged security reports which had earlier been furnished the government that some people were planning to rupture the peace of the city. With such forewarning, every effort should have been made to forestall the event (Nigerian Tribune, 18 September 2001)*

## Appendix 11

### Timeline of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Jos State 2001-2011

Date/Event	Location	Actors	Cause
<b>7 September 2001</b>  <b>Jos Crisis</b>	Jos North Local Govt./Jos South Local Govt. with reprisals in some other LGAs	Hausa/Fulani Muslims vs Indigenous groups and Christians	<p><i>Immediate cause:</i></p> <p>Appointment of a Hausa/Fulani (Alhaji Muktar) as NAPEP Coordinator for Jos North LGA. Appointment rejected by indigenous groups</p> <p><i>Immediate trigger:</i></p> <p>Altercation between a Christian woman passer-by and Muslim congregation during Juma'at prayers</p> <p><i>Remote cause</i></p> <p>Contest over ownership of Jos; indigene-settler issue; political competition</p>
<b>May 2002</b>  <b>The Eto-Baba PDP Ward Congress Crisis</b>	Jos North, Angwan Rukuba, Eto-Baba and Nasarawa Gwom	Indigenous groups vs Hausa/Fulani Muslims	<p><i>Immediate cause</i></p> <p>Pandemonium at political party ward congress due to suspected invasion of event by non-residents perceived as mercenaries by the indigenes.</p>

			<i>Remote cause:</i>  Political competition between indigenous groups and Hausa/Fulani
<b>November 2008 Jos Crisis</b>	Jos North LGA, Jos South LGA and environs	Hausa/Fulani vs Indigenous groups (Berom, Anaguta and Afizere) and Christians generally	<i>Immediate cause</i>  Allegations of rigging of the Local Govt. elections of 27 Nov. 2007  <i>Remote cause</i>  Unresolved issues of indigeneity and ownership of Jos city; political competition.
<b>January 2010 Jos Crisis</b>	Jos North and Jos South LGAs	Indigenous groups and Christians in general vs Hausa/Fulani Muslims	<i>Immediate cause</i>  Dispute between Muslims and Christians in Nasarawa Gwom area  <i>Remote cause</i>  Unresolved issue of indigeneity and ownership of Jos; political competition
<b>March 2010 Dogo Nahawa Massacre</b>	Jos South LGA	Hausa/Fulani vs Berom ethnic group	<i>Immediate cause</i>  Reprisal attack on the Berom for January 2010 attacks on Hausa/Fulani  <i>Remote cause</i>  Political and economic contest

			between indigenes and Hausa/Fulani
<b>2010 Christmas Eve Bombing</b>	Jos North LGA	Islamic fundamentalists (Boko Haram) vs Christians	<p><i>Immediate cause</i></p> <p>Revenge by some fundamentalists on the perception that Muslims are targeted and killed indiscriminately in Jos</p> <p><i>Remote cause</i></p> <p>Animosity over previous conflicts in Jos</p>
<b>August 2011 Eid-el Fitr Sallah Conflicts</b>	Jos North LGA	Indigenes vs Hausa/Fulani Muslims	<p><i>Immediate cause</i></p> <p>Attack on Muslim worshippers at the Rukuba road eid praying ground; refusal by some Muslim worshippers to heed security advice not to use the prayer ground.</p> <p><i>Remote cause</i></p> <p>Animosity over previous conflicts in Jos, particularly the 2010 Christmas Eve bombings.</p>

**Source: Adapted from Gofwen, 2011: 49-55**

**Appendix 12**  
**Ethnic Groups in Nigeria's 36 States**

<b>Serial No</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>No of ethnic Groups</b>
1	Abia	1
*2	Adamawa	80
3	Akwa Ibom	7
4	Anambra	1
5	Bauchi	51
6	Bayelsa	4
*7	Benue	9
8	Borno	23
9	Cross River	30
10	Delta	6
11	Ebonyi	2
12	Edo	9
13	Ekiti	1
14	Enugu	1
15	Gombe	17
16	Imo	1
17	Jigawa	5
*18	Kaduna	32
19	Kano	2
20	Katsina	2
21	Kebbi	19
22	Kogi	13
*23	Kwara	4
24	Lagos	3
*25	Nasarawa	25
*26	Niger	22
27	Ogun	1
28	Ondo	3
29	Osun	1
30	Oyo	1
*31	Plateau	52
32	Rivers	9
33	Sokoto	3
*34	Taraba	39
35	Yobe	10
36	Zamfara	3
37	Federal Capital Territory (FCT)	3

\*Denotes Central Nigeria

**Source: Otite (2002: 10-11) in Alubo, 2011: 12)**

### Appendix 13

#### Newspapers currently published in Nigeria

Newspaper	Location	Publisher	First issued	Remarks
Blueprint Newspaper	Abuja		May 2011	
Business Day	Lagos	Frank Aigbogun	2005	
Business Hallmark	Lagos	Prince Emeka Obasi		
Compass	Abeokuta	Gbenga Daniel	2008	
Daily Champion	Lagos	Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu		
Daily Times of Nigeria	Lagos	Folio Communications	9 June 1925	
Guardian	Lagos	Guardian Newspapers Ltd.	1983	
Independent	Lagos	Independent Newspapers Ltd.	2001	
Leadership	Abuja	Leadership Newspapers Group	1 Oct 2004	
Mirror		Global Media Mirror Ltd.	2006	
Nation	Lagos	Vintage Press Ltd.	2006	
New Nigerian Newspapers	Kaduna	NEWS Nigerian Newspapers Ltd.	1963	
Newswatch	Lagos	Global Media Mirror Group	28 January 1985	This magazine has stated publishing a daily newspaper under the same title.
Next	Lagos	Timbuktu Media Group	2004	

Observer	Benin City	Bendel Newspapers Ltd.	1965	
Osun Defender	Osogbo	Moremi Publishing House		
P.M. News	Lagos	Independent Communications Network Ltd.	1994	
Peoples Daily	Abuja	Peoples Media Ltd.	30 November 2008	
Port Harcourt Telegraph	Port Harcourt	Prince Ogbonna Nwuke	1991	
Premium Times	Abuja	Premium Times Services Ltd.	2011	
Punch	Lagos	Ajibola Ogunsola	1971	
Sun	Lagos	The Sun Publishing Ltd.	2001	
Tell Magazine	Lagos	TELL Communications Ltd.	1991	News magazine
The News Chronicle	Abuja	Adonis and Abbey Publishers	2013	
This Day	Lagos	Leaders and Company	1975	
Tribune	Ibadan	African Newspapers of Nigeria Ltd.	1949	
Triumph	Kano	Triumph Publishing	1980	
Trust	Abuja	Media Trust	2001	
Vanguard	Lagos	Vanguard Media	1983	
The News Journal	Ibadan	Layipo concepts	2013	
Royal Times	Ilorin	Royal times of Nigeria	2012	

Source: AABNig: <http://www.aabnigeria.com>.

## Appendix 14

### Emerging Themes and Codes

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Quality of Reportage	Gender Issues in Coverage	Journalism Training	FOI Act	Professional Bodies	Peace Journalism	Main Challenges of Practice
Ethno-religious bias Poor work conditions Ownership influence Investigative reporting Commercialisation Inadequate training Ethics/Corruption Credible sources Audience expectations	Patriarchy Stereotyping Feminine Orientation Girl-child education Population of women Journalists	Rapid Expansion Gross inadequacy: staff/equipment Obsolete curriculum Dramatic increase in female involvement Disconnect between classroom/newsroom Hope	Weak implementation Lack of awareness Bureaucracy Ethics/Corruption Investigative journalism Non-Domestication by state governments Ownership influence Weak institutions	Weak professional bodies Ethics/Discipline Cosy relationship with Government/politicians Synergy	Ownership Commercial pressures News culture Social values/structures Lack of capacity/training Awareness Audience expectations	Professionalism Ethics Partisanship/ethno-religious bias Commercialisation Ownership Inadequate training/capacity Poor work conditions Corruption Insurance/safety and security Audience culture Weak regulatory environment



## Appendix 15



**“Promoting Women’s Engagement in Peace and Security in Northern Nigeria”, funded by EU.**

### **COMMUNIQUE AT THE END OF 2- DAY WORKSHOP FOR JOURNALISTS FROM PROJECT PILOT STATES OF ADAMAWA, GOMBE AND PLATEAU - (19-20/8/14)**

#### **Preamble**

The northern part of Nigeria, its environs, and as a fact, the entire country is witnessing difficult security and economic challenges which affect the active and proper involvement of Women in governance and nation building. In all these activities, women are key stakeholders whose roles need to be understood and integrated for there to be any meaningful peace management. Guidelines from the terms of agreement were used to do table-top needs assessment to determine what was needed for ensuring the outcome of the interactive session successful and impactful.

Using UN Security Resolution 1325, excerpts from the programme document as well as goodwill messages, the session was interactive and journalist - centred to enable participants to elicit thoughts and suggestions on how best to report peace, security and conflict issues in order to ensure that women are adequately involved in all peace processes and decisions.

Historical testimonials throughout history, where journalists have reported on conflict as it affects women and peace and can serve as examples for women worldwide were discussed.

In the course of the workshop participants answered the following questions:

Q1: What measures can/should be put in place to encourage more and better reportage on peace and security as well as guarantee women’s participation in the processes?

Q2: What examples could they identify of where women’s participation improved a peace process?

Q3: What can women/ female politicians do to guarantee their seat at the negotiating table? What do they believe women can offer in these situations?

#### **Outcomes:**

- They discussed the legacy of conflict-related violence – cases of violence and insecurity which continues or even increases for women, facilitated by large-scale impunity, the absence of effective justice systems and an unreformed security sector.

- Re-establishing the rule of law as the foundation for women's security, protection of rights, and, ultimately, an equitable peace.
- Participants looked at UNR 1325, Constitutional Framework and other good practices that promote peace as a fundamental right and a mandatory duty and which endorses the incorporation of the principles derived from the protection of human rights. In this context, those instruments relating to the participation of women in the processes of negotiation, consolidation and peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction and its contribution to development.
- They looked at strategies of engagement with political decision makers regarded as essential for achieving results, followed by real action, between the State and civil society.
- They also looked at how a paradigm shift can be achieved by reporting from a peace perspective while de-emphasising on reporting and writing about violence as it is being done and celebrated now.
- In doing this, participants reiterated the need for a comprehensive policy framework and public policy, which makes to cover significant gaps in implementation, as well as expressions of discrimination and structural violence against women in public and private spaces.
- They also agreed to delineate areas of activity within the states through peer capacity appraisal so that areas of strength and weaknesses could be utilized fully for maximum effect and impact.
- At the end, a plan of action was agreed by participants where certain steps and actions points in the appendix were agreed upon.

#### **PLAN OF ACTION WITH STRATEGY**

- Participants formed a National Association of Peace and Conflict Journalists. Interim National officials to coordinate affairs are: Moji Makanjuola *MFR* (Chairperson), Danjuma Abdullahi, Blossom Ubani, Zubairu Jide Atta (member and National Secretary). All State NUJ Chairpersons are coordinators.
- Participants came out with a 5-point action plan in order of priority. They agreed to utilise resources at hand and embark on recruiting champions through advocacy visit and engagement.

The step-by-step strategy is expected to ensure community acceptance, optimal use of areas of strength for wide spread impact within a short time and for community ownership and sustainability.

## APPENDIX 16

DAILY TRUST Wednesday, January 5, 2011

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### MUSLIM STUDENTS' SOCIETY OF NIGERIA (MSSN)

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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## YOWICAN AND THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE IN NIGERIA

We read with a high level of consternation, a report by Andrew Agbese, on page 4 of Daily Trust of Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2011 with the caption: "CAN Youths Want End to Attacks". The report stated that Bistu Johnson, who is the Plateau State Chairman of the youths wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria, had addressed a press conference in which he expressed dissatisfaction with the security situation in Jos. The assertions by the CAN youth branch would not have caused any reaction if it had focused on the real issues relating to the unfortunate Jos quagmire, which has claimed the lives of several innocent Nigerians and destroyed an unquantifiable amount of valuable property. For a long time now, we have been reading unsubstantiated cum dangerous allegations by various Christian groups against Nigerian Muslims, but because of the training we have received from our elders, especially the likes of His Eminence, the Sultan of Sokoto, we decided to keep mute in the belief that silence is usually the best answer to those groundless claims. However, given the sensitivity of some of the allegations aired by Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria (YOWICAN), we deem it necessary to clarify some issues for the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of peace and harmonious coexistence in our dear nation.

1. The call by YOWICAN for the Sultan of Sokoto to "apologise to the people of Plateau State" for his "diversionary" comment that the Jos "explosions were indications of failure of leadership" is not only a clear disrespect to the leader of Nigerian Muslims, but also a complete disregard for all the agreements and decisions taken at NIREC, which is co-chaired by the Sultan and the CAN President and which the youth CAN is a party to!!! We believe, if these youths have any respect for the leadership of CAN, and indeed for the teaching of their religion (which requires them to respect elders and uphold to agreements); they would not resort to this dangerous and disrespectful proclamation.
2. His Eminence was not the first to assert that Plateau State's leadership is a complete failure. If these youths did not only aim to attack and exhibit their staunch hatred and prejudice against Muslims and Islam, they should have also directed their vitriol at the Deputy Governor of Plateau State, who has severally made stronger comments in the same direction.
3. Quite shockingly, the YOWICAN seems to have accepted the so-called claim of responsibility by a purported "Jamaatu Ahlul sunnah li dda'awati wal Jihad"!!!! This we have found **VERY UNFORTUNATE AND VERY DISAPPOINTING**. This, to us is an indication of a combination of shallow-mindedness, intellectual immaturity as well as religious extremism and unwarranted chauvinism. It portrays the organization as a gang of youths who do not understand global politics, media propaganda as well as the simple knowledge on I.T. Since a cursory check at the website indexing and time stamping has shown that the website was hurriedly hosted with a view to diverting the attention of people from the real perpetrators of that dastardly act.

#### FOR THE ELDERS IN CAN

*You will surely find the most intense of people in animosity towards the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah; and you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant.* Qur'an 5: 82

To us in MSSN, and indeed to every Nigerian Muslim, Christians are highly respected people. We have been taught by the Glorious Qur'an to respect Christians as contained in the above verse, and many more. That is why we find it difficult to even write rejoinders to many unjustified claims by Christians in efforts to maintain harmonious coexistence with them. We will therefore appreciate if CAN will call its youth wing to order. It will candidly appear contradictory if the leadership of CAN will always utter constructive comments, while its youth wing makes destructive and dangerous remarks. It will also appear suspicious if despite the negative repercussions of the disrespectful comments of YOWICAN the leadership of CAN keeps mute and does not call the exuberant youths to order.

#### FOR OUR POLITICAL LEADERS

We are seriously disturbed by the current happenings in Nigeria. On almost a daily basis innocent Nigerians are killed and maimed. While we sympathize with all the victims of these tragic events, **BOTH MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS**, we call on the Federal Government, as a matter of necessity and urgency, to take a more pragmatic step towards ensuring security for the lives and properties of Nigerians. Our conviction is, for Nigeria to be among the 20 most prosperous economies in the world by the year 2020, the issue of security MUST be given number one priority. We also call on Governor Jonah Jang to look beyond political interest, tribe or religion in his leadership of the Plateau so AS to restore peace in the state and regain for it the slogan of "Home of Peace and Tourism", rather than "Home of Pieces and Terrorism" which best describes the state currently.

#### FOR MUSLIM ELDERS

We wish to call on Muslim elders not to come down to the level of misguided exuberant young boys whose only agenda is to ignite violence and deny the world its most precious assets- its population. Our leaders, as usual, should not waste their time responding to baseless calls like the one referred to above. We believe that when a focused person is walking, no amount of dog's barking could distract him/her. We thank the Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and indeed all other Islamic organizations, for giving the youth CAN the best answer- silence. We particularly commend the effort of our indomitable and highly-spirited leader of the Muslim Ummah, the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar for maintaining the path of tolerance and moderation. He has proved to be a capable leader by using every opportunity to preach for peace and harmonious coexistence between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. In fact, as Reverend Mathew Kukah said at the NEC meeting of NSCIA last year, "His Eminence is a gift to our nation" and we sincerely cherish that gift given to us by the Almighty (SWT).

**Abdullahi Abubakar Lamido**  
National President

*Signed*

**Najeeb A. A. Gambo**  
National Secretary