

## Ideology, Theory and Professionalism in the African Mass Media

by Luke Uka Uche\*

### Abstract

The national communication systems of Africa lack articulated and formulated policy objectives to guide in decision-making that would reflect national orientations and ideological base. This article has attempted to propose a 12-stage theoretical paradigm in the process of problem identification and solution in ideological evolution within the context of the African mass media systems. As models are indispensable tools in the execution of a system's functions within the purview of public policy, such as the mass media, the theoretical paradigm on ideological evolution is, therefore, designed to point out the complementarity of theory and practice in information packaging.

This article presupposes that media policy parameters are not only determined within the ideological directives of their society, but are also dependent variables of the larger policies that emanate from the ideology of their society. It is within such a setting that the contents of the national communication systems in Africa should function as microcosms that reflect the thinking of the macrocosmic entity. The article also established that through surreptitious means, there is overwhelming evidence of the prevalence of external ideological influence of Africa's former colonial overlords in most of Africa's mass media systems, South of the Sahara.

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\*Dr. Luke Uka Uche teaches in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria.

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# Idéologie, Théorie et Professionalisme, dans les Masses Médias Africains

## Résumé

Les systèmes nationaux africains de communications manquent d'objectifs politiques bien formulés, et partant, bien articulés pour servir de guides dans les prises de décisions susceptibles de refléter les orientations nationales et de bases idéologiques. Cet article propose un paradigme théorique en 12 phases dans le processus d'identifier des problèmes et leurs solutions dans l'évolution idéologique, et ceci dans le contexte des systèmes des masses médias africains.

Etat donné que des modèles de référence sont des outils indispensables dans l'exécutions des fonctions au sein d'un système, plus particulièrement dans un secteur public tel que celui de masses médias, le paradigme théorique sur l'évolution idéologique est donc ébauché pour mettre en évidence la complémentarité de la théorie et la pratique dans le traitement de l'information.

Cet article pressuppose que les paramètres stratégiques des médias, non seulement sont-ils déterminés au sein des mêmes politiques idéologiques de leurs sociétés, mais aussi sont-ils des variables subordonnées à de plus grandes politiques émanant de l'idéologie de leur société. C'est dans de telles circonstances que les contenus des systèmes nationaux de communications en Afrique devraient fonctionner comme des microcosmes reflétant la façon de penser de l'antité macrocosmique.

En faisant recours à l'analyse critique de recherche, l'article également conclu que d'une manière générale, des preuves accablantes existent qui font état de la prédominance de l'influence idéologique extérieure sur l'Afrique, de la part des anciens maîtres coloniaux, au sein des systèmes des masses médias africains en Afrique subsaharienne.

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## Introduction

Colonial influence has continued to be quite domineering in the 30 years of independence of African nations from the former colonial chieftains. This is particularly noticeable in the area of the mass media contents. Due to lack of trained manpower and essential infrastructure to sustain the independence of the emergent nation-states, the former colonial overlords consciously used technical aid schemes (especially in the areas of training in newspaper, radio and television) as strategies for ensuring the preservation of, and continued dependence on their cherished values and ideological inclinations in their former colonies. As the new nation-states try to assert the supremacy of the nation-state over religious and ethnic sentiments, the communication media, especially radio and television, stood out as the most important means of scaling down the language, tribal and religious barriers they faced. The consequences of the African experience in foreign domination, servitude, exploitation and the diffusion of various foreign dominant cultural values have culminated in such contemporary international issues as the African indebtedness to the rich and industrialized nations of the west; the demand for a new world economic order, leading to the north-south dialogue that hardly accomplished anything; the most controversial debate of our time — the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) — in which the developing countries demanded (and still demand) for the restructuring of the world's information flow patterns, contents, coverage, and fair redistribution of both the hard- and software in order to eliminate the existing information imbalance; the call for transfer of technology; the re-scheduling of Third World debt; support for the independence of Namibia, which was eventually achieved on 21 March 1990; elimination of the apartheid policy in South Africa, etc.

These international issues have latently led to the glaring lack of a set of well-formulated and articulated policy objectives that experts could rely upon in the formulation and execution of national communication policies that would guide in decision-making to reflect national orientation and philosophical base in mass media contents. This continued lack of ideological base from which to develop a cultural policy base for the mass media industry of the various national communication systems in the African continent easily makes Africa and its home media audiences captives and victims of the dominant cultural values of the media core-countries. This continues to lead to lack of initiative for the development of a scientific and technological base to face the challenge of a new world of information and communication technologies. As the continent continues to depend on external media imports for information and entertainment, the cultures of its various nations are continually being eclipsed by external cultural influences due to a wholesale dependence on foreign media productions.



This article analyzes how neo-colonialism influences ideological orientation of mass media profession in Africa, and proposes a 12-stage paradigm on problem identification and solution. As most African countries are ideologically barren in their communication policies, they may disregard our theoretical propositions for the evolution of ideology in communication policies, just as Bernard L. Brock *et al* (1973: VII) warn that 'at times... the theorist is frustrated because his work is not utilized, while the practitioner laments not having guidelines. But more important, extended incompatibility between theory and practice can result in decay of the discipline.... The novice to the discipline ends up confused, since theory and practice each point him in different directions.'

It is not our intention to confuse the mass media practitioners in Africa; instead, we want to point out the complementarity of theory and practice in conceptualizing, planning and executing programmes of information management based on well-articulated and defined policy parameters that are in line with each nation's aspiration for national ideology. This is so because models are indispensable tools in the execution of a system's functions within the purview of public policy and interest, where media management is a major public area of interest.

## Neo-colonialism and ideology

Neo-colonialism constitutes the greatest impediment to an evolution of national ideology in Africa. Colonial tutelage of the media professionals, mostly glorified clericals, artisans and technicians who rose through the rank and file after acquiring one form of skill or the other in the profession from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), in the case of the former British colonies; or *Societe de Radiodiffusion de la France d'Outre-Mer (SORADOM)*, in the case of the former French colonial territories (Golding, 1977: 294), devastated any original thought and commitment to a national ideology. This is so because, says Golding, the large numbers of Third World students who came to study in the industrialized nations returned home with not only skills in the profession, but also values and attitudes of the men and machines they had learned to work with (Golding, 1977:295). Quoting Gollin's (1967: 362) prior research on the impact of the training of the Third World broadcast journalist on his perceptions, values and attitudes, Golding credits Gollin with observing that 'implicit in the idea of foreign study is the view that through an exposure to the values, norms and practices of economically advanced societies, the trainees may come in time to change their perspectives on their society, their work roles, or themselves in ways which will strengthen their later effectiveness as change agents.' The problem of developing ideological base in most Third World broadcasting systems is aptly highlighted by Golding's analysis of a study



of 'all journalists working in the main broadcasting stations in Nigeria.' He found that 'professional models are drawn not only from training and qualifications, but also from foreign media.... The news values and social values assumed by the major (European and American) news and news film agencies... become models for the aspiring Nigerian journalist,'

Golding further observes that:

...the development of professionalism among Nigerian journalists is nothing more than their increasing integration into a community sharing values and standards developed by major Western news media. Via formal training or education, through exposure to the authoritative products of Western media, or from routine dependence on the primary production of the world by European and American media, professionalism is induced in the form of an ideological convergence, a necessary emulation of the objectives and definitions of those foreign media.

Golding's observation helps in explicating the surreptitious methods of external ideological prevalence in most African mass media systems, as typified by this Nigerian example. Any attempt, therefore, at assessing the training of African journalists and the imparting of the values and attitudes of the former colonialists that isolates the continued geopolitical influence as a hidden agenda in designing the contents and nature of the technical aid schemes and training is to neglect a crucial factor that has affected the philosophy of media management in most African nations. This problem is remarkably acknowledged by Golding, thus:

Less tangible or explicit than either organizations or training are the contextual values and assumptions built into the very ethos of media professionalism as it is transferred to developing countries. These values generate both general 'philosophies' of broadcasting and specific understandings about correct and laudable practice in the production of mass productions.

More specific ideologies appear as models of good practice and implicit statements of acceptable and unacceptable standards. The greatest influence is in the programme material imported from overseas media.... The greater experience and resources of American, British and French stations, among others, give these programmes a technical sophistication which audiences come to demand for all material, including domestic production. Thus, African producers, already aware of the professional superiority of these products, become bound to emulate them in style, philosophy and format. Professionalism becomes imitation.

Golding does assert that, in as much as this problem has been even more true of television programmes, 'the assumed need for continuous broadcasting, the demands of a largely elite audience cosmopolitan in tastes and interest, and the high costs of production, have forced most Third World television stations to rely heavily on imported material.' In his own assessment, Demerath (1973:332), as quoted in Golding (1977:298), believes that 'although professionalism is no cure for all present deficiencies, it could play an invaluable pedagogical role by educating technicians to the trans-national, trans-cultural and trans-ideological dimensions of development.

The nature and form of colonial administration and the cadre of



manpower it developed to man the essential public utilities and the industries, and to run the affairs of the new nation states, helped to perpetuate ideological dependence. This is more so in the area of mass communication. The colonialist refused to train the African in that field because the press became an effective medium in the anti-colonial rule campaign and the demand for independence. The lack of proper professional training after independence led to bilateral agreements in the training of the African journalists to attain professional competence in both the electronic and print media between most African nations and the former colonial overlords. Colonial administration ignored the training of the aspiring African journalists. It is against this colonial backdrop that Abel Ndumbo (1987) argues that in the 'scheme of things that formed the total world of colonial education for the Africans, journalism was an afterthought. As the demand for freedom increased, so did the colonialist barrage of anti-nationalist propaganda.... Either they were not adequately civilized; or deposing the colonial regime would unleash forces of backwardness and anarchy.' Ndumbo's indictment continues:

...the mental picture one perceives of events, largely as a result of media presentations, has a strong influence on the future course of further events even when that perception is patently wrong. This... would illustrate the assertion that neo-colonization is more complete than the colonization of the mind. The biggest indictment of African communicators is the tendency to forget that communication, nay the power to influence and control a people's mind, still forms the battle line along which the struggle for emancipation has to be fought.

Emancipation from what, some may ask? I say emancipation from socio-economic slavehood; from drudgery in life, from toiling to produce raw materials whose prices are fixed by somebody else; emancipation from poverty... low esteem... lack of self confidence.... Emancipation from the debilitating belief that Africans are born to be at the bottom of the heap.

A study of the pattern of news coverage by L. Erwin Atwood (1985) establishes the fact that old colonial ties, resulting in historical ties 'such as are manifest in the British Commonwealth and the French Community are partial determinants of news coverage of Africa.' Can it be that the more the political and economic climate of a former colonial territory favours the sustenance of the ideological values and inclinations of the former colonialists, the more coverage the ideologically-dependent, but 'freed' territories get from the media of their former colonial masters? The following observations of Atwood's support the existence of ideological control, leading to neo-colonialism:

If the historical ties hypothesis is sustained by subsequent work, how should it be evaluated? Should it be considered little more than another manifestation of cultural imperialism? Should it be considered evidence of a genuine interest in the nations involved? The answer, of course, will depend in large measure upon the political perspective of the interpreter.

The historical ties hypothesis can also help interpret variation in why some parts of the Third World are more 'invisible' than are other parts. Searches for historical linkages



may help clarify some of these questions. It may be that former colonial status and continuing close ties with the former colonial power enhances (sic) the amount of news coverage a Third World country receives.

To some people, this observations may be the hallmark of neo-colonialism. The ideological posture of the former colonial masters and the normative values that became integrated in the professional practices, make the realization of national ideologies in Africa a difficult task.

## **Overt and Covert External Influence in African Ideology**

What are the social parameters from which ideological directives are derived for the conceptualization and dissemination of media messages in the African media systems when studies continue to support the agenda-setting influence of the Western wire services in the Third World local media? An empirical study by Hyeon Dew Kang (1985) that examined the extent of news coverage of transnational news agencies and the extent of news coverage of the Third World and Korean newspapers' contents supported the agenda-setting function of the Western wire services for local national newspapers. He discovered that 'the amount of the news that appeared in the Western transnational agencies seems to have a great influence on the appearance of news in the Third World newspapers, including Korean newspapers.' When the debate on the new world information and communication order was at its peak, a group of Western scholars did not only defend the imbalance by arguing that the tradition of the Western journalism sets the standard for the rest of the world, but also saw no justification for the indictment of the Western dominance of international news flow because 'a large part of the imbalance results from the decision of the Third World editors who over-select it (i.e. bad news) from the large and diverse menu available to them' from the Western media sources; adding that 'the dominance of the West is really a function of their ability to provide the kind of information that is widely palatable' (Stevenson and Gaddy, 1985). Having also established the overwhelming dominance of the Western media format, style and standard as a guiding model, also due to 'historical ties', Uche (1986:12) observed that 'as long as the media models are patterned after those of the West, it is imperative, therefore, that Third World media systems are nomenclatures of those of the Western world' because 'by his training and exposure, the Third World journalist has been acculturated to Western media culture.'

It was Elihu Katz who warned of the dangers of the transferring of continuous broadcasting, audience maximization and homogenization of news from the radio to television broadcasting in the United States and Britain as a universal norm in broadcasting. He alerted us that 'this set of norms which guides professional work in television, has been adopted by broadcasters everywhere, but nowhere more than in new and small



nations building both on their own experience with radio and on the model of their more experienced and presumably successful colleagues in the large and developed nations. And nowhere are these borrowed goals less appropriate... than in these new and small nations' (Katz, 1973:385). Katz's alarm was sounded in 1973.

In 1983, exactly ten years later, an empirical study in Nigeria revealed that approximately 70 percent of music aired by the most popular radio station in Lagos, Nigeria, were foreign sounds, coming mostly from the United States, the Caribbean and Western Europe (Uche, 1986:74). The author went to observe that as 'the music format of Radio Nigeria Two... influences the music preference of the youth, because about 60 percent of the audience of Radio Nigeria Two (FM-Stereo) consists of those aged 16-25 years... the implication is that when we talk of cultural imperialism and the endangering of the local culture, we should as well be concerned with and be talking about the structure, programme priorities and orientation of the local electronic media establishments, in addition to cultural policies of the developing nations, particularly.'

The formidable force neo-colonialism constitutes to the media programming contents in Africa, leading to lack of national ideological perspectives from which to formulate national communication policies that would reflect the ideals and perspectives of the developing nations, is demonstrated by the radio station *Africain Numero Un* (Africa Number One), located in Libreville, Gabon. This exceptionally powerful radio station is anything but African in its programme contents. It is a highly-sophisticated commercial radio station, presently existing as an experimentation station under the auspices of a consortium of French multinational companies engaged in large-scale commercial activities in the West and Central African regions. It gives way to Radio France International African service at particular hours in the same meter bands. Because it operates to serve the French multinational interests in Africa, *Africain Numero Un* hardly pays any attention to the accomplishments of Africans in the international arena. A case in point was when a listener, during a telephone *tete-a-tete* with the station on July 19, 1987, wondered why *Africain Numero Un* had neither carried the international football commentaries nor news of the soccer exploits of the two African representatives (Nigeria, an Anglophone, and Cote d'Ivoire, a Francophone) during the 1987 JVC/FIFA under-16 World Cup championship in Canada. The caller then reminded the presenter that on numerous occasions *Africain Numero Un* had carried soccer match commentaries involving football clubs in the premier football league in France. If live commentaries could be run for league matches in far away France, he said he saw no justification for the station's blackout of news and commentaries on World Cup matches involving two black West African countries that were asserting the supremacy and the coming of age of African soccer to the world soccer scene. The presenter informed



the enraged African caller from Doalla, in the Republic of Cameroon, that the decision on what gets aired was that of the station's management. This episode demonstrates a classic case of neo-colonialism that impedes the evolution of local ideological direction. It is all the more interesting to know that Nigeria won the silver medal in that final World Cup match for the under-16, while the USSR won the gold medal after a penalty shoot-out with Nigeria. The other African representative, Cote d'Ivoire, won the bronze medal, thus placing third, having defeated Italy.

Another incident illustrates the lack of ideological direction from which policy parameters are formulated for the African broadcaster. In Nigeria, one often comes across young indigenous broadcast journalists in their early 20s forming what they call 'Voice of America (VOA) Listeners' Club.' They go about recruiting new members. At times they invite officials of the United States Information Service (USIS) in Lagos to come and address members of their 'VOA Listeners' Club' in various parts of Nigeria. Is this not a subtle way of neo-colonial ideological indoctrination? If not, it, at least, strengthens Chinweizu *et. al's* contention that 'contemporary African culture is under foreign domination...' and that it has got 'to destroy all encrustations of colonial mentality...and map out new foundations for an African modernity,' (Chinweizu *et. al.*, 1980:329).

All these illustrations demonstrate that most national mass media systems in Africa are ideologically barren. This is an indication of the need to have the African media practitioner well-educated and versed in the basic theories relating to the sociology, politics, economy, mass communication, history, civilization, arts and sciences of his society. It is the interplay of all these that will give ideological directive to policies on the types and impacts of programmes of media messages for their audiences. The ideological posture of *African Numero Un* and the ideological barrenness of the young Nigerian broadcast journalists give sympathetic hearing to a Nigerian Marxist admirer, Ikenna Nzimiro (1987):

The social foundation of Nigeria's national communication policy can be defined in relation to the nature of the society in which the practitioners of mass communication system operate. These practitioners have operated within the capitalist system. The journalists, the media men working in state television, radio and other media of communicating ideas have operated for the promotion of the capital system. They cannot deny the fact that the system they have been called upon to propagate has not been fraught with dangerous contradictions.

The problem is not whether or not the capitalist system under which the Nigerian and other African journalists operate is 'fraught with dangerous contradictions'. Capitalism, by its very nature is an ideology of the *laissez-faire* economic tradition. The problem is that the African media systems have no political and economic ideological base, upon which to operate, that is indigenous to their environment.



## Theoretical Paradigm for Problem Identification and Solution in Communication

In most African countries the mass media practitioners are seen as messengers who use the communication media to propagate the directives of those that govern. They are not recognized as part of the decision-making process and policy formulation and implementation. Their continued survival within the system is based on intuition, reflective thinking and self conception of their role. In most instances, their intuition, reflective thinking and self conception of their role fail to function accurately as to be of any predictive value to them in trying to discern the prevailing ideological perspective and thinking of the ruling class. Their isolation and detachment from participating in and contributing to national policy issues constitute a major handicap in media contents. This leads to a major conflict in role conception; hence they more often than not walk on slippery grounds. Their alienation from decision-making and implementation of media policies leads to media messages that hardly assuage the public to support any particular government action or public campaign. This results from their undefined role in national scheme of things.

George A. Kelly's (1963:98) essay on the individual and role in an organization emphasized the resultant dysfunction:

...role lays emphasis upon several important points... it is assumed to be tied to one's personal construct system.... It is a pattern of behaviour emerging from the person's own construction system rather than primarily out of his social circumstances. He plays out his part in the light of his understanding of the attitudes of his associates, even though his understanding may be minimal, fragmentary, or misguided.

Kelly's postulates on the role of the individual support the need for the integration of the African communication experts in decision-making in the communication policies of their societies. Kelly further argues that:

Seeing oneself as playing a role is not equivalent to identifying oneself as a static entity; but rather as...an ongoing activity. It is that activity carried out in relation to, and with a measure of understanding of other people that constitutes the role one plays. It is not enough that the role player organize his behaviour with an eye on what other people are thinking; he must be a participant...within a group movement.

At present, most media managers in Africa, instead of anticipating, are rather concerned with the reaction of the political authorities. This is at variance with Kelly's preference of 'the creative capacity of the living thing to represent the environment, not merely to respond to it,' adding that 'a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events.'

This article presupposes that media policies are not only formulated within the ideological directives of a society, but are also implemented as dependent variables of the overall policy parameters that form the basis



of the ideological leaning of a society. It is, therefore, within such a setting that the contents of national communication media in Africa are at present functioning as microcosms that reflect the thinking of the macrocosmic entity. This is particularly true in view of the fact that 'society is often described as an ongoing system of communication maintained by persons committed to the principle of consistent action' (Hawes, 1975). National communication systems in Africa are lacking in ideological base upon which to formulate media policies and professional ethics that would reflect national ideologies in matters of culture, politics and economy.

The following theoretical perspective is being postulated for the evolutionary process of ideology for the formulation and implementation of effective national communication policies in Africa. The implicit assumption of the paradigm is that a national mass media system that is based on a national ideological framework will be less dependent on foreign media. Media dependency is a problem that must be identified. It is by the application of the following 12-stage procedure in ideological evolution that the issue of media dependency could be identified and solved. It is being assumed that the application of the paradigm will lead to the formulation of communication policies that will create an ideological base for the media to flourish in their national cultural environments. The paradigm on communication ideology is outlined as follows:

1. identification of the felt problem of a country;
2. assessment of the magnitude and complexity of the identified problem;
3. developing strategies for solution of the identified problem; (the mass media are usually one of such strategies);
4. impact of the preferred problem solving strategies on the identified problem of the country;
5. should the accepted strategies for solving the problem be continued or discontinued, based on their impact?
6. what are the rationales for the acceptance of their continued application or rejection of their further application?
7. what are the other options or available alternatives for solving the problem?
8. reaction of external (foreign) interests (e.g. governments, multinational companies, international organizations and specialized agencies, etc.) to the problem identified by a country, from the identification stage to the reaction stage;
9. what are the quantitative and qualitative results of the applications of these stages, in terms of their utilitarian values to the greatest number of people in the society, from the identification stage to the present?

10. in measuring their achievements so far, to what extent have they
  - (a) isolated the society from the outside world?
  - (b) brought the society closer to the outside world?
  - (c) brought about harmony, happiness, comfort, satisfaction, judicial and social justice within the society?
11. is there a need for some minor, major or radical alterations based on the preceding stages?
12. what provisions are made for policy guidelines that would lead to
  - (a) avoidance of rigidity and fundamentalism in the implementation of the strategies for the solution of the society's identified problem?
  - (b) creation of room for adaptations to withstand anticipated and unanticipated future changes in the national and international environments?

The implicit implication of these basic stages in our paradigm of problem identification and solution on ideology is the need to develop a mutual working relationship between theory and practice in the conceptualization, development and implementation of national communications policies in the various African media systems. The African journalist needs a sound theoretical exposure if the messages he originates and disseminates are to make indelible impact on the society. It means that he must actively participate in long-term policy formulation and implementation of national ideological directives. He must also be made to understand that the media messages he produces must be developed within the policy guidelines that reflect the ideological orientation of his society.

The danger of developing media messages outside the framework of policy guideline and the continued denial of the involvement of the African journalist in policy formulation is that his own idea of media messages that are based on what he perceives to be within the framework of national public policy formulation may be adaptable to risk and uncertainty. Thus, the problem of adapting media messages to risks and uncertainties is minimized by his involvement in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation, based on his informed knowledge of national ideological directives. Naturally, developing media programmes in the African continent should pose no problem in deciding what public information to choose from in the packaging of media messages among available options, after a thorough analysis, examination and appraisal of 'all possible courses of action and their possible consequences and after an evaluation of those consequences' (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1970) in the light of the continent's values that should form the major components of its ideological direction. The essence of embracing theoretical input in media messages is that it enables the communicator to identify policy formulation, policy implementation, policy analysis and decision-making with the model of



problem solving strategies we have postulated. There is an over-riding need to treat policy questions in the media as both intellectual (theoretical) issues as well as practical guidelines, especially in this era of advanced information technology that makes ideological stance imperative for the African nations that lack the technological base for information processing to unify, mobilize, feed and care for their people.

It follows that the involvement of the African communication specialists, charged with supervising the development and management of their nations' media systems and to reflect the policy issues that are in consonance with their nations' philosophical base, should be based on a thorough knowledge and application of the three basic steps Bernard Brock *et. al.* (1973) have identified in decision-making process. These are (a) the gathering and interpretation of information (b) evaluation of the information gathered and application to decision and (c) execution of the decision.

What are the ramifications of Kelly's postulates and the 12-stage theoretical paradigm on problem identification and solution to the planning of media programmes in the various African countries, in view of all these theoretical perspectives we have so far elucidated? A probable ramification is that it certainly is an impossible task to expect any success in the mobilization of a national mass to support an ideological base from which leaders formulate development policies that seek the commitment of individuals toward the realization of the desired goals of the nation state in an atmosphere of heavy international debt burden, hunger, disease, job insecurity, intimidation, humiliation, degradation and gross lack of respect for the individuals' civil liberties by members of mostly military ruling cliques, party members in the one-party states, and other powerfully-entrenched political interest groups. This makes mockery of any ideological directive from which policy parameters are developed for the Africa media.

The numerous incidents that have been cited so far in this article are dysfunctional to the development and implementation of social policies. The every day experiences of African journalists and mass communicators tend to justify Ikenna Nzimiro's belief that 'the class that controls the state sets itself above the civil society and imposes its rules on those of the civil society. In such a situation, human rights are defined differently, according to one's position in the hierarchy of power' (Nzimiro, 1987).

## Conclusion

In 1984, a military administration in Nigeria mounted a frightening public campaign, code-named *War Against Indiscipline (WAI)*. It gradually began to form a philosophical and ideological base for a country that has been ideologically confused since its independence 30



years ago. The military administration commandeered and mobilized all the communication media in the country for the execution of its public campaign for social change. In an evaluative research on the WAI campaign, Uche (forthcoming) observed:

As the WAI campaign became the primary agenda of all communication media, radio and television began to report and explain events associated with development and change... which analyzed relevant topics which suited the aims and objectives of the WAI campaign.... Special programmes were produced for the youth, students, etc. Such programmes emphasized the need for discipline, integrity and new values. On their part, children were exposed to result-oriented media programmes which prompted inquisitiveness and learning. The aim was to displace myths and superstitions with science and technology.

But as soon as that military administration was toppled by another military regime, the accomplishments of the WAI public campaign for a new ideological orientation were completely wiped out as Nigerians returned to sub-social behaviours. The same broadcasting media that created and produced programmes for the youth and students aimed at eradicating myths and superstitions, and replacing them with science and technology, began to produce children's programmes with mythological base. The most glaring example of such a mythologically-based children's programme was the competitive entry of the National Television Production Centre (NTPC), Lagos, that won the 1986 Nigerian Festival of Television Programmes (NIFETEP) for the children drama category. The award-winning drama created its characters from the ancient African mythology in which a very fair-complexioned and beautiful child, who is constantly sick, communicates with an evil spirit that he/she alone sees. The spirit is said to be the goddess of the sea (mermaid). The sea-mermaid is believed to be the real mother of the child. The child is not presumed to be real until his/her parents succeed in offering all sorts of weird sacrifices that could cost the entire life fortunes of the so-afflicted family. Each occasion the child experiences a nightmare in his/her sleep, the sea goddess is believed to be dragging him/her to the mystical world of the mermaid. The next day the parents are on their heels, searching for the best known native doctor to exorcize the child of the powers of the mermaid. If the child dies, he/she and the mermaid get all sorts of aspersions cast on them. If he/she survives, the demonic powers of the sea goddess have been defeated.

The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) production crew that dramatized this mythology went to a nearby secondary school and struck a bargain with the school's authorities and a 12-year-old girl of mixed parentage. After a series of actings and rehearsals, the drama was staged. The teenage actress was just superb in her role of being possessed by the mermaid. She became a household name among children all over the nation because she made an indelible impression among her teenage group. The code-names of *ogbanje* and *abiku* that



personified her mythological personality became a common expression. The implication of this drama, which the Nigerian Television Authority did not take into consideration before the production of the drama, was that some months before it was aired, several schoolchildren had died during a series of stampedes in primary and secondary schools in Enugu, some 800 kilometres east of Lagos, where some of them claimed to have seen mermaids standing in their classrooms. The NTA drama succeeded in reinforcing a myth that does not allow children to develop scientifically and technologically. In a culture where children suffer from sickle-cell anaemia, die prematurely as a result of malnutrition and dehydration, ideological orientation becomes imperative in the education and professional development of radio and television broadcasters and other media practitioners to exorcize them of their continued belief in the existence of the sea goddess myth.

This article is a reinforcement of Golding's proclamation (1977) that because the mass media systems in Asia, Africa and Latin America developed 'as derivatives of those in the advanced industrialized countries, they do not appear spontaneously at an appropriate moment in social evolution, but have been transplanted from metropolitan centres. This simple fact of colonial history has enormous implications for analysis of the structure and role of media in the Third World...' The history of the development of the media in the Third World has consequently influenced the present author's 12-step guidelines in the evolutionary process of ideology.

Ideology in African countries should not be imported, but rather, it should be a reflection of local needs of evolving ways and means of problem solution. Undoubtedly, lack of ideological direction leads to brainwashing by the competing external values that seek to dominate and influence the attitudes and minds of the people of Africa. It, therefore, becomes necessary to involve the African media practitioner in decision-making and policy issues. But his/her involvement should depend on well-grounded theoretical and practical knowledge of his/her environment and the profession because 'theory is an ad interim construction system which is designed to give an optimal anticipation of events' (Kelly, 1963). The aim of all these is to enhance his/her credibility, status and influence, together with the media's, in the social environment for the development of an ideologically-sound society for a better tomorrow.

The overwhelming influence of the Western media model in shaping the contents and programmes in the various African national media system is a negation of the philosophical base of most developing nations. It retards the evolution of local ideological direction. This is more so because 'the elements of the news ideology emphasize the extent to which the news is a construction of a social reality' (Klaus Jensen, 1987). It, therefore, follows that media messages and contents in Africa

should be such that would reflect a construction of a social reality within the ideological context of their various nations.

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