THE MASS MEDIA AND THE CHALLENGES OF REGIONAL

INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamics of the mass media in fostering economic, cultural, political and social interactions among people and nations of Africa. This paper argues that for the continent to realize its ambitions of regional integration, news contents must be designed by Africans for African environment. In other words, Africa's media practitioners, and news managers must cause a paradigm shift from the western oriented information flow to news patterns that are indigenous in nature. The Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) of 1980, the Abuja Treaty of 1991 etc, are some of the laudable initiatives by African leaders which this paper extols as steps in the right direction towards pursuing Africa's regional integration, but insists that unless African people understand themselves and their history and destiny, as well as share common problems through free flow of information, region integration process will continue to suffer setbacks. It is in line with this thinking that the paper raises some questions which includes; which ways could the media provide effective integration pattern through intra African information flow? What are the challenges of the media in African integration process? Finally, the paper takes a look on the way forward to arrest the challenges of the media in Africa.

Keywords: Mass media, regional integration, Africa

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Introduction

Probably, one of the greatest challenges facing Africa is to integrate into the world's socio-political and economic systems as it works towards sustainable growth and relevance among contemporaries. An Africa with one political, cultural and economic voice is the only sure way which is evident with the success of European Union. With the help African Union (AU), African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the New Partnership for the Development of Africa (NEPAD) is leading the continent's efforts to addressing core integration and development challenges.

Without doubt, in pursuance of Africa's regional integration, socio-cultural integration is projected as the precondition for either political or economic integration. But that notwithstanding efforts on African regional integration had been directed along the direction of political and economic dimensions. The course of social integration is calculated a challenge that stares the African mass media on the face. It is estimated that this mission is one that requires an acute involvement and extensive usage of the mass media. This is because researches and technological advancements have not provided us with a more reliable substitute that can serve better the ends of socio-cultural, political and economic transformation, than the mass media and as a result, mass media remain central and catalytic to social reforms that pave way to political and economic advancement.

It is instructive at this point to note that throughout the stages of human development, communication had remained inseparable part of man. Early philosophers such as Aristotle maintained that communication is older than man. From the premedial state to industrial revolution of the 17th century and the contemporary globalized stage of human development, communication has remained a veritable tool for the societal transformation, social integration

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and cohesion. According to Ndolo (2005) every society's growth, survival and continuity depends among other things, a system of communication, through which people exchange ideas and feelings. Prior to the advent of colonialism, however, Africans have been communicating. For instance, the use of talking drums, age groups, long brass and ivory horns, smoke signals and open market methods were multi-directional ways by which wars, peace, cohesion, transactions etc were maintained in sub-Saharan Africa. Modern communication came, however to provide a solution to the challenges of the globalized world which the traditional instruments could not solve due to their unscientific nature. (Edet 2006:12).

Edmund Burke, in the late eighteenth century in England coined the term 'fourth estate', while making a reference to the powers of the mass media. "The power of the press arose from its ability to give or withhold publicity and from its informative capacity'. The first key freedom was to report and comment on deliberations, assemblies and acts of government." (McQuail, 2000:169). All the revolutionary and reformist movements from the eighteenth century onwards inscribe liberty of the press on their banners and made use of it in practice to advance their causes (Hardt, 2003).

Still on the usefulness of the mass media as a reformation agent, John (1869) in McQuail D. (2000) writes:

> The peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is that it is robbing the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation, those who dissent from opinion even more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging errors for the truth; if wrong, they lose what is almost great a benefit, the clearer the perception and live liver impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

Regional integration in Africa is increasingly being accepted as essential in promoting and facilitating economic and political development; the mass media being the fulcrum upon

which all developmental endeavours anchor, must be accepted in the first place as essential agent in exchange for this mission. Harold Lasswell once stated that "man has always something to watch over his environment and report to him on dangers, discoveries, opportunities, opinions, facts, decisions, changes and current trends – something to entertain people on a broad scale, something to broaden trade and commerce."

The role of the mass media cannot therefore be over-emphasized. The mass media fully saturate our everyday lives that we are often unconscious of their presence not to mention their influence. Media inform us, delight us, annoy us. They move our emotions, challenge our intellects, insult our intelligence. Media often reduce us to mere commodities to the highest bidder. Media help define us; they shape our realities…" (Kogah 2007:19).

The media perform the functions of servicing the political system and holding society together as a sort of cultural glue among other things (Halen 2006:26). On the other hand, McQuail in Ndolo (2005:18) itemized the basic functions of the mass media. They are as follows: correlation, cultural transmission, entertainment, mobilization, personal identity, social integration and interaction, information, surveillance etc.

One of the major challenges facing sub-Saharan African leaders is how to unite nation states that constitute the region of Africa. According to Asonya (2000:) the post colonial problems of Africa could only be tackled through regional integration. Political analysts and indeed experts in international affairs have in different for submitted that the encroachment of western imperialism in Africa could only be halted through regional integration. Both past and present leaders of Africa have made and are still making appreciable efforts in uniting Africa. The former Ghanaian President late John Arthur Mills stated thus:

> "Our position is different from Gaddafi's. We do not subscribe for the United
> States of Africa "USA", but we advocate for cohesion and integration – a
> situation whereby independent nations come together to share their problems
> and devise means of tackling them without hurting one another"

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Appreciating the diverse and hegemonic nature of the continent, African leaders came together in May 5, 1963 to form the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The main objectives of the body were:

(i) To unite Africa

(ii) To accelerate the political and socio-economic integration of the continent.

(iii) To promote sustainable development at the economic, social and cultural levels as well as the integration of African economies.

(iv) To create favorable conditions for the entire development of the continent through the vigorous pursuant of the organization's, objectives particularly by harmonizing strategies and policies as adopted by the member states etc. (www.africahistory.http.ng)

The body lost her vision shortly after her formation because its establishment abinitio was masterminded by the European Community who saw it as another avenue to continue their exploitation of the vast natural and human resources in the continent (Adrel 2000 113) Some countries threatened to pull out of the organization not necessarily because it was hijacked by the forces of the western block, but because the future of the member states was bleak due to political crisis that was rocking the continent. Even Nigeria that was playing the lead role was also batting with her domestic problems (www.afropolhttp.com). Meanwhile, the birth of African Economic Community in 1981 was meant to further guarantee not only solid economic integration of the African states but to disconnect Africa's economy from the capitalist west that was fast engulfing the continent.

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Unfortunately, these bodies could not meet up with the challenges of the fast growing world. In spite of their presence, political crisis still rocked the continent while the leaders were busy mingling with the imperialist west, pursuing capitalist individualistic agenda. And so, the institution became arthritic resulting in the birth of Africa Union in Lusaka in 2001. In spite of the laudable objectives of the African Union, socio-cultural, political and economic integration of the sub-sahara still remain a mirage. Though there has been increase in bilateral and multilateral relations of African states due to perhaps their adoption of democratic governance, the major problem of the continent has not been solved, i.e. the problem of regional integration (Akinyemi 2005:67) But, the peripheral nature of these multilateralism is an issue of great concern. Peripheral in the sense that till date, African citizens are still finding it hard to trade freely in African states. To enter into some African states on a genuine motive in recent time is becoming as hard as obtaining visa to enter Europe (Davis 2011:132). Crisis is still rocking most of the member states of the AU, some African states are yet to identify fully with the body.

Regrettably, the mass media have not lived up to exceptions in this quest for African integration. African media are expected among other things to come out firmly on the side of African project, without prejudice to their adherence to the truth which must at all times be their guiding principle on issues that bothers on continental integrity. Media practitioners in Africa are expected to see the region as their primary constituency and must do anything possible to protect it from invaders. With emphasis on progressive, economic, socio-political and cultural development, as well as mutual co-operation of the sub-Saharan Africa, the media have not fully disseminated information that will accelerate regional integration and development.

According to Edna (1990) "the media organ is one of the major challenges facing African development… this is so because the organ has not provided enough information that would

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warrant Africans believing in themselves" Without prejudice to opinion divergence, African media have joined hands with the international News Agencies to discredit Africa. It is quite disheartening that in spite of many mass media institutions operating in Africa, developmental activities are not well reported. Odenigbo (2001) concurred that African media institutions have not been factual in their reportage because their news is being shaped by the international news pattern. In the international system for instance, access to information is unbalanced and unequal; information flow is often one way; the content unbalanced and repetitive, and news transmitted frequently relates to realities which are divorced from the problems and requirements of the Third World cultures and development. This imbalance in information flow affects news evaluation; distorts the news objectivity as well as cultural values of the third world (Okpoko 2009:51).

Taking into account the effects of these cultural deflation and erosion precipitated by world communication imbalance, Fidel Castro of Cuba, Abdul Nasser of Egypt, Nehru of India among other notable Third World leaders formed Non- Aligned Movement bloc that consequently brought to limelight the Non- Aligned News Agency (NANA). According to Okpoko (2009) it was the news agency that catered for all the countries that neither aligned with western (NATO) Super Powers nor Eastern (WARSAW PACT) allies that dominated the international system during the period of cold war. The objectives of NANA were as follows;

❖ Improve and expand mutual exchange of information and further strengthen cooperation among non-aligned countries.

❖ To facilitate dissemination of correct and factual information about non-aligned countries as well as the international community in general.

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❖ To fill the gap which exist in the field of communication within the international system by providing further information about non- aligned countries and their polices.

❖ To establish a functional media that will enhance progressive, economic, socio-political and cultural development as well as mutual co-operation and action of the allied states.

In another development, African media under the agis of Pan African News Agency was established to present news and features from the third world perspective and angle; to redefine news and present the development news. But evidences show that most of these national news agencies in Africa and indeed the entire third world carry the same crisis news that the western news agencies are accused of disseminating about Africa and developing countries of the world. This therefore means that just as the western media disseminate only negative news of crisis, murder, cannibalism, rape, coup, d'état, earthquake, famine, wars, election rigging, corruption, outbreak of cholera, HIV/AIDS pandemic etc, African national news agencies have followed suit. They do not find anything news worthy about the rural development, commissioning of pipe borne water projects, communal road projects maintenance, war against terrorism etc.

It should be emphasized that before the colonization of the continent, Africa had a well defined economic, cultural social and political systems that were disintegrated on the arrival of the colonialists. These colonialists established allies with the nationalist leaders whom they handed over the mantle of leadership in order to maintain the status quo-dependency relationship. The success of imperialism of course, could not have been possible without the collaboration of the indigenous nationalists who assumed the leadership roles of these developing nations without considering in effect; the consequences of such relationships. (Marx in Nwosu 1997:129) The continent has come to a conviction that it lacks the ability to develop. In his book titled 'How Europe Underdeveloped Africa', Walter Rodney eloquent posited thus:

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'An even bigger problem is that the people of Africa and other parts of the colonized world have gone through a cultural and psychological crisis and have accepted at least partially the European version of things. That means that Africa himself has doubts about his capacity to transform and develop his natural environment. With such doubts, he even challenges those of his brothers who say that Africa can and will develop through efforts of its own people' (pg 25.)

African leaders are depending entirely on the advanced nations for socio-political and economic growth of the continent. The developed nations on the other hand, have devised various means by which the mindsets of these leaders are conditioned into accepting that standard. For instance, there are more than one million intervention schemes in Africa; on health, agriculture, finance, education, infrastructure, security, etc. This parasitic relationship has most often threatened the sovereignty of these developing nations.

Unarguably, one the surest ways by which developed nations have established and maintained superior-inferiority relationship with the Third World is through mass media (media imperialism). The fact remains that these advanced nations have used the media effectively in promoting and propagating their actions, while they portray Africa as underdeveloped region that really deserves pity and assistance.

Media imperialism as a matter of fact refers to the effective utilization of the media by the developed nations in shaping the culture and in fact media content of developing nations. Nwuneli in Okpoko (2009:64)stated that 'Africa has been misrepresented and misinterpreted in the western press because most westerners covering it are not equipped with knowledge or willingness to understand and appreciate the African norms and values. This deluge of western

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flow of information through the media to Africa has not been abated. Africas television and cinema are almost totally dependent on the western soap operas and films. Broadly speaking, four major transnational news agencies (TNNAS) denominate the media world. They are; (i) United Press International (UPI) (ii)Associated Press (AP) (iii)Reuters and (iv) Agence France Press (AFP)

These four news agencies also known as the Big 4 are owned by the US, GB and France. According to Ginsberg in Ndolo (2005:194) the ultimate importance of the market place orientation of US news media was to provide an institutional framework within which superior groups and institutions utilize their superior economic and ideological powers to protect and consolidate their positions. Ndolo (2005) established that "the US media, separated by individuals who themselves are products of socialization process treats Africa as culturally unimportant and uneventful, and economically unattractive, create and perpetuate a grossly inadequate and faulty news reporting frame. This style of news reporting paints a picture of Africa as unproductive, helpless and hopeless, a region in constant need of direction and assistance from the west. In addition, this inadequate framework form the basis on which the perceptions and attitudes of Americans about Africa are anchored"

Western news reporting style overlooks the genuine efforts and struggles made by Africa and its resourceful peoples to overcome poverty, disease, malnutrition, crisis, corruption etc. In addition it gives no attention to those issues and topics that are relevant to the African agenda e.g. agriculture, education, health, etc. The news media represent a means of maintaining as well as destroying power and authority structures of sub-Saharan Africa. They use their sophisticated technology to generate and encourage negative attitudes towards Africa and African issues, which create a destabilizing effect on national development efforts of

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Africa. Udeze in Okpoko (2009:30) pointed out that "despite the high number of national news agencies existing in Africa, as about 90% of African countries have their own national news agencies, yet all these national news agencies are not equal to one of the Big 4s of the Western News agencies in terms of impact and effectiveness" And therefore, the western news spread its wide tentacles and web across the globe using its sophisticated tools to magnet news that most often debase the Third World. This pattern of reporting is capable of discouraging self determination and self-initiatives. It creates audience uncertainty about Africa, and diminishes the bargaining power of African representatives at international arena. More so, individuals and groups in Africa are exposed to the media of the west, and news about Africa in the western news media is all about crime and violence which affects the psyche of the audience. In other words, they will logically have negative perceptions about themselves and their African neighbours, become less likely to cooperate and compromise; and make increasing demands on the limited national resources in order to attain a western style of living. This type of inter-regional or inter group tension created as a result of exposure to this type of media content increase and reinforces sub-national identities and could severely jeopardize national integration efforts and ethnic cleavages (Ndolo 2005:124).

In the midst of this confusion therefore, Africa media practitioners ought to have risen to be challenges of media imperialism. They ought to have articulated regional news contents that will debunk the western media theory. But instead, African media institutions have joined hands with their western counterparts to further debase what is left of Africa.

The paper therefore explores the challenges facing the African mass media in the noble task of advancing the African integration process, and made some recommendations on how to overcome these challenges.

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Theoretical Framework

This work is anchored on two main mass communication theories – Mass Society Theory and Functionalist Theory of the mass media.

The Mass Society Theory:

"The theory emphasizes the interdependence of institutions that exercise power and thus the integration of the media into the sources of social power and authority." (McQuail, 2000) Mass society theory asigns a primary role to the media to offer a view of the world, a substitute or pseudo-environment, which is a potent means of manipulation of people and also an aid to their psychic survival under difficult condition. Wright, (1951:333) posits: 'Between consciousness and existence stand communication, which influences such consciousness as men have of their existence."

Mass theory sees the media as significantly contributing to the control of societies characterized by largeness of scale, remoteness of institutions, isolation of individuals and lack of strong local or group integration. McQuail, (2005) has the following as the features of this theory. Large scale society, atomized public, centralized media, one way transmission, people depend on media for identity, media are used for manipulation and control.

The Functionalist Theory:

This theory agrees that mass media do enormous functions to the society. Lasswell (1948) posits that media do functions of environmental surveillance, correlation of the parts of the society in response to its environment and the transmission of cultural heritage. Wright (1960) in consonance with Lasswell added the entertainment function, while Mendelsohn

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(1966) included the concept of mobilization. This was designed to reflect the widespread application of mass communication to political and commercial propaganda. McQuail (2000) argues that among the general functions of the media for the society, most agreement seems to have been achieved on the idea of the media as a force for social integration. In alignment, studies of media content have also often found that mainstream mass media tend to be conformists and supportive rather than critical of dominant values.

Functionalist theory is characterized by integration and co-operation, order, control and stability; adaptation to change, mobilization, management of tension and continuity of culture and values.

In total and absolute conformity to the direction of this work, mass society theory and the functionalist media theory meet the expectations of mass media in African regional integration process. The research work adopts the use of the mass media to achieve social integration which eventually leads to political and economic development. Coincidentally, the two theories upon this work is anchored are supportive.

The Concept of African Integration

Integration is the unification of a number of, hitherto independent units, into a larger whole, which is more than some of its parts. Integration can be conceived as a process (dynamic), terminal condition (statistics) or cooperation of both. As a process, integration involves the establishment of common legal rules and legal systems for the citizens (Bach, 2000).

Hoskyn C. (1988) says that African integration is any significant step towards cooperation, harmonization of policy, or joint action in relation between African states themselves or in their

dealings with the outside world. African regional integration entails the provision of variety of messages and information services to individuals, countries and groups, which they require for better understanding of one another and to appreciate other's beliefs, view points and aspirations. It is evident that the mass media play a prime role of social mobilization and information dissemination, and as such, constitute the critical variable in the calculus of social integration.

An integrated Africa is an Africa where there is freedom of movement between borders, an Africa where a person from one part of the continent is free to do business in another part of the country with no obstacles whatsoever. An integrated Africa is not only Africa that is united economically and perhaps politically, but an Africa united in purpose, an Africa that leverages the strategic advantages it has in different areas to become a leader in world affairs. Our tone might sound idealistic but this is what we do imagine an integrated Africa to be like. It is against this background that African governments and leaders have continued to give their support for regional integration as an important component of their development strategies, and concluded a very large number of regional integration arrangements. Integration is absolutely necessary as African economy and governments are seen not to be too strong to survive in the world market on their own. From the military point of view, African countries cannot defend themselves. It becomes imperative for them to belong to a group in order to have a clout of group self defense. Davies, (1996) quoted in Mark, et al (2009), said:

> There is a general recognition that the real question is not whether there should be cooperation or integration, but rather to identify the combination of co-operation, coordination and integration that is realistic and feasible under prevailing conditions, and that could thus advance the goal of contributing to growth and development

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It is evident that the African continent needs regional integration to broaden its market and attract foreign investments. Africa's failure to attract a fair share of global investment, in spite of its endowment in natural resources has been due largely to the perception of the continent as the world's riskiest place to do business. The high risk of doing business derive not only from the high incidence of conflict and political instability, and the good governance deficit, but also from high business costs associated with the inadequacy of transport, communication and power infrastructure. A well-designed and effectively implemented regional integration process can help address these shortcomings.

African regional integration plans had generally been ambitious schemes with unrealistic arrangements and time frames towards deeper integration and in some cases, it looked more like political union, the media used intensively and extensively to fight this collective course.

The ambition of African leaders to integrate Africa, and to develop the continent through import subsitition and industrialization, was a key feature of the immediate post-colonial period, and provided the rationale for the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA). The LPA was brain child of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), upheld and endorsed by the African Heads of State in April 1980, and keenly supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

While still in pursuit of the same integration plan, in 1991 the Abuja Treaty provided formidable support for the African integration agenda. This treaty emphasized African solidarity, self-reliance, an intra and international development blue print through industrialization. The proposed framework for African integration and continental industrialization was the division of the continent into regional integration areas that would forge a united African economy, the African Economic Community. In pursuance of this, the

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Economic Community for Africa (ECA) supported three regional integration arrangements; the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) for West Africa, which was established in 1975, predating the LPA; the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) covering East and Southern Africa, which was the fore-runner of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for Central Africa. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was established in 1989, thus completing continental coverage.

The Challenges of the Mass Media in African Integration Mechanism.

Unarguably, Africa's problems are really complex and manifold which calls for the participation of policy makers and indeed the entire stakeholders. The media undoubtedly is one of them. The media, both in print and electronic forms, are a key factor in political, economic and social development. As we noted earlier African countries need effective media because they cannot hope to democratize, prosper or engage with the rest of the world on equal terms without them. States seeking to engage with a globalizing world need a prospering and pluralist media to make that engagement a reality. Africa needs effective, functional and unbiased media that will tackle her numerous problems. The problems include bad governance, ineffective capacity- building, low foreign investment, lack of transparency and accountability, endemic corruption, poor education, adverse geographic and climatic conditions, inadequate health care and most significantly the problem of regional integration. Examining the array of Africa's problems and the media roles in tackling these problems, Elvis (2004) observed that indeed, "Africa's problems are really too challenging but they are all rooted in bad governance, but the emergence of functional media institutions will assist immensely in addressing these regional

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problems... though there are media institutions in Africa, the challenges facing them are also, as numerous as that of the ones facing the region itself".

Going by the above submission, one would not but agree that the challenges facing the media institutions in Africa are quite enormous. Suffice it to say that these challenges are indeed reasons why African media have not performed as their western counterparts. In view of this, we shall examine the major challenges facing the media in Africa, which have prevented them from functioning effectively.

- **Selfishness and Parochialism of the ruling class:** Many authors were blunt to observe that majority of our leaders just pay lip services to the African integration plan. Core among their fears is their unwillingness to mortgage their political dynasty. Soumana (2006) observesd that: the continent's enthusiasm for regional integration has not been matched by commensurate political will and commitment of member states to effectively implement agreement reached under various integration arrangements.

    The author went further to say that few countries on the continent seem to be prepared for the partial surrender and the polling of sovereignty which is critical to the success of any regional integration scheme. Obviously, if the leaders that should be at the fore front of positive movements for regional integration are not fully out to stake all it takes for more fruitful venture, then it must be a proper calculation to say that something is frankly wrong. This is a good case of a house divided within it, and a core issue which must be addressed urgently. Until their unreserved support is guaranteed, it will continue to be a wild goose chase as far as the integration exercise is concerned. No other efforts

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could be properly harnessed without the complete and undivided commitment of African leaders as success is greatly dependent on their willingness to surrender power.

As national governments of Africa are not willing to completely support and accommodate regional integration, they also make the situation not bearable for the media and media practitioners. Philip, (2005) notes:

> State media – government-funded and government controlled – have not delivered the free democratic press the continent requires. However both the later two models, public and private have drawbacks. The publicly funded media require mature, stable and accountable government to fund apolitically and without interference. Even in established democracies, publicly funded media have not always been able to resist pressure from the above. Public, independent media, while probably ideal is a fragile enterprise. In the case of privately funded media, independence can be compromised by the private or corporate interests, by pressure from potential advertisers and by the demand of the market itself.

- **Technological Dependency** is another monumental challenge that must be taken seriously. In this respect, African nations are just consumers and not in any way producers of communication hardware and software. As a debt to the shaky nature of her economy, procurement of state-of-the-art technological devices for production and distribution purposes remains an upheal task. On the angle of communication, the gadgets and the technical know-how are glaringly lacking, making it impossible for the communication sector to be strong enough to cope with the challenging environment. Owing to this, big and industrialized nations take serious advantage of Africans by converting her weaknesses into their advantage. The development of the internet is another landmark achievement that compounded the state of things in the

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technologically exploited Africa. "The arrival of television satellites in the late 1970s broke the principle of national sovereignty of broadcasting space and made it difficult and ultimately impossible to offer effective resistance to television transmission and reception from outside the national territory," (McQuail, 2005:248).

Reacting to the debut of internet in the communication setting and how it is used as an instrument of domination, Chalaby, (2003) says: "recent phase of 'communication revolution' has been marked by a new phenomenon of media concentration, both transnational and multimedia, leading to the world media industry being increasingly dominated by a small number of media firms.' Knowing that Africa does not have the technological powers to match it contemporaries and it cannot resist the influx of communication messages, the indigenous media institutions will continue to die in silence."

- **Cultural issues like Language Multiplicity** is a peculiar attribute of the African continent. Language is an issue of identity as anything else and in the complex reality of contemporary Africa; language identity further complicates media design and development. Given that Africa has several distinct regions, many states, hundreds of distinct tribal and ethnic groupings, the issue of media language and identity becomes particularly pertinent. The greatest challenge here lies in the fact that effective information dissemination in this setting requires dissemination using local media and different local languages.

- **High incidence of conflict and political instability** is another serious factor. Without peace and political stability, all other efforts are militated against. Very often notice is

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taken of wars; if not in Somalia, it is in Mali and other countries alike. Military incursion on political terrains is currently an African identity, when such issues are raised among rival nation just like countries in the Middle East. Conflicts distort natural peace and retards integrative development, as it places an effective check on economic and social activities, destroying infrastructure and constituting a serious barrier on the flow of business and investment.

In line with the direction of this study, economic instability is discovered as another terror. It is a big obstacle for regional integration. As we refer to the poor state of economy in Africa, the issue of debt shows itself as a case in point. South Africa has $25 billion in foreign debt; Angola owes about $10 billion to countries that were involved in the cold war, while Democratic Republic of Congo $2 billion, (Jubilee, 2000). According to Minter, (2004), Mozambique owes about $56 million to foreign creditors per annum. To curtail the inconveniences of this litany, we say that almost all African countries are owing one thing or the other and their debt service ratio is quite precarious. Apart from the above, currency exchange rates is another issue that give an average mind in Africa concern. The ever increasing inflation is ridiculous and the persistent decline of the continent's GDP indicates real danger of economic instability. In the midst of these uncertainties, much money is needed to initiate and sustain the integration dream.

- **Inadequate Infrastructure** is among the debilitating variables. Apart from the human and institutional capacity for regional cooperation and integration, an improvement in physical infrastructure demands serious and urgent attention. Amenities such as power, water, roads, transportation, and communication services are earnestly requesting

serious attention. Governments of African countries, non-governmental organizations and groups need concerted efforts to ensure that infrastructural amenities receive due attention.

- **Inadequacy of human institutional capacity** for the design and implementation of cooperation and integration programmes is another central issue. Soumana, (2006)
  ref. Africa's regional integration process has also been set back by poor design and sequencing of arrangements. This is reflected, inter alia, in the heavy emphasis of most of the schemes on trade liberalization and market integration without much regard for the fostering production integration/regional complementarities or the development of regional infrastructure (especially transport communication) to derive market integration; the inability to adequately handle issues relating to human right, good governance, accountability, and transparency, which are vital for political stability, peace and security and required for the attainment of economic objectives of integration; the absence of self-financing mechanisms for the regional integration organizations; inadequacy of the mechanism to ensure that the benefits are equitably distributed among the member states; lack of involvement of the private sector and the civil society in the integration process; and the disproportionate time allocated to conflict related issues, which has significant implications for the skills and competencies required by the RECs.

- **Lack of fund.** One of the major challenges facing today's media is lack of fund. The truth remains that no organization by any means can function effectively without capital. And so, finance is a key issue in media development. While emphasizing on the need for media planning and research, the secretary of the defunct Private Media Organization of Africa (PMOA) Jarome Dickson cited in Adeleke 1992:135 posited thus: In the developed world, media policy and regulation is based on extensive research and planning. An effective African mass media too will require robust, empirical research and policy design at the national and regional levels. But this can only be possible when

the media have been equipped financially, just like their counterparts in the developed word'. Media models are traditionally divided into state, public and private institutions. All of them especially the state media are poorly funded. National news agencies under the control of the states are not given adequate financial attention hence they are managed and organized as the extension of government ministry of information in their respective countries (Okpoko 2009). Their funds depend largely on subventions from government. Unfortunately, the subventions do not come as and when due, thereby starving these news agencies of fund required for planning and research. Apart from South Africa, though to an extent, no other state in the entire Africa can boast of financing their news agencies up to fifty percent. (http:africamediaco.net) One will be surprised at the subventions these media institutions receive from the government annually. And so, when news are poorly designed, research not properly conducted or the media lacking focus entirely on Africa's vision, the media are not to be blamed out rightly but the government also.

Government control/Political Interference.

One other challenge facing African media is the excessive control of the institution by governments. Most of the national governments in Africa have over the years demonstrated reluctance to allow for the full development of an effective fourth estate. Apart from South Africa's media that are a little bit of standard, most of the media institutions in other African states are virtually controlled by the government. The media have consequently become tools in the hands of the governments. Daliena (2008) observed that Africa's media are tools in the hand of any regime that emerges in power'. According to her, the media turn to praise singers to

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regimes in power without considering the negative effects of such praises. They go as far as protecting and singing praises to corrupt political leaders. But there is no event without a cause. The media have remained tools in the hands of African political leaders in order to avoid dismissal and brutality by those political leaders. Press control and brutalities of course are the major features of African states. Many a times, governments dictate to them what is news and what is not news; what to cover and what not to cover; thereby crippling their effective performance. Sometimes, they are caught up with brutal control and censorship emanating from representing the interest of the government in power that appointed them (Okpoko 2009:68). Against this backdrop, the visions of the media in integration mechanism are politically thwarted as most information pass through the table of their masters (employers), before they are disseminated. In another development, there are cases where ruling political parties influence the media so much so that media managers engage in partisan politics. Abdulrazez (2010) submitted that most of the Director Generals of Africa's media institutions are directly or indirectly attached to one political party or the other especially the ruling party. Such a situation according him does not encourage effective media reportage, hence there are no checks on the excesses of the government. And so, one of the challenges facing the media in African integration process is the excessive government control and political interference

- **Lack of qualified personnel/poor training;**

Basically, the journalism profession in Africa has not yet reached the level of social acceptance and regulatory strictness associated with other professions say, law and medicine. Many of the news agencies in Africa employ unqualified personnel and staff as a result of some

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extraneous reasons that do not consider merit as priority. Instead, they recruit personnel and staff based on man-know-man, financial gratifications or bribes, political patronage, ethnicity, reflection of Federal character etc. some of these people because they are not competent cannot face the challenges involved in working for a news agency (Okpoko 2009: 65)

Most of the personnel working in news agencies in Africa are not as qualified as their western counterpart. This has resulted in low self esteem. Investigation shows that in the western world, apart from recruitment which is entirely based on merit, more than $200m are mapped out annually especially by the Big 4 to train and re-retrain their staff. Furthermore, most of these news agencies rarely conduct professional training for their staff. Adebayo (1998) maintained that it was only through constant training that Africa's media personnel could meet up with the globalization trend. But unfortunately, media in Africa hardly conduct training for their staff, thus leading to journalistic blunders. Therefore, lack of qualified personnel and training pose threats to the media in Africa's integration process.

- **Lack of modern equipment:**

Apart from unqualified staff that characterize media institutions, in Africa, lack of modern equipment has become a major setback to the growth of media in the continent. Most of the national news agencies in Africa are still operating with obsolete equipment which results in news distortion and boredom of the entire exercise. Emphasizing the need to equip the media with modern technology, the former chairman, Nigeria's Senate Committee on Media, Senator Ayogu Eze in one of their oversight functions at the NTA headquarters Abuja stated thus:

"I'm lost at the nature of the equipment you have here. These are obsolete.

They can't meet up with the global challenges. As the giant of Africa we

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must be setting pace for others. We must shift from analogue to digital.

Having said that, we at the National Assembly will ensure that the media

get a fair share of the next year's budget so as to improve your operation"

(quoted from The SUN September 12, 2008).

With this, one can understand the nature of media institutions in Africa. Although there has been an improvement, now it is still an undiluted truth to say that African media do not have sophisticated technology to reach out to the entire world. At the beginning of this write-up we made it clear that all the news agencies in Africa are not equal to one of the Big 4s. The Big 4s are so sophisticated both in terms of equipment and manpower resources. That is why they give firsthand information to their teeming listeners, while African media relay news three to four days after events (Edmound 2006:158). News agencies in Africa are poorly equipped. The very little equipment that were bought at inception of these agencies had broken down and replacement or repairs are difficult to carryout due to corruption and bad governance. Even when little fund comes as it seldomly did, the officer in charge as a result of corruption may end up purchasing refurbished and outdated equipment which breaks down after one or two months of purchase thereby compounding the problems.

Undoubtedly, this is why Africa has not been given a wider and positive coverage that will lead to the integration of the continent. African media do not have modern technology and as such must depend and ultimately rely on the shaped and designed news content from abroad. In that pitiable circumstance, African media take whatever that emanates from the world news agencies and disseminate same to Africans without considering the implications of such news on the continent - whether it tears the region apart or not.

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- **Problem of Communication Imbalance:**

There is no doubt that world news revolves around mainly the western and partly Eastern blocs. (NATO & WARSAW regions) News originate from these blocs more especially the west. The international news system is so unbalanced that the third world cannot but resign to their fate. The demand for a New Information and Communication Order was prompted by the injustice in the flow of information to free the third world people from being passive receivers of distorted information. From the views of (Nzekwu and Mgbemena 1985: 67) it is believed that this demand is an important and inseparable part of the struggle for national liberation, social progress, economic and cultural development of all third world nations. Moreso, the demands for News World Information and Communication Order have arisen largely from third world grievances about the prevailing relationships between the developed and the developing regions of the world. Just as the international economic arrangements are perceived to be grossly at a disadvantage to the third world interest, so are the international information structures and processes are unfavourable to the third world regions too. (Okpoko 2009: 73)

Even though the third world nations demanded for a New Information and Communication Order so as to balance the world information system, it has not yielded any change because the initiative is somehow contradictory to the western agenda. Apart from that, the third world media and indeed the media in Africa cannot match their western counterparts because the former lacks the where-withal to embark on such challenge. The developed countries dominate and control infrastructures in the entire world environment. They are the owners of the major news agencies of the world. As at the moment, none of the major news agencies is owned by the third world country (http:www.newsagencies.nethttuk). In the area of

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technology, there is also the technological imbalance and inequality in the areas such as radio frequency spectrum, international satellite facilities and other hard and soft wares of news media, resulting in the unidirectional flow of international news and inadequate coverage of the developing countries in spite of the fact that the developing countries account for about 75% of the world's population. There is also quantitative and qualitative imbalance in the flow of news to the third world countries.

The lists of media challenges in Africa are endless. For instance, we have the insecurity of the media practitioners – where journalists are killed, maimed or unjustifiably imprisoned while carrying out their legitimate duties. In some war prone areas, their equipments are damaged while preventing them from covering certain events. This issue of insecurity faced by journalists is also a challenge militating against media practice in Africa. This is counter productive to the integration which the media is expected to champion.

Towards Effective Use of Mass Media in African Integration Process

Basically, there is no nation without a problem. All the continents of the world have their own peculiar problems. Africa is not an exception. The continent has seen regional integration as one of the major challenges facing her. Assumption therefore is that if all the nations that constitute the continent could unite, it will assist the continent immensely in tackling other challenges. These challenges are so enormous that they require the involvement of all the stakeholders to brainstorm and come up with possible solutions that will alleviate Africa from this current predicament. In April 1980 for instance, the Organization of Africa Unity, (OAU) adopted the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development of Africa from 1980-2000. The move was in response to the perceived need for action to provide the necessary political

framework towards achieving self-sustaining development and economic growth in Africa. Within this scope, African leaders stressed their commitment to ensuring a central place for human resources development and for the production of skills needed for development in all sectors of the economy (www.sardc.net) The plan focused on the utilization of indigenous technologies as a basis for the economic transformation of African societies. It was meant to create a link for regional integration, and the mobilization of resources to strengthen policies and strategies for inter-state development. The regional leaders believed that regional integration would provide a strengthened collective capacity for countries to address problems of national development and the challenges associated with the complex regional and global environment. Most importantly, the plan was aimed at fostering links for the maintenance of a genuine and equitable process of regional integration in the following areas;

- ❖ Food security, land and agriculture

- ❖ Infrastructure, trade, finance and investment

- ❖ Human resource development, science and technology

- ❖ Natural resources and environment

- ❖ Social welfare, information and culture

- ❖ Politics, diplomacy, international relations, peace and security.

At the heels of LPA was the adoption of Abuja Treaty in 1991, which established the African Economic Community(AEC). This long term plan was indeed the genesis of a concerted effort to integrate the African continent culturally, socially, politically and economically. In a nutshell, the initiative was aimed at promoting the integration of African economies *(The African Union Strategy for Regional Integration: A Journal of the African union pg: xi)*. Economic integration is more emphasized here because it is at the core of development. As a substructure, it

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determines to a great extent the existence of the superstructure. As noted earlier on, one cannot talk of political independence without economic emancipation. Once economic integration is achieved, other sectoral integrations (political, social and cultural) will surface (Abiodum 1999:56) And so, the formation of certain regional organizations such as New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Pan-African Parliament, Peer-Review Mechanism, Conference of African Ministers (of different departments), African Press Council (APC) etc, are all meant to bring Africa together in a round table to discuss her own affairs. But regrettably, African economies are integrated into the very structure of the developed capitalist economies; and they are integrated in a manner that is unfavourable to Africa and ensure that Africa is dependent on the big capitalist countries (Roodney 2005: 350).

The role of media in this circumstance should be a kind of solidarity building. The media should be part of the solution to Africa's problems and not the problems themselves. The media must devise a suitable means of promoting Africa's agenda-selling the region's progressive reports to the world. The fact remains that for the continent to realize its ambition of regional integration, news contents must be designed by Africans for the African environment. The media practitioners must shift from western pattern to indigenous ways of news reportage. Suffice it to say that no matter how African people try to unite themselves under different aegis, integration would remain a mirage so far as African image is still defamed by the Western media. The consequences of Western media coverage of Africa have already been highlighted but it is relevant to remind us that those who edit and report news about Africa, that is the indigenous media practitioners, have acquired western training, and are influenced' by their training. So, challenges of regional integration could only be tackled the moment African media and media practitioners shift from western system of news reportage to independent domestic news system,

designed, shaped and edited by Africans. It is already a known fact that the major objective of these foreign media is not to serve the interest of the indigenous people, rather they are meant to propagate the seed of discord among the peoples. Our own media institutions must rise and debunk the negative perceptions about Africa; creating news that are favourable to the continent and also report without bias negative events as they occur in the First World. The negative perception about Arica can only be erased by the media. And this could only be possible when the news contents designed by Africans take cognizance of the developmental challenges of the continent. No doubt, the African integration process is not feasible without the full participation of the media. And so, for the continent to really integrate for development there must be an intra-African information flow among nation states. This could be achieved through the followings:

1. Revitalization of Regional Pools and National News Agencies.

According to Okpoko (2005) "regional pools and national news Agencies in Africa were formed to keep the people well informed of domestic and world affairs, the national news agencies are equally means of promoting social and economic development. This is because most news gathering about Africa and other third world countries were mainly carried by the world news agencies, hence the establishment of the regional and national news agencies to bridge this gap." Therefore, these regional and national agencies were set up to balance the news from the advanced countries to the developing countries. For instance, Pan-African News Agency (PANA) is a pool resource by African countries. The concept of Pan African News Agency was first proposed by Ghana during the 1963 OAU conference in Algiers. At their1967 conference in Addis Ababa, the Union of African News again stated that there was need for such a news agency that will project a true image of African nations through the exchange of news.

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The dream came through in 1979 when the Pan African News Agency was founded and based in Dakar, Senegal. Today it remains the regional news agency of African Union. PANA was established to tackle the following problems; (i)image battering (ii)information inequality (iii)technological inequality (iv)cultural imperialism (v)news imbalance etc. Unfortunately, the body has remained a shadow of itself because it lacks the capacity to tackle the above problems. Cultural, political, economical and technological limitations have formed major constraints to the attainment of PANA objectives.

The revitalization of PANA and other national news agencies of African states shall definitely widen intra African information flow thereby serving as a window through which the continent of Africa is viewed.

Effective integration pattern for Africa's togetherness could be provided by the media through the revitalization of the regional pool (PANA) and other national news agencies from African states, where news from Africa shall be designed and freely disseminated. In the words of Braite (1996), "restructuring of African news to portray the good image of the region could be achieved through the repositioning of the regional and national news agencies of African states'. When these media institutions are properly revived, they shall serve as a data bank upon which international news agencies shall rely upon. They shall not only perform socialization or integration roles, but they shall also defend African cause."

2 Establishment of Pan-African Broadcaster.

The commission for Africa has itself acknowledged the importance of the media in tackling Africa's problems, stating that, the media is an educator and a key information source that can help deliver the MDGs, promote transparent governance, and through balanced

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reporting help prevent conflicts *(Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa 2005 pg:48)*

Apart from the revitalization of regional pools and national news agencies of African states, the media could provide effective integration through the establishment of Pan-Africa Broadcaster. At a press conference on the 13th of April, 2003, President Thabo Mbeki said: "If Al-Jazeera can succeed there is no reason why an African Al-Jazeera cannot succeed" The President was not actually calling for African Al-Jazeera, but a resemblance of Al-Jazeera in the Middle East. Although, a large proportion of Al-Jazeera's journalists received their training at the BBC, the station has demonstrated commitment to impartiality. There is strong evidence that the station's political coverage has indeed made the region's political regimes more accountable. At the same time, there is reason to believe that the station's coverage has forced other state media to improve their own coverage – the conventional 'protocol' model of national news had to be abandoned. Most importantly, the station has also had significant cultural impact. Its coverage has almost certainly improved non-Arab understanding of the Arab societies, and acted as a network for the Arab Diaspora, affording people living outside the region greater contact both with their various homelands and each other. These cultural effects experts say, have genuine political and economic implications, encouraging greater regional relations and trade across the Middle East.

Although, it would be in appropriate to import the Al-Jazeera model into Africa without adjustment to suit conditions of the continent, it is certain that the African continent would indeed benefit from establishment of a genuinely independent and indigenous Pan-African Broadcast. As noted earlier, Al-Jazeera has had a genuine impact on improving transparency and accountability across the region. Consequently, the existence of this Pan-Arab news channel

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has resulted in the greater economic and cultural exchanges within the region. A Pan-African Broadcaster could have similar consequence. Governments would be forced to become more transparent and accountable. Intra-continental understanding will be on the increase. Pan-Africa Broadcaster would build solidarity between North and Sub-Saharan Africa. Opportunities for factional media to incite violence for example as in Ruwanda in 1994 would be limited (Govviea 2005:15) With this rediscovery, information shall flow which would enable the media to provide effective integration massages that would accelerate unity in Africa and restore the image of the continent that have been so battered by negative western news reportage.

3. Press Freedom

Freedom of the press is another way by which the challenges of regional integration could be tackled by the media. Of course one cannot talk of intra African flow of information without the freedom of the press. Press freedom is the base for media efficiency and functionality. Discussing the impacts of the media in the contemporary world, the chairman of Silverbird Group, Ben Bruce posited that the effectiveness of the media institutions depends largely on their freedom – the freer they are the better they perform (Van. June 16 2010 pg 46) The truth remains that the presence of any unfettered press is a yardstick for measuring the success of any democratic society.

Freedom of the press is said to assure satisfaction of society's need for maximum flow of information and opinion and the individual's right to self fulfillment….. (quoted in Koga 2007: 16) It is therefore a situation whereby media institutions and practitioners are allowed to access and disseminate information without interference or control by especially the government or its agents, or private individuals.

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The 1946 UN Declaration on freedom of information stated that all states should proclaim policies under which the free flow of information within countries and across frontiers will be protected. Press freedom therefore guarantees the right to access information, right to print, right to criticize, right to report etc, within the ambits of the law. While the freedom of the press is widely recognized and acknowledged in the western world; it has been denied in many other areas, especially the developing countries. Despite the recognition of press freedom in many constitutions of African states, the press has not been free of government interference, outright intimidation and censorship. But reason for this is not far-fetched. Ogbondah (1994) cited in Kogah (2007:24) summed it up thus:

> …… the African press is controlled by the government for the fear that a free press would readily unearth the staggering proportions of graft, ineptitude, lack of accountability as well as the corruption, mismanagement, bribery, roguery and official stealing inherent within the ruling bourgeoisie class

It therefore goes to show that regional integration of Africa has not succeeded over the years because African leaders both past and present in their respective states have not liberalized the press to access and disseminate information capable of uniting the continent. Under this pitiable condition of the media in Africa it will also be difficult for information to flow freely to the extent that Africans both at home and in diaspora will be enlightened on regional developments. But if the press freedom is guaranteed as applicable in the developed countries, it will encourage free flow of information among African states. The media and their practitioners would be able to access information freely and disseminate same the way it will favour the continent and her people.

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4. **Interdependent Relationship and Mutual Co-operation among African Media Owners and Practitioners.**

Interdependent relationship and mutual cooperation is what the media institutions need to enable the continent overcome the challenges of regional integration. "…….. mutual cooperation among media groups enhances information flow" (Nguigi 1995:61) The truth remains that there is lack of cooperation among media practitioners in Africa. While discussing the impacts of the media in democratic government, the Director of Africa Diaspora Network, Prof. Kola Omotosho stated that democratic governance fosters transparency, accountability, the rule of law, respect for human rights, civil participation, and civic inclusiveness all of which are necessary for securing economic production, equitable distribution of resources and state legitimacy. The media therefore have a role to play in the development process by ensuring that democratic governance is institutionalized in Africa so as to provide routine instrumentalities for peace and stability and to enhance the attainment of regional integration and human centered development. This cannot be achievable without mutual cooperation among the media (quoted from The Media World Magazine June 2012: 16)

Whenever there is crisis and mishap in Africa, news inconsistencies among African media institutions had always degenerated to image battering and the disbanding of regional brotherhood. Speaking at the South Africa News Editors Forum (SANEF) in 2003, former South African President Thabo Mbeki adduced that "the peoples of Africa are interdependent and share a common destiny. It makes no sense that they should be separated from one another by ignorance of one another. Indeed that dangerous state of unknowing, which leads to prejudice and superstition against and about one another, would make it impossible for us to achieve the goal of African unity" http://www.sanef.org.za/african

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The goal of African unity in this context means integration, self confidence and self-reliance. It means oneness and togetherness. In the western world, media institutions are so coordinated and cooperative that they relay the same news almost at the same time with a high level of accuracy. This is not so in the developing world, especially in Africa where media institutions and practitioners are totally isolated from one another. Undoubtedly, if there is cooperation among African media institutions like their western counterpart, information will flow freely and of course massages that are indeed favaourable to the continent will be disseminated. When we talk about favourable massages, we do not mean that the fourth estate should cover up societal ills whenever they occur in the region but that they should not be so exaggerated by the media to the extent of disorganizing the unity of the region (Adebisi 1997:97) The submission therefore is that Africa's media organization should be interdependently related and cooperate among one another so as to enable them provide effective information that will not only cement African states, but project a good image of the continent internationally.

Conclusion and Recommendations

At this juncture, we shall examine briefly some solutions to the above problems. In the first place, the media industry like every other sector in Africa require capital to function effectively. Unarguably, no organization can effectively function without fund. Considering the enormous tasks facing the media especially as it concerns socialization and integration, African leaders should consider the media sector as a priority area by voting enough funds for its operations. The funds should also be effectively utilized and accounted for. If African media

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industry is funded and salaries and welfare of the practitioners revisited, the industry be better positioned to face the challenges of Africa's development and integration.

In another development, there is need to overhaul virtually all the national news agencies in Africa. This is imperative due to the obsolete nature of the equipment found in these news agencies. Even if funds are released, salaries increased, without re-equipping the media outfits to meet up with the global challenges, it is as good as not releasing funds at all. There should be a shift from analogue to digital equipment, while the modern trend of working in the industry strictly adhered to. It is said that why the world news agencies have constantly dominated and monopolized the world communication system is simply because of their technological advancement. And so, for African media to equal their counterparts and present the region very well to the world, the regional media must be sophisticated in their operations.

It is most appaulling that African media are not yet free from government control. In such a situation where the media practitioners are not free to carry out their duties, intra-african information flow will be jeopardized. And this is a challenge to regional integration process. Unlike their western counterparts, African media are under the strict surveillance and control of their respective governments, thereby sacrificing balancing and objectivity in their reportage. So, there should be the freedom of the press if African media are to perform their integration roles to the fullest. There should be constant training and re-training of media staff in Africa as obtainable in the outside world. Constant training will serve as an eye opener to the third world media practitioners on the dimensions of power play in the industry, especially in the international arena, and also the need for them to go back to the drawing board, adopting a pattern that will fast track the integration and development process of the region.

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Furthermore, recruitment of staff not only in the media sector but in all sectors should be on merit. Non- performers dominate virtually all the sectors in Africa. This is because people are employed not based on their credentials and fitness for the positions they occupy, but rather on favoritism, statism, political party affiliations, religious and quota systems etc. No matter how hard we try to rationalize the merits of the above variables as conditions for employment, they are and will remain counter-productive. So, there should be a standard for employment in Africa.

Finally, the third world should not relent in their calls and pursuit of the New Information and Communication Order. They should not relent because it is the only way out of this quagmire. The new information and communication order tackles the problems of image battering, information inequality, technology inequality, cultural imperialism and news imbalance. Above all, it encourages free flow of information and allows people to develop at their own pace. Let me quickly emphasis here that there is need for the security of the media practitioners. Death of African journalists is still on the increase and for the media to perform effectively their security must be guaranteed.

These and more are the challenges that must be properly addressed for the media to be relevant and more functional in the Africa's regional integration process.

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