



# REFLECTION ON DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY IN AFRICA: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION LESSONS FROM NIGERIA

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By

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## Abstract

The fall of Muammar Gaddafi of Libya in 2011, the rise of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria and its transformation into Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), the Alshabab in Somalia and similar terror groups portend grave danger to African continent. The lack of security and unsafety is immensely affecting democratic governance on the continent. This paper however explored how democracy can be engendered on the continent using one of the asymmetric warfare tools – strategic communication. The paper is a conceptual paper that explored how Nigeria, the most populous black nation on earth was able to wither its numerous challenges using strategic communication and how other African nations can emulate the Nigerian experience to deepen democratic governance. **The paper recommends the usage of non-kinetic approach to complement the military expeditions on the continent to foster safety and engender democracy**

**Keywords:** strategic communication, Africa, Nigeria, Democracy, insecurity.

## INTRODUCTION

Democratic governance in Africa has evolved over the years. After its resurgence from colonialism, Africa is on the verge of actualizing a full democracy. With the attainment of independence of many African countries, internal conflicts i.e communal, tribal and ethnic clashes are however affecting democratic development in Africa. Countries from the western geographical zone of the continent like Nigeria and Liberia have experienced a devastating civil war claiming millions of lives and immeasurable properties. The civil unrest going on Sudan and Somalia is some of the challenging hindering peace and stability in some part of the East Africa region. The Central African Republic and the Southern African countries are also not left out of the insecurity quagmire. Very close to mind is the ongoing xenophobic attack in South Africa. All these conflicts are shaking the continent's unity and challenging the concept of unity in diversity. Despite these challenges, democratic governance is glaringly making wave in the African political landscape.

In Nigeria, despite the civil war and the incessant military coups in the past, democracy is gaining root within the political system. Democracy in Nigeria has become a beacon of hope and template worthy of emulation by other African countries despite the numerous deficiencies. Just like in Nigeria, from independent till date, democratic governance in Africa has been in a dilly-dally mode battling one shortcoming or the other. It has experienced military interventions, civil wars, lack of direction, ethnicity, lack of democratic values, sit tight leadership, among others (Adedeji, 2001; Oghemudia, 2000; Okigbo 1987).

Since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democracy after a long military interregnum, efforts are geared towards sustaining the new political system. All the apparatus of state including the military have the same goal of institutionalizing democracy in the country (Pate, 2012).

Ethnicity and regional diversity which hitherto seems to be the genesis of regional crisis (Ezeibe, 2021; Ajide, 2019) have to some extent been solved by the introduction of 'federal character' and 'derivation system' in the allocation of the nation's resources. This paper is not aiming at justifying whether the derivation system and federal character have totally solved the problem. However, to some extent federal character has created an avenue for aggrieved ethnic group to have voice within the political system. Marginalized segment of the society are finding their voice in the polity.

The advent of more fierce civil society organizations is changing the political landscape resulting in active citizen participation. The impact of associations like; the Save Nigeria Group (SNG), BringBackOurGirls (BBOG), among other cannot be emphasized. Political participation and awareness are relatively improving (Oriola, 2021). This can be related to the improvement in the electioneering system. Election in the country is becoming more transparent because of netizens participation in the electoral process (Kperogi, 2016). The introduction of Electronic Voting (Card Reader) has greatly liberated the voting system paving

way for free, fair and credible elections in the country. The unprecedented outcome of Nigeria's 2015 presidential election; where an incumbent was ousted and conceded happened to be a turning point and a big gain for democracy in Africa (putting into cognizance the case of Yahya Jammeh of Gambia). The importance of Nigeria on African continent need not be emphasized. The stability of Nigeria is paramount to the continent's development. The supposed 'giant of Africa' has set a precedent with the conduct of the 2015 general election. Nigeria must continue to show leadership in the continent by providing a template worthy of emulation for other countries in the continent. Had Nigeria not set a good precedence, it would have been morally inappropriate to interfere in the aftermath of the Gambian presidential election.

However, it is not yet *Uhuru* for the African continent as institutionalization of democratic governance is gradual and procedural. African democracy is still at infant stage. Compared to other advance democracies like the United State of America, African leaders are still shrouded in sit-tight regalia. The political system/parties in Africa are more of regional or ethnical parties. Specifically in Nigeria, many political parties have regional dominance. Even the current ruling political party in the country – the All Progressive Congress (APC) – is touted in some quarters as a mere marriage of few ethnic groups or regions to assert dominance over other region in the country. This mind-set/political structure are a time bomb which if persist is capable of dismantling democratic governance in the continent. Institutionalizing democracy in Africa must therefore be gradual. This paper examines how insecurity has continued to undermine democratic development in Africa specifically Nigeria and how strategic communication can be utilized to repel it.

## DEMOCRACY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Democracy thrives in an atmosphere of peace and stability. Hostility, bad blood and lack of harmony within a society breeds anarchy. A nation devoid of law and order is on the verge of barbarity. For nations to survive, a system of government must exist. The development and creation of strong institution within a nation requires "...sweat, blood and sacrifice of some key individuals and groups who provide the required leadership in different spheres of national existence" (Pate, 2009). These individuals are saddled with the responsibility of ensuring the development of the nation by managing and enhancing the economic, political, military, intellectual and bureaucratic institutions in the society. According to Pate, these set of people are the political elites, economic elites, bureaucratic elites, intellectual elites and military elites; each category working for the betterment of all.

The success or failure of any nation depends on its elites. This is because they are the thinkers, policy formulators, implementers and arbiters. For effective running of the machinery of state, democracy ensures that every category is vested with power, however with some form of check and balance. The three tiers of government in a democracy serve as watchdog of one another. To perfect the system, the fourth estate of the realm (the media) is expected to watch over the other three arms of government. The media on its part is answerable to the public. Media by virtue of their power are bound professionally and ethically to be socially responsible. Scholars have recently proposed the concept of '*fifth power*' to also monitor the media.

In Africa, the political class who are the beneficiary of transition to democratic governance are also credited with the bastardization of the democratic process. Pate (2009, p. 3) said:

...with the political class taking full charge of the country's political space, there have been concerns expressed in many quarters on the performance, conduct and behaviour

of the various members of the political class. Complaints are often heard that even though the political class is the immediate beneficiary of the current democratization process, regrettably, the behaviour of a large number of members of the class appear to be dangerously threatening to the entire democratic project in the nation. Many of such negative tendencies that manifest in the form of poor performance in office, corruption, electoral fraud, desperate and intolerant conduct and other such threatening behaviours heat up the polity, undermine public confidence and paint the political class as having failed to learn from history.

African political leaders have plugged the continent into its backwardness even more than the colonialist. Agreeably, scholars like Frantz Fanon (1967) and Walter Rodney (1972) attributed the underdevelopment of Africa to colonialism; one however imagined what stopped Africa from developing several years after attaining independence. The problem is not farfetched. African elites of all fabric and strata have a congenital anomaly which translates to how the continent operates. Few African leaders prioritised development of their countries. Majority seek power to enrich themselves, cronies and clans. African is so blessed with leaders deprived of vision or mission in office. A visionless and missionless leader is an antithesis of development. Mohandas Gandhi in Pate (2009) stipulates eight monsters that can easily lead to decay and ruins of a nation. These are:

- ✓ Wealth without work
- ✓ Pleasure without conscience
- ✓ Knowledge without character
- ✓ Commerce without morality
- ✓ Science without humanity
- ✓ Worship without sacrifice
- ✓ Politics without principle
- ✓ Rights without responsibilities

These eight monsters best characterised African leaders. Nigeria for example with both its abundant human and capital resources hasn't developed in any ramification compared to its resources. It is endowed with strong politicians and political parties but lacks principle or ideology. The ousted ruling party, People's Democratic Party (PDP), at the federal level bride itself as 'the largest party in Africa'. Nevertheless for sixteen years rule, it has not only brought the country meagre development but also gigantically institutionalised corruption, backwardness, mismanagement, impunity among others. The abyssal performance of African elites – especially the political elites among other reasons breed discord, dissent and disunity leading to instability in the continent.

Causes of conflicts in Africa are so many. Many Africa leaders have turned blind eyes to the triggers of these conflicts. The level of mismanagement and extravagant lifestyle of some political office holders in Africa is capable of causing civil unrest in other clime. The problem with Nigeria is in the massive gap between stupendously rich and the hopelessly poor. In an environment where majority of the masses are experiencing economic inequality, diseases, hunger, poverty, wretchedness and hopelessness, and at the same time watching how the elites squander their common patrimony, uprising by the masses will not be farfetched. In such a situation, if a conflict occurs, one cannot claim not to have knowledge of it because the causatives are apparent enough.

In a chronicle analysis of conflict in Africa, Obasanjo (2014, p. 10) gives a detail account and nature of various conflicts in Africa from 1960s and their causes:

1. Post-colonial conflicts arising from agitations for liberation from the control of colonial settlers in countries such as Zimbabwe (1980); Namibia (1990); and apartheid in South Africa (1994).
2. Boundary and territorial conflicts such as the Angolan Bush War in South Africa (1966-1989); the Algeria–Morocco conflict over the Atlas Mountain area (1963); the territorial tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998–2000); the Kenya–Somali war (1963–67); the Somali–Ethiopian conflict (1964–78); the Egypt–Libya conflict (1977); and the Cameroon–Nigeria conflict over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula (1994) – the settlement of which I was part of.
3. Conflicts linked to secessionist ambitions such as the case of Sudan and South Sudan (1983–2011); the age-long Cassamance rebellion in Senegal; the Cabinda agitations in Angola; and the Biafra civil war in Nigeria (1967–70).
4. Resource-based conflicts such as the Sudan and South Sudan conflict over the Abyei region; the Congo-Brazzaville conflict (2007); the Senegal/Mauritania conflict (1989); and the conflict raging in eastern Congo over the last decade.
5. Identity-based conflicts such as inter-ethnic or inter-tribal conflicts. Examples of these are the 1994 Rwandan Genocide; the Burundi massacres; the Tuareg uprising in Mali; clan fighting in Somalia and Liberia; Algerian Berbers fighting against the ruling Arab class in Algeria; and the ongoing South Sudan conflict.
6. Annexationist conflicts such as the occupation of the Western Sahara by Morocco in 1975; and British Southern Cameroons in 1961.
7. Poverty, denial and perceived or real injustice induced conflicts like the militancy in the Niger Delta of Nigeria or the current Boko Haram insurgency.

With the exploit of Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria between 2009 – 2015 and terrorism activities in other African countries such as Somalia, Mali, Kenya, Algeria, Cameroon, Chad, among others, Africa is indeed experiencing another devastating problem capable of slowing down its development. The destruction caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria will take ages to rectify. The Nigerian Minister of Finance acknowledged the fact that fighting insurgency and other security threats is consuming large budget of the government making it difficult to invest in infrastructure (Reuters, 2021). The irretrievable lives lost in thousands, the environmental degradation, psychological and physical damage couple with malnutrition and famine as a result of avoidable Boko Haram insurgency haven't prickled the consciousness of some African leaders to address the causes and triggers of such events.

Some of the triggers of insecurity in Africa have been discussed by scholars (Morrison & Rockmore, 2021; Eneji, & Agri, 2020). Even before Boko Haram crisis gained international attention, keen observers have always commented on the danger posed by the conduct of the ragtag group. It has been observed that poverty might lead to radicalization and violence which will ultimately decimate some significant elements of contemporary social and political dynamics (Ogbonnaya & Okoronkwo, 2013; Mua'zu, 2015). Whether lack of political will or for purpose unknown to us, the government of the day neglected the early warning signal giving the group the opportunity of becoming a formidable force. Economic inequality, poverty, poor governance, hopelessness and regional jingoism contributed to rise of the crises. Obasanjo holistically highlights the major causatives of conflict in Africa:

Politically, poor governance, state building processes such as the struggle for control of power, and unconstitutional changes of government remain key conflict drivers. Economically, corruption, struggle for ownership, management and control of natural resources, as well as unequal distribution of these resources constitute major factors that trigger conflicts across the continent. Socially, inadequate capacity for diversity management, the real or perceived inequality and discrimination against minorities, marginalization along ethnic and religious lines as well as the alienation and consequent disillusionment of the youth are further additions. Internationally, colonial legacies, and foreign interference in political transition and governance have equally triggered conflicts (Obasanjo, 2014, p. 12).

For democracy to flourish in Africa, peace and stability must be prioritised. Democracy only survives in peaceful atmosphere. “Democracy, in other words, has become part of a broader security strategy, and risks being seen not first and foremost a value in and of itself, but a means to the end of security” (Ogbonnaya & Okoronkwo, 2013, p. 46). African leaders must come together to combat the cankerworm threatening the institutionalization of democracy in the continent. Ogbonnaya and Okoronkwo (2013, p. 46) said “in short, democracy, accountability, and freedom are seen as the basis of security, and must therefore be spread to all corners of the globe, (if necessary by force, as in Iraq)”. All hands must be on deck to address the issues of terrorism, communal clash, militancy etc bedevilling the continents. Close border countries must forge alliance to check the illegalities going within their respectively borders. Initiatives like the Multinational Joint Task Force established by Nigeria, Niger, Chad and Cameroon to combat Boko Haram insurgency are some of the area or collaboration African countries need to emulate. The objective of African Nations should be to form a lasting peace in the continent so as to attract economic development. To achieve an everlasting peace within the continent, Obasanjo (2014, p. 13) itemised five key basic strategies African countries must adopt:

1. Democracy and good governance must form the basis for management of affairs in every country in Africa. Peace, security and good governance are fellow passengers.
2. African leaders and decision-makers must reaffirm their commitment in terms of resources, and demonstrate the political will required to ensure the operationalization of an African-owned APSA. “African solutions” will ring hollow if we fail to fund our initiatives and programs.
3. The implementation of the African Governance Architecture must be accorded the needed priority as APSA and AGA are two sides of one coin. While AGA focuses on broader questions of governance, APSA places emphasis on the mechanisms for conflict management, resolution, and peacebuilding. These two must work together to bring about peace and security in the continent.
4. All components of APSA should be equally implemented for a more coherent and comprehensive approach to managing peace and security in Africa.
5. African stakeholders – government, private sector, and civil society – must make concerted efforts to support existing mechanisms and initiatives, building strong infrastructure of government and viable institutions.

## **THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

Communication has been part of human existence. It has adapted to dynamism in human civilization and also served as the fulcrum of expansion of human tradition, culture, norms and governance.

From the Dark Age to the modernization period, Africa has developed overtime and experienced different forms of government starting from traditional system of government to the colonial era, independence, military regime and now to modernized and civilized citizen inclusive/participatory democracy. Communication has however remained part and parcel of all systems of governments be it ancient or modern because ‘one cannot not communicates’. Sybil, Ode and Soola (1990, p. 2) observed that:

Communication serves as an instrument of social interaction. It helps us to understand ourselves, to keep in touch with other people, to understand situations. It is a means by which power is acquired, exercised and sustained. It is the medium through which relationships are established, extended and maintained.

One of the beauties of democracy is in its proclivity to freedom of speech. Popular mandate bestow political authority in a democracy. As such, the public must be carried along and be involved in the day-to-day running of the government and their opinions and input must be sought in the decision making process. Constant communication must therefore exist between the government and the governed. IDEA in Pate (2007) opines that the:

Essence of democracy is that citizens must be able to ventilate their views through unrestrained debates and that there should be active citizens’ participation in governance as well as unrestricted communication between the government and the governed.

The government must therefore uninterruptedly communicate effectively with the public on the running of the government i.e government policies, government expenditure e.t.c., while the government must also listen to the need and yearning of the public regularly.

The complexity, cosmopolitan composition and multi-ethnic nature of Africa portend weakness and strength at the same time. In Nigeria for example, the amalgamation of northern and southern protectorates in 1914 brought about people of different social, cultural and religious orientations together for form the country. This forceful marriage was a deliberate attempt of the colonialist to subjugate the country for easy administration and exploitation. The handiwork of lord Lugard still exists even after independence. Till date, questions, scepticism, and lack of trust have been expressed by the two sides of the divide given rise to constant national question. Nevertheless, the country is making progress as a unified entity under the federal republic of Nigeria. The relative unity and peace experience in Nigeria in part is due to concerted effort deployed by the government using all communication apparatus.

Specifically, government efforts toward the unity of country are strategic. Government communications are purposive and goal oriented. Different fields of communication such as political communication, public relations, advertising, social marketing etc were deployed by government. Simply put, government communications are strategic and goal laden. Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh (2007) describe such effort as an act of strategic communication.

Strategic communication is defined as a “purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission” (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič, and Sriramesh 2007, p. 3). Strategic communication they claim emanates from six interrelated disciplines “...involved in the development, implementation, and assessment of communications by organizations:

management, marketing, public relations, technical communication, political communication, and information/social marketing campaigns.”

“I don’t know what the hell this [strategic communication] is that Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it”. This statement was attributed to Admiral Ernest King during World War II. Leaders of thought like Winston Churchill have observed that “the principal difference between management and leadership is communication.” Effective communication according to Stavridis (2007, p. 4) “requires the leaders of an organization to take an early and persistent role in deciding how ideas and decisions are shaped and delivered.” Within the context of security he noted “leader can improve the effects of operational and policy planning by ensuring that the communications implications of that planning are considered as early as possible in the process. If planning is done in this fashion, then it is likely that the communications associated with it will indeed be strategic in their effects.”

Admiral James G. Stavridis, of U.S. Southern Command while writing on the importance of strategic communication noted that his command operational approach is to regard strategic communication as a veritable tool for “policy and planning decisions and actions; provide truthful information about those decisions or actions; communicate it in a timely and culturally sensible fashion; use messengers who are likely to be well received; measure the results of our efforts diligently (clearly our hardest challenge and greatest shortcoming); and adjust both message and method of delivery accordingly.” (Stavridis, 2007, p. 6)

Nigeria has population of over 200 million (World Bank, 2020), 400 ethnic groups with multicultural and diverse political lining and inclination, different languages and dialects, it is difficult to have a unified understanding or display uniformity. This is largely due to its diversity and multicultural composition. How people perceive information is influence by many factors including culture, social background, political inclination, religion, region etc (McQuail, 2010). In such a situation, government focus should be on how to “launch ideas, concepts, information, conferences, viewpoints, interviews, and the many other streams of data that constitute effective strategic communication” (Starvidis, 2007, p. 7).

## **THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE**

Communication is directly proportional to the success of democracy. Therefore African leaders must invest heavily in communication by utilizing all communication method to sustain the goodwill in order to drive their policies. Fab-Ukozor (2003) argues that for African countries to achieve steady democracy, strategic communication must be inherent and prioritized in the governance. The stability of democracy on African continent is directly proportional to engendering of strategic communication in the continent.

The essence of strategic communication in private and public organization cannot be over emphasised. Businesses, corporations and governments all over the world are investing heavily in communication management. Aside advertising budget, corporations have realized the value of strategic communication in actualizing the organizational objectives (Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft, & Werder, 2018). If businesses that are the backbone of the economy can rely heavily on strategic communication to survive, then the survival of democracy also depends on public acceptance. It became obvious that political stability is directly proportional with economic viability (Ukozor, 2003).



Strategic communication practice is undergoing momentous revolution in Nigeria (Sule, 2019). The revolution is sparked by the rise in citizen participation in governance. The advent of new media has broken the hegemony of the traditional media which in turn necessitated the need for public relations input in daily running of government activities. Government communications be it about policy or politics need to be managed by professionals with the technical wherewithal and intricacies of modern strategic communication practice.

As management function, strategic communication sought to create mutuality between an organization, government, political institutions and its various stakeholders which is pertinent in every social settings. Also, if as expressed by Cutlip Centre & Broom (2000, p. 6) that “public relations is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends”, which was corroborated by Harlow (1976, p. 36), who tried to synchronize more than 500 definitions of public relation where he noted that public relations is:

the distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed on and responsive to public opinion; defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest; helps management keep abreast of and effectively utilize change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends; and uses research and sound and ethical communication as its principal tools.

Government or political institutions therefore need strategic communication in its daily affairs. So far governance is about service delivery to the people, communication by government is paramount. This in turn needs to be managed by strategic communication practitioner.

Although strategic communication practice in governance in Nigeria has been in existence even before Nigeria's independence, it was regarded as a mere tool in the hands of politicians used for political purpose. Buttressing this point, NIPR (1988) in Ajala (2005) notes that the World War II necessitated the establishment of information office by the colonial government which was later changed to government public relations office. Basically the motive for establishing the information office was to serve the interest of the government as stressed by Adebola (1992) that information office “was primarily set up to publicize the colonial war and to encourage the youth to join the war” (cited in Ajala, 2005, p. 4). Strategic communication was sadly linked with government propaganda during the colonial administration according to Orraca-Tetteh (1986) as it was mainly for the purpose of presenting “....a picture of Nigeria to the outside world”, it as well “assisted government in all activities requiring propaganda in one form or another”. The situation improved after the independence though with little changes and progresses.

After the independence however, strategic communication role in government improved with the establishment of liaison officers in each state of the federation during the Shagari administration in 1979-1983. This development saw the amalgamation and infusion of the ministry of information which served as the megaphone or mouthpiece of government to the office of the president. Despite the military seizure of power in 1983, ministry of information still remained under the presidency. This was necessary because even the military administration then with its draconianism understood the power and importance of strategic communication in government (NIPR, 1988). It is safe to say that the changes in strategic

communication practice in government were more of structure and nomenclature rather than improved functionalism and professionalism. Strategic communication still remained a tool in the hand of government. Ancho and Okoye (2013, p. 1) in their research on communication management by Nigerian government stress that:

Government public relations practice in Nigeria has been in transition since its inception in the early 1940s. From its rudimentary and/or embryonic form to its modern phases, public relations till date has not assumed a particular or sustained status in government or best practices of the concept practiced in governance. What seemed to have prevailed over the years is an admixture of models promoting pernicious propaganda, and application of press agency, public information model and oftentimes two-way asymmetrical communication. There has also been deliberate subversion of the tenets of public relations and brazenly entronement of nonsensical and commonsensical derivatives or understandings of public relations by those who man the saddles of Public Relations Units in government agencies, parastatals and institutions.

Happenings in the field of strategic communication in recent time has proved that though strategic communication in Nigeria is not fully institutionalised but the progress made so far cannot be washed away. Strategic communication has been utilized to facilitate effective communications between government and the governed as posits by Hopkins (2015, p. 1) that strategic communication “is one of many strategies that government can utilize to increase policy dialogue with citizens”.

Information management, which as one of the cardinal functions of strategic communication, has irrevocably taken central stage in running government affairs. As the world developed into what McLuhan described as ‘global village’, people’s urge for information has become insatiable. Government information is now handled by professionals in order to achieve the desired result. The United State of America’s fourth President James Madison (1822) in Sullivan (2001) said: “A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both”. In the same vein, McNair (2003, p. 135) opines that “information is a powerful political weapon, and its selective dissemination, restriction and/or distortion by governments is an important element in public opinion management.”

The success recorded in the 2015 and 2019 General Elections in Nigeria vividly showcased how effective strategic communication is to the actualization of political stability and national development. A careful observation of the political environment before the election will show an atmosphere full of fear, anxiety, and high hope. Fear in the sense that previous elections have been a disaster. Many lives were always lost during elections. The strength of the opposition party was unprecedented. This and many other factors hit up the polity. However, with the utilization of strategic communication by the two dominant political parties and all the apparatus of state i.e electoral umpire, security, civil society etc, the election was conducted peacefully, free and fair.

Foreign public relations firms were engaged by the two major political parties to help position their candidates. AKPD, a public relations firm in US which coordinated the Public Relations activities of the then US presidential candidate Barrack Obama in 2008 was hired by APC the PDP Leveick after it realised that the way the federal government led PDP handled the abduction of over 200 Chibok school girls became the focal point of the opposition’s campaign. Shapiro

(2014) expressed that “after the Nigerian president struggled for weeks to respond to the Boko Haram kidnappings, enduring criticism across the globe, his administration hired Levick, a political and legal crisis managing firm where Mr. Davis works.” Not only the foreign public relations firms, local public relations professional were also involve in designing strategic messages to ensure peaceful electioneering process.

Even after the election, efforts are being made to sustain the peace and harmony in the country. On social front, different social changed campaigns have been executed the government. The aim of these campaigns is to achieve national cohesion, unity, attitudinal change among others. After the civil war, the ‘no victor no vanquish’ rhetoric was aimed at healing the nation follow by rehabilitation, reconstruction and renovation initiatives. Numerous other initiatives were introduced by subsequent administrations. The Shagari administration introduced the Ethical Revolution in 1981, General Buhari with War Against Indiscipline, Babangida’s MAMSER, Abacha’s WAI-C, Rebranding Nigeria by Dora Akunyili and now the *Change Begins with Me* of this current administration. All these initiatives are form of strategic communication appealing to the public to have a societal reorientation.

## CONCLUSION

Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman & Toth (2009, p. 308) expressed that “....the success and stability of democratic governments are ultimately determined by the continuous approval, PIOs (public information officers) seek to ensure such approval.” If there is security in a democracy, development will be achievable. For peace and stability to be constant, communication must be prioritised. Meaning, enormous responsibility lies on the shoulder of communication professionals (public relations practitioners) to ensure peace and harmony. Ukozor (2003) observed that the viability of the society politically and economically depends on public relations, this is because public relations is regarded as the ‘therapy for democratic development’. The development of any society therefore depends on the importance attached to public communication.

- As a non-kinetic approach, when President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office on May 29 2015, his first command was to relocate the Command Center for Counter Terrorism Unit from the capital city, Abuja to Maiduguri the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency. This was a strategic move that signal the readiness of the government to combat the insurgency frontally.
- Operation safety corridor was also created in 2016 to allow willing insurgents to surrender to security agencies to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into the society. The program is facilitated by Mallam Sidi in Gombe state, a location not far from the insurgency’s epicentre in Borno state. For six months, they receive “deradicalisation” instruction, as well as other education, vocational training and psychological support (International Crisis Group report, 2021).
- Also, late President Umaru Yaradua created Amnesty Programme for Niger Delta militants in what is akin to collaboration approach to manage the uprising over resource control in the region.
- Government can also tackle insecurity through awareness campaign, political inclusion and social empowerment in order to mitigate uprising such as the Nnamdi Kanu led Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) uprising in the southeastern region of Nigeria.
- Youths should be carried along and be involved beyond tokenism so as change their social media narrative which is hitherto inherent in primordial sentiment. A result of

which led to the youth uprising experienced in Lagos in October 2020 during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

- Harmonization of government communication mechanism so as to avoid sending conflicting information to the public.
- Similarly, the security and military apparatus should operate under single umbrella as in the case of Nigeria with the appointment of General Lucky Eluonye Onyenuche Irabo as the Chief of Defence Staff. All counter-terrorism campaigns of the Army, Air force and the Navy are planned and executed under the Chief of Defence leadership thereby removing the bottlenecks experience in the past.

The art of information control, psychological operations, guerrilla tactics, digital engagement, and direct engagement with the mainstream media should be adopted as part of communication strategies. This has worked effectively against the Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria. Communication in this sense must be purposive, strategic and goal oriented. Communication coming from the government sources must be uniform. Judging by the multi-ethnic composition of Africa and its diverse culture, African leaders must swiftly adopt strategic communication in governance in order to institutionalised democracy in the continent. Some of these strategies have worked in Nigeria and can be replicated in other climes. It is recommended that other Africa countries can also emulate all these strategies to engender democracy and combat various insecurities bedevilling the continent.



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